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THE ROLE OF PARTY STRATEGIES IN SHAPING POLITICAL POLARIZATION

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THE ROLE OF PARTY STRATEGIES IN SHAPING POLITICAL
POLARIZATION: A CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS

A Ph.D. Dissertation

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İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
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June 2023

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF PARTY STRATEGIES IN SHAPING POLITICAL
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The linkage between parties and citizens is accepted as the basis of democratic politics. Existing literature offers empirical evidence that parties are the key agents of driving polarization. However, we are still in the dark about the extent to which citizens see parties affectively and ideologically distinct from each other in response to party strategies. This dissertation examines the role of electoral party strategies in shaping perceived political polarization in established and developing democracies. By drawing a conceptual and empirical distinction between polarization among political elites and the mass public, this study analyses the patterns of both types of polarization and their determinants. Based on data on citizens' perceptions of party polarization and affective polarization from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES), overall findings suggest that clientelist and manipulative electoral strategies facilitate mass affective polarization. Moreover, although existing research on party competition suggests that attitudes toward parties are shaped by partisan attachments or pragmatic considerations, we still have limited knowledge of the consequences of other party strategies, such as populism. This study shows that parties' populist strategies motivate people to see parties more ideologically distinct from each other. These findings have important implications for debates on democratic legitimacy, party strategies, and public attitudes.

Keywords: Democratic Legitimacy, Mass Affective Polarization, Party Competition,
Perceived Party Polarization, Public Attitudes



ÖZET

SIYASİ KUTUPLAŞMAYI ŞEKİLLENDİRMEDE PARTİ STRATEJİLERİNİN ROLÜ: ULUSLARARASI BİR ANALİZ

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Partiler ve vatandaşlar arasındaki bağ, demokratik siyasetin temeli olarak kabul edilmektedir. Mevcut literatür, partilerin kutuplaşmayı yönlendirmede kilit aktörler olduğuna dair ampirik kanıtlar sunuyor. Bununla birlikte vatandaşların parti stratejilerine tepki olarak partileri duygusal ve ideolojik olarak birbirinden ne ölçüde farklı gördükleri konusunda hala karanlıktayız. Bu tez, yerleşik ve gelişmekte olan demokrasilerde siyasi kutuplaşma algısını şekillendirmede seçim partisi stratejilerinin rolünü incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, siyasi seçkinler ile halk kitleleri arasındaki kutuplaşma arasında kavramsal ve ampirik bir ayrım çizerek, her iki kutuplaşma türünün kalıplarını ve bunların belirleyicilerini analiz ediyor.

Karşılaştırmalı Seçim Sistemleri Çalışması'ndan (CSES) vatandaşların parti kutuplaşması ve duygusal kutuplaşma algılarına ilişkin verilere dayanarak, genel bulgular kayırmacı ve manipülatif seçim stratejilerinin kitlesel duygusal kutuplaşmayı kolaylaştırdığını gösteriyor. Ayrıca, parti rekabeti üzerine mevcut araştırmalar, partilere yönelik tutumların partizan bağlılıklar veya pragmatik düşünceler tarafından şekillendirildiğini öne sürse de popülizm gibi diğer parti stratejilerinin sonuçları hakkında hâlâ sınırlı bilgimiz var. Bu çalışma, partilerin popülist stratejilerinin, insanları partileri ideolojik olarak birbirinden daha farklı görmeye motive ettiğini göstermektedir. Bu bulguların demokratik meşruiyet, parti stratejileri ve halkın tutumları hakkındaki tartışmalar için önemli çıkarımları vardır. Anahtar Kelimeler: Demokratik Meşruiyet, Kitlesel Duygusal Kutuplaşma, Parti Rekabeti, Algılanan Parti Kutuplaşması, Kamuoyundaki Tutumlar

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1970, psychologist Henri Tajfel and his colleagues recruited forty-eight boys aged fourteen to fifteen from a state school in Bristol, divided into three separate groups of sixteen participants. In each group, the boys knew one another well before the experiment. The experiment had two parts. In the first part, twelve slides of paintings, six of which were reproduction paintings of Wassily Kandinsky and six by Paul Klee, were shown. The boys were asked to share their preference for one or the other of the paintings and were told that they would be grouped based on the aesthetic preference they had just made, even though the researchers randomly assigned groupings. The groups were named “The Kandinsky Group” and “The Klee Group.”

In the second part of the experiment, the participants in each group were asked to award points to one member of the subject’s group and one member of the out-group. In allocating points, if the subjects decide to give the highest points to the in-group, it means that the out-group automatically gets the highest points as well. The results of the second part showed that in-group choices were significantly close to maximum joint profit than was the out-group. Even though there was not any direct conflict of interest between the two groups when they gave the highest points to each other, and subjects knew each other well before the experiment, the groups preferred not to give the highest points to the “other” group without giving any less to their “own” group. Tajfel (1970: 102) concludes this study by stating that “neither an objective conflict of interests nor hostility had any relevance whatever to what our subjects were asked

to do. It was enough for them to see themselves as clearly categorized into an in-group and an out-group.”

Tajfel’s Social Judgment Theory Experiment was one of the first experiments to look at people’s affinity for groups and to what extent individuals favor in-groups while discriminating against out-group. Regardless of the existence of any conflict of interest among individuals or groups, societies are divided into different social, political, religious, and ethnic groups. Political polarization refers to the social or ideological distance between different groups or parties in society. The aim of this study is to examine the sources of this polarization that divides people’s perceptions and feelings about parties.

Some degree of political polarization is to be expected and may be desirable, especially in newly established democracies, to strengthen party brands, stabilize elections by presenting a clear set of choices for voters (Lachat, 2008; Lupu, 2013; Thornton, 2013), and assure that parties represent citizens’ voices well (Fiorina, 1980; Heltzel & Laurin, 2020; Sartori, 1976). Clearer electoral choices for voters may lead to stronger party attachments, which may institutionalize the party system. Strong party attachments and clear electoral choices may facilitate electoral stability and consolidate new democracies (Rose & Mishler, 1998). Clarifying voters’ choices is the desired outcome not only in new democracies but also in consolidated democracies as well. For instance, the American Political Science Association (1950: 3-4; see also Theriault, 2008) mentions the necessity of ideologically distinct political parties for U.S. politics with more organized, cohesive, and responsible political parties. Accordingly, research suggests that political polarization can help reduce political corruption and help the emergence of “good government” by raising electoral stakes for political parties (see Testa, 2012).

At the same time, intense political polarization may threaten democratic progress and consolidation (Abramowitz, 2010; Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; Leeper, 2014; McCoy, Rahman, & Somer, 2018; Svobik, 2019) and harm opportunities for compromise among parties (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006). Polarization is linked to income inequality, legislative gridlock, and mass disengagement (Hetherington, 2009; Layman, Carsey, & Horowitz, 2006). One clearly pernicious

consequence of polarization (McCoy & Somer, 2019) is that urgent issues—such as addressing climate change (Alló & Loureiro, 2014; Kachi, Bernauer, & Gampfer, 2015) and public health issues induced by COVID-19 and individual attitudes about social distance, vaccination, and mask-wearing (Allcott et al., 2020; Jost, Baldassarri, & Druckman, 2022)—have become very controversial, resulting in slower progress in responding to these issues. Moreover, polarization can have pernicious consequences for societies when “each camp comes to perceive the “Other” in such negative terms that a normal political adversary with whom to engage in a competition for power is transformed into an enemy posing an existential threat to be vanquished” (McCoy & Rahman, 2016: 2).

Considering these negative outcomes of polarization, one major question motivates this study: how and why do citizens perceive parties ideologically and affectively apart from each other? In addressing this question, I consider the role of party strategies in shaping political polarization. A party strategy refers to adopting a variety of actions, such as presenting clear policy or ideological positions and delivering certain promises (reducing unemployment and crime rate) to voters to mobilize citizens in the electoral context (Hellmann, 2011). The strategies the parties choose to attract voters have important consequences on citizens’ electoral choices and perceptions of parties (Aldrich & Griffin, 2003). Polarization arises because it is either in the instrumental interest of political parties to implement electoral strategies that tend to split citizens into two opposing camps (Somer, 2020). Or it is an unintended outcome of parties pursuing other goals of winning elections (see Lazarus, 2005). I examine clientelist linkages, electoral fraud, and populist politics as the strategies chosen by parties to tap into the masses and motivate them to see parties divided. By drawing a conceptual and empirical distinction between polarization among political elites and the mass public, this study analyses the patterns of both types of polarization and their determinants.

The political competition that political institutions help to form shapes the strategies used by parties to win elections (Lehoucq, 2003). Institutional weakness in the form of a weak state and democratic institutions predominantly contains a lack of judicial independence, unstable constitutional rules, and politicized state agencies (Levitsky and Loxton, 2013). The weakness of parties, displayed by a fluid and fragmented

party system and high electoral volatility, facilitates constant in-and-out-party struggle and fighting, frequent party switching, and inefficient policy-making process (Weyland, 1999). Studies show that institutions, particularly electoral rules, present parties with incentives to follow polarizing or depolarizing strategies (Cox, 1990; Sartori, 1976).

The degree to which institutions are strong shapes political competition and party strategies. Particularly, weak institutions and party systems create more incentives to rely on clientelist linkages, electoral fraud, and populist strategies. Moreover, existing weaknesses enable political actors to further weaken institutional strength by elevating their political power via constitutional changes and weakening checks and balances. The institutional and party weaknesses make it easier for parties to use personalistic voter-elite linkages, interfere in the electoral process, discredit established parties, and be challenged by small, radical, or populist parties. Hence, in developing my argument, I focus on both established and developing democracies and the role of electoral parties' strategies in shaping ideological and affective party system polarization as perceived by citizens.

Party system polarization is usually described as ideological dispersion (or differences) within the party system or "the distribution of parties' mean positions" (Kitschelt, Hawkins, Luna, Rosas, & Zechmeister, 2010: 18, see also Schmitt, 2016). A body of literature has already investigated the causes and consequences of party system polarization (e.g., Dow, 2011; Hetherington, 2009; Layman et al., 2006; Lupu, 2015a). Empirical studies show that party polarization is theoretically linked to electoral rules (Cox, 1990; Dow, 2011; Hug & Martin, 2012), income inequality (Garand, 2010; McCarty et al., 2006), and party attachments (Hetherington, 2001; Lupu, 2015a). However, studies on the patterns and determinants of party system polarization in hybrid and unconsolidated democratic regimes are limited in scope. Some scholars suggest that political polarization is more evident in developing democracies (Handlin, 2018; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021). Some studies show a substantial variation of polarization across unconsolidated democratic regimes in Latin America (Coppedge, 1998; Moraes, 2015; Moraes & Béjar, 2022; Singer, 2012, 2016) and Central Europe (Pardos-Prado & Dinas, 2010).

In this study, I examine citizens' perceived left-right polarization of parties. Left-right dimension is a central aspect of politics at the party level as well as the mass level. Among the mass public, concepts like "left" and "right" can function to make sense of the political realm, helping to reduce the complexity of politics and clarify party alternatives (Freire, 2008). Parties can use these concepts to differentiate themselves from other parties, communicate their programs, and label policy issues that are important to them. The left-right dimension is thus an instrument to comprehend and summarize political information (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990; Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen, 1998). The left-right polarization concept is drawn from Sartori's (1976) analysis of party systems. Sartori classifies party systems in terms of the number of ideological poles upon which parties position themselves and the distance between the left and right poles. In a polarized system, there is a large ideological distance between parties, whereas, in a less polarized system, this distance is small. In this study, I focus on perceived left-right party polarization as a dimension in grasping the distance between parties (see Dalton, 2008, 2011; Knutsen, 1997, 1998; Singer, 2016).

Existing literature on party competition has extensively examined how various parties choose their political issues or ideological positions. The most extensively analyzed party strategy is policy or ideological position-taking, proposed by spatial theory (Downs, 1957). Spatial models of party competition look to explore the relationship between party strategies and voters' preferences (Davis & Hinich, 1966; Downs, 1957; Hinich & Ordeshook, 1970). There are three main assumptions in the spatial model of political competition. First, voters' policy preferences are "both clearly perceived and exogenous to the political process itself" (Iversen, 1994: 157). Second, political parties aim at maximizing either their seats or votes when they compete in elections—regardless of the electoral system that the country has (Laver & Schofield, 1997).

Third, voters opt for the candidates or parties whose policy position is closest to their positions (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989). Rational parties adopt policy positions to minimize the distance between the voters and their parties. Parties competing for seats rely on two possible strategies: movement away from a specific party in a given policy space to differentiate its difference (policy divergence) or movement toward

(policy convergence) to divert voters away from a competitor. In that sense, parties seek electoral victories rather than seeking to implement preferred policies¹ (Green & Shapiro, 1994).

In this approach, Downs frames the party ideologies as left and right positioning of parties in political competition. In the Downsian spatial theory, ideology serves as an informational shortcut for voters in judging the political parties and candidates (Enelow & Hinich, 1981, 1982a; Hinich & Pollard, 1981). Downs (1957: 121) explains this framing as the “numerical distribution of voters along the political scale determines to a great extent what kind of democracy will develop.” In a two-party system where both parties locate close to the center when the electorate is symmetrically distributed around the median (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989), it would be highly likely to have stable policies that reflect the majority of people’s views (Dow, 2001). In Downs’ spatial modeling, political parties will attempt to resemble each other ideologically and eventually converge to near the center in two-party systems.

Analyses based on spatial theory underline that the centralizing tendencies of political parties in the two-party model are generally not observed in multi-party systems (Cox, 1990; Downs, 1957). In multi-party systems, each party will try to differentiate itself ideologically from other parties, at least some parties positioned away from the median voter (Dow, 1998). Multi-party system equilibriums are sensitive to specific models of spatial theory. Ideology appears as a more decisive drive for voters who select parties based on a rational calculation in multi-party systems than in a two-party system since “party ideologies are relatively immobile in multiparty systems” (Downs, 1957: 132). The ideological spread of political parties along the left-right scale affects the voters’ closeness to a party. It increases voter turnout as voters abstain from voting when all parties look identical, or there are no distinguishable policy preferences by voters (Sherrill, 1998). In the spatial analysis of political competition, parties’ gathering around the center reveals the dominance of centripetal forces within the party system. At the same time, the dispersion of parties

¹ As an alternative approach to Downs’s assumption, Chappell and Keech (1986) assumes in their study that parties seek elections to formulate policies rather than formulating certain policies to win elections. See (Chappell & Keech, 1986) for more information.

along the left-right ideological spectrum indicates the existence of centrifugal forces in the system (Cox, 1990)—i.e., party system polarization.

The traditional spatial theory has been criticized for lacking an adequate explanation of the psychology of voting (Iversen, 1994) and its unidimensional spatial structure (Rabinowitz, 1978; Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989; Stokes, 1963). Debates on the uncertainty about the distribution of the electorate and its voting determinants² (Budge, 1994; Kollman, Miller, & Page, 1992; Osborne, 1995), including policy motivations (Hacker & Pierson, 2014), non-policy factors (such as partisanship) (Adams, Merrill, Grofman, 2005; Enelow, Hinich, & Mendell, 1986; Grofman, 1985), and multi-dimensional policy competition have brought alternative conceptualizations of party competition to the traditional spatial theory (Green & Shapiro, 1994).

Party competition has been reconceptualized by scholars of theories of voting as the inclusion of non-spatial factors (e.g., partisanship and personality characteristics) into the Downsian approach (Enelow & Hinich, 1982b). In proximity models of political competition, citizen preferences are derived from their “closeness” to a particular party (Green & Shapiro, 1994). Rabinowitz and Macdonald’s (1989) directional theory distinguishes each party’s ideological or policy stand with respect to its direction and intensity. The directional theory assumes that a centrist party’s support base will be unstable because people will be attracted to parties that present themselves as being on the same side of an issue instead of supporting parties that are ideologically close to their own position (Iversen, 1994: 161). Parties that are perceived as responsible and taking advantage of symbols that matter to voters will maximize their support base at around the extremes. Further work on spatial models incorporates partisanship, retrospective economic evaluations, and sociodemographic characteristics and suggests that voters withdraw from politics and abstain when no party position itself close to their preferred policies (Adams & Merrill, 1999; 2003; Adams & Rexford, 2017; Adams, Dow, Merrill, 2006; Callander & Wilson, 2007).

² Budge (1994) argues that even though parties have information about voter preferences through public opinion polls, they cannot be sure about how these preferences will affect their voting behaviour. As a response to such an uncertainty, parties rely on ideology.

Despite the common expectation in spatial models that parties will attempt to converge to the ideological center in two-party systems, studies on party polarization in two-party systems suggest that parties' behavior are in line with ideological polarization (Cini, 2002; Hare & Poole, 2014; McCarty et al., 2006; Poole & Rosenthal, 1997). Multi-party systems have also been identified with the dispersion of parties along the left-right ideological spectrum (Fuchs & Klingemann, 1990; Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen, 1998). A further inquiry into the reasons behind ideological polarization in party competition that is comparative across a wide range of party systems is needed.

Moreover, with improvement in the unidimensional Downsian model to multi-dimensional spatial models (Davis & Hinich, 1966; Hinich & Ordeshook, 1970), the programmatic conception of party strategies has become the primary approach through which to identify party strategies and political competition (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989). Existing strategic models, however, have generally overlooked how party strategies shape citizens' attitudes toward parties (Meguid, 2008). According to spatial theory, voters' behavior depends on their ideological proximity. In elections where parties are equal with respect to their ideological distance, voters do not recognize the difference between their party options (Sherill, 1998). Attitudes to parties, however, do not solely depend on prior loyalties or making rational considerations. Voters are active and responsive to party strategies rather than passive and dependent. They are faced with the problem of interpreting complicated political information.

Parties seek to maximize their votes, and they can do by relying on certain strategies and shaping the voters' preferences by adopting clearer policies and strategies (Przeworski & Sprague, 1986). Citizens respond to party cues, loyalties or party identification, or issue positions to reduce information costs stemming from the complexity of politics. The spatial theory of party and voting behavior sheds light on party programmatic strategies, but we still have limited knowledge of other party strategies. While limited in scope, existing research draws attention to alternative strategies, such as short-run, confrontational strategies of political elites (LeBas, 2006) and omission of party discipline, i.e., the influence of party leaders over their rank-and-file (Canen, Kendall, & Trebbi, 2020), and perceived costs and benefits of

imposing centrifugal vs. centripetal strategies (Moraes, 2015), as drivers of political polarization. As a contribution to this growing research, a new look at party strategies is needed, moving away from purely programmatic strategies and recognizing that parties can use alternative strategies to appeal to their constituencies instead of being led by citizens' policy or ideological preferences.

In this study, I argue that the party strategy that creates a strong us vs. them distinction and thus magnifies perceived party system polarization is populist politics. Parties rely on populist rhetoric to differentiate themselves from competing parties to win the support of the electorates. Populists usually (re)politicize social, political, or economic grievances, such as welfare abuse and unwanted migrants, and tap into certain issues and social and political cleavages (Barr, 2009). In party competition, parties are assumed to move strategically along the left-right dimension to attract more voters and win elections (Downs, 1957). In this study, while some parties use populist strategy to attract more voters and position themselves on the left-right spectrum, mainstream parties adopt alternative strategies, such as ideologically distancing away from a populist party, to keep their electoral base or fight off the populist parties (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017b). Parties can move their ideological position or adopt adversarial (ideological divergence) and accommodative strategies (ideological convergence) in response to populist rhetoric (Meguid, 2008; Pirro, 2015). Citizens are assumed to perceive these ideological shifts among parties in response to populist parties, especially if they identify with a populist or anti-populist camp. These party ideological shifts will be expressed as high levels of party polarization in the minds of voters. This study draws attention to populist politics as the reason why individuals see parties more ideologically distinct from one another.

Democratic polities rely on compromise and cooperation, not just among political parties but also among citizens. Individuals may polarize along with a non-ideological issue, such as how to respond to climate change (Alló & Loureiro, 2014) “or along with ideology just as a marker or “empty signifier,” that is, without necessarily knowing/caring deeply about ideology” (Lauka, McCoy, & Firat, 2018: 109). Emotions have a vital place in evaluating political parties and their leaders (Masters & Sullivan, 1993). Affective polarization concerns citizens' emotional

evaluations of parties rather than their ideological divide. It reflects the degree to which citizens view opposing parties and their supporters negatively and their own support party and its supporters positively (Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, & Westwood, 2019; Kingzette et al., 2021; Wagner, 2021).

While inter-party ideological and policy disagreements provide clearer electoral choices for voters (Levendusky, 2010) and have been argued to reinforce people's attachment to political parties (Lupu, 2015a, 2016), mass affective polarization is concerning as it may undermine democratic values and institutions (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Somer & McCoy, 2018). There is evidence that it impedes cooperation in political and non-political settings, including social relationships and everyday interactions (see Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Iyengar, Konitzer, & Tedin, 2018; Nicholson, Coe, Emory, & Song, 2016; Settle & Carlson, 2019) and economic transactions between individuals from opposing parties (Carlin & Love, 2018; Gift & Gift, 2015; McConnell, Margalit, Malhotra, & Levendusky, 2018). Affective polarization has received growing academic and public attention, but research on this topic mainly focuses on the American context (see Iyengar et al., 2019; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017; Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, & Judd, 2015). This research contributes to this growing body of research with a comparative study of the causes of mass affective polarization.

A growing body of literature has shed light on the origins and consequences of mass polarization (Banda & Cluverius, 2018; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019, Lelkes, 2018; Levendusky, 2018a). It is theoretically linked to income inequality (Iversen & Soskice, 2015), ideology (e.g., Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017; but see also Iyengar et al., 2012), and societal forces such as social identities (Hobolt, Leeper, & Tilley, 2021) and social sorting³ (see Mason, 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b), as determinants of mass affective polarization. Despite the important link between parties and mass polarization (Dassonneville & Çakır, 2021; Moral, 2017) and empirical evidence suggesting that parties are the key agents driving polarization (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Moral & Best, 2023; Torcal &

³ Social sorting refers to an alignment of political identities, such as being liberal or rightist, with non-political identities, such as race and religion (see Mason, 2016).

Mainwaring, 2003), there have been few analytical efforts to explore how citizens become affectively more polarized in response to parties' strategies.

There are two party tactics—clientelism and electoral manipulation—that target the same question: how to attract and maintain the support of the masses? While this study focuses on public attitudes, it examines how party strategies motivate voters to see them as emotionally distinct from one another, i.e., mass affective polarization. The first strategy is clientelist voter-elite linkage. The underlying assumption is that voters are information misers, usually lacking time and resources to make a political decision. Parties rely on clientelist linkages to ease the complexity of decision-making among voters (Kitschelt, 2000) and to establish durable relationships through creating a psychological attachment of indebtedness, gratitude, and reciprocal obligation and duty with voters. The second strategy is electoral manipulation. Voters are responsive to new information and political actions (Ahlquist, Ichino, Wittenberg, & Ziblatt, 2018; Bullock, 2011; Kendall, Nannicini, & Trebbi, 2015). Parties use fraudulent actions to win the election at hand and enhance, consolidate, and monopolize political power over time (Simpser, 2013). It does so by distorting the information about the strength of incumbents, opposition parties, or candidates and deterring potential challenges from their competitors. Both strategies are conceptualized as the basis for attributing affective judgments toward opposing parties as feelings of injustice and personal or group deprivation initiated by clientelist benefits and electoral fraud create negative feelings among the masses.

This study takes a novel approach and seeks to offer insights into the link between the party strategies and mechanisms of information processing and the attitude formation of citizens. As such, on a theoretical level, it focuses on party strategies in the form of clientelist ties, electoral manipulation, and populist rhetoric that increase political polarization by accentuating the in-group/us vs. out-group/them notion. Research in social psychology emphasizes that individuals rely on cognitive tools to differentiate and accentuate the in-group from the out-group in forming social identities (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Even in a group setting of experimental research where membership to a group is anonymous, and there is no group or individual interaction, people are found to discriminate in favor of in-group and against out-group members

(see Brewer, 1979; Tajfel, 1970, 1978, 1982; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Clientelist ties, electoral manipulation, and populist rhetoric are assumed to be the basis for people seeing themselves as distinctly and cognitively formed groups. These party strategies serve as cognitive cues to imposition and accentuation of social groups as “us” vs. “them.”

In short, this study seeks to contribute to our knowledge of what drives mass attitudes toward parties. It aims to deepen our understanding of subjective ideological and affective party-system polarization, and this understanding has important implications for issues related to democratic legitimacy, governmental representation, and voter-elite linkages in contemporary democracies. As such, it offers insights about not only established but also developing democracies. Empirical analyses presented in this study are based on a sample of individual respondents from 48 countries with 150 lower-house legislative elections obtained from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) project data.

The CSES is composed of election studies conducted by country experts that cover a common module of survey questions in post-elections. It follows a set of standard rules to ensure that datasets are cleaned and tested before making them publicly available (Howell & Jusko, 2009; Karp & Vowles, 2015). Five CSES modules have been published to date, covering country national elections in the five-year periods 1996-2001, 2001-2006, 2006-2011, 2011-2016, and 2016-2021. The CSES provides demographic, district, and macro-level (electoral system) data. Election surveys are conducted after a general election to assess how social, economic, and political institutions influence citizens’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors about democratic institutions, practices, and political parties, with a special emphasis on election turnout and voting (Grosse & Appleton, 2009).

The surveys are largely conducted face-to-face, even though some were carried out by telephone, mail, or a mixture of interview modes (Lupu, 2015a). The project provides data on macro and micro levels, enabling researchers to employ cross-level interactions between macro and micro variables (Karp & Vowles, 2015). While each module has a substantive theme to address important issues and questions, such as representation and accountability (Module 2) and populism (Module 5) in electoral

studies, a set of core questions are asked repeatedly, and these include citizens' attitudes and feelings about political parties.

Outline of the Study

This study is organized into four main chapters. Chapter 2 addresses the question of how a particular type of voter-elite linkage—clientelism—impacts mass affective polarization. I examine the conditions through which clientelism affects polarization and why different types of citizens perceive interparty hostility. Moreover, I analyze the extent to which citizen perceptions differ depending on partisan affiliation and the degree of clientelist linkages in their country. Apart from testing the direct effects of clientelism and partisanship, I seek to analyze to what extent the positive effect of clientelism on mass affective polarization differs between partisans and non-partisans.

Chapter 3 examines how electoral integrity and winning-losing status influence mass affective polarization. As such, I hypothesize that lower levels of electoral integrity will have a negative impact on attitudes toward political parties. I also argue that electoral status (voting for the losing (winning) party) has implications with respect to citizens attitudes toward political parties. Chapter 4 traces how populist politics affects political polarization in the minds of ordinary citizens. Following existing research, I argue that populism intensifies ideological polarization among parties through strategies of polarizing populism and anti-populism in electoral regimes. I extend my analyses by looking into how the level of radicalism in populism and populism in government is correlated with the level of perceived party polarization. This study links to research on party politics, populist politics, governmental representation, and ideological radicalism of populist parties in electoral regimes with various levels of democracy.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Turkish case—a hybrid regime struggling with a weakening party system and political institutions along with high levels of political polarization. Using the literature on selective exposure to information and the party persuasion effect, I argue that parties' populist discourse facilitates a cognitive mechanism for voters to reduce complexities stemming from party competition as populism heavily relies on the “us” vs. “them” notion to attract the voter base. The populist rhetoric of

“us” vs. “them” is expected to be more evident among partisans. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the overall findings of my dissertation and their contribution to the political polarization literature. It also spells out this study’s limitations and offers venues for future research.



CHAPTER II

CLIENTELIST STRATEGIES, PARTISANSHIP, AND MASS AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION

Democratic polities rely on compromise and cooperation among political parties and citizens. Mass polarization, where citizens' opinions become more divided, and those divisions escalate over time (Levendusky, 2009), is considered as a threat to the functioning of democracy (Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008; Leeper, 2014). McCoy et al. (2018) analyze how mass polarization relates to the concentration of power and democratic decline in Hungary, the United States, Turkey, and Venezuela. The authors argue that polarization and intensified zero-sum perceptions that are associated with the us vs. them politics lead partisans to tolerate illiberal behavior by their own party, thus weakening democratic norms. Svobik (2019: 24) claims that "in sharply polarized electorates, even voters who value democracy will be willing to sacrifice fair democratic competition for the sake of electing politicians who champion their interests." In both studies, democratic decline, especially in Turkey, the U.S., and Venezuela, is considered a consequence of mass polarization; however, the causal mechanism by which severe polarization leads to democratic erosion is not clear. An important question remains: what causes mass polarization that makes people willing to sacrifice democratic values, not only in developing regimes like Turkey and Hungary but also in long-standing democratic polities? In this study, I examine clientelist voter-elite linkage as a party strategy to win the support of the majorities and partisanship as two determinants of mass affective polarization, i.e., magnifying inter-party hostility in developed and developing democracies.

A growing body of literature has investigated the origins and consequences of affective polarization (Banda & Cluverius, 2018; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019, Lelkes, 2018; Levendusky, 2018a), cross-country trends (Boxell, Gentzkow, & Shapiro, 2022) and alternative measurements of affective polarization (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019, Gidron, Adams, & Horne, 2018; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Knudsen, 2021; Reiljan, 2020; Wagner, 2021, but see also Lelkes, 2016). The common conclusion is that ideology (see Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017, but see also Iyengar et al., 2012), social identities (Hobolt et al., 2021), and social sorting⁴ (see, e.g., Mason 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b) drives affective polarization. Others stressed the ways of reducing affective polarization, such as priming a national identity for voters (Levendusky, 2018a, 2018b).

Expanding on these studies, examining how clientelist party strategies and party attachments alter people's evaluations of political parties is important. The aim of this study is to assess how and why citizens differ in their affective judgments of political parties. I examine the conditions under which clientelism shapes affective polarization. I also analyze how different types of citizens perceive interparty hostility and the extent to which citizen perceptions differ depending on partisan affiliation and the degree of clientelist linkages.

This study contributes to research on affective polarization in several ways. First, while existing studies analyze affective polarization at the macro level (Boxell et al., 2022; Gidron et al., 2018; Orhan, 2022), this study takes a different approach and analyzes each respondent's overall positive or negative reaction to parties (see Wagner, 2021). This approach takes into consideration that an individual, who feels warmly or coldly toward all parties, would have a low-level affective polarization. Individuals with different levels of affection toward various parties would have a high affective polarization. Hence, this approach considers the possibility of multiple positive identities in the analyses, i.e., feeling positively towards more than one party.

Second, while some studies suggest that there is a positive association between party identification and higher interparty hostility or affective polarization (Gidron,

⁴ The term social sorting refers to an alignment of political identities, such as being Republican or leftist, with non-political identities, such as race and religion (see Mason 2016, 2018b).

Adams, & Horne, 2019; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Lelkes, 2016; Mason, 2015; Wagner, 2021), the underlying mechanism of why partisans hold a stronger in-group affect toward the party they identify with remains unclear. This study conceptualizes partisanship as a social identity involving a psychological attachment to a political party that voters feel close to (see Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Huddy, 2001, 2003; Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2010). I argue that partisanship increases mass affective polarization by accentuating the in-group/us vs. out-group/them notion. Once people become attached to a party, they should pursue their psychological bond by perceiving their preferred party as more distinct from its competitors to differentiate themselves from other groups. Partisanship motivates individuals to perceive their support party positively while seeing other parties negatively.

On a theoretical level, I also acknowledge that clientelism often constitutes a broader set of strategies for bonding with citizens (Gans-Morse, Mazzuca, & Nichter, 2014; Lawson & Greene, 2011; Levitsky, 2003). I draw attention to the issue of reciprocity in voter-elite linkages, where parties are unsure that clientelist benefits and services will be returned with electoral support. It motivates parties to establish durable relationships as a party strategy through a psychological attachment of indebtedness, gratitude, and reciprocal obligation and duty with voters. In doing so, I investigate whether clientelist ties magnify the differences in in-group (us) vs. out-group (them) distinction and hence enhance affective polarization.

Third, apart from testing the direct effects of clientelism and partisanship, I seek to analyze to what extent the positive effect of clientelism on mass affective polarization differs between partisans vs. non-partisans. I argue that when the feelings of indebtedness and gratitude toward a clientelist party interact with partisan attachments, it will further encourage positive feelings among partisans toward their party and negative feelings toward the opposition parties, i.e., affective polarization. Finally, this study goes beyond the existing research, which mainly analyzed affective polarization in the U.S. context (see, e.g., Iyengar et al., 2019; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017), and analyzes the effect of clientelism and party identification in a varied and extensive sample of developing (see Linz, 1990; Mainwaring, 1989) and developed democracies.

The empirical analyses are based on public opinion survey data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) collected in 48 countries. The data cover 150 elections between 1996 and 2020. The chapter is organized as follows. First, I develop my theoretical argument and state my hypotheses about the causes of mass affective polarization. Second, drawing on survey data, I present my empirical evidence that clientelism and partisanship contribute positively to affective polarization at the mass level, and that the positive effect of clientelism on affective polarization is larger among partisans than non-partisans. Finally, I conclude my chapter by discussing the main findings and their implications.

2.1 The Causes of Mass Affective Polarization: Theoretical Assumptions and Hypotheses

Mass affective polarization is commonly defined in the U.S. context as “the tendency of people identifying as Republicans or Democrats to view opposing parties (out-group members) negatively and co-partisans (in-group members) positively” (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015: 691). Affective polarization revolves around social identity theory, positing positive emotions toward one’s own group and negative emotions toward those perceived as belonging to opposing groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Research in social identity theory generally shows that individuals attach positive attributions to the in-group members and negative traits to the out-group members (Tajfel, 1970). Existing studies also show that identifying with a particular group and categorizing their social identity as “us vs. them” are sufficient conditions to favor in-group members and discriminate against out-groups (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; see also Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). How affective polarization is associated with clientelist linkages has not been systematically analyzed yet.

2.1.1. Clientelist Strategies and Mass Affective Polarization

Parties are the key representative agents between citizens and the state. In party competition, parties strategically seek to establish linkages with voters so that they get elected to public office – a feature used to distinguish parties from other organizations or interest groups (see Dalton, Farrell, & McAllister, 2011; Lawson, 1980). In recent years, certain developments have undermined the position of the parties. Growing social spending expenditures used by parties to encourage popular

participation has become a real burden on the state. Increased material well-being, especially in Europe, has also been linked to dissatisfaction with taking part merely in the traditional forms of political participation, i.e., voting in elections. A growing number of young people have become interested in greater involvement in the decisions that affect their lives (Inglehart, 1977). Single-issue parties, such as anti-immigration parties and populist parties, have also challenged the established parties by bringing new issues, such as asylum seekers and international organizations, into the political agenda. This means political parties are forced to seek alternative strategies and establish stronger linkages in the electorate at large rather than merely retaining party members (Katz, 1990).

The underlying assumption in the elite-voter linkage is that voters are information misers, typically lacking time and resources for their political decision-making. They cannot predict how their vote preference will affect the outcome of democratic decision-making (Kitschelt, 2000). Political parties usually rely on a variety of strategies, such as founding charismatic, programmatic, and clientelist linkages (see Osterkatz, 2012), in order to ease the complexity of decision-making among voters. Charismatic linkage focuses on the personality of the leader(s) and tends to appeal to people with direct messages (Madsen & Snow, 1991). Through programmatic linkages, parties can place their positions on a range of issue positions or a simple left-right position and provide policy cues for voters.

As for the clientelist strategies, parties rely on direct, personal, and usually materialist bonds with voters. Clientelism generally refers to the targeted provision of material benefits and personal favors in exchange for political support, such as votes and campaign funding (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020; Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Hicken, 2011, Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Clientelist linkages involve two different types of exchange. First, resource-rich voters can finance politicians and parties in exchange for material favors, such as subsidies, monopolies, and government contracts (see Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1981). This type of exchange secures resource-rich voters against market uncertainty (Kitschelt, 2000, 2007, 2010). Second, parties can provide voters selective benefits (such as money, repairing a road or mosque, and jobs, see Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020) before and after the elections in exchange for their votes (Stokes, 2007).

In clientelist politics, the party-voter linkage is usually reciprocal and voluntary (Kitschelt, 2000). Parties target individuals or small groups that already support or assure the party to support in elections. In return, electorates support politicians that sustain benefits or promise to deliver goods and services right after the election (Hicken, 2011). The nature of benefits can be varied from material goods and services such as cash (see, e.g., Schedler, 2002b; Brusco, Nazareno, & Stokes, 2004) to non-material goods, including jobs (e.g., van de Walle, 2007), healthcare, and housing (Hicken & Simmons, 2008). Even though clientelist politics can be in different forms and intensities, it is a common strategy in many countries (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020; Hicken, 2011; Kitschelt & Kselman, 2013).

Clientelism is reported in developing democracies, such as Argentina (Stokes, 2005) and Mexico (Nichter et al., 2015), as well as advanced democracies, such as Greece, Spain, and Italy (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Piattoni, 2001).

The terms patronage, corruption, and vote-buying are inevitably associated with clientelism (see Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Piattoni, 2001). “Patronage” refers to the flow of state resources and benefits (Mainwaring, 1999; van de Walle, 2007). The main distinction between clientelism and patronage is that while in the latter, the patron must have access to state resources or be an officeholder, in the former, linkage can be found through state resources or different means of exchange such as party resources (see Hicken, 2011: .295). A common approach is to identify patronage as a particular type of clientelism (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020; Hicken, 2011; Hutchcroft, 1997, 2014). “Corruption” is commonly described as “the misuse of public power for private gain” (Rose-Ackerman, 1999: 91). Common examples of corruption include bribing public officials to quickly issue necessary permits or a residency certificate (Singer, 2009). The two concepts are theoretically linked and hard to distinguish. Such difficulty gave rise to using the level of corruption as a proxy for clientelism in empirical analysis (see, e.g., Persson, Tabellini, & Trebbi, 2003; Keefer, 2005, 2007).

“Vote-buying” usually includes the direct exchange of consumption of goods, such as food baskets or coal (Gallego, 2015) or cash for votes, and is accepted as one

dimension of clientelism⁵ (see, e.g., Brusco et al., 2004; Gans-Morse et al., 2014; Hicken, 2011). Some studies underline that the main distinction between them is that vote-buying is essentially based on contingent exchange as the goods or cash have a *quid pro quo* basis. In contrast, clientelism may or may not involve such an exchange (Nichter, 2014). Other studies, however, argue that *quid pro quo* (reciprocal exchange of goods, cash, or services) is one of the core features of clientelism (Bereschot and Aspinall, 2020). Existing studies show that the line that distinguishes patronage, corruption, and vote-buying from clientelism is blurred. A common approach in the literature is to classify these concepts as sub-categories of clientelism. This study adopts this common approach and integrates three clientelist strategies: vote-buying, particularistic vs. public goods, and party linkages (programmatic or clientelist).

While they are mostly case studies relying on qualitative methodologies, a number of studies point out the association between clientelism and political polarization. Çarkoğlu, Baruh, and Yıldırım (2014), for instance, describe clientelism as one of the essential motives behind political polarization in the media after the 2011 elections in Turkey. A study by Gërxhani and Schram (2009) empirically shows that clientelism shapes voting behavior and increases geographical and cultural polarization in Albania. In their analysis of distributive politics in Venezuela, Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco (2013) point out the increased polarization between pro-Chávez supporters and the opposition, which crystallized as a consequence of the vote-buying strategy of Chávez in the early 2000s.

Previous studies have explained clientelist linkages as a strategy in which voters, candidates, or parties act deliberately and are interlocked (Stokes, 2007). Political brokers need to solve the issue of reciprocity by monitoring and sanctioning if the recipient fails to support the patron. However, careful surveillance would be costly and hard for parties to pursue in the long run. It is especially hard to effectively monitor and sanction voters when democratic rules are consolidated in a country (Lawson, 1998; Lawson & Greene, 2014). Instead of monitoring people, I argue that clientelist strategies can be used to establish a psychological attachment and

⁵ Some studies use the term clientelist vote-buying referring to vote-buying (see e.g., Carlin & Moseley, 2015).

reciprocal obligation. Specifically, clientelism can make very tight linkages of responsiveness and accountability between the voters and elites (Kitschelt, 2000) and strengthen the bond between them.

Existing research has examined the basis of relational clientelism that comprises durable relationships of mutual dependence and support (Lawson & Greene, 2011; Levitsky, 2003; see also Gans-Morse et al., 2014). Following these studies, the main assumption is that clientelism goes beyond a material relationship. It contributes to forming and maintaining a political identity as benefit receivers (in-group, those who received clientelist benefits) vs. the others (the out-group(s), those who are excluded from the clientelist linkages). It does this by providing voters with a cognitive tool to form an in-group vs. out-group affect toward political parties.

Social groups and group affiliations are fundamental features of social life. Individuals' relations with others, attitudes, and roles are primarily determined by group memberships. Research on social identity theory emphasizes that individuals rely on cognitive tools to differentiate and accentuate the in-group from the out-group in forming social identities (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Social groups can be formed around mutual interpersonal attraction where "people tend to categorize those with whom they share some characteristics as in-group members while placing those who differ from them in an out-group" (Wojcieszak & Warner, 2020: 790; see also Tajfel, 1982) or "external designation" (Turner, 1984). Cartwright and Zander (1968: 56-57) explain group formation based on external designation as follows:

For some groups the original impetus to their formation derives neither from the desire to accomplish some objective nor from the needs of those who become members, but from the fact that certain people are treated in a homogeneous manner by others ... The members of a socially defined category find that certain kinds of behaviour are expected of them and that certain opportunities are available to them or denied them simply because of their membership in the category. Inter-dependence among members develops because society gives them a 'common fate'.

A certain manner or attitude (like the systematic exclusion of certain groups from politics, policies, or strategies) by others can designate individuals as members of a

group. Experimental studies on imposed social categorizations on people show that inheriting social categories such as class and gender or mutual coherence and interaction among in-group members is not necessarily a condition for group formation (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel, 1970, 1978, 1982; Tajfel et al., 1971). Social categorization provides minimal conditions for group formation. In these studies, individuals are divided into two distinct groups on an arbitrary or explicitly random basis (i.e., externally designated) where group membership is anonymous, and there is no social interaction between or within groups (Brewer & Silver, 1978; Locksley, Ortiz, & Hepburn, 1980). The members' simple task is to decide the allocation of rewards to anonymous other individuals. Individuals discriminate in favor of in-group and against out-group members and show more positive attitudes toward in-group than out-group members. These results suggest that individuals tend to attribute more positive feelings, show favoritism for the in-group than the out-group, and are more willing to cooperate with the in-group than the out-group, even when there is no interaction or mutual coherence. Social identification with a group is not usually based on formal group membership but rather stems from self-perceived belonging to a particular group (see Greene, 1999). These self-perceptions result in perceptual exaggerations and emotional and attitudinal biases in voters' evolutions of parties (Greene, 1999; Turner et al., 1987).

Clientelist party strategy constitutes the basis for forming distinct and cognitive identities. Clientelist linkages provide the necessary condition for a collection of individuals to form a social group where their attitudes and values are shaped. Clientelism usually favors individuals or particular groups by distributing material and non-material benefits in exchange for political support, whereas other, so-called "low return" groups receive nothing (Cox & McCubbins, 1986). It serves cognitive cues to imposition and emergence of social categorizations into benefit receivers vs. non-receivers. In that sense, clientelism cognitively and materially divides a collection of individuals as in-group (us/benefit receivers) vs. out-group (them/non-receivers).

Clientelist relations go beyond simple reciprocal exchange and involve important aspects of the psychological mechanism of obligation, duty, and indebtedness (Hopkin, 2006; Lawson & Greene, 2011). Receiving favors, gifts, or protection

ignites a psychological attachment of indebtedness and gratitude among receivers (Lawson & Greene, 2014). In that respect, patron-client relationships serve to unite clients around “us” and strengthen the in-group’s affective bonds with the patron (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972). Clientelist ties are vertical and provide a sense of protection and a privileged position for beneficiaries in society. It creates a dependence on parties and the political system by marginalizing people to meet their basic material needs and a sense of belonging (Sives, 2002). Research on clientelist linkages shows that people who are linked through clientelism reciprocate because they feel gratitude and pleasure in expanding the material payoffs of parties or politicians who have provided them benefits (Caprenetti, Casaburi, & Venturini, 2021; Finan & Schechter, 2012). Under such conditions, one will feel grateful and indebted for clientelist benefits and perceive their benefactor party more positively while others more negatively.

While clientelist ties reinforce the in-group’s affective bonds, they also reinforce a perception of others as “them” (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972). Through clientelist party strategies, state resources are exclusively distributed to adherent business circles and political supporters, feeding social inequality in a country. It creates an unfair environment among the masses, including income inequality, by favoring certain groups or individuals while punishing the opposition (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). Some groups or individuals are excluded from the material benefits and personal favors granted by the welfare state. Excluded people may feel resentment and injustice for being deprived of clientelist benefits while another person or group receives material benefits or personal favors (Jennings, 1990). Feelings of personal or group deprivation can motivate people to see parties more emotionally distant from one another.

Moreover, while clientelism is rooted in poverty, social inequalities, and ethnic and religious differences, it amplifies social, religious, and ethnic cleavages, especially when it is accompanied by the geographical distribution of clientelist benefits (Lemarchand & Legg, 1972). The “us” vs. “them” division is further deepened with rapid social mobilization of certain segments of society through clientelist ties where personal loyalties depend on membership to those groups. Rwanda, for instance, presents an extreme case where the social mobilization of certain ethnic groups

through clientelism intensified polarization and resulted in a major conflict. The literature also suggests a significant positive correlation between corruption and polarization, where more corrupted countries, on average, are those with higher levels of polarization, instability, and conflict (Gasparini, Horenstein, Molina, & Olivieri, 2008; Gërxhani & Schram, 2009; Stokes et al., 2013).

As such, clientelism can lead to social disorder and discontent with the political parties, which can translate into negative feelings toward parties and polarized masses. Accordingly, when parties rely on clientelist strategies rather than programmatic ones, we should expect that citizens will attribute more affective judgments toward parties and politicians. Hence, one might generally experience negative feelings toward clientelist parties or individuals known to be the receiver of clientelist benefits. These perceptions of clientelism can shape peoples' perceived affective polarization by fostering negative or positive feelings toward political parties and their supporters. From these arguments, I derive the following hypothesis. H1: Clientelism contributes positively to mass affective polarization.

2.1.2 Party Identification and Mass Affective Polarization

Party identification is the second factor that I expect to intensify affective polarization at the mass level. Partisanship⁶ refers to an adherence of voters to particular parties that tends to be stable over time (Klar, 2014; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021: 242, see also Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, & Nevitte, 2001). In *The American Voter*, also referred to as the Michigan model, partisanship is conceptualized as a social attitude involving a psychological attachment to a political party that voters feel (see Campbell et al. 1954, 1960; Huddy, 2001, 2003; Huddy et al. 2010). Existing research has acknowledged that party attachments shape voters' political attitudes and judgments (Carsey & Layman, 2006; Krishna & Sokolova, 2017; Wagner, 2021).

This concept was later developed within the framework of the social identity approach, which considers partisanship a cause of individual attitudes and opinions on political issues rather than a consequence of them (Garzia, 2015; Green,

⁶ I use the concepts "party identification" and "partisanship" interchangeably.

Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002; Greene, 1999; MacKuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 1989). In this model, party identification is viewed as an affective, long-term, and psychological attachment to one's preferred party (see Berglund, Holmberg, Schmitt, & Thomassen, 2005). Party identification is embraced during childhood, through a socialization process during adolescence, and persists during adulthood (Campbell et al., 1960). As a social identity, partisan attachments drive individuals to perceive the political context as us/in-group vs. them/out-group. This in-group and out-group distinction motivates people to view their group as distinct from others by overstating their differences (Billig & Tajfel, 1973, Tajfel, 1982).

The literature on partisanship is initially described in the American context as a psychological identification with the Democrat or Republican Party (see, e.g., Campbell et al. 1954, 1960; Fiorina, 1981). However, the concept is later analyzed in other regions, such as in Europe (see Barton & Döring, 1986; Blais et al., 2001; Dalton, 1984; Holmberg, 1994; Lisi, 2014; Sanders, Burton, & Kneeshaw, 2002; Thomassen, 1976, 2005), and in Latin America (see Lupu, 2015b; Lupu & Stokes, 2010). In addition, empirical evidence in the literature shows that party identification significantly affects voter behavior (Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009), scholarship allocations (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Munro, Terell, & Scott, 2010), and religious choice (Margolis, 2018).

Party identification that shapes voters' political attitudes and their engagement with politics (Carsey & Layman, 2006; Wagner, 2021) is considered the source of increasing inter-party hostility or mass affective polarization (Iyengar et al., 2012; Mason, 2015). Affective polarization in the context of partisanship is described as the extent to which partisans have a) negative out-group affect toward other parties and their supporters and b) positive in-group affect toward their party and its supporters (see Iyengar et al., 2012; Wagner, 2021). Party identification shapes citizens' perceptions by providing them with psychological attachments to denote a sense of belonging as in-group vs. out-group and cognitive cues to label out-party and its supporters, which can be disliked (Devine, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012, Iyengar et al., 2019; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Through party identification, voters obtain "a strong sense of solidarity with their own reference group and a corresponding social

distance from out-groups” (Westwood et al., 2018: 332, see also Dunning & Harrison, 2010), as party identification magnifies “us” vs. “them” distinction.

Existing research empirically shows that partisanship shapes affective polarization at the mass level (Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016; Klar, Krupnikov, & Ryan, 2018; Mason, 2015). For instance, Iyengar et al. (2012) point out that over the past 50 years, partisan voters have become more negative in their evaluations of the opposing party in the U.S. Reiljan (2020) provides empirical evidence of out-party hostility in Europe. Empirical research also suggests that partisan identities can ignite negative emotional reactions, such as anger and bias, toward out-groups and induce affective polarization at the mass level (Mason 2015, 2016, 2018a, 2018b). Among partisans, even a simple act of voting may promote retaining a sense of belonging to an in-group. Partisans can stay loyal to their party even when their policy preferences differ from their party’s preferences (Uslaner & Brown, 2005). For instance, V. O. Key (1966) analyzes the voting behavior in the U.S. presidential elections between 1936 and 1960. The study shows that “standpatters”⁷ had stayed loyal to the party even though policy preferences of these voters conflicted with their voting record and even when these preferences were in line with the opposition party’s policies.

Recent research also shows that partisanship induces an affective bond with their party more strongly than religious or ethnic affiliations (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021; Westwood et al., 2018). Partisans overall show negative affection toward opposition groups. Once people become attached to a party, they pursue their psychological bond by perceiving their party as more distinct from its competitors. Partisanship accentuates the “us” vs. “them” notion in people’s minds and motivates individuals to perceive their party positively while seeing other parties negatively. Hence, I hypothesize the following:

H2: Partisans perceive higher affective polarization than non-partisans.

2.1.3 Clientelism, Party Identification, and Affective Polarization

⁷ V.O. Key (1966: 16) defines three major components of the body of voters at any election in the US context: standpatters, switchers, and new voters. Standpatters refer to the largest single component of the electorate; they are “those voters who cast their ballots for candidates of the same political party at two successive elections.”

In addition to their direct effects, I also seek to understand whether clientelist ties impact people's affective attitudes about political parties by interacting with partisanship. Specifically, I expect that the positive effect of clientelism on mass affective polarization should be higher among partisans than non-partisans. When the electoral contest is organized by parties, party identification can be useful for established parties and their voters to build a strong link between them (Aldrich, 1995; Brader & Tucker, 2001; Miller & Shanks, 1996). In political systems, clientelism is considered "a tool for building a loyal network of supporters" (Hicken, 2011: 297). Voters can simplify the decision-making process by identifying a party that has reliably fulfilled their needs and interests in the past and adopting it as a cue to facilitate political judgment (Brader & Tucker, 2001).

Moreover, existing studies show that higher levels of mobilization during an election period increase the visibility of party brands and partisan cues (Brader & Tucker, 2001, 2008; Lupu, 2013; Michelitch & Utych, 2018). Exposure to brands and cues is found to be an important factor in engendering and reinforcing partisan attachments, as well as partisan conflict (Dinas, 2014; Greene, 2004; Iyengar & Simon, 2000). A body of empirical evidence has underlined that as group competition magnifies, people are motivated to choose a side and intensify identification with their in-group and out-group hostility (Brewer, 1979; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Tajfel, 1974, 1978, 1982). We may expect that clientelist strategies and partisanship mutually reinforce the emotional attachment to their party not only during the electoral period but also outside of the electoral cycle. It will create long-term stability in psychological attachment to a party one identifies with.

In distributing benefits, political competitors must ensure that they will be reciprocated with electoral support. They do so by directing their focus on loyalists rather than swing voters so that parties' funds will not be wasted on swing voters or opposition groups. Research on partisan attachments and distributive politics shows that parties allocate their resources to their core constituencies to win and keep them loyal to the party (Fox, 2012; Rauschenbach & Paula, 2019; Singer & Kitschelt, 2011). This strategy of parties is conceptualized as "rewarding loyalists" (Nichter, 2008). Stokes et al. (2013) empirically show that loyal supporters are the main target

groups for parties, whereas swing voters receive few benefits in Argentina, India, Mexico, and Venezuela.

This perspective is supported by research on the responsiveness of voters to clientelist linkages (Bussell, 2019; Calvo & Murillo, 2004; Cox & McCubbins, 1986; Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2015; Keefer, 2009), indicating that parties follow the strategy of allocating their resources to narrow groups or core constituents whom they feel less uncertain about their electoral support. When clientelist benefits are distributed in a partisan manner, parties' branches may tend to target the allocation of benefits to their own co-partisans while dismissing or halting services and benefits to whom they are not aligned with. While this approach strengthens the affective bond between the party and its supporters (Lawson & Greene, 2014), the interaction between clientelist ties and party attachments further deepens the in-group and out-group distinction. It motivates individuals to be emotionally closer to their party while magnifying the negative feelings for out-parties and their supporters. The discretionary allocation should heighten the affective feelings among partisans.

Apart from how parties allocate their clientelist benefits to their core constituents, i.e., partisans, another important question is how non-partisans respond to these clientelist benefits. Existing studies draw attention to the negative consequences of clientelism, such as the possibility that voters can lose their interest and politics can collapse (Hagopian, 2005, 2007). In the eyes of voters, the legitimacy of democracy and political parties can be diminished (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, & Tóka, 1999; Stokes, 2007). For instance, Linde and Erlingsson (2013) investigate perceptions of corruption in Sweden's "least corrupt" setting. Their findings suggest that corruption perceived by citizens is, to a large extent, high and has an eroding effect on their support for the political system. Following this logic, when parties allocate their resources to core constituents, non-partisans can be expected to disengage from political processes or feel unsympathetic toward political parties.

Recent research also suggests that partisans bear a lower negative judgment for their parties and support corrupted officials in exchange for clientelist benefits more than non-partisans (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Blais, Gidengil, & Kilibarda, 2015; Bowler, Brunell, Donovan, & Gronke, 2015; Solaz, de Vries, & de Geus, 2018). This

attitude is conceptualized as partisan bias. Anduiza, Gallego, and Munoz (2013: 1679) show experimental evidence of partisan bias in attitudes toward corruption. They conclude that “citizens consider corruption less serious when it affects a politician of the party they feel close to, than when it affects a politician belonging to another party.” This body of research suggests that partisans are usually rewarded through their party’s clientelist strategies. Partisans are expected to pursue their pre-established bonds with their party in the context of corrupted politics. Many empirical studies find significant evidence that partisans systematically denigrate and counterargue evidence that contradicts their views on their party while accepting the supportive evidence unquestionably and uncritically (Kraft, Lodge, & Taber, 2015; Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Taber & Lodge, 2006). As a consequence, ordinary citizens are reluctant to perceive their party negatively and continue to support their party.

Moreover, this direct exchange can generate an emotional attachment between parties and voters where recipients of benefits feel obliged to vote for clientelist parties. In their study, Lawson and Greene (2011) draw attention to the concept of “self-enforcing clientelism.” Based on their 2009 survey conducted in Mexico, they show that clientelist exchanges create feelings of obligation among voters. Almost 55 percent of respondents expressed an inclination to vote for the party that provided them clientelist benefits in the past. The study has shown that clientelist benefits generate a strong attachment that is based on feelings of obligation.

When the feelings of indebtedness and gratitude toward a clientelist party interact with partisan attachments, it will encourage positive feelings among partisans toward their party and negative feelings toward the other parties, i.e., affective polarization. Clientelist ties coupled with partisanship strengthen the affective bond between the partisan groups and their party. The effect of clientelist politics on partisan individuals in shaping affective polarization is expected to be larger as partisans tend to respond to clientelist benefits positively and to evaluate their party more positively and opposition parties in a more negative manner. Hence, I derive the following hypothesis:

H3: Positive effect of clientelism on affective polarization as perceived by citizens should be larger among partisans than non-partisans.

2.2. Data and Measurement

In this chapter, I seek to assess whether clientelism and party identification correlate with mass affective polarization, and if so, to what extent. The empirical analyses reported in this chapter are based on a sample of individuals from 48 countries with 150 legislative (lower house) elections between 1996 and 2020 (see Appendix A for detailed information). Country elections that have presidential and upper-house legislative elections are excluded from the sample. The dependent variable is mass affective polarization. The key independent variables are clientelism and party identification.

2.2.1 Dependent Variable

In line with existing literature (Gidron et al., 2018; Iyengar et al., 2012; Wagner, 2021; Ward & Tavits, 2019), I measure mass affective polarization in public by analyzing the standard like-dislike question included in election surveys from the CSES data. Respondents are asked to rate the political parties in their country in a common module on a 0-10 like-dislike scale (or so-called thermometer scale, i.e., positive or negative feelings toward parties; see, e.g., Gidron et al., 2018). On the like-dislike scale, lower numbers denote more negative evaluations toward parties by the respondents. Using the like-dislike question has two advantages: it has been systematically asked in surveys and is comparable across a wide range of countries. In addition, using the like-dislike question will enable me to identify an overall negative or positive individual attitude toward political parties, which constitutes the essence of affective polarization (Wagner, 2021).

I measure affective polarization at the level of individuals rather than country level. The country, or aggregate, level polarization is an averaged value of individual-level affective polarization. The measure is computed using polarization using Wagner's formula (2021: 4). Specifically, for parties j and individual respondent i , mass affective polarization is:

$$Spread_i = \sqrt{\sum_{p=1}^P Vp(like_{ip} - \overline{like}_i)^2}$$

where p is the political party, and $like_{ip}$ is the like-dislike score placed for each party p by individual i , and Vp is the proportion of each parties' vote share. This measurement is based on the weighted affective polarization to weigh smaller parties less and larger parties more in measuring polarization. As larger parties tend to be more likely to hold the offices and use clientelist linkages to attract voters (Singer & Kitschelt, 2011), weighing affective polarization by parties' vote share is essential for this study. Therefore, the mean affect, weighted by party vote share, is calculated as follows:

$$\overline{like}_i = \sum_{p=1}^P (Vp * like_{ip})$$

All respondents who expressed a positive or negative affection for at least two parties are included in the measurement of polarization. Lower values indicate that all parties have similar likeability, and higher values show that all parties are divided along the like-dislike polarization scale (see Appendix B).

2.2.2 Independent Variables

To measure party identification, I relied on one survey question: "Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?"⁸ This survey item has been widely used in cross-national studies with multi-party systems as a valid indicator of party identification (Anderson & Just, 2012; Holmberg, 1994, 2003; Just, 2021). Party identification variable has dichotomous response categories, with "1" indicating a positive answer (partisanship) and "0", a negative one (non-partisanship).

I also use respondents' partisanship strength to show that the results generalize beyond a single indicator of partisanship. The partisanship strength question is included in the CSES election surveys and has been widely used in cross-national studies as a more nuanced indicator of party identification (see Çakır, 2020; Singh & Thornton, 2019). This survey question asks: "Do you usually think of yourself as

⁸ The data include a follow-up question that asked respondents whether they feel closer to one party. The follow-up question has been recognized as an indicator of "leaners" (e.g., Lupu, 2015a; Petrocik, 2009; Reiljan, 2020). However, this survey item was not available for Australia (1996, 2004, 2013), Canada (1997), Latvia (2010, 2011, 2014), Norway (2001, 2005, 2009, 2013), New Zealand (1996), Slovenia (1996, 2008, 2011), and Switzerland (2007). As the inclusion of this follow-up question would decrease the number of countries in the dataset, the question is not included in the party identification variable.

close to any particular party?” If “yes,” “Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?” This variable has four response categories, with 0 “non-partisan” (reference category), 1 “not very close” (weak partisanship), 2 “somewhat close” (moderate partisanship), and 3 “very close” (strong partisanship).

To measure clientelism at the macro level, I use the clientelism index from the *Varieties of Democracy* (V-dem) data (Coppedge et al., 2021). It measures the extent to which politics are based on clientelist ties. The V-dem dataset has been widely used in the literature due to its extensive geographic and temporal coverage (e.g., Deuskar, 2020; Huijsmans, Reijken, & Gaidyte, 2020). The index is constructed using a Bayesian factor analysis of 3 indicators: vote-buying, particularistic vs. public goods, and party linkages. The vote-buying indicator measures the extent of vote-buying (such as the distribution of money or gifts to individuals, small groups, or families) in the last national election. The second item measures the extent to which social and infrastructural spending in the national budget are “particularistic” (i.e., narrowly targeted certain groups, firms, sectors, or regions) or “public goods.” Party linkages indicator estimates the major parties’ main or the most common form of linkage to their constituents (i.e., whether it is programmatic or clientelist). The clientelism index is scaled from low to high (0-1), where higher scores indicate that politics is based mainly on clientelism (see Appendix C).

My estimation models include several additional variables that may confound the impact of my key independent variables on people’s perception of affective polarization. As perceived ideological distance among parties may affect individuals’ emotional attitudes toward parties, I control for party system polarization. I follow previous studies (Gidron et al., 2018) and employ a party system polarization index developed by Dalton (2008: 906):

Polarization

$$= \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n \text{party vote share}_i \times \left(\frac{\text{party score}_i - \text{party system mean score}}{5} \right)^2}$$

where i stands for individual parties. This polarization index measures how spread out the political parties are in the system, where 0 indicates no polarization, whereas 10 shows the highest party polarization as perceived by people. In previous research,

income inequality is emphasized as a determinant of polarization (Fang, Gozgor, & Yan, 2021; Pontusson & Rueda, 2008). Income inequality may create negative emotions, such as resentment and hostility, toward the out-party members and hence can generate affective polarization among the public. I follow existing studies (e.g., Fang et al., 2021; Fenzl, 2018; Gidron et al., 2018; Han, 2015; McCarty et al., 2006; Pontusson & Rueda, 2008) and measure income inequality (lagged by one year) using the Gini coefficient index from the *Standardized World Income Inequality Database* (SWIID). The Gini index has a zero value when every family has the same income, and a value of 100 when one family has all the income (i.e., maximum income inequality) (Solt, 2020).

At the macro level, I also control for the level of party institutionalization. As a higher level of party system institutionalization indicates higher stability in the system, it may strengthen citizens' attachments to their political parties while igniting resentment and hostility towards the out-parties. Higher institutionalization may also provide incentives for using clientelist strategies with the increased capability of parties to monitor and manage the disbursement of the goods. The party institutionalization data is taken from the V-dem dataset (Coppedge et al., 2021). Besides party institutionalization, my analysis controls for how fragmented each party system is by using the effective number of parties (Laakso & Taagepera, 1979) provided in the CSES data. Moreover, as majoritarian electoral systems disproportionately favor major parties (McCoy & Somer, 2019), they may create hostility and resentment towards out-parties among supporters of smaller parties. I, therefore, control for the effect of electoral systems. Party system fragmentation is measured using the vote share of parties in the last election.

Following previous research (Dow, 2011; Matakos, Troumpounis, & Xeferis, 2016), I also control for electoral system disproportionality using the Gallagher's (1991) index of disproportionality of electoral systems. Lower electoral disproportionality decreases the effective threshold that parties need to pass to have a seat in the parliament, making the system more proportional (Carey & Hix, 2011; Matakos et al., 2016). More proportional systems tend to magnify polarization because parties in such systems can be widely dispersed across the political system (Dow, 2011: 342). Since the dataset includes countries with varied democracy levels, I control for

democracy level using civil and political rights scores provided in the Freedom House Project at the macro level. The Freedom House measures civil liberties and political rights in a country using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates absolute freedom and 7 shows no freedom. I used the Freedom House index by adding the political rights score to the civil liberties score. I inverted the polity score so that low values indicate lower levels of democracy. The scale ranges from 2 (strongly autocratic) to 14 (strongly democratic). The lowest polity score (5) belongs to Turkey (2018). Following existing research (e.g., Aaskoven, 2020; Fang et al., 2021), I also include GDP per capita (in 1,000s of constant 2015 U.S.\$), which is lagged by one year to account for the countries' economic conditions.

At the individual level, I include control variables for left-right self-placement and left-right extremity⁹ (see Granberg & Brown, 1992). I also control for respondents' age in years, gender (where "0" denotes males and "1" females), education (ranges from 0 to 4, where 0 indicates "no education," 1 "primary or lower secondary education," 2 "higher secondary education," 3 "post-secondary (non-university) education," and 4 "university education"), and individuals' household income (in quantiles ranging from 1 to 5—1 "lowest income quintile," 2 "second income quintile," 3 "third income quintile," 4 "fourth income quintile," 5 "highest income quintile"). In addition to these control variables, I include the number of days that elapsed between the first round of the legislative election and the day respondent's interview was conducted—a measure provided in the CSES data. Moreover, research on voting and polarization suggests that voters, compared to non-voters, perceive greater polarization among parties (see Beasley & Joslyn, 2001). To see if my results are robust to the inclusion of individuals' voting turnout, I additionally control for voting behavior indicating whether a respondent cast a ballot in the last legislative (lower-house) election: 1 "yes," 0 "no."

I also want to see how identification with a governing vs. non-governing party influences affective polarization. People attached to parties that happened to be

⁹ Left-right extremity measures the absolute difference between the respondent's left-right self-placement relative to the country-election median, i.e., the middle of the 0-10 scale (see, Best & Seyis, 2021).

appointed to government may perceive parties as more diverse than partisans of non-governing parties. Partisans of non-governing parties may experience cognitive dissonance after supporting the losing party. They may perceive parties as affectively close to each other to decrease the dissonance stemming from supporting the losing party (Festinger, 1957). In contrast, partisans of governing parties would not have any cognitive dissonance, as they confirm that their party is great.

Moreover, partisans of the incumbent parties tend to perceive less corruption than non-partisans (see Blais et al., 2015). Under the conditions of fraudulent actions, partisans of non-governing parties may perceive incumbent parties more negatively while attributing more positive feelings to their party. I differentiate between partisans of governing and non-governing parties using the information on government support composition available in the *V-Party* dataset. This variable measures whether the party is a senior or junior government partner or in opposition to the government. A survey item in the CSES data asks respondents, “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” If “yes,” “Which party do you feel closest to?” Respondents’ answers to this question were matched with information about government support composition after the last election. I created a three-category variable: partisans of governing parties, partisans of non-governing parties, and non-partisans (reference category).

2.3 Empirical Results

A glance at country election averages in the CSES data suggests that there is a relationship between clientelist ties and mass affective polarization. Figure 1 shows the average mass affective polarization (aggregated across individuals in each country-election) against clientelism in each country’s election. The scatterplot shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between mass affective polarization and clientelism that is statistically significant ($\beta = .64$, $SD = .19$, $p < .001$). As expected, individuals are more affectively polarized at higher levels of clientelism. The correlations at the country-election level suggest the need for a further inquiry using multi-level models of individual-level data. Multi-level models (with individuals nested in country elections) suggest the same direction as aggregated correlations at the country level.

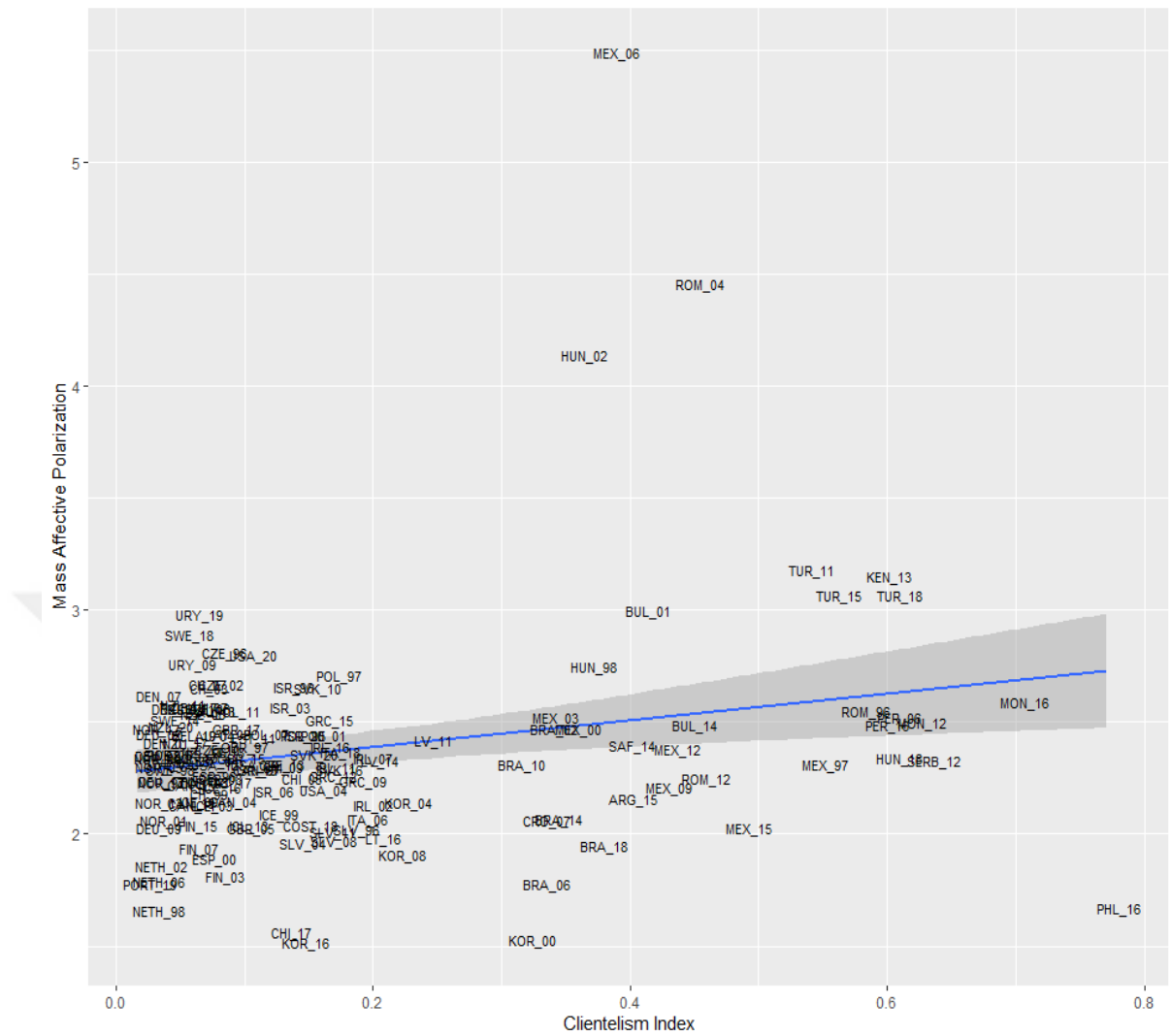


Figure 1: Mass affective polarization and clientelism in 48 countries, 1996-2020

I first fit the null model in which there is not an independent variable but only the intercept to get information about the structure of the data (see Appendix D for descriptive statistics). In particular, the null model provides information about the estimates of the variance among individuals and country elections. The null model shows that the mean affective polarization across country elections is 2.37, which is significantly different from zero. Country-elections in the sample also vary significantly in their mean affective polarization (CI: 2.30, 2.45). The analyses display that around 15 percent of the variance in affective polarization in my sample is attributable to country-election level differences.

I next use multi-level modeling (with individuals nested within countries) to test the associations between my variables, as explained above. Overall, the results that

emerge are as follows. First, I check whether mass affective polarization is predicted by clientelism, which varies across countries. Clientelism is indeed a statistically significant predictor of affective polarization. As the clientelism level increases by 1 point, mass affective polarization increases by .58 (SD= .20, $p < .01$). The analyses reveal a consistently positive and statistically significant coefficient of clientelism even after controlling for the country- and individual-level control variables. Thus, as expected, high levels of clientelist ties magnify mass affective polarization.

After controlling for additional independent variables, clientelism's positive effect persists. Among the macro-level control variables, party system polarization is statistically significant. In contrast, democracy level, GDP per capita, electoral system proportionality, income inequality, party system institutionalization, and the effective number of legislative parties are insignificant in the models of affective polarization (see Table 1). In line with Enders and Armaly's (2019) and Lupu's (2015a) findings, more educated, female, ideologically more extreme, and older people perceive more polarization, which may be related to participants' political knowledge and access to political information. In contrast, left-right self-placement and income are statistically insignificant. The number of days that was elapsed since the last election is also statistically significant.

Table 1: Multi-level linear models relating clientelism, partisanship, and mass affective polarization, 1996-2020

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Clientelism	1.40 (.42)**	-	1.50 (.41)**	1.48 (.41)**
Partisan	-	.52 (.00)***	.52 (.00)***	.52 (.01)***
Clientelism*partisan	-	-	-	.04 (.03)
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (00)	-.00 (00)	-.00 (00)	-.00 (00)
Left-right extremity	.21 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***
Female	.08 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	.00 (.00)**	-.03 (.00)	-.03 (.00)	-.03 (.00)
Education	-.02 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***

Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***
Party system polarization	.11 (.03)**	.08 (.03)*	.10 (.03)**	.10 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)*	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Electoral system disproportionality	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Income inequality	.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Democracy level	.08 (.04)	-.01 (.03)	.09 (.04)*	.09 (.04)*
Party system institutionalization	.65 (.43)	-.11 (.37)	.66 (.41)	.66 (.41)
Constant	1.97 -.19 (.87)	1.97 (.56)**	-.43 (.84)	-.42 (.84)
Variance of random intercept	0.1631	.1658	.1530	.1527
Variance of residuals	0.9399	0.8769	0.8769	.8769
Number of observations	167,672	164,259	164,259	164,259
Number of country elections	150	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-233096.7	-222669.7	-222663.2	-222662.4
Akaike Inf. Crit.	466229.4	445375.4	445364.4	445364.8
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	466410	445555.5	445554.6	445565

Note: Cell entries are multi-level linear regression estimates, with observations clustered by country election. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Moreover, I include partisanship in my models. The results indicate that those who are attached to a party are more affectively polarized than non-partisans ($\beta = .52$, $SD = .00$, $p < .001$), holding other variables constant. The confidence intervals for the party identification variable are .51 and .53 at 95 %. This result suggests that partisanship is a significant predictor of affective polarization, but affective polarization is slightly higher among the partisans than non-partisans (see Figure 2). I also test whether the effect of clientelism on affective polarization is larger among partisans than non-partisans (H3). Regarding the main effects, both partisanship and clientelism are statistically significant. The coefficient of the interaction term is statistically insignificant, suggesting that the coefficient of clientelism does not depend on partisanship.

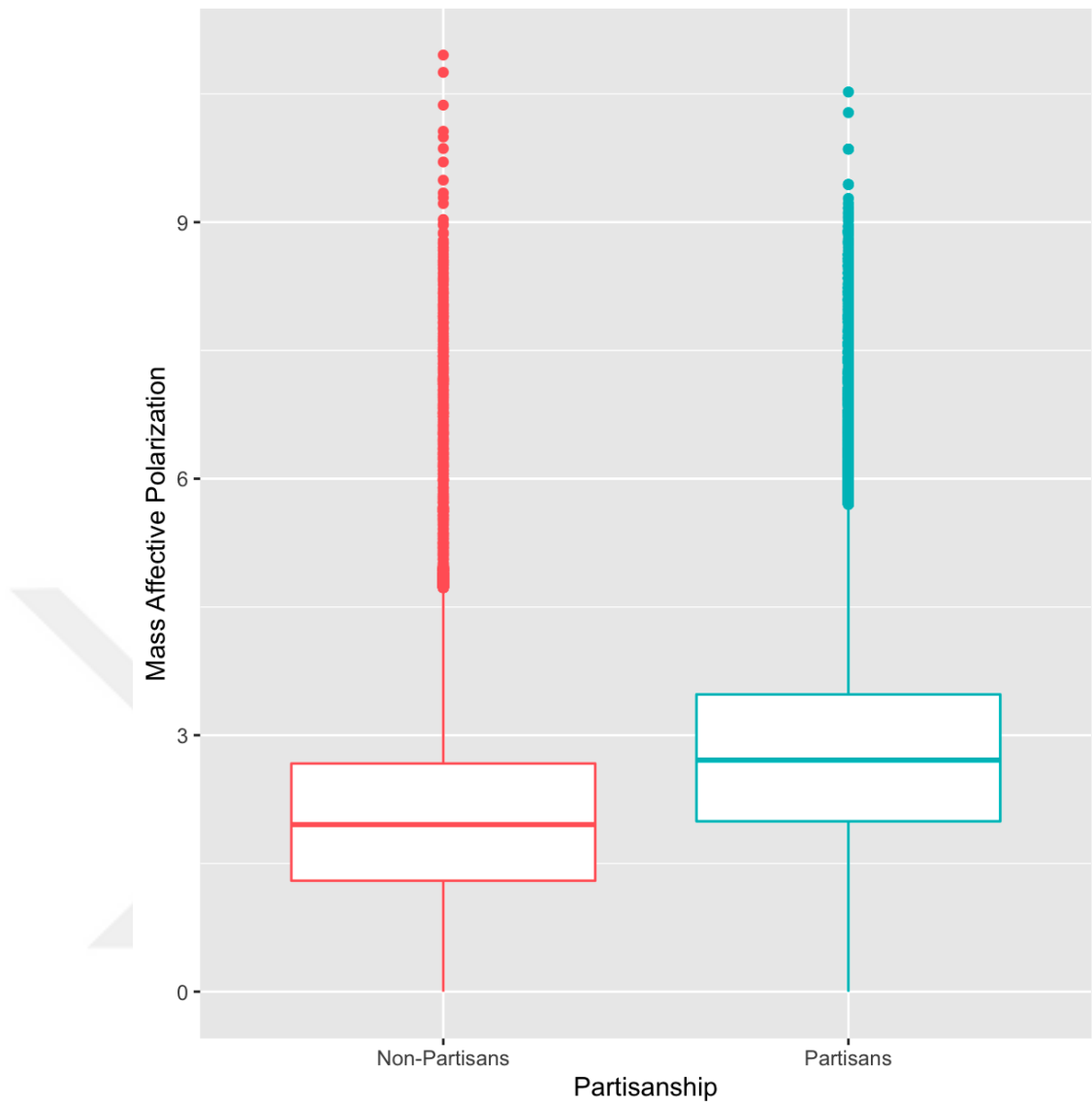


Figure 2: Mean affective polarization among non-partisans vs. partisans, 1996-2020.

To see if these findings are robust, I use an alternative measure of partisanship that additionally accounts for its strength. Results are similar with respect to the main effects of partisanship and clientelism. The coefficient of the interaction term is statistically significant but negative for strong partisans and positive for weak partisans, not supporting H3 (Table E1 in the appendix). Additionally, when I include governing vs. non-governing parties people identify with, the results reveal no change in the main findings (Table E2). I have re-estimated my models using the voted variable, i.e., having voted in the last election. My results are also robust to individuals' voting turnout (Table E3). The results from these additional analyses confirm that partisanship is a robust predictor of mass affective polarization.

2.4 Conclusion

Voter attitudes play an important role in the emergence and persistence of political polarization. What drives these citizens' attitudes and feelings about political parties? This study advances a theoretical model on how instrumental voter-elite linkage—as a party strategy can establish a psychological attachment with their constituents to win upcoming or future elections. Partisan attachments play also an important role in shaping attitudes about political parties. Specifically, clientelist strategies increase mass affective polarization by magnifying the emotional distance between the in-group vs. out-group. The issue of reciprocity, where they are unsure that benefits and services will be returned with electoral support, motivates parties to establish a psychological attachment of indebtedness, gratitude, and reciprocal obligation with voters.

Moreover, research on political polarization suggests that polarization contributes to democratic decline, legislative gridlock, and income inequality (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Frye, 2002; Hetherington, 2009; Layman et al., 2006). Existing literature also draws attention to the fact that voters will be willing to sacrifice democratic principles for the sake of electing parties that serve their best interests in polarized societies (McCoy & Somer, 2021; Svolik, 2019). However, we still have a limited understanding of how voters exchange democratic principles for their personal interests. The theoretical argument presented in this study offers a new mechanism for political polarization to emerge in electoral politics. Polarization, in my model, is driven by clientelist strategies and is intertwined with partisanship in shaping mass affective polarization. The main findings in this study suggest that higher levels of clientelism encourage voters to perceive political parties as more emotionally distinct from each other.

I also contribute to the theoretical literature on inter-group conflict based on partisan attachments. The association between partisanship and political polarization has been studied extensively (Devine, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012, Iyengar et al., 2019; Miller & Shanks, 1996). This study contributes to the partisanship literature by using different ways of measuring party identification, i.e., a dichotomous measure, as well as categorical measures that include partisanship strength as well as partisanship of

governing vs. non-governing parties. Drawing on social identity theories, partisanship is conceptualized as a psychological attachment to a political party (see Campbell et al. 1954, 1960; Huddy, 2001, 2003; Huddy et al. 2010). I argue and show empirically that partisanship increases mass affective polarization by accentuating the in-group/us vs. out-group/them notion. Once people become attached to a party, they perceive their party as more distinct from its competitors. Partisanship motivates individuals to perceive their party positively while seeing other parties negatively.

There are certain limitations of this study that should be noted. First, there is a potential endogeneity problem where affective polarization may affect partisanship. For instance, research by Lupu (2015a) suggests that when people perceive their parties as more polarized, they are more likely to identify with a political party. In other words, Lupu's study shows that citizens in polarized systems are more likely to become partisan. Future research based on experimental evidence or time-series analyses could more accurately identify the nature of this reciprocal relationship.

Second, the clientelism variable is aggregated at the macro level using country experts' perceptions. We do not know whether the clientelism perceived by country experts is at the same level as what respondents perceive or actually experience. Studies by Seligson (2002) and Booth & Seligson (2009) show that individuals' actual experience of corruption motivates citizens to evaluate political institutions and government performance more negatively. A more systematic analysis of whether and to what extent electors' experience of clientelist strategies contributes to their affective attitudes toward parties could be a venue for future research. Third, the clientelism variable at hand aggregates various indicators—covering all linkage types and not necessarily identifying diverse strategies that may affect citizens' attitudes. Recent research shows there are differences in the evaluation of clientelist ties (Gallego & Wantchekon, 2012; Wegner, Pellicer, Bayer, & Tischmeyer, 2022). Individuals perceive vote-buying party linkages pragmatically and, therefore positively, while evaluating other forms negatively and as unlawful (Wegner et al., 2022). Further research on identifying the varieties of clientelist strategies, such as corruption and vote-buying, could allow us to better grasp how voter-elite linkages shape citizens' affective evaluations of political parties.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF ELECTORAL FRAUD AND WINNING-LOSING FOR MASS AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION: CROSS-NATIONAL EVIDENCE

The rules underlying democratic regimes presume that citizens hold governments accountable for their actions through electoral contests, which are supposed to be transparent, free, and fair. While a fundamental aspect of democratic legitimacy is good electoral governance, many elections fail to have integrity. The erosion of electoral integrity is confined not only to newer democracies but also to established ones as well (Alvarez, Hall, & Hyde, 2008; Birch, 2008, 2011; Elklit & Reynolds, 2005; Farrall, Wilks-Heeg, Struthers, & Gray, 2022; Fisher & Sällberg, 2020; Karp, Nai, & Norris, 2018; Norris, 2014a, 2014b; Norris, Elklit, & Reynolds, 2014). Strategies of electoral manipulation can be more covert, such as restrictive and inaccurate voter and party registration, imbalanced campaign funding or financial resources, and electoral officials' failure to be impartial and independent (Norris, 2014a; 2014b), or more blatant, such as tampering with the ballot box (Kelley, 2012) and restricting the opposition's freedom to campaign the elections (Frye, Reuter, & Szakonyi, 2018). The most overt violations of electoral rules include harassing or imprisoning political opponents, coercing voters, and manipulating vote count (Norris, 2014a).

The central claim in this chapter is that these manipulative electoral strategies to win elections are not without affective and behavioral consequences. The lack of integrity can decrease public trust and confidence in political institutions. It can challenge political legitimacy in the eyes of voters. Moreover, a lack of electoral integrity can

enhance negative feelings among voters toward political parties. Research on electoral integrity should address a relationship between voters' attitudes towards parties and electoral integrity because these party strategies can motivate voters to see parties affectively distinct from each other. This chapter aims to contribute to the literature on voter behavior and manipulative party strategies. It seeks to determine the consequences of a lack of electoral integrity for the feelings toward political parties among ordinary citizens.

While existing research concentrates on detecting electoral fraud (Hyde, 2008; Leeman & Bochslers, 2014) and the reasons why manipulative electoral strategies are committed (Hill, Sobolewska, Wilks-Heeg, & Borkowska, 2017; Lehoucq, 2003), it is still limited with respect to the consequences of these strategies on citizens' attitudes towards political parties. This study looks into one feature of democratic performance—electoral integrity—that is supposed to be untouched, free, and fair. Drawing on the election-level data from the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) (Tufis & Hudson, 2022) and the individual-level survey data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems*, I investigate whether electoral manipulative strategies influence citizens' affective evaluations of political parties. The study is based on data from 48 country-elections between 1996 and 2020.

Drawing on mechanisms of information processing of citizens (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Kraft et al., 2015; Taber & Lodge, 2006), I argue that legitimacy contains affective components, such as citizens' trust for political parties, government, and the democratic regime itself. In confronting the manipulative strategies, voters may do nothing—i.e., abstain from voting or casting a blank vote, or actively oppose the manipulator party at the ballot box due to the feelings of despair and hopelessness induced by such strategies. Or they may support fraudulent parties. On the theoretical level, I assume that voters' affective attitudes toward parties' electoral injustices are triggered consciously or unconsciously. Voters' responses to electoral fraud are based on cognitive mechanisms of public processing information: motivated political reasoning and selective exposure to information. Regardless of the content, people are motivated to evaluate information that is congruent with their existing views more accurately or consider it more valid than incongruent information they prefer

not to believe (Munro, Weih, & Tsai, 2010). Hence, we can expect that existing attitudes and beliefs about a political party will affect how individuals perceive political parties' fraudulent strategies, as people are more prone to comprehend congruent information uncritically but intensely reject or counterargue incongruent information (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Taber & Lodge, 2006). As such, I hypothesize that manipulative electoral strategies will have a negative impact on citizen attitudes toward political parties.

I also argue that electoral status (voting for the losing (winning) party) has implications for citizen attitudes toward political parties. Winners are expected to see parties more emotionally distant from each other than losers. The underlying mechanism is that voting for the losing party creates psychological discomfort among the voters, and losers are expected to avert this cognitive dissonance. Losers are expected to modify their evaluations of choices to reduce dissonance, i.e., to avert unpleasant feelings and increased stress due to voting for the losing party after the election (Cigler & Getter, 1977) by perceiving parties closer to each other. Supporters of winning parties will continue to believe that their party is the best and will not experience any dissonance.

When faced with electoral injustice, however, losers are expected to attribute blame to fraudulent parties and adjust their affective feelings about parties accordingly. Manipulative electoral strategies—as an external and uncontrollable factor for citizens—can motivate people to perceive parties as emotionally distinct from each other. Hence, I expect the relationship between electoral integrity and affective polarization to be stronger among those who voted for the losing party than those who voted for the winning party.

The chapter seeks to make several contributions to existing research. First, it aims to enhance our knowledge of the adverse effects of electoral strategies on citizen attitudes. Even though electoral fraud or manipulation is widely assumed to have negative consequences for democratic legitimacy and regime stability, it has not been systematically examined how it affects people's attitudes toward political parties. I go beyond the existing studies by establishing a link between manipulative electoral strategies and mass affective polarization in developed and developing democracies.

Second, this study brings a new perspective on mass polarization by focusing on electoral integrity—an indicator of institutional strength and an explanatory variable that has not been examined in the study of mass polarization. Thus, I seek to better understand mass polarization by analyzing whether and how electoral integrity affects people’s feelings about political parties. Third, this study utilizes a comprehensive measure of electoral integrity: a key feature that has been analyzed as a part of democracy indicators. The main findings in this chapter uncover the effect of electoral integrity on the degree to which citizens are affectively polarized. I find that while electoral integrity is indeed associated with good governance, manipulative electoral strategies may enhance affective polarization. Fourth, this study contributes to the winner-loser status literature by showing its association with mass affective polarization, i.e., how winners differ from losers in perceiving parties, and interacting electoral integrity with voters’ winner-loser positions in the elections and affective polarization.

The following section develops my theoretical argument using the existing literature on electoral integrity and mass attitudes about the political system. Subsequently, I state the hypothesized effect of manipulative electoral strategies and “winner” (“loser”) on citizens’ attitudes toward political parties. I also explain why and how the impact of electoral integrity on mass attitudes may differ for winners and losers depending on the electoral status, i.e., being a winner or loser voter in an election at hand. I then present my measurements and the data. After presenting the results, I discuss the significance of the findings for the study of the elections and citizens attitudes and propose the possible venues for future research.

3.1 Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses

As I explained in the previous chapter, mass affective polarization refers to the tendency of people to hold opposing parties/out-group members negative emotions and perceive one’s own group/in-group members positively (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Existing studies show that identifying with a particular group and categorizing their social identity as “us vs. them” are sufficient conditions to favor in-group members and discriminate against out-groups (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; see also Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). How mass affective polarization is

associated with manipulative electoral strategies has not been systematically analyzed yet.

3.1.1 Electoral Integrity and Mass Affective Polarization

Elections are accepted as the basis of a functioning democracy (Dalton, 2013; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). In every functioning democracy, elections are expected to reflect the “will of the people” (Simpser, 2013) and to be based on democratic principles of universal suffrage, political equality, transparency, and accountability (Norris, 2014a). While electoral integrity is widely acknowledged as a “more tractable outcome” of democratic well-being (Kolev, 2014: 202) than democracy itself, defining what constitutes good or poor practice in electoral contests is difficult. In “The Menu of Manipulation,” based on Dahl’s theory of democratic principles, Schedler (2002b: 40-41) lays out seven conditions to describe elections as democratic: empowerment, free supply, free demand, inclusion, insulation, integrity, and irreversibility. These conditions can be summarized as follows:

1. Empowerment: elections require citizens’ wielding power.
2. Free supply: political elections require choices with multiple candidates or parties.
3. Free demand: voters must be free from any pressure to form their political preferences and have access to multiple sources of information to form their choice.
4. Inclusion: elections require universal franchise.
5. Insulation: voters must freely (without any pressure or coercion) express their opinion and political preferences.
6. Integrity: elections must be based on the “one vote, one count” principle, where votes are counted honestly and weighted equally.
7. Irreversibility: elections must be decisive, i.e., winners must be able to hold the offices and exercise power.

If every condition on the chain of democratic choice is met, an election can be described as democratic. For Schedler (2002b), violating one of the conditions makes the election undemocratic, not less democratic. Actions that deviate from this ideal

type of election are commonly described as electoral fraud¹⁰ (Elklit, 2012; Lehoucq, 2003), electoral manipulation (Simpser, 2013), electoral malpractices (Birch, 2011), and “vote-rigging” (Norris, 2014a). In actions that impair electoral quality, the main purpose is to maximize the electoral gain. This purpose can be short-term to win the upcoming elections or long-term to win future elections (see Jarabinský, 2017; Simpser, 2013). Political parties and candidates are among the biggest stakeholders in elections (Jarabinský, 2017), and hence, they tend to be the main perpetrator of manipulative electoral strategies.

The Peruvian elections in the 1990s with Fujimori manipulating the elections (Levitsky, 1999), the 2000 Mexican election¹¹ (Cornelius, 2000; Lehoucq, 2003), elections in Paraguay under Stroessner, in Turkey under Erdogan, and in Russia under Putin and Medvedev are some examples where electoral integrity was exchanged for partisan purposes and personal gains. In addition to newer democracies, electoral fraud has been utilized in some British (see Hill et al., 2017) and Australian elections (see Copeman & McGrath, 1997; Hughes & Costar, 2006), even though it was not widespread.

In conceptualizing “electoral integrity,” the terms “clientelism,” “vote-buying,” and “patronage” are closely associated. This situation stems from the thickness¹² of these concepts (Elklit, 2012). They include multiple features of democratic deficit, such as favoritism in applying rules, and hence, they inevitably are complex and may overlap. In the literature, there are two somewhat competing understandings of clientelism. On the one hand, it is conceptualized as a “targeted, non-policy based and contingent provision of material benefits” (Berenschot & Aspinall, 2020: 4) in non-electoral realms. On the other hand, clientelism is described as the conditional exchange between voters and parties before and after the elections (Cox & Kousser, 1981; Stokes, 2007). For instance, Posada-Carbó (2000: 630) states that “neither

¹⁰ Elklit (2012: 13) defines electoral fraud as “deliberate wrong-doing by election officials or other electoral stakeholders, intended to distort the individual or collective will of the voters.”

¹¹ There is considerable evidence that the PRI, the incumbent party, utilized vote-buying strategy to win the 2000 elections (Cornelius, 2000; Simpser, 2013).

¹² “Thickness” refers to Coppedge’s (1999) thick vs. thin concepts where thin concepts are clear, simple, and objective, and thick concepts are broad and complex. In describing democracy and legitimacy, it is not possible to reduce these multi-dimensional concepts into a single indicator without excluding some meaningful part of it.

deferential nor clientelist relationships necessarily imply the distortion of the will of voters; thus they should not themselves be equated with corrupt electoral practices.” As it was explained in the previous chapter, clientelism may or may not include “vote-buying,” which refers to “the distribution of money or gifts to individuals, families, or small groups to influence their decision to vote/not vote or whom to vote for” (Coppedge et al., 2021: 65). “Vote-buying” is considered a subset of electoral manipulation tactics (Lehoucq, 2003; Simpser, 2013). Vote-buying is often used on election day, while electoral integrity can be damaged in the pre-election period by intimidating opponents and discouraging citizens from turning out to vote or in its aftermath by disregarding the opposition’s electoral victory.

“Patronage,” in some cases, refers to the conditional exchange of government jobs for political support (see Stokes, 2007). In other cases, it includes the conditional exchange of public goods for electoral support, which may involve public employment, vote-buying, or other conditional exchanges of goods (see, e.g., Greene, 2007; Kopecký, Mair, & Spirova, 2012; see also Golden, 2003). Clientelism, vote-buying, and patronage are different forms of “linkage politics”—strategies through which parties or individual politicians sustain their political support or obtain electoral support in exchange for distributing material and non-material benefits. Accordingly, individual politicians and parties may or may not utilize a variety of linkage politics—vote-buying, patronage, or clientelist linkages—in exchange for electoral support during the electoral process (Birch, 2011).

In this chapter, electoral integrity is considered as a phenomenon that involves political actions before, during, and after an election. Following Norris (2012) and Simpser (2013), I focus on a broader definition of electoral integrity:

The core notion of ‘electoral integrity’ refers to agreed international principles and standards of elections, applying universally to all countries worldwide throughout the electoral cycle, including during the pre-electoral period, the campaign, and on polling day and its aftermath (Norris, 2012: 4).

The idea of the electoral cycle is similar to Schedler’s definition of democratic elections, as his “Menu of Manipulation” covers a range of principles, including free demand rights of voters (in the pre-electoral period), integrity (on polling day), and

irreversibility (its aftermath). Political elites may restrict the political opponents' use of media outlets or state resources in the pre-election period. On election day, electoral integrity can be challenged by diverse practices, including intimidating voters, stuffing ballot boxes, and embellishing the ballot count (Norris, 2012). In its aftermath, political parties or citizens may reject the electoral outcomes or process and respond to them violently or peacefully (e.g., Tarouco, 2017).

The conventional wisdom in the literature is that electoral malpractices aim at winning the election at hand (Nyblade & Reed, 2008). Political parties strategically use electoral malpractices to achieve small margins of electoral victory (where the difference between the percentage of votes is crucial) (Christensen & Colvin, 2005). They can also aim at winning close or tight races when the difference between two candidates' popularity or parties' electoral support is minor (Simpser, 2013). In the latter case, electoral manipulation is likely to change the winner of the election (see, e.g., Magaloni, 2006). The manipulation can be marginal or excessive, depending on the degree of effort in malpractice, the election at hand, intentions of the manipulators, or what is at stake in the election outcome (Simpser, 2013). In the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, for instance, electoral fraud was marginal, resulting in a small margin of victory (OSCE/ODIHR, 2005). In contrast, massive manipulation took place in the 2004 Russian election and increased the votes considerably (see, Myagkov, Ordeshook, & Shakin, 2009).

As such, electoral manipulation is a strategy for winning the election at hand and enhancing, consolidating, and monopolizing political power over time. There are both direct effects of electoral manipulation (such as electoral victory) and indirect effects—i.e., having an “impact on the subsequent voluntary behavior of political actors” (Simpser, 2013: 83). Electoral manipulation indirectly and directly impacts political context by a margin of victory and proportion of votes and offices depending on its extent and visibility. The political context created by manipulative strategies shapes the expectations about the ruler, i.e., the ruler's resources, capabilities, and power. Indirectly, such expectations can shape the voters' and elites' behavior, such as voting or abstaining from voting, running for office, or bargaining with the government (see, Simpser, 2013: 90).

The mediating link between these indirect effects is information. Electoral malpractices may distort the information about the strength of incumbents and opposition parties or candidates. As an indirect effect in the post-election period or subsequent elections, the manipulator party may give the impression that the party is too strong to be challenged electorally. Such an impression may lead to the defection of the opposition, or electoral fraud can impact political elites' perspective on the manipulator's bargaining power. For instance, Putin in Russia and the PRI in Mexico had frequently used electoral manipulation to deter potential challenges from the opposition to their rule (Simpser, 2013).

Following this logic, this chapter focuses on “non-electoral indirect effects” on voters' perceptions and feelings about political parties. The main assumption is that voters are responsive to new information and political actors (Ahlquist et al., 2018; Bullock, 2011; Kendall et al., 2015). How voters respond to electoral manipulative strategies is crucial to understanding their indirect effects on voters. In confronting the manipulator, voters may do nothing—i.e., abstain from voting or casting a blank vote, or actively oppose the manipulator party at the ballot box. Voters may be mobilized by fraudulent party activities or programs (Dalton, 2013). The ruling party may face popular unrest (Fearon, 2011; Tucker, 2007) or suffer from decreasing popularity (Birch, 2011). For instance, Beaulieu (2014) explores the causes of boycotts, focusing on incumbents' credibility in the likelihood of election boycotts. The study provides systematic evidence that the lack of electoral credibility is one of the causes of electoral protests. Another study by Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski (2018) analyzes the effect of government-sponsored election violence on the likelihood of electoral victory and post-election repercussions. Their analysis shows that incumbents who utilize pre-election violence are more likely to face post-election protests. Their study also indicates that such protests usually result in the resignation of the government or re-election.

Following existing studies (e.g., McCann & Dominguez, 1998; Fortin-Rittberger, Harfst, & Dingler, 2017), I argue that electoral strategies shape voters' perceptions of political parties. Electoral malpractices affect the cognitive thinking of voters in assessing parties. When being treated unfairly or coerced during an electoral process (before, during, or after an election), voters are expected to lose their interest in

politics and feel indifferent to the manipulator party, or support the manipulator party, especially if the manipulator party is their party, or feel anger, bias, and injustice toward the manipulator party and its supporters (Baghdasaryan, Iannantuoni, & Maggian, 2019).

Previous research has shown that unfairness shapes peoples' voting behavior and makes them prone to act against it. In an experimental study, Baghdasaryan et al. (2019) show that people tend to react against electoral fraud by participating in elections if there are moderate fraudulent actions. However, there is a sharp drop in participation if the fraud is widespread. The study suggests that people respond differently (decreasing vs. increasing participation rates) when bearing a decreasing vs. increasing quality of political institutions. Similarly, in an experimental study on fair procedures, Bolton, Brandts, and Ockenfels (2005) note that people are willing to impose a cost—both on themselves and others—to resist procedures that they consider unfair.

The social psychology literature argues that when being treated unfairly, people tend to feel hopeless and despair. Gould (2012: 95) describes political despair as “feelings of political inefficacy and hopelessness, the sense that nothing will ever change, no matter what some imagined collective ‘we’ do try to bring change.” Feelings of despair and hopelessness are linked to feelings of resentment and frustration with parties. The sight of blatant fraud can lead a voter to conclude that the manipulator party is above the law, untouchable, and therefore does not need to cover its electoral malpractices. Due to a low degree of electoral integrity, voters may feel political despair and hopelessness (Gould, 2012). These negative feelings will trigger voters' negative attitudes toward the fraudulent party and positive feelings toward other parties. To the extent that voters prefer virtuous parties, they should punish those parties that use electoral malpractices (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2021). The emotional distance among voters will be high when some voters evaluate fraudulent parties negatively to rectify the injustice they feel, and others either feel indifferent towards all parties or positively toward the fraudulent parties.

While existing literature emphasizes that supporters of democratic values and regimes will be more motivated to react against malpractices than weakly committed

supporters, the literature on support for fraudulent parties is limited. The theoretical assumption in this chapter is that support for a fraudulent party can be maintained through cognitive mechanisms of selective exposure to information (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2021) and “motivated skepticism” or “motivated political reasoning” (Erisen, Lodge, & Taber, 2014; Taber & Lodge, 2006). The underlying mechanism is that people tend to favor information that strengthens their existing opinions and join groups formed around their shared beliefs, attitudes, and narrative—called echo chambers (Cinelli, De Francisci Morales, Galeazzi, Quattrociocchi, & Starnini, 2021). As such, some studies link echo chambers with group polarization. An echo chamber can be instrumental in reinforcing existing opinions within a group, or moving the entire group to more extreme positions (see Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015; Cinelli et al., 2021; Sunstein, 1999). In a recent study, Levendusky and Stecula (2021) show evidence that cross-party interactions and discussions in an experimental setup help individuals from different groups to acknowledge what they have in common with members of the other party in the US—lowering the affective divide.

When cross-party dialogue is non-existent or low in everyday interaction, however, we can expect persistent support of fraudulent parties due to selective exposure to information or the “echo chambers” effect. People are prone to believing the messages they hear or read (Gilbert, 1991; Lewandowsky, Ecker, Seifert, Schwarz, & Cook, 2012), and political information has an impact on people’s attitudes and beliefs (Lewandowsky Ecker, & Cook, 2017; Pantazi, Hale, & Klein, 2021). People form beliefs from their echo chambers and then persist in these beliefs even after discrediting evidence is provided to their initially formed beliefs (Ross & Anderson, 1982). Moreover, people are goal-oriented in processing information and can be motivated to process information in line with their beliefs, goals, and attitudes—so-called motivated political reasoning (Erisen et al., 2014; Huntington, 2020; Kunda, 1990; Taber & Lodge, 2006). It is the motivated tendency of people to accept the validity of information consistent with their a priori judgments and beliefs than of information inconsistent with their a priori judgments (Ditto et al., 1998). Regardless of the content, people seek to evaluate congruent information more accurately or consider it to be more valid than incongruent information they prefer not to believe.

Theoretically, we should expect that existing attitudes and beliefs about a political party will affect how individuals perceive political parties' fraudulent strategies as people are more prone to comprehend congruent information uncritically but intensely reject or counterargue incongruent information (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Taber & Lodge, 2006). Voters will be motivated to process fraudulent actions skeptically or refute these accusations altogether. They might even blame other political parties for making false accusations. They will persist in their a priori attitudes and judgments about a political party and continue positively perceiving fraudulent parties due to their motivated reasoning.

Existing literature suggests that the distortion of information and electoral strategies can influence voters' judgments and evaluations of political systems, parties, and institutions. This chapter extends this literature by testing how electoral manipulative strategies shape citizens' affective attitudes toward political parties. Following these studies, I hypothesize:

H1: Electoral manipulative strategies have a positive effect on affective polarization.

3.1.2 Winner-Loser Status and Affective Polarization

In this part, I focus on the attitudinal consequences of losing/winning status and how this status interacts with electoral integrity in shaping mass affective polarization. Specifically, I seek to establish whether a voter's status as a winner or loser in an election at hand affects the voter's attitudes about political parties. I further analyze whether the negative effect of electoral integrity on affective polarization depends on the winner-loser status of voters. Focusing on the winner-loser status and its interaction with electoral integrity is appropriate because the experience of being a loser or winner affects people's attitudes about political parties and institutions (see Anderson, Blais, Bowler, Donovan, & Listhaug, 2005).

Elections unavoidably generate unequal conditions of winning or losing for voters. Three groups emerge as a result of the elections: those who voted for the winning party, those who voted for the losing party, and those who did not vote. This situation creates "ambivalent attitudes towards political authorities on the part of the losers" (Kaase & Newton, 1995: 60). From the utilitarian point of view, people prefer winning to losing as the expected utility that they get from winning is higher

than losing (Thaler, 1994; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). As their views and interests will be reflected in the government's policies (Anderson et al., 2005; Miller & Listhaug, 1999), and their preferences are "the values that are authoritatively allocated" (Riker, 1986: 62), the expected utility of winning for voters should be higher than losing in the elections.

Aside from utilitarian motives, psychological factors affect people's attitudes in that winning-losing may create affective responses (Anderson et al., 2005). Winning evokes positive feelings—happiness usually is the most commonly reported affect in the literature (Weiner, Russell, & Lerman, 1979)—and reduces stress and arousal, while losing leads to reverse feelings, such as anger, frustration, and upset (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Weiner et al., 1979). Not surprisingly, winners are usually content and happy with the election outcome. In contrast, losers tend to be discontent and discouraged by the outcome in the aftermath of the election at hand, as "losing an election and being in the minority means that one's political preferences were outvoted or at least failed to translate into political power." (Anderson et al., 2005: 10).

As the elections constitute the backbone of democratic politics, there is already extensive literature on voter attitudes and feelings about political parties (see Dalton, 2007). Existing studies have mainly focused on different aspects of voter attitudes and evaluations, specifically feelings of distrust, dissatisfaction, and political alienation from political institutions (see, e.g., Dalton, 2007; Easton, 1965; Hardin, 2002; Miller & Listhaug, 1999; Singh, Lago, & Blais, 2011). The literature on voter attitudes has emphasized the causal mechanism between voting for the winning (losing) party and voters' degree of support (rejection), feelings, and evaluations of the political system and its actors, such as political parties (e.g., Anderson & Tverdova, 2001; Harmel & Robertson, 1986; Singh et al., 2011). For instance, Singh et al. (2011) analyze the effect of winner-loser status and ideological congruence on citizen evaluations of democratic principles, institutions, and government performance. Using survey data from Canada, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the study concludes that being in a political majority or minority (winner/loser) shapes voters' feelings about the political system. Their analysis

further suggests that competitiveness, ideological congruence, and federalism are not related to public evaluations of democratic principles.

Overall, the existing literature suggests that winning and losing produce affective and cognitive responses among citizens (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Weiner et al., 1979). Winning leads to pleasant feelings and decreased stress, whereas losing leads to the opposite feelings and effects. For instance, Anderson, Mendes, and Tverdova's (2004) study examines the relationship between voting behavior and post-election economic evaluations using panel surveys conducted in Great Britain pre-and post-1997 general election. The study points out that as voters seek to reduce cognitive dissonances between their vote choice and their evaluations of economic performance, winners (losers) are more likely to be more optimistic (pessimistic) about the economic situation in the country and evaluate past economic performance more positively (negatively).

This chapter builds on these affective and cognitive consistency mechanisms. The theory assumes that winning and losing matter for voters. The experience of winning and losing leads citizens to embrace a new lens through which they view the political parties and the system. Depending on the outcome of an election, favorable or unfavorable to the voters' choice, citizens can perceive the political system differently (Anderson et al., 2005; Baron & Hershey, 1988). One's electoral status shapes their behaviors, views, and attitudes (Singh et al., 2011), as winning and losing make people part of the majority and minority, depending on whom they voted for. The psychological factors associated with losing (winning) can shape their positive and negative feelings about political parties. McAuley, Russell, and Gross (1983), for instance, find that winning and losing, even at a tennis play, have affective consequences. Losers in table tennis games are found to be depressed and angry, whereas winners feel proud and content.

According to the dissonance theory, the experience of psychological discomfort, which Festinger (1957) referred to as dissonance¹³, i.e., inconsistencies in their beliefs, values, and attitudes, leads to a pressure to avert the psychological

¹³ This psychological inconsistency has also been referred to as imbalance or incongruity in the literature (Abelson, 1959).

discomfort and achieve consonance (Cigler & Getter, 1977; Festinger, 1957; McLeod, 2008). Existing research asserts that dissonance may occur from having voted for the losing party or candidate in the electoral arena. There can be the cognitive inconsistency of believing their party was the best one but did not win the election (Cigler & Getter, 1977). Voting for the losing party creates psychological discomfort among the voters, and losers are expected to avert this dissonance. Reducing dissonance involves attitude change toward parties after the election (Beasley & Joslyn, 2001; Cigler & Getter, 1977; Stricker, 1964).

Following this logic, losers are expected to modify their impressions of choices to reduce dissonance, i.e., to avert unpleasant feelings and increased stress due to voting for the losing party after the election. One of the ways of reducing dissonance for losers is to associate candidates or parties with their party and see them as similar to each other (i.e., adjusting their inconsistent political cognitions from “my party was the best” to “my party was not really the best one” or “there is really not much difference between the two candidates/parties”) (Cigler & Getter, 1977). Such cognitive adjustments would lead losers to perceive parties as closer to each other. The probable effect of these adjustments would be depolarization among losers.

In a study on the 1962 U.S. presidential election, Stricker (1964) shows that supporters of the losing candidate did not change their attitude toward their candidate but viewed the opposition and the other presidential candidate more favorably to achieve consonance. Drawing upon pre- and post-election survey data on candidate evaluations in six presidential elections in the U.S., Beasley & Joslyn (2001) argue that voters perceive the presidential candidates more distinct after voting in the election. They further find that voters of the losing candidate were likelier to see fewer distances between candidates than those who voted for the winning candidate in the post-election survey.

Accordingly, supporters of the losing party are expected in this study to express less distinction among affective evaluations of parties than those who had voted for the winning party in the post-election survey. Theoretically, voters for the winning party are expected to persist in their pre-election attitudes by evaluating chosen alternatives more positively and the other alternatives more negatively (Festinger, 1964;

McGregor, 2013). This implies that voters of the winning party should see parties as more distinct, preserving their pre-election judgments. In contrast, voters of the losing party should see parties as increasingly more similar, revising their pre-election judgments to reduce dissonance.

In sum, the existing literature suggests that winning and losing produce affective responses among citizens (Brown & Dutton, 1995; Weiner et al., 1979). Winning leads to pleasant feelings and decreased stress, whereas losing leads to the opposite feelings and effects. In the political context, losing may produce negative feelings, discontent, and anger toward the winning party. When applying dissonance theory to affective attitudes toward parties, I expect supporters of the losing party to perceive less distance among the parties in the post-election period than those who voted for the winning party. The probable effect of these affective responses should be in the direction of smaller mass affective polarization among the losing voters than those who voted for the winning party. In line with the existing research, I derive the following hypothesis:

H2: Mass affective polarization should be higher among supporters of the winning party than supporters of the losing party.

3.1.3 Electoral Integrity, Winner-Loser Status, and Affective Polarization

Losers' consent to electoral outcomes is crucial for democratic legitimacy. In democratic regimes, the policies and government actions reflect the majority's opinion. Losers' consent should depend on the degree of fairness in the electoral process. The more the electoral process was fraudulent, the more difficult it should be for losers to accept the election results. As such, the response of the electorate depends on the manipulative strategies used in a particular electoral process (Cigler & Getter, 1977). Under conditions of widespread fraudulent actions, supporters of the losing parties should see their party as more distinct from supporters of winning parties.

Research on individuals' attitudes toward electoral outcomes and procedural quality of elections indicates that supporters of losing parties consent to the electoral results and view winning parties as having legitimate authority, if they see the electoral process as free and fair (Anderson et al., 2005; Bowler et al., 2015; Lind & Tyler,

1988; Tyler, Casper, & Fisher, 1989). In contrast, unfair electoral procedures can ignite negative attitudes and feelings among voters about electoral outcomes and political actors (Van den Bos & Van Prooijen, 2001; Van Prooijen, van den Bos, Lind, & Wilke, 2006). Accordingly, sometimes losers refuse to concede because they find the electoral process unfair and objectionable. For example, following the 2003 presidential election in Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev's, the son of the outgoing president, Heydar Aliyev, electoral victory resulted in losers' protests against the fraudulent actions—such as ballot stuffing and tabulation of votes—and repression of the opposition parties (Valiyev, 2006).

A study by Maldonado and Seligson (2014) on electoral trust in Latin America argues that being a winner or loser in an election is a fundamental determinant of public confidence in elections. Their study explores the relationship between the winner-loser gap and electoral integrity and finds that the winner-loser gap in electoral trust varies in Latin American countries depending on the level of electoral integrity. They also test the effect of repeated winning or losing on electoral trust. The study concludes that “presidents or parties that stay in office for more than one or two terms create more polarization in their societies in ... satisfaction with democracy and ... elections” (Maldonado & Seligson, 2014: 19). Consistent with Maldonado and Seligson's (2014) findings, Cantú and García-Ponce (2015) find that electoral losers tend to perceive the fraudulent strategies more negatively than electoral winners. The existing literature also suggests that government stability with respect to corruption is important for how people perceive the political system and hence political parties. For instance, Anderson and Tverdova (2001) show that citizens in systems with less corrupt governments are more supportive of the political system. Their study also suggests that the negative effect of corruption on people's faith in the democratic process is attenuated by voters' political allegiance. Specifically, people who voted for the incumbent government tend to evaluate the performance of political institutions more positively than those who oppose it.

Despite growing interest in winning-losing status (Anderson et al., 2005; Maldonado & Seligson, 2014; Singh et al., 2011), current research does not explore the effect of winning and losing on voter attitudes in the context of electoral manipulative strategies. The electoral context in which winning and losing occur is also crucial to

understand citizen attitudes. Elections that are manipulated may serve to attribute voting for the losing party to electoral fraud. Existing studies in social psychology show that people tend to make causal attributions when they explain their behavior (Buss, 1978: 1312). These attributions can be based on internal vs. external factors (whether the reason is outside the person), such as skill or luck, and controllable vs. uncontrollable (whether the reason is beyond the person's control), such as physical handicap or lack of effort (Maruna & Mann, 2006; Weiner, Folkes, Amirkham, & Verette, 1987). A central assumption in political theory is that citizens' political attitudes are impacted by attributions of internal causes or external factors.

Losing when there are electoral injustices may influence attitudes toward the political parties. The impact of electoral fraud—as an external and uncontrollable factor—on citizens' attitudes can be expected to operate mainly via causal attributions of voting for the losing parties. Voters—particularly those who support the losing party—are expected to attribute blame to the incumbent party for electoral fraud and adjust their affective polarization accordingly. Losers will feel more dissatisfaction with the electoral results of an unfair election and attribute blame to electoral injustice for voting for the losing parties. Voters are expected to attribute blame to the incumbent party for the electoral fraud and evaluate it more negatively. In such a context, I expect the relationship between electoral integrity and affective polarization to be stronger among those who voted for the losing party than those who voted for the winning party. I thus derive the following hypothesis:

H3: While electoral manipulative strategies induce affective polarization, this relationship should be stronger for those who have voted for the losing party.

3.2 Data and Measurement

The empirical analysis to test these hypotheses is based on the aggregate-level data from 48 countries with 160 lower house legislative elections and survey results from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) data covering developed and developing democracies (Appendix A). Multi-level modeling is employed to properly model my dependent variable that may be shaped by both macro- and micro-level factors.

3.2.1 Dependent Variable

As I explained in the previous chapter, I measure mass affective polarization in the mass public with the standard like-dislike question included in election surveys from the CSES data. On the like-dislike scale, lower numbers denote more negative evaluations toward parties. Using this survey item will enable me to identify an overall negative or positive individual's attitude toward political parties, which constitutes the essence of affective polarization (Wagner, 2021).

3.2.2 Independent Variables

While in theory, there is an ideal type of political regime where the elections are free, fair, and clean of fraud and manipulation, in practice, no election fulfills the conditions of this ideal type (Dahl, 1956; Elklit, 2012; Schedler, 2002; Simpser, 2013). Existing research has extended its focus to the degree of electoral fraudulent strategies and how to decide if an action is a deviation from the ideal type of election (Anderson et al., 2005; Birch, 2008; Carreras and Irepoglu, 2013; Elklit & Reynolds, 2005; Maldonado and Seligson, 2014; Norris, 2013; Rosas, 2010). One of the approaches to classifying an action as electoral fraud is legality (Lehoucq, 2003; Simpser, 2013). Lehoucq (2003: 235) defines an activity as fraudulent if it is "hidden from the public gaze" and "breaks the law." Empirical studies referring to using this approach to measure electoral integrity are based on legal complaints of citizens and parties (e.g., Lehoucq & Molina, 2002; Ziblatt, 2009) and legislative records of parties (see Perman, 2001).

However, this approach is criticized as establishing legality requires strong legal and political institutions, and measuring electoral integrity on the basis of legal complaints can be especially challenging in developing democracies where both legal and political institutions are not fully established (Simpser, 2013). Within the body of electoral integrity research, Simpser (2013) lays out another approach to develop an operational definition of electoral manipulation, in line with Schedler's seven conditions of democratic elections. The author lists the main items that cover common tactics of electoral manipulation: stuffing or destroying ballot boxes, tampering with the vote count and voter registration lists, vote-buying pre-and after the election, impeding voter or candidate registration, threatening voters or candidates before and after the election, multiple voting, and voting by ineligible voters such as minors.

Moreover, the literature on electoral integrity has further extended with analyses based on non-governmental organizations' electoral reports and news coverage of elections (Kolev, 2014). Nyblade and Reed (2008), for instance, utilize newspaper reports to define illegal acts for electoral gain in Japan from 1947 to 1993. However, relying on reports or news has also been criticized by scholars as the newspapers or reports can be biased (Simpser, 2013). Specifically, depending on the newspapers or the NGO's closeness to the government, a particular social or political group, or a political party can be covered biasedly. Another approach to measure electoral integrity is to rely on citizens' perceptions of electoral. Cantú and García-Ponce (2015), for instance, by analyzing survey data conducted at different stages (before, during, and after) of the 2012 presidential election in Mexico evaluate several contextual and logistic factors, such as partisanship and the role of elections observers, that might shape voters' perceptions of electoral integrity.

The literature on electoral integrity discloses that electoral integrity is a complex phenomenon to identify and operationalize. Complexity is partly attributable to the data used (Coma & Frank, 2014). There are different cross-national measures of electoral integrity or manipulation. One of the cross-national measures is the "fraud" variable available in the *Database of Political Institution* (DPI). An election is coded as fraud when the fraud is reported as "serious enough to alter the outcome of the election" (Beck, Clarke, Groff, Keefer, & Walsh, 2001: 167). However, some scholars suggest that this measure is "inaccurate" since the dataset codes the presidential elections of Zimbabwe in 2002, Mexico in 2000, and Peru in 2000 as "clean" even though there was evidence of electoral fraud (Simpser, 2013).

Other datasets that measure electoral integrity cross-nationally include the *Quality of Elections* dataset (Kelley, 2012) and the *Index of Electoral Malpractice* (Birch, 2011). Kelley's dataset covers electoral quality data between 1975 and 2004 in more than 170 countries. The quality of this dataset is also debatable, as assessments of the electoral process are based on the U.S. State Department (Kolev, 2014). Birch's (2011) dataset covers 161 elections using the election observers' reports on electoral integrity but is limited to a period from 1995 to 2007. Another alternative dataset is Hyde and Marinov's *National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy* (NELDA; Hyde &

Marinov 2012), which provides measures of election-related procedural problems. This dataset has been criticized for its assessments of the electoral process (Higashijima, 2021; Norris, 2013). The items¹⁴ that measure electoral integrity primarily focus on electoral competition in the pre-electoral period and code elections as fraudulent and unfair only if Western monitors report a significant amount of vote fraud. Moreover, the 2015 Mexican election is coded as a free and fair election, even though there were allegations of vote-buying and vote coercion by parties in the pre-election period (see Serra, 2015), which raises questions about the validity of this dataset.

The independent variable, *electoral integrity*, is taken from the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) project (Tufis & Hudson, 2022).

The Global State of Democracy Indices in this dataset assess electoral integrity using six indicators.¹⁵ It measures the extent to which national elections are free from irregularities such as flows and biases in voter registration. The electoral integrity index summarizes the overall integrity of the election on a 0-1 scale. Higher values indicate higher levels of electoral integrity. The main advantage of using this dataset is that the surveys assess the whole electoral cycle, i.e., the integrity during the pre-electoral period, such as biases in voter registration, the campaigning process, the election day (such as voter intimidation), and its aftermath (such as fraudulent counting). This approach is similar to the chain of democratic choice in the “Menu of Manipulation” that Schedler (2002) described, where electoral integrity is undermined when a link in the electoral cycle is broken (Norris, 2014a). It is also a systematic and comprehensive dataset that monitors the whole electoral process by

¹⁴NELDA dataset includes detailed information on national elections (from all independent countries) between 1945 and 2020. The dataset is constructed by using extensive secondary sources including newspaper archives, archives from specific countries, and reports from intergovernmental organizations. The following items that are commonly used in the literature to measure electoral integrity are included in the dataset: before elections, are there significant concerns that elections will not be free and fair; were opposition leaders prevented from running; is there evidence that government harassed the opposition, in the run-up to the election, were there allegations of media bias in favor of the incumbent, were there allegations by Western monitors of significant vote-fraud (see, e.g., Higashijima, 2021; Norris, 2013). The NELDA data provides only a limited indicator of the broader concept of electoral integrity because it mainly focuses on pre-election period.

¹⁵ Six indicators are listed as electoral integrity sub-attributes based on expert surveys and in-house coding from the V-dem and LIED data. The indicators consist of the election management body’s (EMB) autonomy, EMB capacity, voting irregularities, government intimidation, election free and fair, and competition (see Tufis & Hudson, 2022).

including expert evaluations and in-house coding. The dataset covers 174 countries in the period 1975-2021.

The average electoral integrity score of the sample analyzed in this study is 0.86. The difference in mean electoral integrity between the country elections at the top (Montenegro 2016, Turkey 2018) and the bottom (Germany 2009) is more than 0.53 points on a 0-1 scale, which indicates a large difference (see Appendix F). The top-ranking countries are Finland, Sweden, and Norway, established democracies, and the bottom are Hungary, Romania, and Turkey, new or underdeveloped democracies.

Moreover, using multiple measures is helpful to increase confidence in my results. I, therefore, re-estimate my empirical models with an alternative indicator of electoral integrity to see if the results are robust across different indicators. An alternative measurement of electoral integrity is taken from the *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Project* (PEI) (Garnett, James, & MacGregor, 2022) in this study. The “electoral integrity” is conceptualized in the dataset as “international standards and global norms governing the appropriate conduct of elections” (Norris & Grömpin, 2019: 3). The PEI dataset is one of the most comprehensive works covering 480 national parliamentary and presidential elections from 2012-2021. The electoral integrity index summarizes the overall integrity of the election on a 0-100 scale. The PEI surveys gather experts’ opinions on electoral integrity using 49 indicators. These indicators are categorized under 11 dimensions: electoral laws, electoral procedures, boundaries for electoral districts, voter registration, party, candidate registration, media coverage, campaign finance, the voting process, the vote count, voting results, and electoral authorities.

To measure the winner-loser status of the citizens in the surveys, I rely on the following survey item in the CSES data: the respondent’s vote choice for the party list in the previous national election. I created a dummy variable coded as 1 if a respondent reported having voted for the winning party and 0 if voted for the losing party.¹⁶ I rely on Anderson and his colleagues' (2005: 34) aspect of winning and losing in coding the winner and loser status of the parties/coalitions. I coded parties

¹⁶ In measuring winner/loser status, I excluded non-voters from the empirical analyses.

as winners if they were in government and losers if they were out of government. These responses are combined with information about the party or parties that hold the executive branch of government in the country that the respondent voted for at the time the survey was conducted.¹⁷ The information about parties' electoral results is taken from the *V-Party* dataset. I use the government support variable, measuring if the party is a senior or junior partner or in opposition to the government (Lindberg et al., 2022). If the respondent voted for parties in government (out of government), they are categorized as winner (loser).

3.2.3 Control Variables

My estimation models include several control variables previously identified as main determinants of polarization to isolate the direct effects of electoral integrity and election winning-losing status on mass affective polarization. As I explained in detail in the previous chapter, party system polarization may affect mass affective polarization at higher levels of ideological differences between the parties. Left-right party system polarization index measures how to spread out the political parties in the system are, with lower values indicating lower polarization.

Higher institutionalization may also provide incentives and opportunities for the ruling elites to engage in fraudulent practices because of the increased capability to monitor and manage the electoral cycle. Hence, I control for party institutionalization using the data provided in the *V-dem* dataset (Coppedge et al., 2021). At the macro level, I additionally control for party system fragmentation, democracy level, income inequality, the effect of electoral systems, and GDP per capita (in 1,000s of constant 2015 U.S.\$, lagged by one year), which were explained in detail in the previous chapter. Moreover, whether there was a change in government in the last election or not can magnify citizens' affective polarization. If there was no change in government and high levels of electoral fraud took place, voters could attribute

¹⁷ In U.K., Canada, Kenya, Mexico, Romania, Ireland, Australia, France and the U.S., there was a district candidate rather than a party list. Hence, I used the respondents' vote choice for the district candidates in these countries. The German, South Korean, New Zealand, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Albanian, Estonian, Uruguay, and Philippines, and Italian electoral systems have both party list and district candidate. Some respondents in these elections voted for different parties. I relied on party list choice in coding these elections as party list voting is considered to be decisive in the lower house elections (see e.g., Gallagher, 1998; Scarrow, 2001).

blame to the incumbent party. Hence, I include a dummy variable with a value of 1 if there was government change and 0 otherwise.

To check the robustness of my results, control variables are used to analyze the effects of single-member districts (SMD), presidential system, and federalism. Data is taken from the *Electoral System Design Database* in the *International IDEA* dataset. I identify SMD, presidential, and federal system dummies: “1” if a system is based on SMD, dichotomous categories/if it is presidential/if it is federal. I also additionally control for the effect of new vs. old democracies to see whether the negative effect of electoral manipulative strategies on mass affective polarization is the same in different groups of countries. Following Dahlberg, Linde, and Holmberg (2015), countries that have been in the process of democratization after 1980 are classified as “new democracies,” and democracies established before 1980 are classified as “old democracies.” Classifying various countries into only two categories, new and old, might be too simplistic. However, new vs. old classification has been frequently applied in existing research. Following the current research (Aarts & Thomassen, 2008; Anderson et al., 2005; Norris, 2011), I classified countries in democratic transition and developing democracies as new democracies—as 1 and 0 otherwise. However, following Dahlberg et al. (2015) and Karp and Banducci (2007), I grouped Portugal and Spain with old democracies, even though they have emerged in the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991).

As the assessment of parties can be affected by partisan identity (see Lauka et al., 2018; Shtudiner, Klein, & Kantor, 2017; Ura & Ellis, 2012), I also control for party identification. To measure partisanship, I relied on the survey question: “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” This survey item has been widely used in cross-national studies with various party systems as a valid indicator of partisanship (Anderson & Just, 2012; Holmberg, 1994, 2003; Just, 2020). The partisanship variable has dichotomous response categories, with “1” indicating a positive answer (partisanship) and “0”, a negative one (non-partisanship). I also use standard demographic variables previously linked to polarization as additional controls (Lupu, 2015a). These are income, age, gender, and education. Age is measured in respondents’ years, and income is calculated as quintiles in each country's election survey. Education is coded using five categories, and gender is

coded as 1 for females and 0 for males. Finally, I include left-right self-placement, left-right extremity¹⁸ (see Granberg & Brown, 1992), and the number of days that elapsed since the last election by the time of the survey, which is a measure provided in the CSES dataset.

3.3. Empirical Findings

Is mass affective polarization driven by the degree of party manipulative strategies? A glance at the county election averages from the CSES data suggests that there is a relationship between the two variables. Figure 3 displays the average mass affective polarization (aggregated across individuals in each country-election) against electoral integrity at each country's election. The scatterplot shows a negative relationship between mass affective polarization and electoral integrity that is statistically significant ($\beta = -1.48$, $SD = .35$, $p < .001$). As expected, individuals are more affectively polarized as the level of electoral integrity decreases. The correlations at the country level provide preliminary support for my theoretical expectations. As a next step, to probe deeper into this relationship, I turn to multi-level models of individual-level data.

¹⁸ Left-right extremity measures the absolute difference between the respondent's left-right self-placement relative to the country-election median, i.e., the middle of the scale 0-10 scale (see, Best & Seyis, 2021).

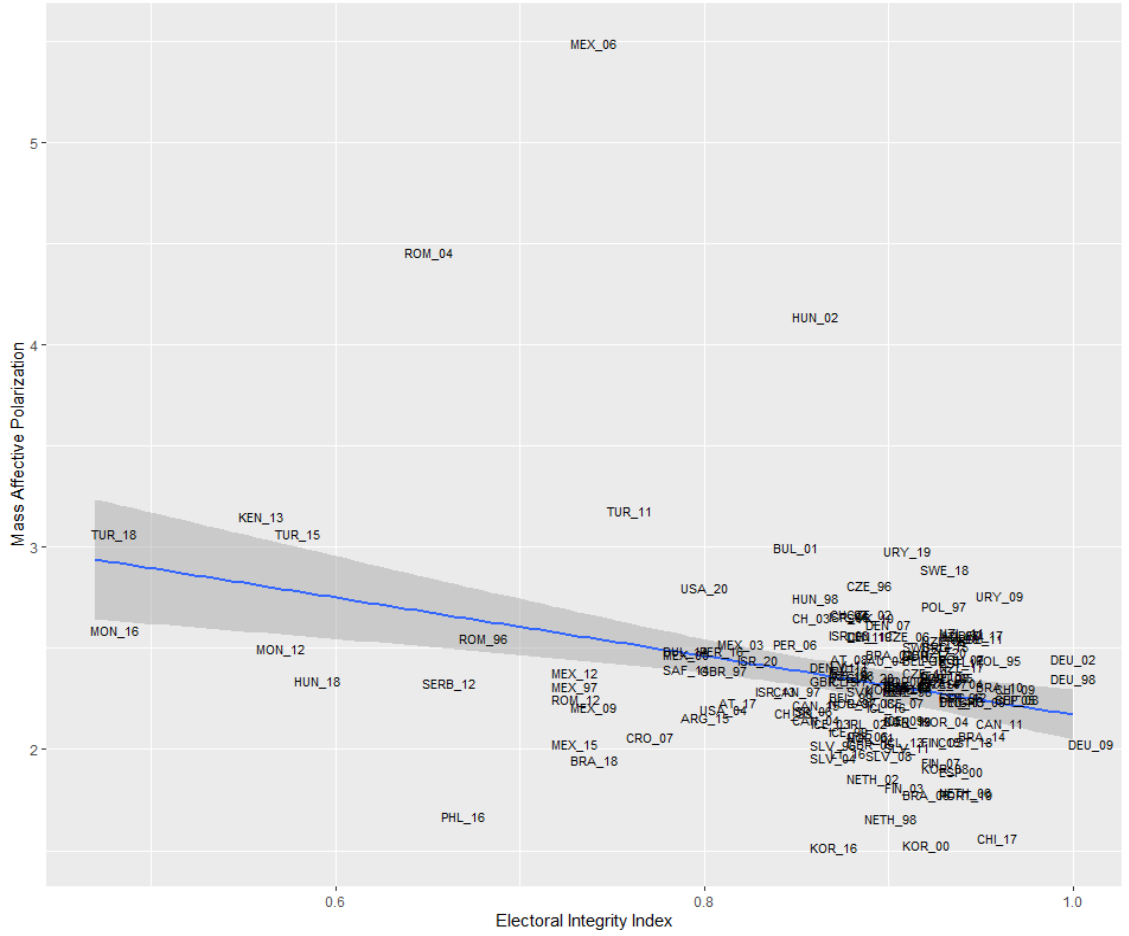


Figure 3: Mass affective polarization and electoral integrity in 48 countries, 1996-2020.

I estimate the relationship between affective polarization (at the individual level) and the independent variables described above. The results reported here were obtained by estimating multi-level linear models (with individuals nested within country elections) with the following specification:

$$Y_{ji} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1j} + \beta_2 X_{2ji} + \beta_3 X_{1j} X_{2ji} + \varepsilon_{ji}$$

Where the index i indicates individuals and j indexes countries. Y_{ji} represents the affective polarization perceived by individuals, β_0 denotes a general intercept, β_1 is the slope of the explanatory variable, X_{1j} is the electoral integrity at the election level, and X_{2ji} represents the voter's winner or loser status in elections, and ε_{ji} represents the error term. $\beta_3 X_{1j} X_{2ji}$ represents the interaction term for the electoral integrity and electoral status to test Hypothesis 2b.

I first fit the null model in which there is no independent variable but only the intercept to assess the structure of the data (see Appendix G for descriptive statistics). In particular, the null model provides information about the estimates of the variance at the level of individuals and at the level of country elections. The null model shows that the mean affective polarization across country elections is 2.37, which is significantly different from zero. Countries in the sample vary significantly in their mean affective polarization (CI: 2.30, 2.45). The analyses reveal that around 15 percent of the variance in affective polarization across countries is attributable to country-election level differences.

I next use multi-level modeling (with individuals nested within country elections) to test the associations between the variables described above. Overall, the results that emerge are as follows. First, I check whether the mass affective polarization is predicted by electoral integrity, which varies across country elections. Electoral integrity is a statistically significant predictor of affective polarization, supporting H1 (see Appendix H). As the electoral integrity decreases by 1-point, mass affective polarization increases by 1.65 ($SD = .47$, $p < .01$). The results indicate that after considering the effect of electoral integrity, the estimate of variation in the intercept across country elections is 0.15, while within country election variation is 0.88.

The statistical significance of electoral integrity in the model of affective polarization persists even after including the country- and individual-level control variables. Among the country-level control variables, party system polarization, GDP per capita, and democracy level are statistically significant. In contrast, electoral system disproportionality, party system fragmentation, income inequality, party institutionalization, and government change variables are insignificant in predicting affective polarization (see Table 2). Among the individual-level factors, left-right extremity, partisanship, female, age, gender, and education are statistically significant. In contrast, left-right self-placement and income are statistically insignificant. The number of days that had elapsed since the election is also statistically significant.

Table 2: Multi-level linear models relating electoral integrity (IDEA), winners vs. losers, and mass affective polarization, 1996-2020

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	-1.65		-1.79	-1.65
Electoral integrity (IDEA)	(.47)**	-	(.47)***	(.47)**
		.18	.18	.44
Election winners	-	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.05)***
Electoral integrity*election winners	-	-	-	-.29
		-.00		(.06)***
				-.01
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (.00)	(.01)***	-.01 (.00)	(.00)***
	.17	.17	.17	.17
Left-right extremity	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
	.09	.08	.08	.08
Female	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
	.00	.00	.00	.00
Age	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
		-.01	-.00	-.01
Income	-.00 (.00)	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03
Education	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00	-.00	-.00	-.00
	(.000)***	(.000)***	(.000)***	(.000)***
	.52	.44	.44	.44
Partisan	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***	(.00)***
Government change	.04 (.07)	.03 (.07)	.05 (.06)	.05 (.06)
Party system polarization	.08 (.03)*	.10 (.03)**	.09 (.03)**	.09 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.00 (.01)*	-.00 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)*	-.00 (.01)*
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)*	-.03 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Electoral system disproportionality	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Income inequality	.00 (.00)	.00 (.01)	.01 (.00)	.01 (.00)
Democracy level	.08 (.04)*	-.01 (.03)	.09 (.04)*	.09 (.04)*
Party institutionalization	.21 (.37)	-.09 (.38)	.23 (.37)	.20 (.37)
	1.82	1.99	1.88	1.77
Constant	(.55)**	(.57)***	(.54)**	(.54)**
Variance of random intercept	0.1554	0.1647	0.1511	0.1505
Variance of residuals	0.8769	0.8194	0.8194	0.8192
Number of observations	164,259	131,896	131,896	131,896
Number of country elections	150	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-222663.7	-174381.7	-174374.6	-174364
Akaike Inf. Crit.	445367.4	348803.4	348791.3	348771.9
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	445567.6	348999.2	348996.8	348987.3

Note: Results are calculated using the multi-level linear estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Moreover, I include the winning-losing status in my models to see if it has an effect on affective polarization. The results indicate that those who voted for the winning party in the last election are more affectively polarized than those who voted for the losing party ($\beta = .18$, $SD = .005$, $p < .001$), holding other variables at their means and the dichotomous variables at their medians. The confidence intervals for the election-winning status are .17 and .19 at 95 %. This result suggests that election-winning status is a significant predictor of affective polarization but this effect is slightly higher among the voters who voted for the winning party than those who voted for the losing party (Figure 4). The statistically significant relationship between winning-losing status and affective polarization persists even after controlling for other country- and individual-level factors. Next, I test the effect of winning-losing status on affective polarization when additionally including electoral integrity. The statistically significant effect of winning status on affective polarization persists. Moreover, when voting for a losing/winning party is considered, electoral integrity is also a statistically significant predictor of affective polarization, suggesting that at a higher level of electoral integrity, mass affective polarization is lower.

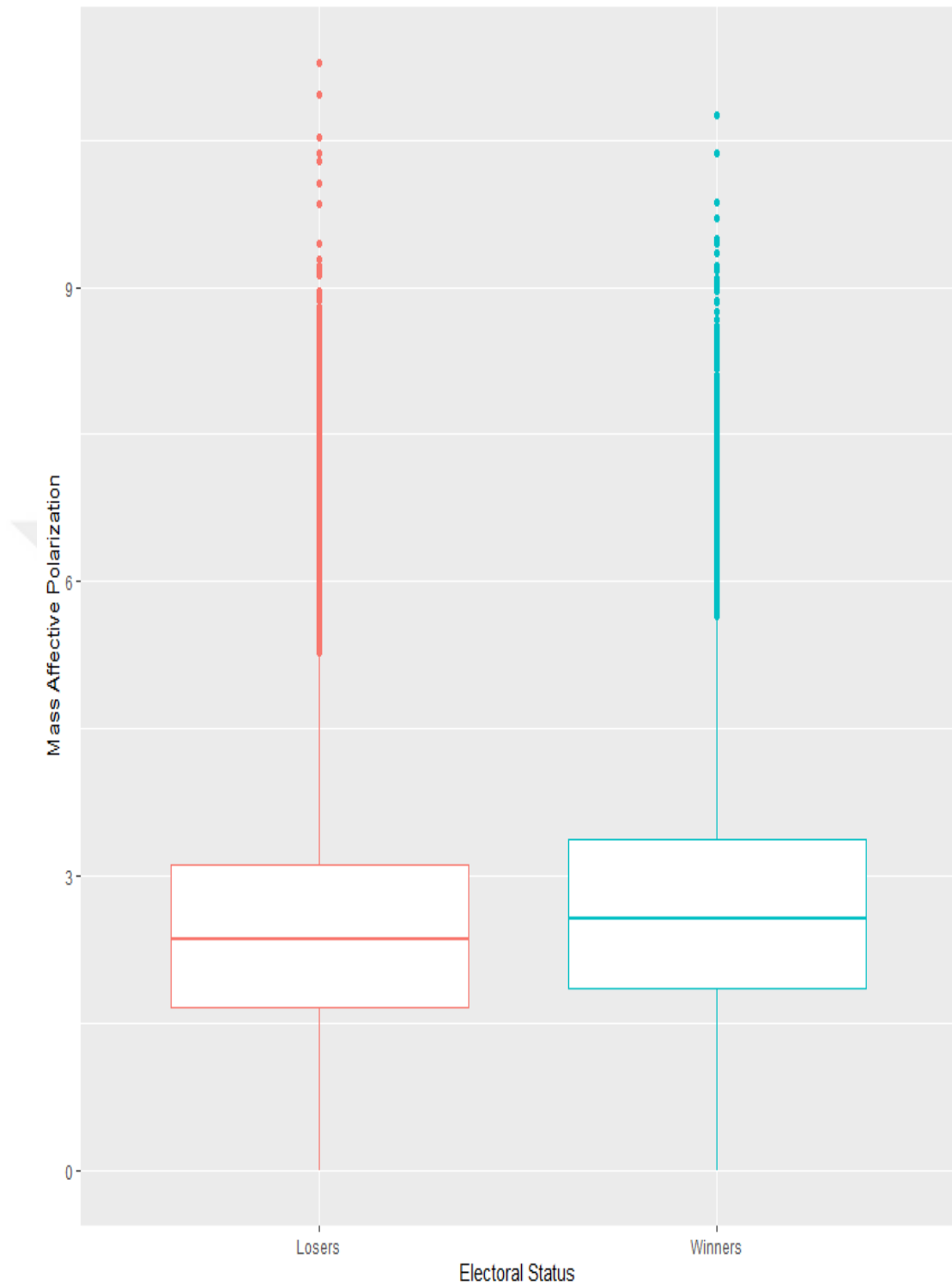


Figure 4: Mean affective polarization among winners vs. losers, 1996-2020.

I also test the interaction effect between electoral integrity and winner/loser status to see whether the effect of electoral integrity on affective polarization is larger among losers than winners (H3). I find that both the main effects of winning-losing status and electoral integrity are statistically significant. Figure 5 provides empirical

support that winning-losing status and electoral integrity interact in shaping citizens' perceived affective polarization. It shows that the marginal effect of electoral integrity (with 95% confidence intervals) on affective polarization is negative and statistically distinguishable from zero for both winners and losers, but this negative effect is slightly larger for winners than it is for losers.

Figure 6 represents the marginal effects of voting for the winning (vs. losing party) (with 95% confidence intervals) on mass affective polarization by the levels of electoral integrity. The figure shows that the marginal effect of voting for the winning party on affective polarization is positive and statistically significant at all values of electoral integrity but is particularly large at low levels of electoral integrity, and considerably lower at high levels of electoral integrity. So, whether one is a winner or a loser matters less for affective polarization in countries with high levels of electoral integrity. When the integrity level is around 0.5, the predicted value of affective polarization is 3.05 [2.71, 3.39] among those who voted for the losing party and 3.34 [3.00, 3.68] among those who voted for the winning party. Similarly, when the electoral integrity is around 0.9, the predicted value is 2.39 [2.32, 2.46] among those who voted for the losing party and 2.56 [2.49, 2.63] among the winners.

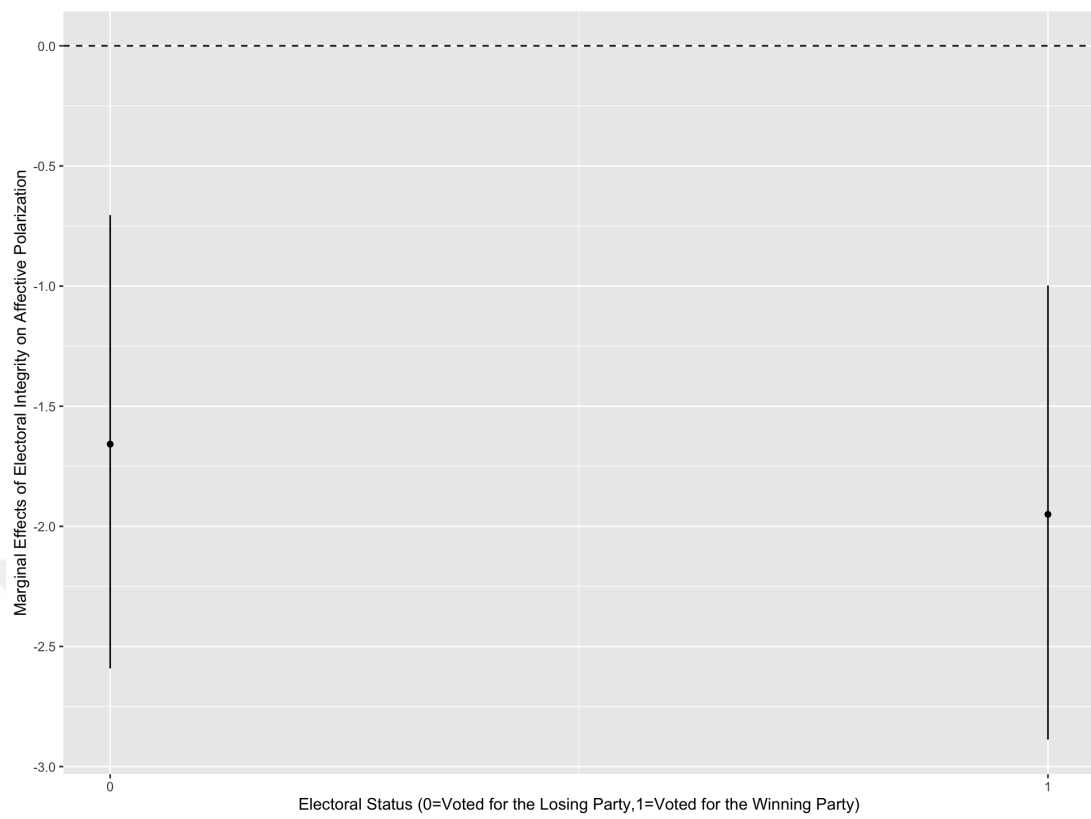


Figure 5: Marginal effects of electoral integrity on affective party system polarization among those who voted for the winning party vs. the losing party in 48 countries, 1996-2020.

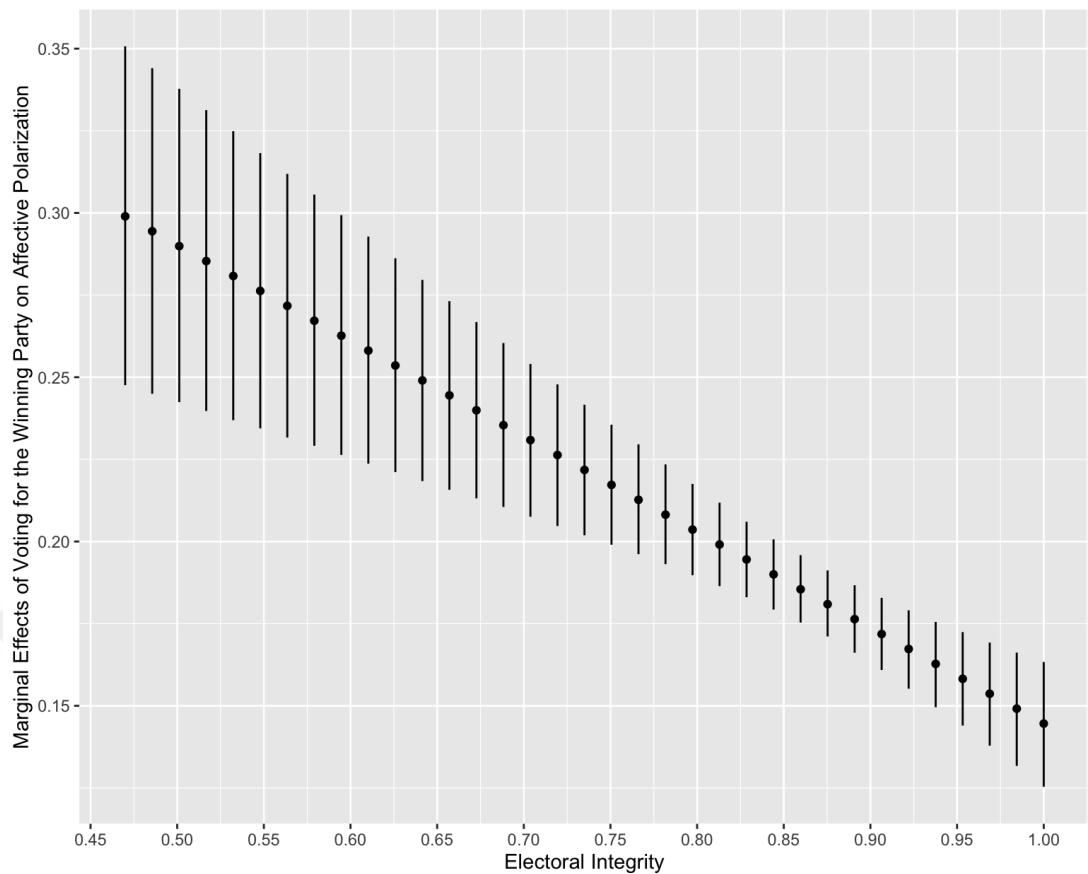


Figure 6. Marginal effects of voting for winning party (vs. losing party) on mass affective polarization by electoral integrity in 48 countries, 1996-2020.

I re-estimate my empirical models with an alternative indicator of electoral integrity to see if these results remain the same. The integrity data from the PEI dataset is available for 55 elections from 38 countries. The average electoral integrity score is 69.72 on a 0-100 scale in my multi-level models of affective polarization. The correlation between the integrity indicators from the IDEA and the PEI data is 0.74. My empirical results are substantively similar using the alternative measure from the PEI dataset: as the electoral integrity is lower, the mass affective polarization is higher (see Table I1 in the appendix). To further test the robustness of my results, I include control variables for the single-member district (SMD), presidential system, and federalism in my analyses. My results are the same using these alternative variables as before, while SMD, federalism, and presidential systems are statistically insignificant (see Table I2). I also distinguished new/developing and old democracies to see whether my results differ for these two groups of political regimes. My results are robust to adding an additional control for new/developing vs. old democracies (see Table I3).

3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has underlined three main points. First, the results confirm that electoral manipulative strategies by political parties have a direct positive effect on affective polarization. Electoral integrity strongly affects people's affective judgments about political parties. This relationship remains statistically significant even after controlling for the country- and individual-level indicators that previous research finds to be important predictors of mass polarization. Second, I hypothesized that affective polarization would be greater among those who voted for the winning party. The results suggest that electoral status as being winner vs. loser is indeed a statistically significant predictor of mass affective polarization. Specifically, the results show citizens who voted for the winning party are more polarized than those who voted for the losing party, supporting my hypothesis. Losers may overcome the cognitive dissonance stemming from supporting the losing party by considering their party as more similar to other parties. Third, I hypothesized that the effect of electoral integrity on inducing affective polarization would be greater among those who voted for the losing party. I found that the effect of electoral integrity indeed depends on respondent's election status as a winner or loser. However, winners continue to perceive parties as more distant from each other than losers. This finding might be related with cognitive mechanisms of selective exposure to information, where citizens may be exposed to a biased media coverage, and reject the incongruent information that their party won the election unfairly. Or they might be motivated to believe that accusations about their winning party is false. It can ignite more negative feelings towards losing parties among the winners.

The main findings in this chapter contribute to a better understanding of what shapes citizens' attitudes toward political parties. Existing literature is mainly limited to studies on social identity, sorting, and ideology as the driving forces behind affective polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019; Mason, 2016; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). This chapter shows how manipulative party strategies can add to our understanding of political attitudes and behaviors that go beyond existing phenomena such as ideology and social identity. The chapter also explains how affective polarization may differ depending on voter support for winning vs. losing parties. The literature on winner-loser status focuses on citizen

satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions. This chapter shows that winners' vs. losers' status also matters for people's affective attitudes toward political parties.

There are certain limitations to this study. The first limitation is the potential endogeneity problem with regard to the association between voting behavior and mass polarization. There is a possibility of a reverse causal relationship where mass polarization may affect peoples' voting choices. Pierce and Lau (2019), for instance, predict that affective polarization increases the probability of citizens voting "correctly" in the U.S. presidential elections. "Correct" voting occurs when citizens support parties and candidates that are closer to their values and preferences. When citizens are polarized, one group tends to unconditionally support existing political structures or incumbent parties. The other group tends to denounce the ruling parties unconditionally. Fraudulent parties, then, will have no incentive to follow the rules of democracy (Moehler & Lindberg, 2009; Türkan İpek, 2018). In such cases, affectively polarized masses may feel that their vote will not make any political difference at the ballot box and choose not to vote.

Moreover, while widely used, the CSES measures are still self-reports of voting and may be problematic. Respondents may overreport their voter turnout in a country-election survey to give a socially desirable answer to a valuation question that affects response validity (Karp & Brockington, 2005; Vossler & Kerkvliet, 2003). Electoral integrity measures also have their limitations. The variables from the IDEA and PEI datasets aggregate various indicators—covering all linkage politics, and it may be the case that some of these indicators are more important in driving the results than other indicators. Separately measuring different manipulative strategies, such as vote-buying or patronage, would allow us to better grasp the mechanism by which fraudulent party strategies operate on citizens' affective evaluations of political parties. Also, electoral integrity is a country-level variable, and we do not know whether the degree of electoral integrity is the same level as what respondents have perceived and experienced.

The research presented here could be extended in four ways. First, it could be extended by exploring the effect of mass media, i.e., how media frames electoral

malpractices, on people's attitudes toward political parties. This approach would provide us with a better understanding of the conditions under which people's access to information can shape their negative and positive feelings about parties. It would also provide us with a better understanding of how echo chambers are retained by media frames. Second, future research could investigate whether different periods (pre-, during, and aftermath) of the electoral cycle have varying effects on citizens' affective evaluations of political parties. Earlier findings indicate that affective polarization decreases as elections become less salient (Hernandez, Anduiza, & Rico, 2021). Further analyses tracking people's attitudes over the electoral cycle could provide valuable insights in the relationships under investigation here. Finally, the research could make use of identifying whether and if electors' experience of electoral fraud has any effect on mass affective polarization. Existing research indicates that citizens' perceptions of electoral fraud tend to be exaggerated, in that voters express a higher degree of fraud than electoral experts did (Farrall et al., 2022; Fisher & Sällberg, 2020). If citizens believe that electoral malpractices occur frequently, to the extent that it affects election outcomes (see Ansolabehre & Persily, 2008), these personal beliefs may motivate citizens to abstain from voting and to see parties affectively. Further research on citizens' perceptions or experiences of electoral fraudulent strategies would broaden our perspective on the winner-loser status and affective attitudes toward parties. Finally, future research might examine the effect of repetitive losing, for instance under a predominant party system, on citizens' perceptions of political parties. Losers might perceive governing parties more negatively than winners due to repetitively casting a ballot for a party out of government.

CHAPTER IV

POPULIST POLITICS AND PERCEIVED PARTY POLARIZATION: CROSS-NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Contemporary politics have witnessed the rise of populism worldwide, attracting great scholarly interest (e.g., Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012; Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2017a; Rooduijn, 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser, Taggart, Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017). With the rise of populist parties and leaders, including Donald Trump, Hugo Chávez, and the Fidesz party in Hungary, scholarly attention has focused on conceptualizing populism, measuring it (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2012; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Meijers & Zaslove, 2021; Rooduijn, De Lange, & Van Der Brug, 2014), and explaining populist parties' electoral success in various countries around the world (Barr, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Moffitt, 2016). Despite growing scholarly attention, research on the consequences of populism is still limited. Current research often assumes a relationship between populism and polarization (e.g., Enyedi, 2016; Handlin, 2018; McCoy & Rahman, 2016; Roberts, 2022), yet theoretical explanations and empirical evidence of this relationship are still limited.

The existing literature on party competition and populism begs the question: how does populism as a strategy of political actors affect political polarization? The central claim in this study is that populism is a driving factor behind party system polarization as perceived by citizens in electoral regimes that include both developing and developed democracies. Populist parties rely on antagonistic rhetoric dividing “the people” versus “the elite.” In populist politics, the exclusionary

antagonism that is undergirded by the moral dimension of “good, pure people” vs. “evil” elites can be expected to create two opposing camps: the populist parties versus the elites. This antagonism shapes citizens' perceptions of parties as being far from one another and hence fuels perceived party polarization. In turn, mainstream parties can be expected to respond to populist parties by adopting an anti-populist discourse, juxtaposing the “evil populists” against the “good democrats” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018) – and realigning to the “anti-populist” side (Moffitt, 2016; Stavrakakis, 2018). These populist and anti-populist strategies can affect citizens' party system polarization as perceived by citizens.

Moreover, I expect populist parties' participation in government to influence this relationship. Mainstream parties can be expected to fear that populist parties' presence in government and their appeal to the people threaten their public support. Mainstream parties can react their presence in government by moving further away from the populist parties ideologically and establishing the “anti-populist” camp. It will ultimately intensify party system polarization in the eyes of citizens. Furthermore, I extend my analyses of perceived party system polarization by looking at how the level of radicalism in populism is correlated with the level of perceived party polarization. It is theoretically plausible to expect that ideology and populism interact in shaping citizens' perceptions of party system polarization. Specifically, I expect the relationship between populism and party system polarization as perceived by citizens to be stronger in political systems that include ideologically radical populist parties than in systems without radical parties.

This study attempts to make three contributions to current research. First, this study aims to contribute to the literature on populism and party polarization with a systematic and cross-national analysis. Second, empirical research on populism usually focuses on the rhetoric of political actors in electoral campaign speeches (Hawkins, 2009), the diffusion of populism in newspapers (Rooduijn, 2014b), and party manifestos (Rooduijn et al., 2014; Schumacher & Van Kersbergen, 2016). This study contributes to this existing research by measuring populism using experts' placement of the parties on a populism scale. Moreover, previous research largely examines populism scores at the party level (Pauwels, 2011; Zaslove, 2008). This study contributes to this literature by analyzing populist discourse deployed in an

election, i.e., aggregated party scores. Third, this study contributes to the literature about the uneasy relationship between populism and democracy by exploring how the effect of populism on perceived party system polarization depends on whether a party is in government or not, and the degree of party ideological extremism.

In short, this study aims to answer three key questions. First, do populist parties accentuate ideological polarization among parties as perceived by citizens? Second, does this polarizing effect vary depending on party presence in government? Third, can the ideological extremity of a party magnify the impact of populism on citizens' perceptions that the party system is polarized? In the following section, I develop my argument about the relationship between populism and polarization and explain why I expect this relationship to be stronger when populist parties are in power and within the systems that include radical (right and left) populist parties. Then, I describe the data and measures employed in my empirical analyses. In section four, I present the results and conclude by discussing the implications of my findings.

4.1 Populism and Party System Polarization

Party polarization, at its core, refers to the degree of ideological or policy distance between parties. In this study, party polarization refers to the ideological distance between parties as perceived by citizens. A body of literature has already shed light on the causes and consequences of party system polarization (e.g., Dow, 2011; Hetherington, 2009; Layman et al., 2006; Lupu, 2015a). It is theoretically linked to electoral rules (Cox, 1990; Dow, 2011; Hug & Martin, 2012), societal forces (e.g., Rae & Gil, 2011), including social cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), and party attachments (Hetherington, 2001; Lupu, 2015b) as the determinants of party system polarization. In this chapter, I focus on whether citizens' perceptions of party system polarization are also driven by the degree of intensity of a country's populist politics.

4.1.1 Populism and Party System Polarization

Populism, in a fundamental sense, "worships the people" (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969: 4). It has been commonly identified with parties, political and social movements, and political leaders (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Three definitions of populism have become dominant in the literature: populism as a political style (De la Torre, 2000; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014), populism as a political strategy

(Weyland, 2001, 2017), and the ideational approach to populism (Mudde, 2004, 2007). While there are differences between these three approaches, they significantly overlap (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Populism as an ideational approach is “a thin-centered ideology that considers being ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and argues that politics should be an expression of “the *volonté générale* of the people” (Mudde, 2004: 543). Populism as a set of ideas divides society into two homogenous groups: the people, who are considered “us” and pure, vs. the elite, the “them,” who are morally corrupted. Populism as a thin-centered ideology is a narrow ideology and is sometimes referred to as “populism with adjectives” (Mudde, 2017a). It is usually combined with other ideologies and concepts, such as reactionary populism (Fraser, 2017) and xenophobic populism (DeAngelis, 2003; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). This approach has some drawbacks for analyzing populism as it offers a very generic layout of populism rather than elaborating its core principles (Rooduijn, 2014a; Stanley, 2008; Weyland, 2017).

As a political style, populism underlines the dichotomy between “the people” (us) and “others” (them) and has an anti-establishment discourse based on a struggle over hegemony and power (Filc, 2010; Laclau, 2005; Panizza, 2005). Some scholars have considered populism as a political strategy in various forms: a form of mobilization, political organization, and policy choices (Acemoglu, Egorov, & Sonin, 2013; Madrid, 2008; Weyland, 2001). Some scholars put the charismatic leader at the core of populist politics (e.g., Hawkins, 2009; Taggart, 1995, 2000) and usually analyze populism as a top-down political mobilization by a personalistic and charismatic leader who seeks political power and challenges the political establishment or economic elites (Roberts, 2010; Taggart, 1995, 2000). Alternative approaches of populism as a political strategy do not find a charismatic leader necessary for populist politics (Barr, 2009; Pappas, 2012), as there are populist politics without a charismatic leader (e.g., Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands¹⁹).

¹⁹ See Brug & Mughan, 2007.

Considering the theoretical links and overlaps between these approaches, it is possible to bring them together as they draw attention to the use of inclusionary and exclusionary strategies—strategies that create an “us” vs. “them” distinction in mobilizing people. Following Filc’s (2010) approach, I connect ideology and political strategy, addressing the inclusion and exclusion in populist politics. If populism is based on the division between “us” vs. “them,” as the ideational approach claims, “then delineating who belongs to these categories requires a dynamic process of simultaneously excluding and including specific groups within these boundaries” (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013: 13). As such, populist politics entails inclusionary and exclusionary categories by depicting who belongs to them. It brings socially excluded groups under a collective category while excluding the other to sustain this Manichean discourse (Filc, 2010). Populism, thus, can be defined as a strategy relying on a set of ideas that mobilize people through anti-establishment appeals and divide society into two antagonistic and homogeneous groups, “the pure people” vs. “the corrupt elite” (Barr, 2009; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Mudde, 2004, 2007, 2017a).

The concept of “the people” is idealized by the populists using key features of the targeted community, such as race, class, and ethnicity (Mudde, 2017a; Taggart, 2004). Meanwhile, the division between the people and the elite is based on morality (Mudde, 2017a). The populists divide the people and the elite in Manichean terms where the people are pure and good, whereas the elites are corrupt and evil (Hawkins, 2009; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Mudde, 2004, 2017a). The elites are referred to by populists, for instance, as “snobby intellectuals” (Rooduijn, 2019), business leaders (e.g., Bonikowski & Zhang, 2020), or biased media. The populists often claim to represent the general will of the people and prioritize policies based on the demands of the common people (Mudde, 2017b; Taggart, 2000), whereas the populists frame the elite as representative of the interests of certain groups or classes (Mudde, 2004, 2017a; Weyland, 1999).

Despite the growing attention to the topic, research on populism is still limited in scope. Most of the literature has drawn attention to conceptualizing and measuring populism (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2012; Meijers & Zaslove, 2021; Rooduijn et al., 2019; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017) and explaining populist parties’ electoral success

(Barr, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Moffitt, 2016). Moreover, studies on political polarization typically focus on cases of how political parties or intergroup competition have facilitated polarization (Sherman, Hogg, & Maitner, 2009), without identifying the mechanisms under which parties polarize the political system. The literature on populism and polarization has mainly revolved around the potential threats of populism and polarization to the survival of democratic regimes (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Some researchers draw attention to the link between populism and party system and affective polarization. For instance, Roberts (2022: 2) argues that “polarization is congenital to populism – an essential component of its political DNA.” Enyedi (2016) conceptualizes a term called “populist polarization” in analyzing Hungary’s democratic backsliding. Polarization, he argues, combined with populism and the inertia of the party system, can challenge consolidated democracies, as the Hungarian case demonstrates (see also Palonen, 2009). Meanwhile, Handlin (2018) describes the high levels of party polarization in South America that emerged through a mechanism called *polarizing populism*. The term refers to the case where “the ascendance of an outsider politician or movement capitalizing on anti-systemic sentiment also triggered an uptick in party polarization on the left-right programmatic dimension” (Handlin, 2018: 76). In countries such as Poland and Hungary, the democratic recession has accompanied populist politics and political polarization (Lührmann, Grahn, Morgan, Pillai, & Lindberg, 2019). In an analysis of comparative cross-country data in 28 European countries, Harteveld, Mendoza, and Rooduijn et al. (2022) also show that the strong and homogenous dislike between supporters of radical right populist parties and supporters of mainstream parties, i.e., affective polarization, is amplified by populism.

While a growing body of literature has focused on the simultaneous rise of populist politics and polarization, research about the exact nature of the relationship between party polarization and populism has been scarce. A central claim of this article is that populism fosters citizens’ perceptions of party polarization. Populism reshapes the social and political context by mobilizing the masses or parties (Hawkins, 2010). Polarization is not based on “choosing one identity over the others. Rather, it elevates one particular cleavage to a point where multiple identities and interests align under

it” (McCoy & Rahman, 2016: 5). Populism serves to bring a collection of identities along the lines of class, religion, ethnicity, and race under a privileged identity of “the people” (Cannon, 2008; McCoy & Rahman, 2016). Populist parties (re)politicize specific issues and frustrations of the people that the mainstream parties – that is, the existing “establishment” parties (Downs, 2001) – have ignored. Building on Stavrakakis (2018), I differentiate between two strategies: polarizing populism and polarizing anti-populism, which I expect to contribute positively to party system polarization in the eyes of voters.

First, parties rely on populist rhetoric to differentiate themselves from other parties and attract more voters. Populist parties discursively create in-groups and out-groups that strengthen the bond and solidarity among the in-group members and mobilize them politically, excluding the outsider groups and elites. The moral and Manichean distinction between in-group and out-group manifests itself as the “we/the good side/the people” vs. the “they/evil/the corrupt side/the elite.” The elite can be a cultural elite, a media elite, or an economic elite. But most of the time, the elites are political elites (parties and leaders) (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017). Populist parties require “them”/the elite to construct themselves as “the people” and distinguish themselves from other parties (Filc, 2015). Populism, in its essence, holds a polarizing discourse.

Studies on social psychology have shown that voters typically rely on cognitive mechanisms to reduce complexity in party competition. The categorization of political parties and their members, as well as simplification, are cognitive mechanisms that voters use (Fernbach & Van Boven, 2022). Populism constitutes a notion of a sense of belonging among the “people,” especially among marginalized and excluded people, and encourages in-group cohesion rather than inter-group interaction (McCoy & Rahman, 2016; Roberts, 2022). As parties rely on the Manichean discourse to mark opposition parties, mobilize the masses, and create a loyal voter base, the mediums of communication between parties are dismantled, and the consensus becomes attainable only within the political camps themselves (LeBas, 2006; McCoy & Rahman, 2016: 247; Palonen, 2009). Under populism, the exclusionary antagonism based on the moral dimension creates two opposing camps and places different parties and their supporters in one camp – the populist party –

and the others – mainstream parties/elites/their supporters – in the other camp. The Manichean distinction facilitates this categorical thinking by categorizing parties and oversimplifying the party competition as between “us” and “them.” Citizens will perceive a large distance among parties under polarizing populist strategies as populist politics divides parties between us (“the people,” the many, the marginalized, good, pure, and honest) and them (the elite, the 1%, the evil, corrupt, tainted, the establishment, and fraudulent) (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Stavrakakis, 2017, 2018).²⁰ Populist parties’ reliance on this strategic use of polarizing rhetoric to differentiate themselves from their opponents is expected to be perceived by citizens and foster their perceptions of party system polarization.

Second, populists usually (re)politicize social, political, or economic grievances, such as welfare abuse and unwanted migrants, and tap into social and political issues and cleavages (Barr, 2009). The populist parties “polarize the political system by mobilizing segments of the electorate that are angry with the current state of affairs against the “corrupt” elite” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018: 1682). In party competition, when challenged by populist parties, mainstream parties strategically respond to the populist challenge with demarcation, confrontation, or accommodation (De Jonge, 2019). They can either adopt an anti-populist stance (Stavrakakis, 2018) to distinguish themselves from the populist parties by demarcating them. Demarcation occurs by treating them as “outcasts” or confronting them with demonization and stigmatization. Or they can accommodate their rhetoric (De Jonge, 2019) by increasing their salience on issues that populist parties are stressing (Mudde, 2004, but see also Bale, 2003) – a strategy to keep their electoral base or fight off the populist parties (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Mainstream parties can move to the extreme sides by adopting a populist stance (Downs, 2001; Meguid, 2008; Vachudova, 2021).

As an anti-populist strategy, the established parties demarcate or confront populist parties by framing populism as a “pathology” or “disease” (Arditi, 2004) that needs

²⁰ While anti-elitism is a key element in populist politics, there are some populist leaders who do not attack the elite (see Hellmann, 2017). Joko Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi and a member of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in Indonesia, for instance, refrains from polarizing rhetoric and is even defined as a “polite populist” by Mietzner (2015: 26).

to be eradicated from politics. Mainstream parties confront populist rhetoric by relying on the moral division between the “evil populists” and the “good democrats” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). When the mainstream parties (re)define themselves with moral distinctions, they are “fighting fire with fire” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017: 502) and make the populist parties’ moral distinction more visible and valid (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017) in the eyes of citizens.

In party competition, parties are assumed to move strategically along the left-right dimension to attract more voters and win elections (Downs, 1957). Parties move in their ideological position in response to voter position (Ezrow, De Vries, Steenbergen, & Edwards, 2011) and to internal or external pressures (Budge, 1994) such as economic shocks. Mainstream parties adopt two strategies in response to populist parties: adversarial and accommodative (Meguid, 2008; Pirro, 2015). Mainstream parties can adopt an adversarial strategy and make their ideological positions distinct from one of the populist parties. To differentiate themselves as anti-populists, mainstream parties may increase their ideological distance leftward in response to a right-wing populist party or rightward in response to a left-wing populist party (Downs, 2001; Meguid, 2008). As an adversarial strategy, they may express their hostility (Meguid, 2008) toward populist parties and realign themselves with the “anti-populist” camp (Stavrakakis, 2018). When parties adopt adversarial strategies, we should expect that when the left moves toward the center to differentiate itself from a left-wing populist party, it leaves the right parties no choice but to move rightward to distance themselves from other parties and vice versa (Downs, 2001). The adversarial strategy of mainstream parties thus increases the ideological distance among parties. Citizens are expected to perceive this ideological distance among parties in response to populist parties, especially if they identify with a populist or anti-populist camp. This adversarial strategy will be expressed as high levels of party polarization as perceived by voters.

Parties can adopt accommodative strategies – a strategy to keep their electoral base or fight off the populist parties (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017a) – by converging around the ideological position of populists (Meguid, 2008). When mainstream parties rely on accommodating populist rhetoric by adopting populists’

themes (De Jonge, 2019), they help prime the populist agenda among voters and increase the salience of issues, such as asylum seekers and welfare abuse, raised by the populists (Bale, 2003). By accommodating populist rhetoric, mainstream parties minimize their ideological policy distance from populist parties and become more committed to extreme policies (van Spanje, 2010). This strategy promotes both inter-party conflicts and intra-party struggles (Webb & Bale, 2014). Some state leaders of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany, for instance, have adopted the populist rhetoric of the right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD). The state leaders of the CDU demanded a more restrictive stance on asylum policies and criticized the leader of the CDU's stance on asylum seekers during their 2016 election campaigns (Dilling, 2018). As such, center-right parties in countries such as Austria, Italy, and Denmark have become more committed to implementing immigration and welfare policies that are both harsher and more populist in tone (Bale, 2003). Such policy shifts toward the populist agenda are likely to ignite intra-party competition, manifested in their ideological stances. Accommodative strategies magnify the inter-party struggles as well that may shape citizens' perceptions of party polarization.

When a populist party gets stronger and becomes a real challenge to the system with its exclusionary and inclusionary rhetoric, the political system could be polarized by the struggle between "us" and "them" (Stavrakakis, 2018). Populist and anti-populist politics frame the political system as divided between two parties and party-blocs or where one side is different from the other and is opposed to it (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Hence, populist politics is expected to trigger citizens' perceptions of polarization in electoral competition, where "political discourse is often reduced to language vilifying the opponent and reducing them to the "inferior" Other by stripping them of any morally redeemable quality" (McCoy & Rahman, 2016: 11). Accordingly, I hypothesize the following:

H1: Populist parties will intensify citizens' perceptions of ideological party system polarization.

4.1.2 Populism in Power

Scholars have often highlighted populism's uneasy relationship with representative democracy (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Mény & Surel, 2002). Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012a: 16) argue that populism "can be a corrective or a threat to

democracy,” depending on whether populism is in power or in opposition. The distinction between populism in power and in opposition matters as populists in power can have more room to make arbitrary changes in political system. In contrast, populists in opposition can give voice to people who feel underrepresented and ensure a broader representation of citizens (Rovira Kaltwasser & Mudde, 2012a). Following their theoretical approach of populism in power or in opposition, I examine whether populism’s polarizing effect on citizens’ perceptions of political parties differs depending on whether a populist party is in power. Accordingly, I expect populism’s polarizing impact on citizens will be more prominent in systems with a populist party in power.

Populism in power refers to populist parties’ governmental participation either through forming a government or becoming a coalition partner to the government. Populist parties that have a strong electoral base to manage state apparatus and branches of government, can use political institutions to their advantage. They can manipulate electoral institutions, pressure civil society and media, trigger a constitutional crisis by rewriting the constitution, and use referenda to circumvent parliament (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013; Roberts, 2022). Excessive and arbitrary attempts of populists to breach democratic checks and balances are expected to create a confrontation between the opposition and the ruling elites, widening the populist vs. anti-populist divide and having a polarizing effect on citizens’ perceptions of parties’ ideological positions.

Moreover, populist parties in government have the capacity to shape politics strategically via democratic procedures. Using referendums or legislation, they can bring new voices or issues to the political agenda and implement their preferred policies, which can also be polarizing for the party system. For instance, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) managed to shape the political agenda following its accession to power in a way that the party raised the salience issues, such as unemployment and migrants, that the elites ignored (Fallend, 2012). All Austrian parties, except the Greens, had subsequently adopted increasingly restrictive policies (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Duncan, 2010). It created a schism in the system, with all the parties taking harder stances on asylum vs. the Greens’ demands for greater rights for migrants in Austria. Populist parties in government’s ability to shape the political

agenda is expected to be met with a reaction from other parties that will perceive the populist agenda as a political threat. Populism in government will also widen the ideological distance between parties. Populist party positions are likely to magnify citizens' perceptions of party polarization following the inclusion of populist parties in government. Accordingly, I hypothesize that:

H2: Populism's negative effect on citizens' perceptions of ideological polarization among parties will be larger in systems where populist parties are in government.

4.1.3 Radical Populism

There has been growing attention to the ideological radicalism of populist politics (Bernhard & Kriesi, 2019; Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017) with the rise of right-wing parties in Europe and left-wing parties in Latin America. Right-wing populism mainly includes different combinations of ideologies of liberalism, nativism, and nationalism (e.g., Betz, 1994; Rodrik, 2021). Left-wing populism relies on various forms of socialism and neoliberalism (De La Torre, 2018; March, 2011; Remmer, 2012; Weyland, 1999). Populism in Europe is mostly right-wing (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), although there are left-wing populist parties in Europe as well, such as the Podemos in Spain and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and Die Linke (The Left) in Germany (Caiani & Graziano, 2019).

Both right- and left-wing populism rely on a strategy of political differentiation. Ideological populist parties divide the party system using anti-elite and anti-establishment rhetoric (Roberts, 2022). However, it is important to note that the ideological position of a party on the left-right spectrum is not directly associated with its inclination to use populist rhetoric (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2014). In a study of the content analysis of parties' election manifestos in five Western European countries, Rooduijn et al. (2014) find that populism is employed not only by populist parties but also by mainstream parties on the left and the right. It reveals that the degree of populism rhetoric is not directly related to the ideological position of a party but depends on whether their populist rhetoric accompanies *radicalism*. In a study on parties' press releases in 11 Western European countries, Bernhard and Kriesi (2019) have shown that populism is more frequently concentrated on the radical right and radical left than more moderate areas of the ideological continuum. Likewise, in their analyses of party manifestos of 32 parties

in five Western European countries, Rooduijn and Akkerman (2017) show a strong association between radical parties— both on the right and the left – and populist discourse. They further argue that a party’s degree of populism is determined by its ideological radicalism.

Following these studies, I analyze the association of radical (right and left) populist parties with citizens’ perceptions of party polarization. I expect that the positive effect of populism on party system polarization as perceived by citizens should be stronger when populism is espoused by ideologically extreme political parties. On the one hand, mainstream parties can respond to the rise of extreme populist parties by adopting their exclusionary rhetoric to tap into the issues such as welfare abuse by immigrants or the Americanization of the economic system (Meguid, 2008; Vachudova, 2021). In some countries, such as Hungary and Slovakia, socialist and liberal parties have presented their stances as the struggle against the exclusionary rhetoric and ideological right-wing radicalism of the populist party of the Fidesz-MSP. Such a party stance against the extremism of populist parties has polarized the party system in Hungary and Slovakia (Deegan-Krause, 2012; Enyedi, 2016).

The adoption of populist discourse and alliances between radical populist parties and mainstream parties will likely deepen the existing identities and interests, such as race, class, and ethnicity, among voters. Such alliances will increase the left-right distance among parties that citizens perceive. As conservative parties move rightward to cooperate with the populist radical right and the leftist parties preserve their stance, or leftist parties move leftward (as a response to populist radical left), citizens will perceive more distance between leftist and rightist conservative parties and hence more party polarization. On the other hand, the ideological spread of political parties along the left-right scale affects voters’ closeness to a party. The ideological spread of parties increases voter turnout, as voters abstain from voting when all parties look identical, or there are no distinguishable policy preferences by voters (Sherrill, 1998). Mainstream parties can choose to react strongly to radical populist parties by distancing their policy preferences or rhetoric to make themselves distinguishable in the eyes of voters and keep their electoral base. As leftist parties move to the left and the rightist parties hold their positions unchanged (as a reaction to a populist radical right-wing party), or right-wing parties move further to the right

(as a reaction to a populist radical left-wing party), citizens will likely see larger differences among parties and the level of party polarization perceived by citizens will be higher. All in all, the radical populist parties will shape citizens' perceptions which will see parties ideologically distant from each other. Hence, I hypothesize the following:

H3: The positive effect of populism on citizens' perceptions of party system polarization will be larger when populist parties are ideologically extreme.

4.2 Data and Measurement

I employ cross-national survey data from the CSES dataset Modules 1-5 that includes developed and developing democracies. The nationally representative surveys in this dataset asked respondents about the ideological placement of the political parties in their countries on the left-right dimension. Information on relevant survey items is available for 151 election surveys across 48 countries from 1996 to 2020 (see Appendix J). Given that the data is composed of individuals embedded in election surveys, I use multi-level modeling and control for the country and individual-level factors that have been shown to affect party system polarization in previous research (see Appendix K for descriptive statistics).

4.2.1 Dependent Variable

I measure party system polarization using respondent perceptions of party positions on the left-right dimension, which is useful in measuring issues that are salient to a country's politics at a given point in time (Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Lupu, 2015a). While using this dimension assumes that party system polarization is structured around the left and right, it also captures the major conflicts in the political system and provides "reference points" for citizens to evaluate political parties (Dalton, 2008: 904; also see Dalton, 2011; Inglehart, 1990). Left-right placement of political parties by citizens has proved to be a reliable and valid measure for the purpose of constructing party system polarization (Inglehart, 1990; Knutsen, 1998). The survey item from the CSES data asks respondents to place the political parties in their country on a 0-10 left-right scale. Following previous research (Aaskoven, 2020; Mete-Dokucu & Just, 2022; Wang, 2014), I use these survey items to compute a party system polarization index developed by Dalton (2008: 906):

$$Polarization = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n party\ vote\ share_i \times \left(\frac{party\ score_i - party\ system\ mean\ score}{5} \right)^2}$$

where i stands for individual parties. This polarization index measures how spread out the political parties are in the system on the 11-point left-right scale.

The mean party system polarization, as perceived by survey respondents in 48 nations, is 4.81. Some countries, such as New Zealand and Australia, are more homogenous and have lower perceived party system polarization (a smaller mean) than others, such as Mexico and Romania. Some established countries, such as Sweden ($\mu = 5.56$) and France ($\mu = 5.11$), exhibit high level of party system polarization along with newer or less developed democracies, including Hungary ($\mu = 5.88$), Poland ($\mu = 2.55$), and Romania ($\mu = 2.55$) (see Appendix J).

4.2.2 Independent Variables

Measuring the degree of populism is a challenging task as there are different conceptualizations of populism in the literature (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021). Various studies have investigated to what extent politicians and political parties rely on populist rhetoric (Hawkins et al., 2019; Rooduijn, 2019) in their political speeches (Hawkins, 2010), party media broadcasts (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), and election manifestos (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). Some studies measure populist attitudes and discourse at the mass level using survey research (e.g., Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Bakker, Rooduijn, & Schumacher, 2016; Hawkins et al., 2019) and populism in public debates in the media (Rooduijn, 2014b). Current research has built on these studies and examined how to measure populist attitudes (both at the mass and party system levels) (Castanho Silva, Jungkunz, Helbling, & Littvay, 2020; Jacobs, Akkerman, & Zaslove, 2018; Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck, 2016).

Expert surveys are commonly used to measure the degree of populism of parties and politicians (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021; Polk et al., 2017). They offer consistent, reliable, and valid measurements of the attitudes of parties and politicians as they take multiple sources of populism, including party manifestos and rhetoric, into consideration (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Hawkins & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; Meijers & Zaslove, 2021). Contrary to qualitative research, which relies on a very small

number of experts, expert surveys are based on a collection of expert-based judgments on populist politics, which increases the reliability of the measurement (Benoit & Weisheimer, 2009). Hence, expert surveys can measure subtle variations of populist attitudes among parties, increasing the estimations' accuracy compared to qualitative research (Meijers & Zaslove, 2021; Norris, 2020).

I rely on expert surveys to measure populism at the party level for the following reasons. Following Bergh and Kärnä (2021) and Ginsburgh, Perelman, and Pestieau (2021), this study relies on aggregated data of the populism index for each party in each country's election scores for each party. The independent variable is taken from the *V-Party* dataset²¹ (Lindberg et al., 2022). The *V-Party* dataset asks experts, "to what extent do representatives of the party use populist rhetoric (narrowly defined)?" and record their responses on a scale from zero to one. Aggregated scores of the populism index for each party enable me to create an overall measurement of the populism index for each country-elections and to predict the overall effect of populist politics on citizens' perceptions of party system polarization.²²

Notably, I constructed a populism index for each survey election by calculating an average party populism by adding up each party's populism score. It is a macro-level measure at the level of country-election. In systems where parties rely on more populist rhetoric, average party populism should be higher. I also account for each party's salience in the system by weighting its contribution to the party populism by its seat share.²³ The populism index summarizes the overall populist orientation among political parties within the country election at hand. The *V-Party* dataset's

²¹ For alternative measurements of populism gathered by expert-evaluations, see Appendix L.

²² An alternative way of measuring populism commonly used in the literature is populism degree at the party level. Measuring the effect of a populist party on party system polarization is challenging, as populist politics overall shape not only populist parties' ideological stances and policy preferences but also other parties' ideological positioning and preferences as well as citizens' perceptions of political parties. Hence, a populism index aggregated across parties is preferred over the populism index of individual parties.

²³ I use the seat share each party gained in the lower house elections, as reported by the *V-Party* dataset. Since the *V-Party* project does not ask experts to place every party on the populism scale in the system, an unweighted measure of the populism index will also be misleading in cases where an extensive number of minor parties is omitted. Moreover, an alternative approach would be using the vote share of parties, rather than seat shares. The *V-Party* does not provide a populism score for electoral alliances, and information on vote share for each member of an electoral coalition is missing. The *V-Party* dataset provides information on seat share of each party. Hence, I weighted parties' populism scores by their seat shares.

main advantage is that it relies on a broad operationalization of populism by computing the mean of anti-elitism and people-centrism indexes. Anti-elitism is measured by asking experts, “how important is anti-elite rhetoric for this party?”²⁴ The people-centrism index provides information about the extent to which leaders of political parties glorify the ordinary people²⁵ and identify themselves as part of them (Lindberg et al., 2022). Moreover, it provides systematic and comprehensive data on 1,995 political parties from 1,560 elections in 169 countries from 1970 to 2019. Using continuous scaled measures of populist discourse enables me to capture the extent to which political parties adopt populist strategy and therefore offers a more nuanced measure of populism rather than relying on binary categories of “populist” vs. “non-populist” parties.

Additionally, there is a potential reciprocal causality where polarization may drive the use of populist rhetoric by parties. I therefore use the populism index lagged by one country-election. The average populism score in my sample of country elections is 6.80. Figure 7 plots the difference in the mean values of populism index in my sample, showing a large gap. While some fragile and developing democracies, such as Kenya and Croatia, are at the bottom, the top rankings include some developed democracies, such as U.S. and Canada.

²⁴ In the *V-Party* dataset, elites are defined as a relatively small group of people who have political and/or social power and wealth and have a greater voice in society (or in the international arena) than others (Lindberg et al., 2022).

²⁵ Ordinary people, here, refer to a homogenous group who has a unified political will and whose will should guide politics (Lindberg et al., 2022).

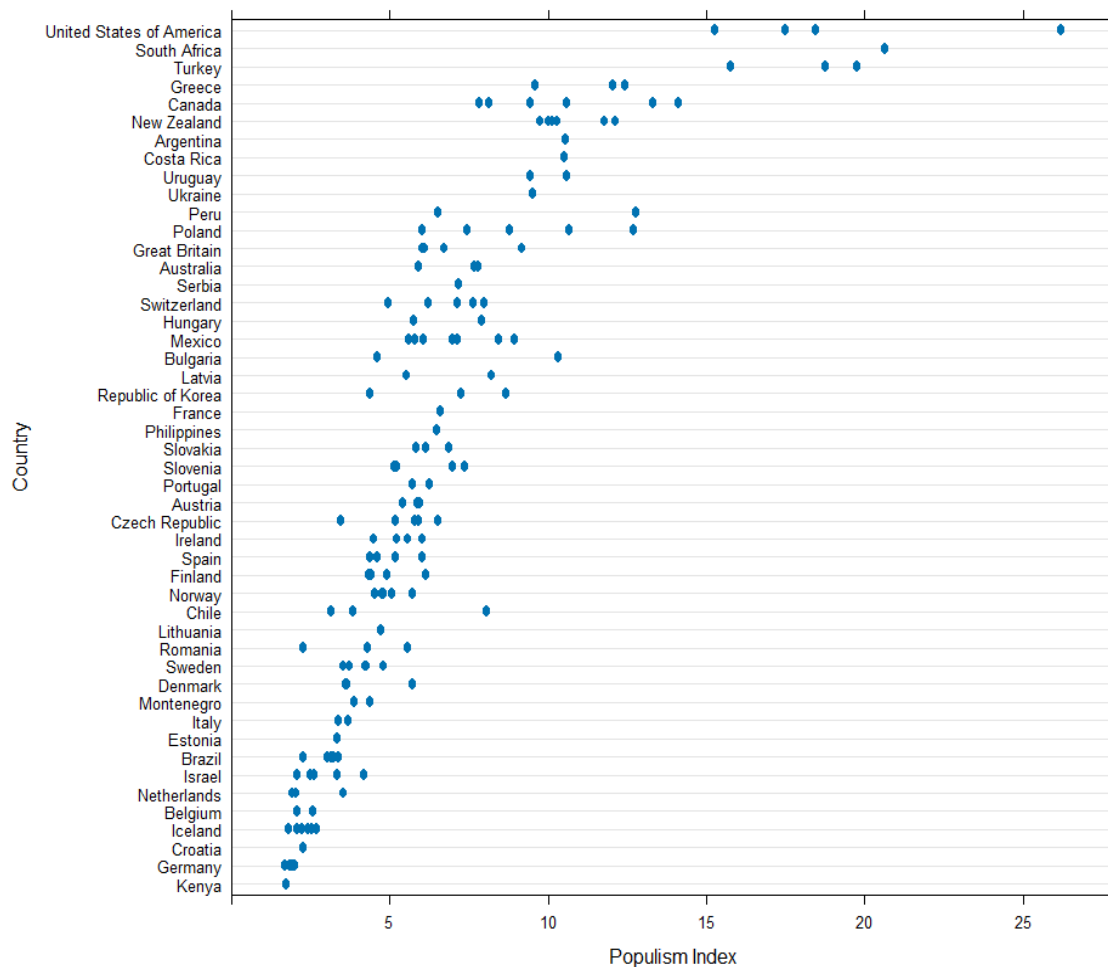


Figure 7: Average party populism by country elections, 1996-2020.

I use the V-Party's government support variable to measure whether the party is a senior or junior partner in government or in opposition. Senior or junior partners in government are coded as populist parties in power. The V-Party dataset offers only a continuous scale (0-10) of populism. I converted the populism index into a binary variable as 0 (0 through 0.49) and 1 (0.5 through 1). I coded 1 if a populist party is in power, i.e., in government or a partner in a government coalition, and 0 if otherwise. The resulting variable is lagged by one election. The effect of populist parties in power on party system polarization would not be observable immediately. Hence, instead of coding the parties' presence in government during the survey year, I used the information from the previous election.

In coding ideologically radical populist parties, I relied on the PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019), the POPPA (Meijers & Zaslove, 2020b) and the GPS (Norris, 2020)

datasets. The PopuList project provides a list of populist parties, radical-right, and radical-left parties in Europe since 1989. For ambiguous and missing cases,²⁶ I adjudicate using the left-right scale of the experts in the CSES.²⁷ These multiple datasets allow me to cross-check the parties' ideological stance and the degree of populist attitudes rather than relying on one data source. In coding country elections for populist parties' *ideological radicalism*, I coded an election 1 if there was any radical-left and/or -right populist party in that election and 0 otherwise (see Appendix N).

4.2.3 Control Variables

My models control for several country-level factors that may confound the relationships between party-system polarization and populism. Following previous research, I control for how fragmented each party system is, as fragmented multi-party systems allow small, fringe radical parties to exist in the party system (Alvarez & Nagler, 2004; Dow, 2001). Parties may opt to place themselves in non-centrist positions in a more fragmented party system, and some systems may be more polarized simply by virtue of having more party choices (Andrews & Money, 2009). The effective number of electoral parties (ENP) measures the number of options individuals have when voting in elections. I use the Laakso and Taagepera (1979) measure provided in the CSES data.

This study examines mixed electoral systems in 48 countries, including both developed and developing democracies. These cases show significant institutional variation in their electoral systems. As highly proportional systems may foster parties to spread across the ideological spectrum, resulting in higher left-right party polarization (Cox, 1990; Dow, 2011; Matakos et al., 2016), I also control for the type of electoral systems. Following previous research (Dow, 2011; Matakos et al., 2016;

²⁶ Different scholars use different conceptualizations of populism. There were ambiguities in classifying radical populist parties. Specifically, in the POPPA dataset, the Golden Dawn was coded as a far-right populist party (according to its populism index and the overall left-right score), whereas the PopuList coded the party as far-right but not populist. Similarly, the Unified Democratic Coalition (Coligação Democrática Unitária, CDU) was coded as a far-left populist party in the POPPA dataset, while it was coded as a far-left but not a populist party in the PopuList.

²⁷ Following Lubbers (2001), Norris (2005), and Van Spanje (2011), I relied on the left-right party placement of experts (on a 0-10 scale) to identify far-left and far-right parties provided in the CSES data. Values that are greater than 8 are assumed to denote far-right parties, and parties scoring lower than 2 are coded as far-left. Since party ideologies may vary over time, I coded the parties as far-right or -left if a party scored lower than 2 or higher than 8 at least once.

Mete-Dokucu & Just, 2022), I employ the Gallagher's (1991) index of disproportionality of electoral systems. Since the dataset includes countries with various democracy levels, I include the democracy score using the Freedom House project, which measures civil liberties and political rights using a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates the highest degree of freedom and 7 shows the lowest degree of freedom. I use the Freedom House index by adding the score of political rights to the score of civil liberties. I inverted the scale so that lower values indicate lower levels of democracy. The scale ranges from 2 (strongly autocratic) to 14 (strongly democratic). In this study, countries ranged from 5 (Turkey 2018) to 14 at their democratic level. Following existing research (e.g., Aaskoven, 2020; Fang et al., 2021), I also include the log of GDP per capita (in 1,000s of constant 2015 U.S.\$, lagged by one year) to control the countries' economic conditions. As income inequality has been found to be an important determinant of party polarization in previous research (Esteban & Ray, 2011; McCarty et al., 2006; Pontusson & Rueda, 2008), I follow existing studies (e.g., Fang et al., 2021; Gidron et al., 2018; Han, 2015;) and measure income inequality using the Gini coefficient index from the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID). The Gini index has a zero value when every family household has the same income, and a value of 100 when one household has all the income (i.e., maximum income inequality) (Solt, 2020).

The CSES data is structured hierarchically, where each respondent is clustered within each country's election. To account for this hierarchical structure, I specify multi-level models. My control variables include individual-level factors previously linked to polarization. These are income, age, gender, education, partisanship, and self-placement on the left-right scale, as well as left-right extremity. Following existing research (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018; Lupu, 2015b), I also control for party identification. The partisanship variable has dichotomous response categories, with "1" indicating a positive answer (partisanship) and "0" a negative one (non-partisanship). Finally, I control for time elapsed since the current election, which is provided by the CSES dataset.

4.3 Results

Is party-system polarization associated with populism? A glance at country-year averages from the CSES data suggests that they are associated with one another.

Figure 8 shows the average party system polarization (aggregated across individuals in each country-election) against populism in each country's election (see Appendix M for examples of country-level association). The scatterplot demonstrates a positive relationship between party system polarization and populism that is statistically significant at a .01 level. As expected, parties are perceived as more polarized when the degree to which populist rhetoric has been used is higher.

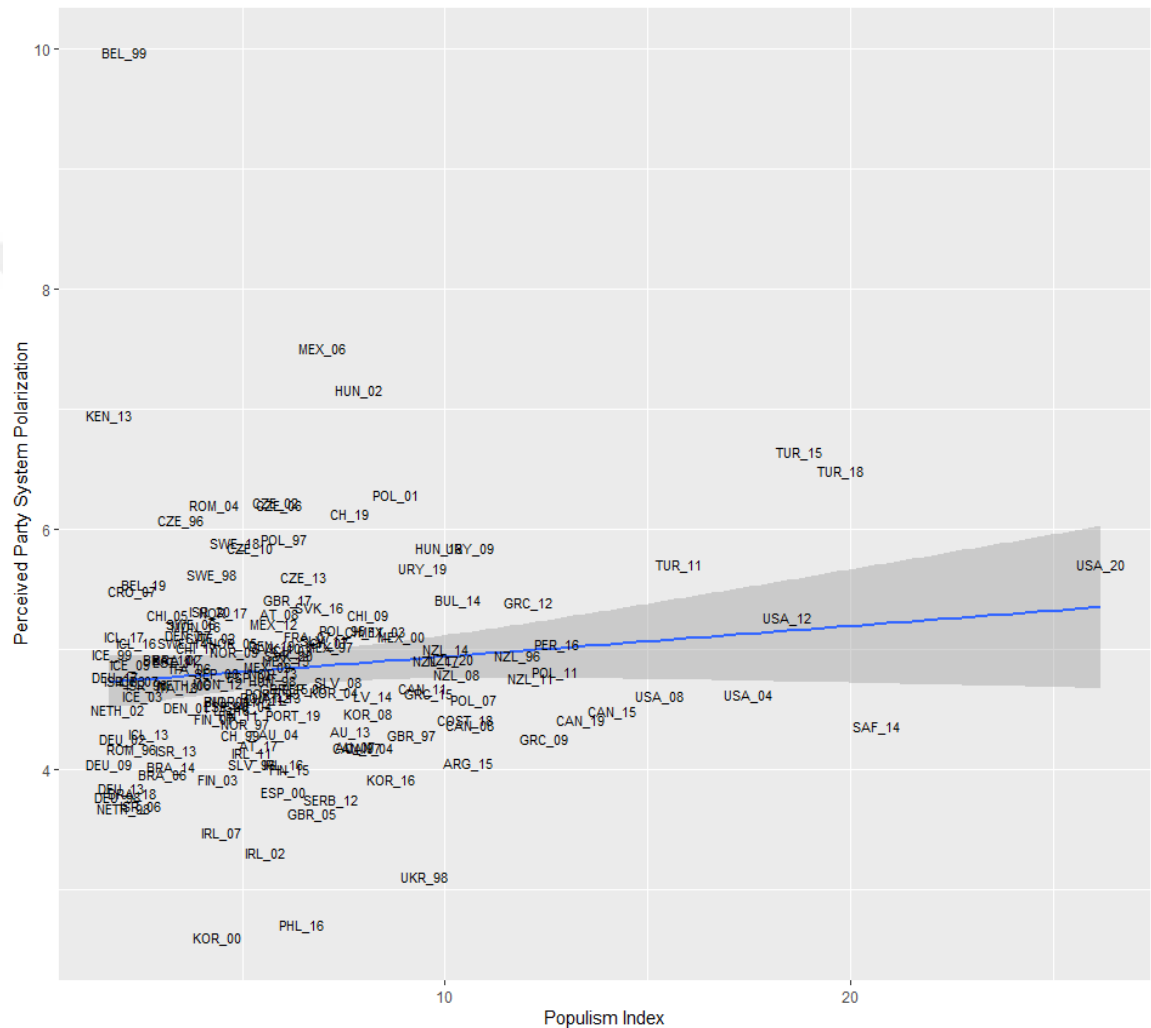


Figure 8: Perceived party system polarization and populism in 48 countries, 1996-2020.

I estimate the relationships between party polarization and the independent variables specified above. The results reported here were obtained by estimating multi-level linear models (with individuals nested within country elections). I first fit the null model in which there is no independent variable but only the intercept to assess the structure of the data. In particular, the null model provides information about the

estimates of the variance among individuals and country elections. The null model shows that the mean party polarization across country elections is 4.89, which is significantly different from zero. Country elections in the sample vary significantly in their mean party polarization (*CI*: 4.72, 5.00). The analyses show that around 16 percent of the variance in party polarization across countries is attributable to country-election level differences.

Overall, the results that emerge are as follows. First, populism is a statistically significant predictor of party polarization, supporting Hypothesis 1. As the populism index increases by 1-point, party polarization increases by .06 (*SD* = .02, *p* < .01). The output also shows that after considering the effect of populism, the estimate of variation in intercepts across country elections is 0.6958, while within-country election variation is 3.2656.

Among the control variables, GDP per capita, income inequality, party system fragmentation, and party institutionalism are statistically significant. In contrast, democracy level and electoral system disproportionality are insignificant. Among the individual-level factors, partisanship, gender, age, income, and left-right extremity are found to be statistically significant. In contrast, left-right self-identification and education do not predict party system polarization. The number of days that have elapsed since the current election is also statistically significant (see Table 3).

Table 3: Multi-level linear models of populism, populism in power, the ideological extremity of populists, and mass affective polarization, 1996-2020.

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Populism	.05 (.02)**	.05 (.02)*	.05 (.02)*
Populism in power	-	.13 (.17)	-
Ideological Extremity		-	.22 (.15)
Left-right self-placement	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Left-right extremity	.39 (.00)***	.39 (.00)***	.39 (.00)***
Female	.15 (.01)***	.15 (.01)***	.15 (.01)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	.02 (.00)***	.02 (.00)***	.02 (.00)***
Education	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.000)***	-.00 (.000)***	-.00 (.000)***
Partisan	.33 (.01)***	.33 (.01)***	.33 (.01)***
GDP per capita	-.02 (.00)*	-.02 (.00)**	-.02 (.00)**

Party system fragmentation	.07 (.04)*	.06 (.04)	.06 (.04)
Electoral system disproportionality	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.02 (.01)
Income inequality	-.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)
Democracy level	-.03 (.06)	-.02 (.06)	-.03 (.06)
Party institutionalization	2.44 (.73)**	2.54 (.74)***	2.21 (.73)**
Constant	2.57 (1.12)*	2.41 (1.12)*	2.67 (1.10)*
Variance of random intercept	0.6958	0.6957	0.6875
Variance of residuals	32.656	32.680	32.656
Number of observations	168,14	164,104	164,32
Number of country elections	151	149	150
Log-Likelihood	-338466.2	-331067.5	-331377.6
Akaike Inf. Crit.	676968.4	662170.9	662793.2
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	677149	662351.1	662983.3

Note: Cell entries are multi-level linear regression estimates, with observations clustered by country election. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 8 below depicts the predicted values of perceived party polarization depending on the level of populism with 95% confidence intervals. For every unit change in the populism index, there is a 0.06-unit change in the party polarization, holding other variables at their means and dichotomous variables at their medians. Specifically, the predicted value of party polarization is 4.78 [4.63, 4.93] when the populism index is around 5. It is 5.34 [5.00, 5.69] when the populism level is around 15. The confidence intervals provide empirical evidence that populism magnifies the degree of party polarization, as I hypothesized.

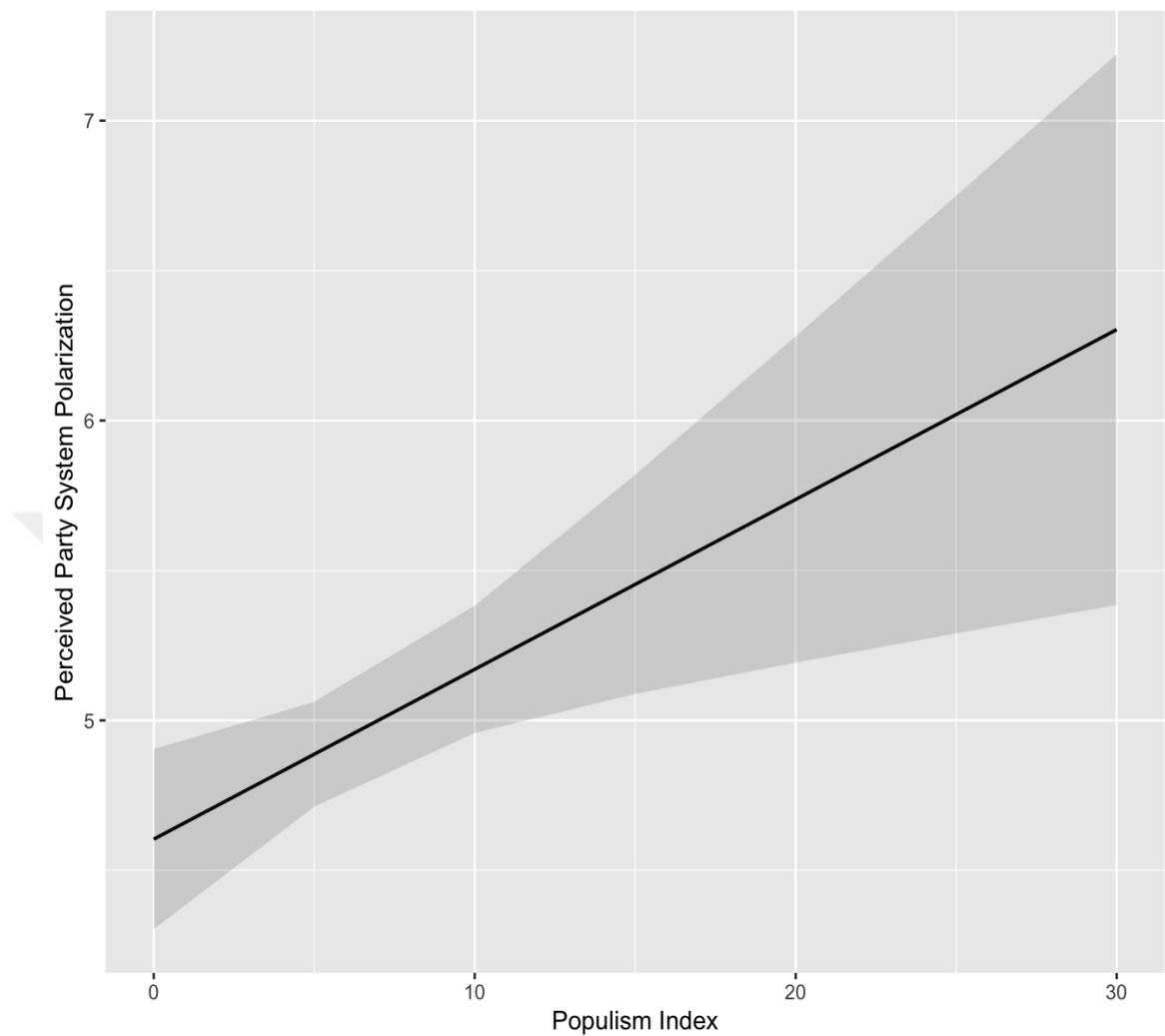


Figure 8: Predicted values of perceived party system polarization depending on populism level, 1996-2020.

Next, I check to see whether populist parties' presence in government has any effect on intensifying party polarization. I found no statistically significant association indicating that systems with a populist party in government are more polarized than those that did not have a populist party in power, holding other variables constant. This result does not support H2 that populism's positive effect on party polarization is larger in systems where populist parties are in government. I also test whether the positive impact of populism on party polarization is larger in a system with radical (left/right) populist parties (H3). The results show that ideological radicalism does not condition the relationship between party polarization and populism. Empirical

analyses do not support my hypothesis that ideological extremity and populism interact in shaping party polarization as perceived by citizens.

4.4 Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between party system polarization and populism. My findings here provide empirical evidence in support of this association. Populism has, in fact, a direct positive effect on subjective party system polarization. As I hypothesized, populism strongly affects the degree to which citizens perceive that parties distance themselves from one another. The literature points out some positive effects of party system polarization on democratic competition, such as strengthening party brands and stabilizing elections by presenting a clear set of choices for voters (Lachat, 2008; Lupu, 2013; Thornton, 2013). While polarization may magnify party brands in voters' eyes and present clearer party choices (Lupu, 2015a), polarization driven by stigmatizing, demonizing, or accommodating populist strategies might be pernicious for the party system and a democratic regime.

I expected that this relationship would be more prominent when populist parties are in government, as populist parties' ability to shape political decision-making in line with their policy preferences might ignite reactions from other parties that may subsequently shape citizen views of political parties. Here I found no empirical evidence supporting this argument. This finding might suggest that populists tone down their populist rhetoric by making their programs more mainstream to be an appropriate coalition partner in government formation with mainstream parties (Rooduijn et al., 2014) or to enlarge their voter base. Democratic checks and balances might indirectly affect populists' ability to shape the political agenda as well. While the FPÖ in Austria has managed to shape the political agenda in line with its policy preferences, democratic checks and balances also limited populists' ability to implement stricter policies on asylum seekers and migrants. The Constitutional Court, for instance, threw out the Austrian parliament's decision on a new policy to withdraw the state's support from asylum seekers who had accepted financial aid from non-governmental organizations in 2003 (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013). Yet, in Poland, a new democracy, the tension between the Constitutional Tribunal and the populist parties in government resulted in the increasing power of

the minister of justice to suspend or remove judges from courts in 2007 (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013).

At the same time, current studies have emphasized that it is the *ideological radicalism* of populist parties that distinguishes them from mainstream parties. In line with observation, I expected that radicalism would be at work in conditioning populism's impact on party system polarization. My findings do not provide empirical evidence for this relationship. This finding might imply that polarization does not mainly stem from radicalness but rather from the populist and anti-populist strategies of political parties. Ideologically moderate populist parties might have the same impact on subjective party system polarization as radical populist parties.

There are certain limitations of this study that should be mentioned here. One limitation is related to measuring populism. While existing measurements capture the degree to which parties and political elites use populist rhetoric, there is no measurement for anti-populist rhetoric by mainstream parties. Future research on measuring the degree to which party elites rely on anti-populist strategies would contribute to the existing literature on populism and polarization. Moreover, even though respondent placements of the parties on a left-right scale are widely used, they can be prone to perceptual biases (Drummond, 2010; Lupu, 2015a; Merrill, Grofman, & Adams, 2001). Future studies might use alternative data sources (such as party manifestos or country experts' placement of political parties on the left-right scale) to assess this relationship.

The findings of this study suggest important avenues for future research. An analysis of the short- and long-term effects of populism on polarization would be one such avenue. In Western Europe, populists are sometimes restrained and are induced to tone down their populist rhetoric by democratic institutions (Rooduijn et al., 2014). Future research on the "taming effect" of holding offices by populist parties (Minkenberg, 2017) and whether this "taming effect" has any effect on party polarization in people's minds would be useful to understand the varying effects of populism on polarization across countries. Moreover, populist parties usually target previously excluded people from social benefits and employment—like the middle and lower classes—and claim to represent these people. Looking into the structural

factors (such as social cleavages and ethnic fragmentation) that create opportunities for populists to rise would be fruitful for future research. One would expect, for example, that in more ethnically fragmented countries, such as Kenya and Zambia, populism to accompany by ethnonationalism and ethnic polarization as ethnicity has been transformed as a political identity by colonial and post-colonial elites (see Cheeseman & Larmer, 2015; Kagwanja, 2009: 366).

Moreover, the literature has often argued that people have become more receptive to populism (Mudde, 2004) as mainstream parties have converged around the center and become less ideologically distinct in many post-industrial societies. Existing literature could compare the degree of party polarization in the periods before and after the rise of populist parties to see whether populism has a polarizing effect on the party system in Western Europe indeed. It would help us to understand whether the ideological convergence of mainstream parties around the center provides a convenient ground for populist parties to rise and polarize the whole party system. I hope that this study will be useful in leading future research in these directions.

CHAPTER V

PARTY SYSTEM AND MASS AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION IN HYBRID REGIMES: THE CASE OF TURKEY

In many established democracies, such as Greece, Austria, and the U.S., mainstream parties rely on populist strategies to target the electoral majorities and to maintain their popular support (Berman, 2021). With the rise of populist parties and leaders, such as Donald Trump, Orban (Fidesz), and Tayyip Erdogan (AKP), in various countries, a growing body of studies has focused on conceptualizing and measuring populism (e.g., Hawkins, 2009; Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Meijers & Zaslove, 2020a; Rooduijn et al., 2014), and explaining populist parties' electoral success (Barr, 2009; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Moffitt, 2016). Research on populism also includes debates on whether right-wing populists and their presence in government constitute a threat to liberal democracy due to populist leaders' exclusionary and authoritarian discourse (Rodrik, 2018; Mansbridge & Macedo, 2019). Because parties/leaders use populist rhetoric as a strategy to appeal to the mass constituencies and distance themselves from mainstream parties (Barr, 2009; Stavrakakis, 2017, 2018), a pressing question is whether these parties' loyal supporters perceive more emotional and ideological distance among parties because of the parties' populist rhetoric in hybrid regimes. This chapter focuses on this question by analyzing the case of Turkey—a country that has recently shifted from a democracy to a hybrid regime.

The central claim in this chapter is that political parties' populist politics influence their supporters' perceptions of left-right ideological polarization and affective polarization. Political polarization has been a subject of scholarly debate in Turkey in

recent years. Existing research draws attention to a profound degree of polarization as one of the salient features of Turkish politics (Karpas, 2004; Özbudun, 1981). Many studies have underlined the increased social and political polarization in Turkey (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2018; Aytas, Çarkoğlu, Yıldırım, 2017; Erdoğan, 2016). While current research underlines the existence of political polarization in Turkey, theoretical reasons and empirical evidence of its rise are still limited in the literature. Moreover, most studies on Turkish politics do not directly measure mass polarization but rather assume, infer it from qualitative data, or are limited to descriptive statistics that provide little insight into its potential determinants (Lauka et al., 2018; McCoy et al., 2018).

This study attempts to fill this gap in existing research by making three contributions. First, empirical research on political polarization is commonly associated with democratic backsliding in hybrid regimes (Orhan, 2022). The explanations behind the rise of polarization that intensify democratic backsliding are, however, limited. This study goes beyond existing literature by focusing on a party strategy—populist politics—raised as a reason behind democratic backsliding (Bauer & Becker, 2020) and its potential effect on political polarization. Second, this study contributes to advancing research on political polarization beyond established democracies and focuses on a hybrid regime that combines democratic and authoritarian features. Finally, this study goes beyond the current literature by considering how populism fosters partisans' perceptions of party polarization in hybrid regimes. This study aims to contribute to the literature on populism and partisans' perceived left-right and affective polarization that has not been, to date, systematically and cross-nationally analyzed.

This paper proceeds in the following manner. The first section discusses the relationship between party populism and partisans' perceived ideological and affective party system polarization. Then, I explain how partisanship, as well as populism, has been influential in the Turkish party system. In the following section, I describe the data and measures and then present the results of my empirical analyses. In the final section, I discuss the implications of my findings on hybrid regimes and offer avenues for future research.

5.1 Mass Affective and Party System Polarization in Hybrid Regimes

A hybrid regime or electoral authoritarianism combines some elements of democracy and authoritarian rule. It refers to political systems with multi-party elections with some levels of uncertainty and competition and authoritarian elements, such as suppressing the opposition, intervening in free and fair elections, and limiting the organization of opposition in civil society (see Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2002; O'Donnell, 1996). The unstable democratization process in hybrid regimes is often attributed to the institutional and party system weaknesses displayed by electoral volatility, fragmentation, as well as political polarization (Barnes, 1998; Levitsky & Loxton, 2012; Weyland, 1999). Accordingly, some scholars suggest that political polarization is more evident in hybrid regimes than in established democracies (Handlin, 2018; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021). A growing body of research provides evidence of party system polarization in hybrid regimes in Latin America (Coppedge, 1998; Moraes, 2015; Moraes & Béjar, 2022; Singer, 2016) and new or developing democracies in Central Europe (Pardos-Prado & Dinas, 2010).

Current research underlines that the democratic decline in hybrid regimes or developing democracies is considered a consequence of party system polarization (Enyedi, 2017; Tepe, 2013; Warburton, 2020); however, the causal mechanism by which severe polarization leads to democratic erosion is not clear. Moreover, the factors behind mass affective polarization in hybrid regimes have been subject to limited systematic evidence as well. Some studies provide evidence of mass affective polarization using descriptive case studies that provide little insight into its potential determinants (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019; McCoy & Somer, 2019). Existing research also explains ethnic polarization in Eastern Europe (Evans & Need, 2002) and mass polarization in Latin America (Svolik, 2019). While polarization in hybrid regimes is often pronounced in existing research, we are still in the dark with respect to causal mechanisms behind polarization in hybrid regimes. This study aims to contribute to current research by analyzing the patterns and determinants of affective and ideological polarization as perceived by partisans in the case of a hybrid regime—Turkey.

5.1.1 Populism and Partisans

I argue that citizen attitudes and perceptions toward political parties are based on two important factors—populist strategies and partisan support. Following Anderson and Just (2013: 338), this study considers party identification as “the channel that allows parties to communicate their positions to partisan supporters effectively.”

Partisanship refers to an adherence of voters to particular parties that tends to be stable over one’s lifetime (Klar, 2014; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021, see also Blais et al., 2001). It can be defined as citizen attachment to parties (Dalton & Weldon, 2007). Following the Michigan model of electoral voting, partisanship is typically conceptualized as a social attitude involving an affective, long-term, and psychological attachment (see Campbell et al. 1954, 1960; Huddy, 2001, 2003; Huddy et al. 2010). Another approach to partisanship has challenged the idea of partisanship being more or less consistently stable over time. According to the rational actor approach, developed by Fiorina (1981), party identification reflects individuals’ rational evaluations of candidates/parties, and cognition, rather than affect, constitutes the main component of party identification (see Achen 1992, 2002; Fiorina, 1981; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Citizens can make rational evaluations by using the information about parties, and party identification relies on individuals’ retrospective evaluations of political parties (i.e., short-term factors such as assessing government performance) rather than a long-term psychological sense of group identity (Thomassen, 2005).

The literature on partisanship initially focused on the American context analyzing the psychological identification with the Democrat Party or the Republican Party (Campbell, 1954, 1960; Fiorina, 1981). The concept is subsequently analyzed in other regions, such as Central Europe (Barton & Döring, 1986; Blais et al., 2001; Dalton, Flanagan, & Beck, 1984) and Southern and Eastern Europe (Enyedi & Todosijevic, 2009; Lisi, 2014). Moreover, recent findings suggest that partisan attachments have become more salient in hybrid regimes such as Turkey (Çakır, 2020; Laebens & Öztürk, 2021) and Latin America (Lupu, 2015b; Lupu & Stokes, 2010).

Partisanship is important in shaping citizens’ perceptions and attitudes toward parties, but attitudes toward parties may also shape partisanship. Citizens are uncertainty minimizers (Koch, 2003) and can decrease the cost of acquiring

knowledge about parties and candidates and base their political decisions on partisan attachments. Partisan labels and cues allow citizens to devote fewer resources, such as time and cognitive effort, to acquire information about candidates or parties (Marinova, 2016). For instance, in their survey experiment, Schaffner and Streb (2002) examine the effect of partisan information by comparing vote preference questions that provide party labels with those that do not. Their study shows that providing party labels increases the likelihood of a respondent stating a vote preference for either candidate.

In this study, party identification shaping voters' political attitudes and engagement with politics (Carsey & Layman, 2006; Wagner, 2021) is considered as the channel between parties' populist politics and increasing inter-party hostility or mass affective polarization. The more recent social identity approach, developed by Greene (1999, 2004), explains partisan attitudes with self-perceived belonging to a particular group. According to this approach, partisan attitudes "are a natural psychological outgrowth of self-perceived membership in a political party" (Greene, 2004: 138). People categorize parties into "us" and "them" and accentuate their perceptual differences to favor their group (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Existing studies emphasize that the prerequisite of hating or disliking an out-group is belonging to a group (see Tajfel, 1974). Partisans tend to attribute more positive feelings, show favoritism for the in-group than the out-group, and are more willing to cooperate with the in-group than the out-group members. These self-perceptions result in emotional and attitudinal biases in perceiving political parties (Greene, 1999; Turner et al., 1987).

Following this theoretical reasoning, I expect partisans to perceive more ideological party polarization and affective polarization in their country than non-partisans. Affective polarization for partisans is the extent to which they have a) negative out-group affect toward other parties and their supporters and b) positive in-group affect toward their party and its supporters (Iyengar et al., 2012; Wagner, 2021). Through party identification, citizens obtain "a strong sense of solidarity with their own reference group and a corresponding social distance from out-groups" (Westwood et al., 2018: 332, see also Dunning & Harrison, 2010), as party identification magnifies the "us" vs. "them" notion.

Affect toward parties as groups has long been accepted as a significant feature of partisanship (Campbell et al., 1960; Green et al., 2002; Abramowitz & Webster, 2016). Research on partisanship argues that party supporters tend to perceive opposing parties and their supporters as very different from themselves with regard to their political values and beliefs, ideological stance, and social characteristics (Mason, 2015). Abramowitz and Webster (2018), for instance, analyze the relationship between partisanship, affective evaluations of presidential candidates, and voting behavior using the ANES data. Their study suggests that when partisans have strong affective evaluations for their support candidate, they are likelier to vote loyally over multiple elections for their party's candidate. Accordingly, partisans are expected to show favoritism to their party, while exaggerating perceived negative differences to derogate other parties and their supporters.

Moreover, partisans can be divided along their left-right continuum, enhancing *ideological polarization* (Wilson, Parker, & Feinberg, 2020). Party attachment is considered as a dominant predictor of an individual's left-right placement (Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen, 1997, 1998). Current research suggests that partisans perceive the ideological distance between their party and the opposition parties to be far wider than it actually is—a phenomenon called *false or perceived polarization* (Keltner & Robinson, 1993, 1996; Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995; Westfall et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2020). These studies show that while partisans believed that their opponents were biased and extremist, partisans overestimated the magnitude of political polarization. Hence, partisans are more likely to perceive a large ideological distance between parties than non-partisans.

The main assumption of this chapter is that political parties' cues in their populist rhetoric reinforce in-group vs. out-group distinction among partisans. The opinions that parties/leaders express are often useful cues for their supporters to evaluate political parties (Dalton, 2013; Tetlock, 1993). Similarly, research on populism suggests that identification with the party/leader is essential for populism to draw the line between "insiders" and "outsiders" (Aytaç, Çarkoğlu, & Elçi, 2021; Panizza, 2017), as leaders seek to mobilize the masses through this populist rhetoric. Populism, in essence, discursively creates in vs. out-groups. Parties' populist rhetoric

deepens the in-group vs. out-group distinction in society by igniting a sense of belonging to a group distinct from the one they dislike or hate. While deepening the distance between two groups by excluding outsider groups and elites, populism strengthens the bond and solidarity among the group members. The Manichean discourse used by populists facilitates cognitive mechanisms, such as party cues or leaders' rhetoric, by categorizing parties as "insiders" and outsiders". Populism oversimplifies the electoral competition as the struggle between "us" vs. "them" and reduces complexities stemming from party competition.

Partisans amplify differences across "us" vs. "them" categories, assuming that parties and their supporters from the "them" category are more different than they are compared to non-partisans. Partisans also underestimate the differences within the "us" category, assuming that individuals from their own category are more similar than individuals belonging to the out-group (Corneille & Judd, 1999; De Langhe & Fernbach, 2019; Fernbach & van Boven, 2022). Current literature often depicts populism as affiliated with emotions (Fieschi, 2004; Rico, Guinjoan, & Anduiza, 2017). Accordingly, partisans will perceive a larger distance between populist and mainstream parties as populism divides them as "us," the people, the many, good, pure, and honest, vs. them, the elite, the 1%, evil, corrupt, and the establishment (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Stavrakakis, 2017, 2018). When populism relies on moral divisions by dividing the politics into a simplified notion of "us" and "them," it can magnify partisans' emotional reactions toward opposing political parties, such as anger and dislike. Political parties' cues in their rhetoric provide such cognitive tools for partisans and accentuate the "us" vs. "them" mentality. Accordingly, I hypothesize the following:

H1: Political parties' populism magnifies their partisans' perceptions of affective polarization.

Moreover, the Manichean discourse as a cognitive mechanism is expected to be more evident among partisans as partisanship has significant implications for seeking and processing information (Druckman, Peterson, & Slothuus, 2013; Lerman & Acland, 2020; Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010). Essentially, partisans will be more exposed to parties' populist rhetoric as they are "more likely to search the information that strengthens their preexisting beliefs, "more heavily weigh and more easily recall

information that is congruent with what they already believe, and view evidence as being stronger if it is confirmatory” (Lerman & Acland, 2020: 228). The main mechanism is selective exposure to information (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2021). Partisans tend to favor information that strengthens their opinions and join groups formed around their shared beliefs, attitudes, and narratives in an echo chamber (Cinelli et al., 2021). An echo chamber can be instrumental in reinforcing existing opinions within a group, moving the entire group to more extreme positions (see Bakshy et al., 2015; Cinelli et al., 2021; Sunstein, 1999).

Partisans’ selective exposure to biased information is also related to party persuasion, which refers to party supporters’ adopting different attitudes in response to cues from parties and candidates (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018). Parties rely on “controlled” communication strategies to promote their party, candidate, or leader. They strategically exploit some political circumstances, such as public concern over crime and unemployment, biased media coverage, and divided opposition (Rico et al., 2017). Current research shows that political persuasion and partisan differences in media preferences can influence voting behavior. DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007), for instance, show that after the introduction of Fox News—a Republican-leaning TV channel—to several cable markets, the Republican Party’s vote share increased through the mechanism of political persuasion. Their study implies that the existence of biased news could lead to an “echo chamber” where partisans reinforce and strengthen their perceptions of parties (Martin & Yurukoglu, 2017). A study by Martin and Yurukoglu (2017) also shows that watching the Fox News Channel for 2.5 additional minutes per week increases the vote share of Republican vote shares by 0.3 points. Moreover, their empirical analyses suggest that removing Fox News from the channel list would have decreased the Republican votes by over six percent in 2008.

Considering selective exposure to information and the party persuasion effect, it is plausible that partisans carry more biased perceptions of political parties and attribute the more extreme ideological positions to parties (Iyengar et al., 2012). Moreover, parties’ populism will magnify their partisans’ left-right polarization. As a party strategy, populist parties usually (re)politicize social, political, or economic grievances, i.e., welfare abuse, unwanted migrants, and increasing crime and

unemployment rates, bringing together a set of ideologies such as socialism and nationalism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). By nature, populism attaches itself to other “thick” (full) ideologies, such as socialism (see, Remmer, 2012; Mudde, 2007), nationalism (Collier & Collier, 1991; Mansfield & Synder, 2002), and (neo)liberalism (Aslanidis, 2016; Pauwels, 2010; Roberts, 1995; Weyland, 1996, 1999). Hence, populism has been associated with various concepts, such as nativism and Euroscepticism (Rooduijn, 2019), and is described as “an empty box waiting to be filled with programmatic substance” (Hawkins et al., 2012: 4). By tapping into existing social and political cleavages (Barr, 2009) and attaching themselves to various ideologies, populist parties “polarize the political system by mobilizing segments of the electorate that are angry with the current state of affairs against the “corrupt” elite” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018: 1682).

Populist parties provide cues by tapping into certain values, such as conservatism, family, and God, to mobilize the masses and strengthen their loyal voter base, i.e., partisans (LeBas, 2006; McCoy & Rahman, 2016; Palonen, 2009). For instance, in a study using the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* data on party positions, Vachudova (2019) shows that party polarization in Hungary has widened the social-cultural dimension between cosmopolitan liberals and nationalists since 2010. This social-cultural gap is associated with Fidesz’s populist rhetoric demanding a return to conservative values, such as family, God, patriotism, and order (Pappas, 2014). Consequently, partisans are expected to attribute the more extreme ideological positions to other parties (Iyengar et al., 2012). The “us” vs. “them” rhetoric facilitated through certain values and ideologies, such as nationalism, conservatism, return to family values, and traditionalism, will strengthen partisans’ biased perceptions of the left-right positions of other parties. Hence, I hypothesize that:

H2: Populist politics of parties foster their partisans’ perceptions of left-right party polarization.

5.2 The Turkish Case: Perceived Ideological and Affective Party System Polarization

As a political regime that combines features of both democracy and autocracy, Turkey has had some challenges in its electoral system. Turkish political system has experienced democracy breakdowns with several military interventions and the subsequent closure of political parties (Kalaycıoğlu, 2001, 2013; Sayari, 2002, 2008).

The literature on Turkish politics has argued that political instability, high electoral volatility, and the lack of party institutionalization have been the main obstacles to the consolidation of democracy (Çarkoğlu, 1998; Kalaycıoğlu, 2013; Özbudun, 1981, 2000). Moreover, a growing number of studies have started categorizing Turkey as competitive authoritarianism or electoral autocracy (Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Özbudun, 2015, also see Levitsky & Way, 2002). Suppression of the opposition parties and the masses has been accompanied by deepening political polarization in Turkey. The literature often mentions the growing polarization between the liberals and the conservatives in Turkey (Akçalı, 2011; Kaya & Sunar, 2015). Personalization of power under Erdoğan, the leader of the ruling party, brought decreasing commitment to the rule of law and civil liberties (Akkoyunlu, 2017).

There is growing research on the dynamics of polarization in Turkey (see, e.g., Erdoğan & Semerci, 2018; Erişen & Erdoğan, 2019; Keyman, 2014; Somer, 2019; Yılmaz, 2015). Polarization is also analyzed in different contexts, such as the media (Çarkoğlu et al., 2014), the political elites (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2018), and public debates on political Islam (Akçalı, 2011; Kaya & Sunar, 2015). Existing studies also highlight the links between polarization and democratic decline, political uncertainty (Mete-Dokucu & Just, 2022), and deepening left-right and religious and ethnic cleavages in Turkey (Esmer, 2002; Kalaycıoğlu, 1999; Özbudun, 2000; Somer, 2019; McCoy & Somer, 2019). However, an important theme remains underexplored: the causes of political polarization as perceived by partisans in Turkey. Understanding these causes is important because polarization plays a key role in democratic progress and consolidation in Turkey (McCoy et al., 2018; Tepe, 2013).

Since its electoral victory in 2002, the AKP has won all consecutive general elections (2002, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2018), and the Turkish party system has substantially shifted to a hegemonic party system (see Cinar, 2016, 2019).²⁸ Several studies have stated the decline in party switching among voters and electoral volatility from 50 percent in 2002 to 19 percent in 2007 (Gumuscu, 2013; Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2015).

²⁸ A hegemonic party system refers to a system where a major party, with a clear authoritarian tendency, wins consistent electoral victory in three consecutive elections (Sartori, 1976). While hegemonic party system resembles predominant party system, in the former, the hegemon party can use patronage, control media, and coerce the opposition, hindering a democratic competition.

The decline in electoral volatility shows a voter's tendency to support the same party over multiple elections (Yardımcı-Geyikçi, 2015), which may be due to an increase in partisanship in Turkey (see also Kalaycıoğlu, 2008). Party identification may also be an outcome of party clientelist linkage with Turkish voters. Çarkoğlu and Aytaç's (2015: 549) study suggests that the incumbent AKP directs its focus on vote-buying toward strong partisan voters rather than weak partisans or non-partisans. Moreover, a survey study by Erdogan (2016) shows that Turkish people do not watch the same channels to get informed about current events. The majority of respondents reported that they find mainstream media outlets "biased" and have generally followed people on social media who have a politically similar opinion. Moreover, 83 percent of respondents oppose the idea of their daughter marrying someone who votes for the party they feel distant from. While this study suggests a high level of mass polarization along partisan lines, the determinants of this partisan polarization remain unclear.

With respect to populism, its roots in Turkey date back to the late 19th century among the Ottoman intelligentsia. They were affected by the Narodnik (*populist* in Russian)—a social movement in Russia starting in the second half of the 19th century (Toprak, 2013). Influenced by the writings of some Ottoman thinkers like Yusuf Akcura and Ziya Gökalp, populism became one of the Atatürk's principles aimed at creating a classless Turkish society in the early Republican period (Bora & Canefe, 2008). In the 1950 national election, the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) succeeded in tapping into popular resentment of some peripheral groups, such as conservatives, and won the first free and fair electoral contest by relying on a populist strategy (Kasaba, 1993, see also Cinar, 2023). Populist politics and leaders have become a feature of Turkish politics with the rise of the populist movement of the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) led by Necmettin Erbakan in the post-1980 period and the populist agenda of the AKP (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019; Türk, 2018b). The National Outlook movement has built on an antagonistic divide between the secular, imperialistic, and materialistic West vs. the moral and oppressed Muslim community (*ümmet*) (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019; Hadiz, 2016).

Many leading members, including R. Tayyip Erdoğan of the incumbent AKP, rose out of the National Outlook movement. With an emphasis on economic stability, the

national will (*milli irade*), and the plebiscitary politics of frequent referendums, the incumbent, R. Tayyip Erdoğan, is considered to be a charismatic populist leader (Türk, 2018a, 2018b). For instance, in the November 2015 general election manifesto, the AKP emphasized that different tutelages, referring to military tutelage in Turkey, have been weakening during the party's governance: “The most important indicator of it is that we have a president chosen directly through national will for the first time in the republican history... Turkey has become demilitarized, the nation’s will has become the dominant will” (*author’s translation*, the Justice and Development Party, 2015: 27; see Lehmann et al., 2022). By the end of 2011, the AKP subjugated the military-bureaucratic-judiciary tutelage through arbitrary constitutional changes and legal battles (Jenkins, 2011; Somer, 2017). The party has increasingly relied on the populist rhetoric of the “national will” (Türk, 2018b) as well as weakening institutions of horizontal accountability (Aytaç et al., 2021).

Although scholars have noted the polarizing nature of populist politics under the AKP governance (see Arat-Koç, 2018; Elçi, 2022; Özpek & Tanriverdi Yaşar, 2018; Yilmaz, 2018), we still have limited knowledge of how populist politics influences political polarization. This is mainly because most of the existing studies have relied on qualitative and descriptive studies that describe the degree to which Erdoğan uses populist rhetoric (Elçi, 2019, 2022), what kind of populism he utilizes (Aytaç & Öniş, 2014; Demiralp, 2018), and the link between his authoritarian tendencies and populist discourse (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019; Selçuk, 2016; Wuthrich & Ingleby, 2020). This study contributes to the current debate on political polarization and populism in Turkey by examining whether parties' loyal supporters perceive more emotional and ideological distance among parties because of the parties’ populist rhetoric.

The Turkish experience of populism under the AKP governance has been characterized by a Manichean struggle between us—the conservative, pious “people” vs. them—the secular-republican “elites” (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019; Aytaç et al., 2021; Taşkın, 2012). Populism is attached to ideologies of Islamism and nationalist conservatism in Turkey (Taşkın, 2012). The AKP has been characterized by right-wing populism with its “emphasis on pro-capital policies and general neglect of labor interests, and a rather reactive and conservative macroeconomic policy-making” (Aytaç & Öniş, 2014: 49). The elites are described as Western-oriented people who

are ignorant of the people's values and demands and the will of the people (Bora & Erdoğan, 2006). They are accused of being disconnected from the will of the people. The "people" are commonly referred to as the conservative majority by the AKP (Bora & Canefe, 2008). The elites, "the enemies of the people," are portrayed as the Republican elites involved in the army and the Constitutional Court (Dinçşahin, 2012). After 2011, with the suppression of the military and the judiciary, the main opposition party, the CHP, academics, the media, and intellectuals, who are portrayed as elites, criticized the authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019).

Populist politics have been accompanied by eroding democratic institutions and rising authoritarianism in Turkey (Aytaç et al., 2021; Esen & Gumuscu, 2016; Öniş, 2015; see also Levitsky & Loxton, 2012, 2013). Erdoğan has heavily favored a majoritarian understanding of democracy along with a direct and plebiscitary linkage between the people and the leader (Aytaç & Elçi, 2019). His disdain for horizontal accountability is followed by institutional changes, including constitutional amendments, reliance on omnibus bills (*torba kanun*)—where many unrelated laws are passed together in the parliament (Akkoyunlu & Öktem, 2016), and the adoption of the presidential system. As the president of Turkey, Erdoğan has relied on executive decrees that were passed without legal scrutiny (Esen & Gumuscu, 2017). Aytaç and Elçi (2019: 101) note that Erdoğan's increasing popularity and weakening institutional checks and balances "opened up a wide political space for him to push further his populist agenda."

The literature also mentions how the AKP's populist strategy has divided society into two antagonistic groups. Plebiscitary linkages founded through frequent referendums under the AKP governance are also linked to a polarized political environment. Atikcan and Öge (2012), for instance, show that the 2010 referendum polarized the political spectrum when the referendum was degraded into the yes/no camps. Erdoğan's populism is referred to as exclusionary, anti-constitutional, and polarizing by relying on three approaches, "capture public discourse, nurture clientelism, and undermine institutions" (Rogenhofer, 2018: 131). The populist rhetoric used by political parties took advantage of the social-cultural dimension between cosmopolitan liberals and nationalist-conservatives in Turkey.

The AKP's populist rhetoric demands a return to conservative values, such as family and order, by creating a pious generation that would serve the party's ideological goals (Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018) and reviving the Ottoman culture (Lüküslü, 2016; Öncü, 2007). In the 2018 election manifesto, for instance, the AKP emphasized the importance of policies that can strengthen family values: "As the AKP, we consider the family institution, whose power and values have been eroding in the world, as an important policy space for our nation's survival and social future" (*author's translation*, the Justice and Development Party, 2018: 99; see Lehmann et al., 2022). Populist discourse accompanied by conservative values is associated with a rising culture war between liberals on the left and conservatives on the right at the party and mass levels in Turkey (Kaya & Sunar, 2015).

Moreover, populism has been instrumental in tapping into existing cleavages not only for the AKP but for other parties as well. The People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP), a pro-Kurdish party, is usually identified as a (left-leaning) populist party in the literature²⁹ (Elçi, 2019; Tekdemir, 2016). The HDP has adopted anti-establishment appeals by emphasizing the "people" (Tekdemir, 2016). A study using quantitative content analysis of political leaders between 2011 and 2019 shows that the HDP's populism gradually increased by utilizing anti-elitist and anti-establishment rhetoric between 2017 and 2019 (Elçi, 2019). For instance, in the 2018 general election manifesto, the HDP announced that "the AKP had prospered only a handful of its partisans with its economic policies throughout its 16 years of governance. The palace [referring to the AKP] had recreated itself partisan billionaires and global construction firms" (*author's translation*, the People's Democratic Party, 2015: 24; see Lehmann et al., 2022). There were 32 more mentions of the name "AKP" in the HDP manifesto, while the CHP's name was not mentioned at all. The HDP manifesto indicates that the party's anti-elite and establishment rhetoric mainly targeted the incumbent party. Rather than relying on an anti-populist rhetoric, the CHP also initially utilized the antagonistic

²⁹ As different scholars rely on different conceptualizations of populism, some scholars do not consider pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey as populist parties. For instance, in their study, Aytaç and Elçi (2019) rely on Barr's (2009) definition of populism which emphasizes plebiscitarian linkages as a core element of populism. Their study does not classify pro-Kurdish parties as populist parties.

rhetoric by adopting a polarizing strategy and situating itself on the side of the opposition pole (Gürpınar, 2022). In 2008, the CHP applied to the Constitutional Court on several grounds, claiming that constitutional changes brought by the incumbent party are anti-secular, and appealing to the Court for changing the “simple majority” principle in the parliament to block the AKP’s nominee, Abdullah Gül. These initial strategies of the CHP to tame the AKP’s rise deepened the secular-conservative cleavages and paved the way for the AKP’s victimization discourse by statist forces, the military and the Kemalist elite, in Turkey (Satana & Özpek, 2020).

This antagonistic division and the Manichean discourse used by political parties are expected in this study to influence partisans’ perceptions of parties. The AKP’s emphasis on liberal, Kemalist, and Western (leftist) vs. conservatism, religious, and nationalist (rightist) values will be reflected in partisans’ negative feelings toward opposition parties and positive feelings toward the parties they feel attached to. Moreover, partisans will perceive more ideologically polarized parties by attributing more leftist positions to the center or leftist parties and more rightist positions to the center or right-wing parties. I, therefore, hypothesize that political parties’ populism magnifies their partisans’ perceptions of affective and left-right party polarization.

5.3 Data and Measures

In this chapter, I test my hypotheses about the role of parties’ populist strategies on partisans’ perceptions of left-right and affective polarization by analyzing data collected at the level of individuals and political parties. I combine individual-level survey data borrowed from the Modules 3-5 of the *Comparative Study of Political Systems* (CSES) project to measure partisanship and mass affective and ideological party polarization with information on populism of political parties from the *V-Party* dataset. The nationally representative surveys in this dataset asked respondents about the ideological and affective placements of political parties in their countries on the left-right and like-dislike dimensions. The individual-level and party-level variables for Turkey are available for five parties: the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP), the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), the Peace and

Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP)³⁰, and the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections.

5.3.1 Dependent Variables

Following current research (Gidron et al., 2018; Iyengar et al., 2012; Wagner, 2021; Ward & Tavits, 2019), I measure *mass affective polarization* in the public with the standard like-dislike question in the CSES data. Respondents are asked to evaluate the political parties in their country in a common module on a 0-10 like-dislike scale (or so-called thermometer scale, i.e., positive or negative feelings toward parties). Lower values on this variable denote more negative affective evaluations of parties. Using the like-dislike question will enable me to identify an overall negative or positive attitude toward political parties, constituting the essence of affective polarization (Wagner, 2021).

I measure individual-level affective polarization at the level of individuals rather than countries. I rely on the like-dislike scale placed by partisans. I do not focus on the affective judgment of various political parties by all voters. I measure individual-level affective polarization using Wagner's formula (2021: 4). For parties j and individual respondent i , mass affective polarization is:

$$Spread_i = \sqrt{\sum_{p=1}^P \frac{(like_{ip} - \overline{like}_i)^2}{n_p}}$$

where p is the political party, and $like_{ip}$ is the like-dislike score placed for each party p by individual i . This measurement is based on the weighted affective polarization to weigh smaller parties less and larger parties more in measuring polarization. The mean affect, weighted by party vote share, is calculated as follows:

$$\overline{like}_i = \sum_{p=1}^P (Vp * like_{ip})$$

³⁰ As a pro-Kurdish party founded in 2008, the BDP joined another pro-Kurdish party, the HDP, in 2014.

All partisan respondents who expressed a positive or negative feeling for at least two parties are included in the polarization measurement. Lower values indicate that all parties have similar likeability, and higher values show that all parties are divided along the like-dislike scale. Mean affective polarization in Turkey ranges from 2.76 in 2011 to 3.18 in 2015, with a small decrease to 3.13 in 2018 in Turkey.

There are several ways of measuring ideological party polarization. The most frequently used measurements are based on content analyses of party manifestos, assessments by experts, and analyses of mass surveys (Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Knutsen, 1998). The two latter strategies have often relied on the left-right scale to measure ideological distances in party positions. In this chapter, I measure party system polarization using partisans' placements of political parties on the left-right dimension. Respondents' placement of political parties on the left-right scale of political parties is accepted as a valid and reliable strategy (Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart & Klingemann, 1976; Lupu, 2015a). While this dimension assumes that party system polarization is structured around the left and right, it also represents major conflicts in a political system and provides "reference points" for citizens to evaluate political parties (Dalton, 2008: 904; also see Inglehart, 1990).

Left-right placement by masses has proved to be a reliable and valid measure for constructing party system polarization (Inglehart, 1990; Knutsen, 1998). The survey item from the CSES data asks respondents to place the political parties in their country on a 0-10 left-right scale. Following previous research (Aaskoven, 2020; Mete-Dokucu & Just, 2022; Wang, 2014), I employ the party system polarization index developed by Dalton (2008: 906):

$$Polarization = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n party\ vote\ share_i \times \left(\frac{party\ score_i - party\ system\ mean\ score}{5} \right)^2}$$

where i stands for individual parties. Party system polarization is calculated using each party supporter's placement of political parties on the 11-point left-right scale. This polarization index measures the political parties' ideological spread in the system. According to the CSES data, perceived party polarization in Turkey declined from 3.88 in 2011 to 3.63 in 2015 and further down to 3.41 in 2018. The mean party

polarization is 3.64. The Turkish party system consistently displays the highest polarization scores compared to other CSES countries (see Appendix J).

5.3.2 Independent Variables

I relied on the following survey question in the CSES data to measure party identification: “Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?” This survey item has been widely used in cross-national studies with multi-party systems as a valid indicator of party identification (Anderson & Just, 2012, 2013; Holmberg, 1994, 2003; Just, 2020). Party identification variable has dichotomous response categories, with “1” indicating a positive answer (partisan) and “0”, a negative one (non-partisan). The percentage of partisans was 73.9 in the 2011 and 74.4 in the 2015 elections. In the 2018 elections, there was a decline (of 8 percent) in the share of partisans.

This chapter relies on expert surveys to measure populism. The populism index for each country’s election is taken from the *V-Party* dataset (Lindberg et al., 2022). The *V-Party* dataset asks experts, “to what extent do representatives of the party use populist rhetoric (narrowly defined)?” and records responses on an interval scale, ranging from 0 to 1. The *V-Party* dataset’s main advantage is that it relies on a broader operationalization of populism by computing the mean of anti-elitism and people-centrism indexes. Anti-elitism is measured by asking experts, “How important is anti-elite rhetoric for this party?”³¹. The people-centrism index provides information about the extent to which leaders of political parties glorify the ordinary people³² and identify themselves as part of them (Lindberg et al., 2022). Using continuous measures of populist discourse enables me to measure the extent to which political parties adopt populist rhetoric and thus provides a more nuanced measure rather than relying on binary categories as “populist” parties.

Additionally, there is a potential reverse causality where polarization may drive the use of populist rhetoric by parties. To address this issue of reverse causality, I use the

³¹ In the *V-Party* dataset, elites are defined as a relatively small group of people who have political and/or social power and wealth and have a greater voice in society (or in the international arena) than others (Lindberg et al., 2022).

³² Ordinary people, here, refer to a homogenous group that has a unified political will and whose will should guide politics (Lindberg et al., 2022).

populism index lagged by one country-election. A glimpse at the change in parties' populism over time (Figure 10) shows that the AKP exhibits the highest mean level of populism index (rising from 0.92 in 2011 to 0.96 points in 2018), which is followed by the pro-Kurdish parties BDP/HDP (from 0.63 in 2011 to 0.64 in 2018). Overall, in all major parties' rhetoric, i.e., the AKP, CHP (0.3 vs. 0.54), and MHP (0.34 vs. 0.46), there had been an increasing trend of populism from 2011 to 2018. In other words, all mainstream parties in Turkey have increasingly relied on populist rhetoric to overtake government positions across elections.

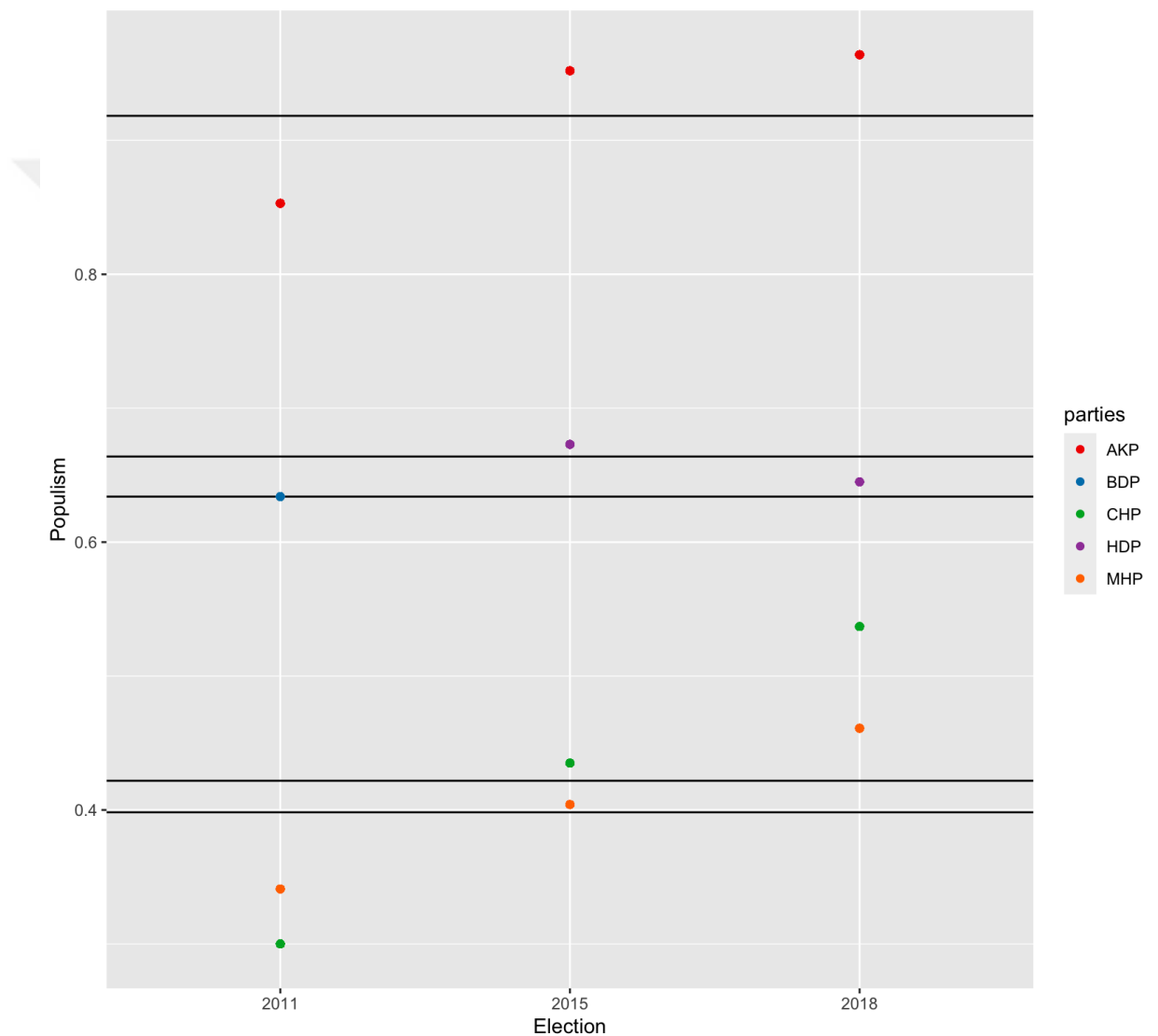


Figure 10: Parties' populist rhetoric used over 2011-2018.

5.3.3 Control Variables

This section describes the additional independent variables used in my model estimations. My models control for several party-level factors that may confound the

relationships between the independent and dependent variables specified above. Following Adams and Rexford (2018), I include seat shares of parties to control for the party size. Party size matters for levels of ideological and affective party polarization. A partisan's perception of parties is more affectively polarized if they perceive positively towards a large party than if they like a minor party. Accordingly, a partisan will perceive more ideological polarization among parties, if they place a major party on left-right scale than placing a minor party (see Wagner, 2021). Data on party seat share is obtained from the Supreme Election Council (*Yüksek Seçim Kurulu*, YSK). Another control variable is the degree to which parties' reputations are widely known (Lupu, 2015a). Partisans need to observe party behavior in order to perceive parties ideologically and affectively more distant. I therefore control for party age provided in the *V-Party* data. Moreover, I included election-year dummies to account for all the macro-level differences that may bias my results.

At the party level, my controls include ideological dispersion of parties constructed through parties' manifesto manifestos. The information on parties' ideological positions is from the *Comparative Manifesto Project* (CMP) dataset (Lehmann et al., 2022). The CMP data is based on content analysis of party electoral manifestos using a classification scheme of 57 issue categories. As the CMP data is derived from official party statements made before elections, it provides an objective indicator of parties' ideological stances in those elections (Bakker & Hobolt, 2013). The left-right dimension (RILE) ranges from -33.84 (for the BDP in the 2011 elections) to 9.37 (for the MHP in the 2018 elections). Following Harteveld et al. (2022), I also control for party ideological families by including dummies for social democratic-socialist parties, nationalist parties, and conservative parties (reference category). The information about party ideological families is taken from the ParlGov database (Döring, Huber, Manow, Hesse, & Quaas, 2023) that provides an indicator whether any given party is left-wing vs. right-wing (see Appendix O).

My control variables include several individual-level factors that were previously linked to subjective polarization and are available in the CSES survey data. These include income, age, gender, and education. I control for individual left-right self-placement and left-right extremity (relative to the country-election median) (see

Granberg & Brown, 1992) and the number of days that elapsed since the last election by the time of the survey, which can influence perceived polarization. As the salience of elections decreases, perceived polarization tends to diminish (see Hernandez et al., 2021).

5.4 Multiple Regression Analyses

As an initial step in my empirical analyses, I analyze election-level changes in mass affective (Figures 11 & 12) and ideological party system polarization (Figures 12 & 13) among partisans vs. non-partisans. Looking across elections, both partisans and non-partisans (2.01 in 2011 vs. 2.29 in 2018) increasingly perceived parties as more emotionally distant from each other. As expected, partisans see a larger affective distance among parties than non-partisans (3.4 vs. 2.16). A further inquiry into partisans of different political parties (Figure 11) reveals that partisans of the incumbent party are overall the most affectively polarized compared to partisans of other parties. On the one hand, comparing the 2011 and 2018 elections reveals a rise in the average score of affective polarization among two major party supporters—the AKP (from 3.62 to 3.85) and the MHP (from 2.46 to 3.84). On the other hand, partisans of the CHP perceive lower affective polarization in the 2011 elections (3.18) than in the 2018 elections (3.02).

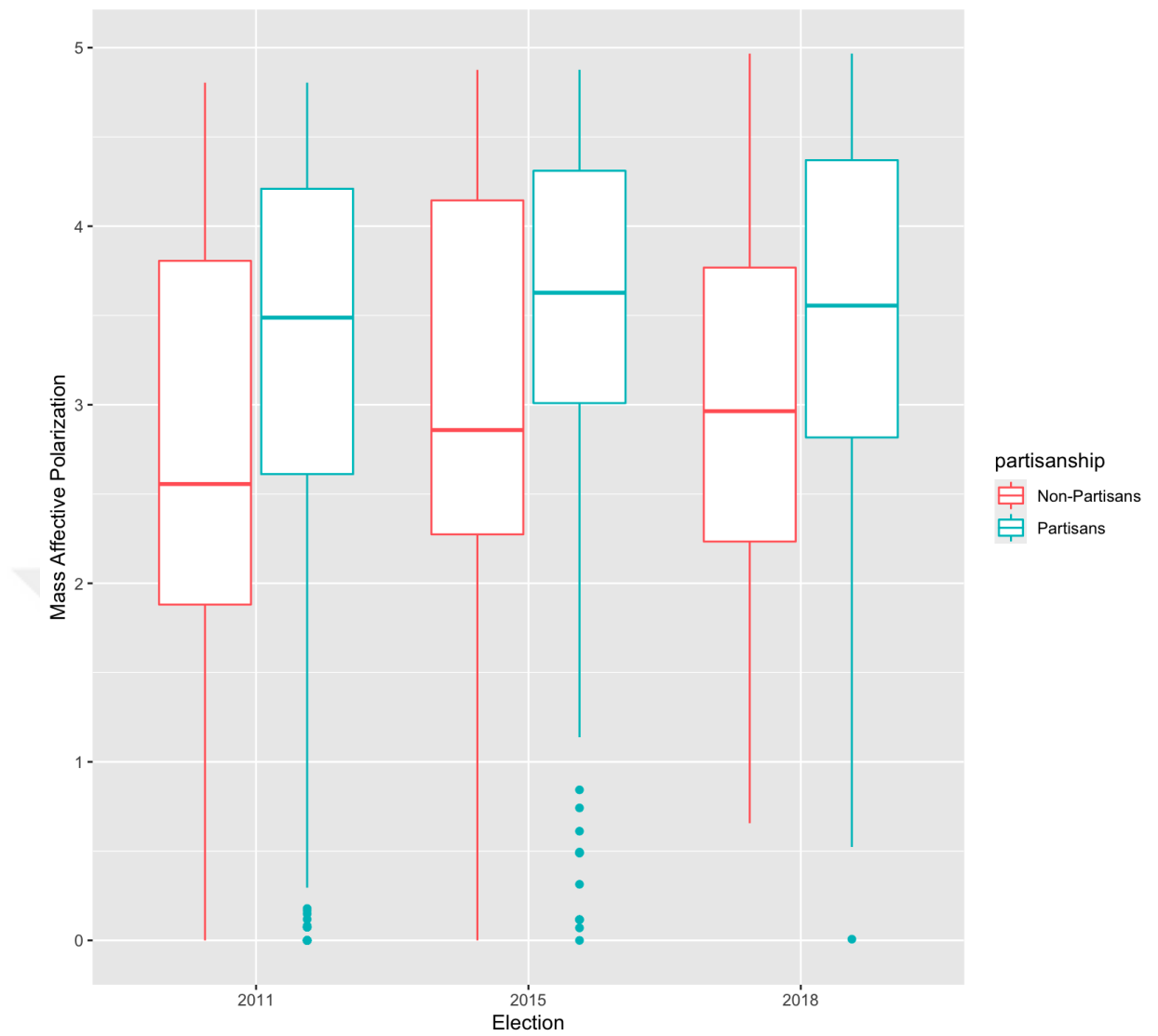


Figure 11: Mean affective polarization as perceived by partisans vs. non-partisans in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections in Turkey.

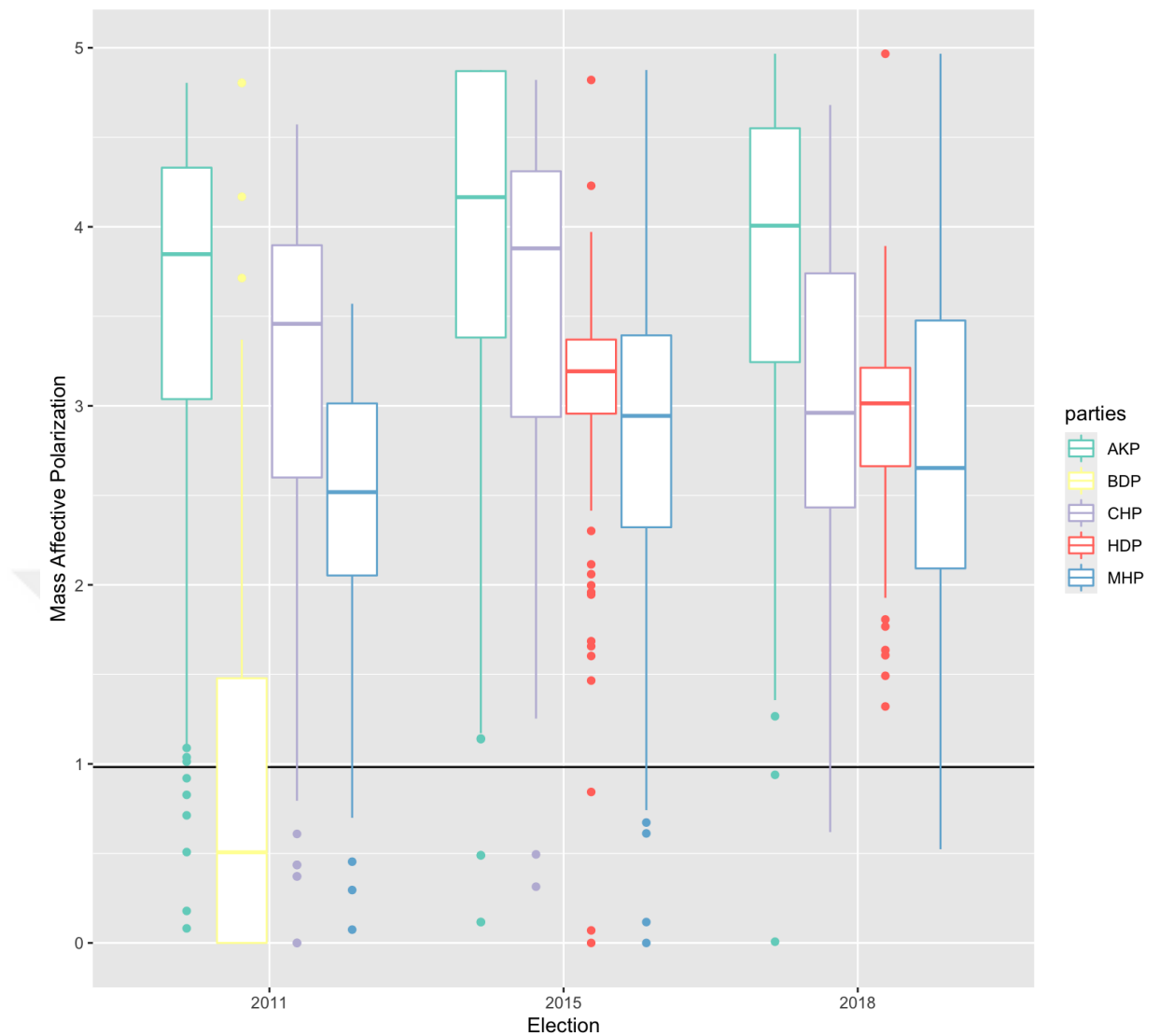


Figure 12: Mean levels of affective polarization as perceived by partisans of different political parties in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections in Turkey.

Descriptive results on ideological party polarization as perceived by partisans vs. non-partisans indicate similar trends. Partisans see parties to be more ideologically polarized than non-partisans across elections (6.44 vs. 5.89). Overall, both partisans and non-partisans also perceive higher levels of ideological polarization (on the left-right scale) than of affective polarization. Comparing the 2011 and 2018 elections, all major parties' partisans share an increasing level of perceived party polarization: the AKP (6.02 vs. 7.01—a change of 0.99 points), the CHP (5.89 vs. 6.37—0.48 points difference) and MHP (5.53 vs. 6.44—a change of 0.91 points). Among the pro-Kurdish parties' partisans, the average perceived party polarization reveals a rise

from 4.14 to 6.32 (a difference of 2.18 points) when we compare the 2011 and the 2018 elections.

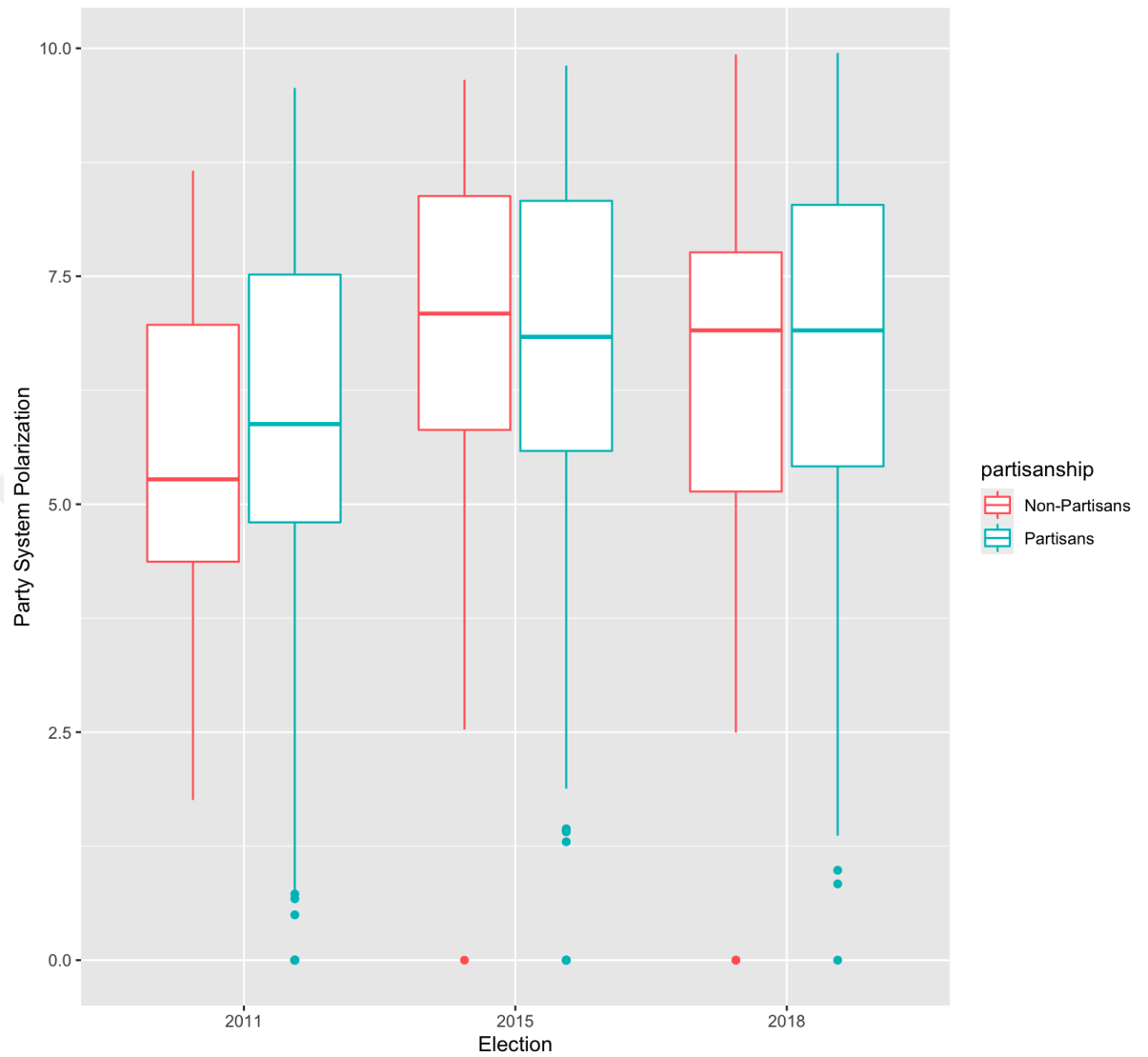


Figure 13: Mean party system polarization as perceived by partisans vs. non-partisans in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections in Turkey.

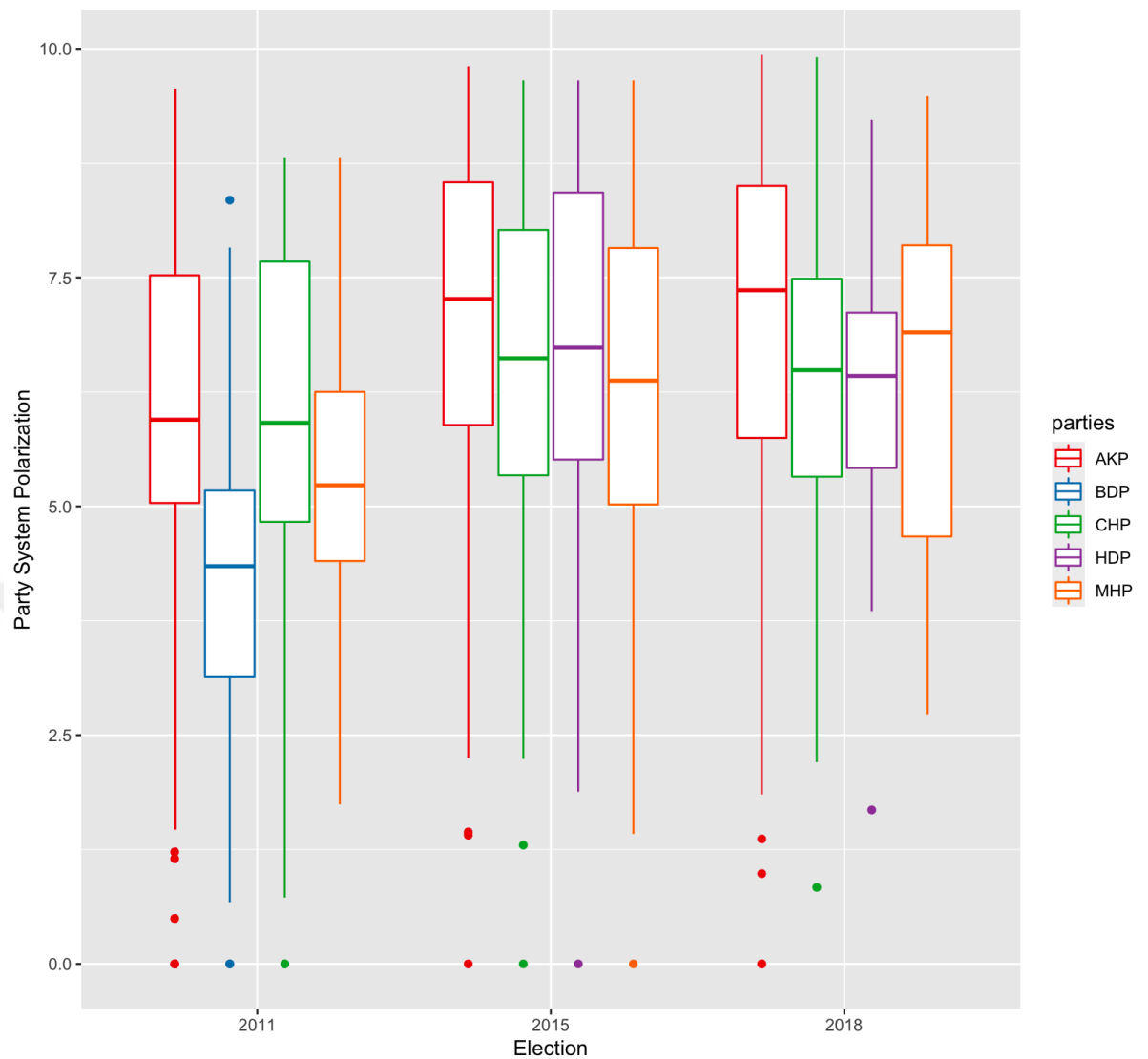


Figure 14: Mean levels of party system polarization as perceived by partisans of different political parties in the 2011, 2015, and 2018 general elections in Turkey.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine to what extent perceived mass affective and ideological party polarization compared among partisans and non-partisans could be predicted by party populism in the case of Turkey (see Appendix P for descriptive statistics). I clustered observations by parties in the OLS regressions to obtain unbiased and consistent estimates. Empirical analyses show that the relationship between partisans' affective polarization and populism is statistically significant $F(15, 1902) = 50.69, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .28$) but negative, which does not support my hypothesis (H1). As party populism decreases, partisans' perceived mass affective polarization increases by 2.26, holding other variables constant (see Table 4 below). Party size, party age, and nationalist party family are

statistically significant, implying that being a large party, a younger party, and holding a nationalist party ideology matter for perceived polarization. Party left-right position (*based on the election manifesto*) and the social democrat and socialist party family are statistically insignificant. Among individual-level control variables, age, gender, the total number of days since the election, and individuals' left-right position are statistically insignificant, whereas education, income, and left-right extremity are statistically significant. These results are robust across different indicators of party institutionalization, i.e., internal party cohesion and party age (see Table 4).

Table 4: Correlates of partisans' perceived mass affective and party system polarization in Turkey, 2011-2018.

<i>Variables</i>	Mass Affective Polarization Model	Perceived Party System Polarization Model
Populism index	-4.56 (1.11)***	-2.01 (2.06)
Election dummies		
2015 Election	1.07 (.13)***	1.20 (.25)***
2018 Election	1.10 (.17)***	1.32 (.33)***
Parties' left-right position	.01 (.01)	.00 (.02)
Party seat share	.03 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**
Party age	-.01 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)
Party ideological families		
Social democrat & socialist parties	-1.17 (.64).	.11 (1.19)
Nationalist parties	-2.11 (.60)***	-.25 (1.11)
Age	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Female	-.07 (.04).	.12 (.08)
Income	-.03 (.01)**	-.05 (.02)*
Education	-.08 (.02)***	.04 (.04)
Left-right (self)	.02 (.01)	.02 (.02)
Left-right extremity	.11 (.01)***	.44 (.02)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.00)	.01 (.00)**
Intercept	5.71 (1.04)***	4.33 (1.93)*
Observations	1,902	1,883
R-squared	0.282	0.2409

Note. OLS regression estimates with observations clustered by parties; standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

I also tested to see whether party populism influence partisans' perceived left-right party polarization. Empirical analyses show that as populism increases, the partisan's perceived party polarization decreases by .32, holding other variables at their means and dichotomous variables at their medians. The association between populism and partisans' perceived party polarization, however, is statistically insignificant $F(15, 1883) = 41.05, p = .81$, adjusted $R^2 = .24$), not supporting my hypothesis (H2). Among election party-level control variables, the parties' left-right placement, ideological party families, and party size are insignificant. Among individual-level control variables, individual income, the time elapsed since last election, and left-right extremity are statistically significant, whereas being female, older age, more educated, and more right-wing are statistically insignificant (see Table 4).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter was designed to investigate populism as a predictor of partisans' perception of mass affective and ideological party system polarization in a hybrid regime of Turkey. Previous research on political polarization also points to the association between political polarization and populism (Enyedi, 2017; Handlin, 2018). Moreover, partisanship shapes citizens' perceptions of parties by providing them with psychological attachments to parties denoting a sense of belonging as in-group vs. out-group (Devine, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012, Iyengar et al., 2019; Miller & Shanks, 1996). Previous research also argues that partisanship has been instrumental in seeking out and processing information (Aytaç et al., 2021; Druckman et al., 2013; Lerman & Acland, 2020; Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010). Parties' populist discourse helps voters to reduce complexities stemming from party competition and this process will be more evident among partisans.

This chapter has underlined two main points with respect to the relationship between populism and perceived affective and ideological party system polarization. First, the results show that high levels of party populism do not affect partisans' perceived party left-right polarization, failing to support my hypothesis. Second, while the results confirm that populism directly shapes partisans' affective polarization, this effect is negative. Populism has a strong negative effect on partisans' affective judgments about political parties, whereas I hypothesized the opposite. These results raise questions about the consequences of populist strategies.

It may be that as biased media coverage, pressure on media, and unstable elections are common problems in hybrid regimes (Stier, 2015), increases in populist rhetoric facilitated through authoritarian policies and unstable electoral competition, such as frequent party switching, can diminish partisans' perceived polarization in hybrid regimes. Institutional weakness, in hybrid regimes, in the form of a weak state and democratic institutions predominantly reflects a fluid and fragmented party system and high electoral volatility. Current research shows that the weakness of parties can facilitate constant in-and-out-party struggle and fighting, frequent party switching, and inefficient policy-making process (Weyland, 1999). The results from this chapter suggest that populism's "us" vs. "them" rhetoric shifts in an unstable electoral competition, which can have depolarizing effects on political polarization as perceived by citizens.

While the AKP attacked the opposition with polarizing populist politics (Somer, McCoy, & Luke, 2021), its enemies shifted over time. Groups, such as the Gülenist Islamists and the Kurdish groups, who were in the "us" group, have become enemies of the nation after the split with the Gülenist faction in 2013-2014. In 2009, the AKP initiated the policy of the "Kurdish opening" (so-called democratic opening or brotherhood project) to disarm the military group—the PKK, and to find a peaceful policy to the Kurdish question. However, the "Kurdish opening" has failed to bring any peaceful resolution and has turned into a disappointment for Kurds and other state actors. To target the nationalist voter base and push the MHP below the ten percent threshold, the government subsequently adopted a hardline approach to the Kurdish question (Kayhan Pusane, 2014). It increasingly targeted Kurdish groups as enemies of the nation. Until 2015, the MHP was depicted as "them" in the AKP's party rhetoric. The AKP, however, moved from propagating for Kurdish opening to allying with the MHP, which used to attack the AKP for its Kurdish opening strategy heavily. Following the 2015 election, the AKP and the MHP have increased their exclusionary nationalist rhetoric to prevent an electoral loss. As Sözen (2019) notes, the government's power and pressure over the media and the judiciary have made it easier for the AKP to shift its political narrative.

Moreover, hybrid regimes tend to exhibit more unstable interparty competition—an indicator of lower party system institutionalization—than most advanced democracies (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006). When parties split, abandon, or join party lists, they create an unstable electoral environment for voters (Marinova, 2016). The Turkish party system has experienced such electoral changes. The growing alliance between the MHP and AKP after the 2015 November (repeat) elections raised opposing views within the MHP. In 2016, Meral Akşener was expelled from the party after she failed to take over the party (Sözen, 2019). The İYİ Party was founded as a nationalist, conservative, and Kemalist political party by defectors from the MHP, including its leader, Meral Akşener, in 2017. Before the 2018 elections, the party made an electoral alliance with the CHP.

In 2012, an opposition party, the People's Voice Party (Halkın Sesi Partisi, HAS Parti)—founded by former members of the Felicity Party—dissolved after their members joined the AKP party lists. Süleyman Soylu, a former member of the opposition, the Democrat Party—joined the AKP. This unstable interparty competition was reflected in the parties' narratives in the media. Both HAS Parti and Süleyman Soylu used to criticize the AKP with allegations of widespread corruption. The AKP, which used to attack these Islamists and opposition groups, shifted its political narrative after they joined the party lists. These shifts in narratives that signal changing cues result in diminishing ideological and emotional distance between parties as perceived by citizens. These shifts in the populist narrative, facilitated by the AKP's rising authoritarian tendencies and democratic decay, and unstable party competition, might have decreased partisans' perceived affective polarization.

Furthermore, when challenged by populist parties in electoral contests, mainstream parties are likely to either adopt an anti-populist strategy (Stavrakakis, 2018) or accommodate their populist strategy (De Jonge, 2019) to fight off the populist parties and keep their electoral base (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Enyedi (2016: 217) argues that “if a party system becomes dominated by parties that pursue populist strategies, then both the relations among parties and the relationship of the party system with its environment will be affected.” The results from this study suggest that the opposition's anti-populist rhetoric can lower partisans' perceived

polarization among parties. The Turkish opposition parties initially tried to curb the AKP's populist politics by accommodating its populist rhetoric on the religious-secular axis—the same strategy used by the AKP (Sözer, 2019). The CHP, however, has shifted its political narrative to active-depolarizing politics (Somer et al., 2021) by forming new electoral alliances. The opposition has adopted an anti-populist stance by “redefining politics based on positive, service-oriented and non-ideological messages” (Somer et al., 2021: 941). The opposition's electoral strategy was to form a democratic block between ideologically disparate parties—“a cooperative competition strategy” (Sözen, 2019). The broad coalition of opposition, including socialists, nationalists, and Islamists steered by the CHP, was united.

The CHP, who had a hard stance against Kurdish demands, such as education in their native language, also reconciled with pro-Kurdish parties. Alevis—a minority group practicing a heterodox branch of Islam—have also become more prominent in the CHP's political discourse (Gürpınar, 2022). The opposition's strategy has aimed at defusing political polarization by redefining politics with an axis of economic development and social class rather than ethnic and religious cleavages (Somer et al., 2021). This depolarizing anti-populist strategy can diminish perceived polarization by partisans. While these anti-populist strategies make the whole party system populist, partisans can actually see less inter-party emotional distance due to anti-populist party strategies.

In measuring populism, while existing research and measurements are based on capturing the degree to which parties and political elites rely on populist rhetoric, there is no measurement for anti-populist strategies by mainstream parties, which may explain the unexpected negative effect of party populism on perceived political polarization. Despite the secular-conservative cleavage in Turkey, an ideologically diverse opposition—the social-liberal secularist CHP, the nationalist IYI, and the Islamist SP—steered their cooperation based on “balanced progressivism and centrism” (Gürpınar, 2022: 522) and common grievances resulted from Erdoğan's populism (Sözen, 2019). If the opposition parties respond to the polarizing populist narrative with a depolarizing strategy of cooperation and competition by redefining politics with positive and non-ideological rhetoric (Gürpınar, 2022; Sözen, 2019)—as the opposition parties incrementally achieved following the 2015 elections in

Turkey, anti-populism can have a negative effect on perceived polarization. Future research may benefit from a comprehensive conceptualization and measurement of anti-populist strategies and the extent to which these strategies have contributed to ideological and affective party system polarization as perceived by citizens.

Moreover, in measuring partisans' party ideological polarization and affective polarization, I relied on the left-right placement and like-dislike evaluations, which have been commonly used to construct indicators of political polarization (Gidron et al., 2018; Huber & Inglehart, 1995; Iyengar et al., 2012; Lupu, 2015a; Wagner, 2021; Ward & Tavits, 2019). These measures, however, mask party positions on social dimensions such as libertarian-authoritarian dimension. In a recent study, Selçuk and Hekimci (2020) link the alliance among ideologically disparate opposition to the rise of democracy-authoritarianism cleavage in Turkey. The authors argue that despite the existing argument in democratization literature (see Kitschelt, 1995; Moreno, 1999), "democracy-authoritarian cleavage not only emerges during democratic transition but also backsliding" (Selçuk & Hekimci, 2020: 1497) by uniting against Erdogan's authoritarian tendencies to impede democratic backsliding. Further research may benefit from examining the libertarian-authoritarian issues in hybrid regimes and the extent to which citizens perceive party system polarization based on democracy-authoritarian cleavage.

The main findings in this chapter contribute to a better understanding of the political factors that affect partisans' attitudes and perceptions about political parties. Existing literature is mainly limited to studies on social identity, sorting, and ideology as the driving forces behind political polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019; Mason, 2016; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). This chapter shows how populist politics in hybrid regimes can add to our understanding of partisans' political attitudes and behaviors that go beyond existing phenomena such as social sorting. This study also contributes to the current debate in the literature on political polarization and populism in Turkey. Current literature mainly consists of research on polarization driven by populist rhetoric in the media (Bulut & Yörük, 2017; İşeri & Ersoy, 2021; Özçetin, 2019) and case studies comparing Turkey with other countries (Ben-Porat, Filc, Ozturk, & Ozzano, 2023; Selçuk, 2016). While a growing number of studies analyze Erdoğan's populist rhetoric (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2019;

Selçuk, 2016; Wuthrich & Ingleby, 2020), we are still in the dark with respect to the causal mechanism by which parties' populist rhetoric can reinforce the in-group vs. out-group distinction among partisans. Moreover, research on populism largely focuses on the policies and rhetoric of populist parties and leaders at the macro level (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013; Mudambi, 2018). This study contributes to the current literature by examining how populist strategies at the level of parties affect individuals, i.e., those who identified with a party and their perceived polarization.

There are several important venues for future research. The information for measuring political polarization in Turkey was available for three elections where a populist party, the AKP, was in government. Scholars have often paid attention to populism's uneasy relationship with representative democracy (see, Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Mény & Surel, 2002). Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012: 16) argue that populism "can be a corrective or a threat to democracy," depending on whether populism is in power or in opposition. Future research could examine whether populist parties in power have more capacity to shape partisans' perceptions than populist parties in opposition, and see whether these results are different for developed and developing democracies. Moreover, populist parties usually emerge from excluded segments of society or claim to represent these people. For instance, while existing literature often classifies the HDP as a leftist or left-leaning populist party (Elçi, 2019; Tekdemir, 2016), it is also a pro-Kurdish party that taps into the existing ethnic cleavage in Turkey. Looking into the structural factors (such as social cleavages, including ethnic fragmentation) that create opportunities for populists to strategically use anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric to compete electorally can be fruitful for future research. I hope that this study will be useful in leading future research in these directions.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Political parties have an important role in providing informational shortcuts for voters in democratic settings. As voters are information misers, they rely on such cues to process information about parties. Institutional strength shapes political competition and party strategies. Political institutions enable politicians to use certain strategies in shaping political competition. Institutional and party system weaknesses displayed by electoral volatility, fragmentation, and politicized state agencies, may result in constant inter and intra-party struggle and inefficient policy-making. Weaknesses in institutions and party systems make it easier for parties to use clientelist voter-elite linkages, interfere in the electoral process, to be challenged by populist parties. Although clientelist dynamics and electoral malpractices are claimed to more prevalent in socially and economically “backward” developing democracies (Cornelius, 2000; Lehoucq, 2003; Levitsky, 1999; Nichter et al., 2015; Stokes, 2005), such party strategies can be found in advanced socio-economic contexts in established democracies as well (Copeman & McGrath, 1997; Hughes & Costar, 2006; Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Piattoni, 2001). Accordingly, this study focuses on both consolidated and unconsolidated regimes.

This study examines the role of parties’ strategies in shaping the perceived ideological and affective party system polarization in the mass publics. Drawing on the individual-level survey data using citizens’ perceptions of party polarization and affective polarization from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) combined with party and country-level indicators from *Varieties of Democracy* (V-Dem), the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA),

and *V-Party* datasets, this study examined whether and how clientelist, electoral manipulative, and populist party strategies influence citizens' affective attitudes and ideological perceptions of parties. It did so by incorporating a link between party strategies and cognitive mechanisms of information processing and attitude formation of the public.

My analyses, thus, consider parties as key players in shaping perceived ideological party and affective polarization among ordinary citizens. In developing my theoretical argument, I first looked at the conditions under which clientelism shapes affective polarization. I also analyzed how different types of citizens perceive interparty hostility and the extent to which citizen perceptions differ depending on partisan affiliation and the degree of clientelist linkages. Empirical results presented here suggest that clientelist ties increase mass affective polarization by magnifying the emotional distance between the in-group vs. out-group. The issue of reciprocity, where parties are unsure that the benefits and services to the constituents will be returned with electoral support, motivates parties to establish a psychological attachment of indebtedness, gratitude, and reciprocal obligation with voters. I also show that partisanship, operationalized as self-identification with a political party, increases mass affective polarization by accentuating the in-group/us vs. out-group/them notion. I empirically show that the positive effect of clientelist politics on affective polarization is larger for partisans than non-partisans, as they tend to respond to clientelist benefits more positively and to evaluate their party more positively and opposition parties in a more negative manner.

Moreover, I seek to better understand mass polarization by analyzing whether and how electoral manipulative strategies affect citizen feelings about political parties. While electoral integrity is indeed associated with good governance, my results suggest that electoral integrity is negatively associated with affective polarization. This study also examines the winning-losing status' association with mass affective polarization. I predicted that affective polarization would be greater among those who voted for the winning party. Those who voted for the losing party may experience cognitive dissonance and overcome this dissonance by considering their party closer to other parties. When we consider the effect of electoral integrity,

winners continue to perceive parties as slightly more affectively polarized compared to losers.

Furthermore, this study investigates the relationship between party system polarization and populist party strategies. My findings here provide empirical evidence in support of this association, i.e., populist politics has, in fact, a direct positive effect on the degree to which citizens perceive that parties distance themselves from one another. While I expect that this relationship would be more prominent when populist parties are in government, as populist parties' ability to shape the policy-making process might ignite negative reactions from other parties, I found no empirical evidence supporting this argument. At the same time, current studies have emphasized that it is the *ideological radicalism* of populist parties that distinguishes them from mainstream parties. Following this logic, I assumed that radicalism would be at work in populism's impact on increasing party system polarization. My empirical findings suggest that radicalism does not have a further magnifying effect on citizens' perceived party polarization.

Finally, I analyze whether parties' loyal supporters perceive more emotional and ideological distance among parties in a hybrid political regime of Turkey characterized by high levels of populism in the rhetoric of some parties. My main argument is that political parties' populist politics influence their supporters' perceptions of left-right ideological and affective polarization. Empirical research on political polarization is commonly associated with democratic backsliding in hybrid regimes (Orhan, 2022); however, the underlying mechanism of how political polarization affects democratic decline is unfolded. Parties' populist strategy facilitates a cognitive mechanism for voters to reduce the complexities stemming from party competition, and I expect this relationship to be more evident among partisans. Empirical results suggest that populism at the level of parties has a direct negative effect on partisans' affective party system polarization. In contrast, it has no effect on partisans' perceived left-right party polarization.

These unexpected findings may be due to the fact that as hybrid regimes tend to exhibit unstable interparty competition, it is easier for parties to split, abandon or join other party lists. Parties adapt their political narrative in line with these shifts in party

competition, as those who used to be attacked as “enemies of the nation” can become coalition partners or new party members in an unstable electoral environment. The shifts in their political narrative may be perceived as diminishing emotional distance among parties by citizens. Moreover, depolarizing anti-populist strategies used by mainstream parties can diminish perceived polarization by partisans.

Contributions to Existing Research

Existing research on the consequences of political polarization suggests that polarization contributes to democratic decline and legislative gridlock (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Frye, 2002; Hetherington, 2009; Layman et al., 2006). Literature also draws attention to the fact that voters will be willing to sacrifice democratic principles to elect parties that serve their best interests in polarized societies (McCoy & Somer, 2021; Svolik, 2019). However, we are still in the dark regarding why exactly voters are willing to exchange democratic principles for their partisan interests.

Moreover, with respect to the link between elite-driven strategies and polarization, research has mainly focused on party programmatic strategies, such as issue and ideological positions, and the role of cues and party loyalties in magnifying party system polarization. We still have a limited understanding of how party strategies can shape citizens’ affective attitudes toward parties. Theoretical findings here suggest that party strategies might be a vehicle for in-group vs. out-group formation that contributes to not only a polarized party system but also an affectively polarized parties in the eyes of citizens.

The main findings in this chapter contribute to a better understanding of the party strategies that affect partisans’ attitudes and perceptions about political parties. Existing literature is mainly limited to studies on social identity, sorting, and ideology as the driving forces behind political polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019; Mason, 2016; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Webster & Abramowitz, 2017). This study shows how clientelist, electoral manipulative, and populist strategies can add to our understanding of partisans’ political attitudes and behaviors that go beyond existing phenomena such as ideology and social identity. Moreover, research on party competition argues that polarization may magnify party brands in voters' eyes

and present clearer party choices (Lupu, 2015a). Results from this study suggest that polarization driven by clientelist party strategies, electoral malpractices, and stigmatizing, demonizing, or accommodating populist strategies might be pernicious for the party system and a democratic regime.

This study also contributes to the theoretical literature on inter-group conflict based on partisan attachments. The association between partisanship and political polarization has been studied extensively (Devine, 2015; Iyengar et al., 2012, Iyengar et al., 2019; Miller & Shanks, 1996). This study contributes to this literature by using alternative measurements of party identification to a dichotomous measure with partisanship strength and partisanship of governing vs. non-governing parties. It also explains how affective polarization may differ depending on voter support for the winning vs. losing party. While the literature focuses on satisfaction with democracy and trust in political institutions (Anderson et al., 2005; Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Fortin-Rittberger et al., 2017; Henderson, 2008), this dissertation examines the consequences of winners' vs. losers' status for affective party polarization as perceived by ordinary citizens. The results from this study also broaden our understanding of the consequences of the winner-loser status for perceived polarization across countries with various levels of electoral fraud.

Another contribution is regarding the current research on political polarization and populism in Turkey. Current literature mainly consists of research on polarization driven by populism in the media (Bulut & Yörük, 2017; İşeri & Ersoy, 2021; Özçetin, 2019) and descriptive case studies comparing Turkey with other countries (Ben-Porat et al., 2023; Selçuk, 2016). The results from this study contribute to our understanding of the extent to which party populist rhetoric can reinforce the in-group vs. out-group distinction among partisans. Moreover, research on populism largely consists of macro-level analyses, ignoring that citizen perceptions of their country's political system might be affected by parties they identify with. Specifically, because partisans take cues from their own party, the extent to which their party relies on populism may directly shape their perceptions of party system polarization.

Limitations

There are certain limitations of this study that should be mentioned here. There is a potential reciprocal relationship between partisanship and affective and ideological party polarization as perceived by citizens. Future research based on experimental evidence or time-series analyses could more accurately identify the extent of this potentially reciprocal relationship. Moreover, while respondents' placement of the parties is widely used (Drummond, 2010; Lupu, 2015; Merrill et al., 2001), they can hold perceptual biases in assessing parties. Recent work on political polarization has suggested that "individuals perceive more polarization than actually exists" (Enders & Armaly, 2019: 815; see also Ahler & Sood, 2018; Westfall et al., 2015), and these "biased" perceptions are strongly associated with their affective judgments of political parties. Future studies might benefit from using alternative data sources of party system polarization (such as party manifestos or country experts' placement of political parties) to assess the relationship under investigation in this study.

Furthermore, while I assume that populist strategy holds both populist and anti-populist rhetoric, my measurement of populism does not identify the degree to which parties rely on anti-populist strategies. As the chapter on the Turkish case suggests, anti-populist rhetoric adopted by opposition parties may actually have a negative effect on political polarization. Future research may benefit from a comprehensive investigation of anti-populist strategies and their consequences with respect to ideological and affective party system polarization as perceived by citizens.

Venues for Future Research

The research presented here could be extended in five ways. First, clientelism and electoral integrity are measured at the macro level. Future research on identifying separate aspects of clientelism and electoral fraud, such as vote-buying or patronage, could provide a better understanding of how elite-driven practices influence citizens' affective judgments of parties. Moreover, current research suggests that citizens' perceptions of electoral fraud tend to be exaggerated among voters than experts (Farrall et al., 2021; Fisher & Sällberg, 2020). Further research could broaden our understanding of citizens' perceptions of electoral fraud, the winner-loser status, and affective attitudes toward parties by identifying whether and if citizens' personal experience with electoral fraudulent and clientelist practices have any effect on their attitudes toward parties.

Second, research suggests that media frames clientelist ties and electoral fraud (Örnebring, 2012; Strömbäck, 2009), and pro-government media bias in outlining these practices can be accompanied by deep political polarization (Liotti, 2014). This study could be extended by examining the effect of media frames and media bias on people's perceptions of parties. Doing so could provide us with a better understanding of how people's access to information and the types of media they use shape people's affective judgments of political parties. Third, future research could investigate whether different periods (pre-, during, and aftermath) of the electoral cycle have varying effects on citizens' affective evaluations of political parties. Earlier findings indicate that affective polarization decreases as elections become less salient (Hernandez et al., 2021). Further analyses on how salience of elections and perceived party system and affective polarization could provide valuable insights.

Third, as I found no empirical evidence supporting that populist parties in power will intensify perceived party polarization, the short-term and long-term effects of populist parties in power on polarization could be an important venue for future research. Populists can tone down their populist rhetoric over time (Rooduijn et al., 2014). Existing literature could utilize research on whether the taming effect is observable in populist parties when they are in government, with important consequences for party polarization.

Fourth, this study conceptualizes winner-loser status as having voted for parties that were in government vs. out of government. There are, however, alternative conceptualizations of electoral winners-losers. For instance, Anderson (2019: 211-212) brings an alternative conceptualization of electoral status as "policy losers" referring to voters whose policy preferences are not represented by the government. Voters may vote for a governing party but their policy positions may not be matched with the government's position. As a result, "policy losers" may perceive governing party more negatively than those whose policy position "is close to the government's, regardless of whether their party is in government" (Anderson, 2019: 212). This study could be extended to see if the results would be the same across different conceptualizations of electoral status.

Finally, clientelist and populist strategies by parties usually target previously excluded people, like lower-income groups. Looking into the structural factors such as social and religious cleavages or ethnic fragmentation that make it easier for parties to use personalistic voter-elite linkages and populist rhetoric could be fruitful for future research to understand how populist parties utilize the “us” and “them” notion. Moreover, in populist politics, plebiscitary linkages usually accompany by clientelism. Barr (2009: 42) emphasizes that “once populists have taken power, they tend to use clientelism in addition to plebiscitarian linkages” to strengthen their ties with constituencies. Future research could utilize an examination of the degree to which clientelist strategies were used before and after populists came into power and its association with political polarization. I hope that this study will be useful in leading future research in these directions.

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APPENDICES

This appendix contains information about the data and robustness tests.

APPENDIX A. INFORMATION ABOUT THE SAMPLE

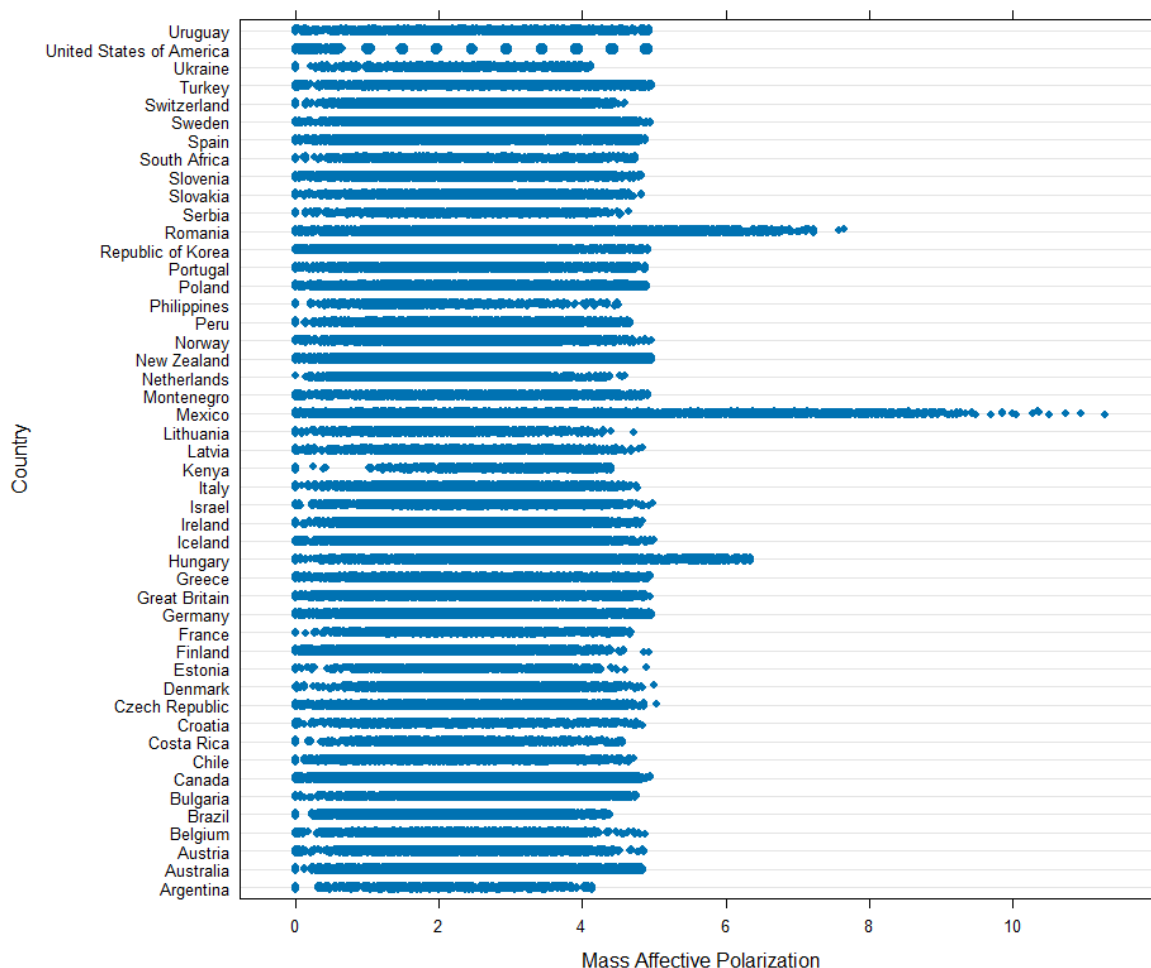
My sample in this study includes only legislative lower house elections with overall 48 countries and 150 elections. The country elections included are; Argentina 2015; Australia 2004, 2007, 2013; Austria 2008, 2013, 2017; Belgium 1999 (Flanders), 2019; Brazil 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018; Bulgaria 2001, 2014; Canada 1997, 2004, 2008, 2011, 2015, 2019; Chile 2005, 2009, 2017; Costa Rica, 2018; Croatia 2007; Czech Republic 1996, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2013; Denmark 2001, 2007, 2019; Estonia 2011; Finland 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015; France 2007; Germany 1998, 2002, 2009, 2013, 2017; Great Britain 1997, 2005, 2015, 2017; Greece 2009, 2012, 2015; Hungary 1998, 2002, 2018; Iceland 1999, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2017; Ireland 2002, 2007, 2011, 2016; Israel 1996, 2003, 2006, 2013, 2020; Italy 2006, 2018; Kenya 2013; Latvia 2011, 2014; Lithuania 2016; Mexico 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015; Montenegro 2012, 2016; Netherlands 1998, 2002, 2006; New Zealand 1996, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2020; Norway 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017; Peru 2006, 2016; Philippines 2016; Poland 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2011; Portugal 2005, 2019; Romania 1996, 2004, 2012; Serbia 2012; Slovakia 2010, 2016, 2020; Slovenia 1996, 2004, 2008, 2011; South Africa 2014; South Korea 2000, 2004, 2016; ; Spain 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008; Sweden 1998, 2002, 2006, 2014, 2018; Switzerland 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2019 (included only in the populism and perceived party system polarization chapter); Turkey 2011, 2015, 2018; Ukraine 1998; United States 2004, 2008, 2012, 2020; Uruguay 2009, 2019.

I exclude surveys that include presidential and upper house legislative elections: Chile 1999, France 2002, 2012, 2017; Hong Kong 1998, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016; Japan 2004, 2007, 2013; Kyrgyzstan 2005; Lithuania 1997; Philippines 2004, 2010; Romania 2009, 2014; Russia 2000, 2004; Thailand 2007; Taiwan 2004, 2008; United States 2016.

Country elections are omitted from the sample due to missing data on perceived party polarization (Belarus 2001, 2008, Belgium 2003, Japan 1996, Thailand 2001, the United States 1996), mass affective polarization (Switzerland 2019), partisanship (Belgium-Walloon 1999), left-right self-placement (Thailand 2011), age (Peru 2000, 2001), individual income (Australia 2019, South Korea 2012, Latvia 2010, South Africa 2009), GDP per capita (Taiwan 1996, 2001, 2012, 2016), the time elapsed since last election (Albania, 2005, Australia 1996, Denmark 1998, Finland 2019, Germany 2002 mail-back, 2005, Netherlands 2010, New Zealand 2002, Peru 2011, Portugal 2002, 2009, 2015, Russia 1999, South Korea 2008).



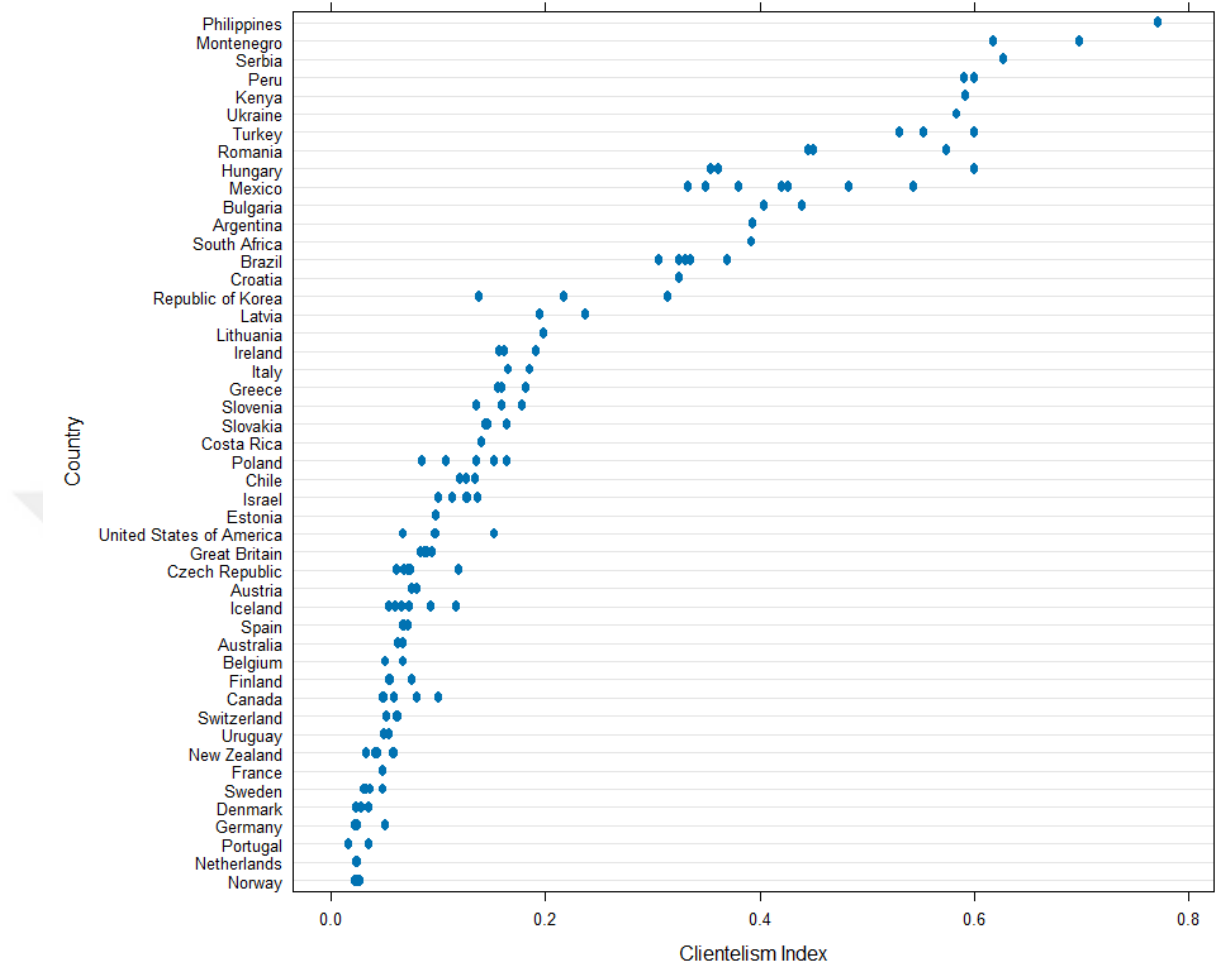
APPENDIX B. THE DISPERSION OF AFFECTIVE PARTY SYSTEM POLARIZATION IN 48 COUNTRIES, 1996-2020.



Source: CSES dataset.

Note: Figure 1 shows out-party dislike scores for the countries in my study on a 0-10 scale where 0 denotes maximum out-party dislike, i.e., more intense affective polarization. The dot plots represent the dispersion of affective polarization for each country averaged across the available election surveys in my dataset.

APPENDIX C. THE DISPERSION OF CLIENTELISM IN 48 COUNTRIES, 1996-2020



Source: V-Dem dataset.

APPENDIX D. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (CHAPTER II)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Mass affective polarization	237,352	2.38	1.15	0	11.29
Key Independent Variables					
Clientelism	258,459	0.16	0.17	0.02	0.77
Partisan	241,654	0.48	0.50	0	1
Control Variables					
Left-right self-placement	210,050	5.41	2.53	0	10
Left-right extremity	210,050	1.94	1.67	0	5
Education	254,210	2.18	1.22	0	5
Age	255,867	47.38	17.33	18	115
Female	257,810	0.52	0.50	0	1
Income	211,764	2.95	1.40	1	5
Time elapsed since last election	254,600	43.22	64.22	0	362
Perceived party system polarization	258,459	3.42	1.15	0.10	5.94
Party system fragmentation	258,459	5.03	2.44	2.10	18.02
Electoral system disproportionality	258,459	5.84	4.06	0.37	23.15
Party institutionalization	258,459	0.89	0.11	0.18	1
Income inequality	258,459	32.84	7.57	22.60	62.90
GDP per capita	258,459	32.76	21.24	1.33	87.98
Additional Variables for Robustness Tests					
Partisan Strength	229,846	2.22	1.11	0	3
Governing vs. non-governing partisans	237,903	1.96	0.82	0	2
Voted	249,792	0.85	0.36	0	1

APPENDIX E. ROBUSTNESS TESTS (CHAPTER II)

Table E1: Clientelism, partisanship, and citizen perceptions of affective party system polarization with an alternative measure of partisanship—partisan strength

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Clientelism	-	1.32 (.39)**	1.37 (.39)**
Weak partisans	.22 (.01)***	.22 (.01)***	.21 (.01)***
Moderate partisans	.53 (.01)***	.53 (.01)***	.54 (.01)***
Strong partisans	.93 (.01)***	.93 (.01)***	.99 (.01)***
Clientelism*weak partisans	-	-	.15 (.05)**
Clientelism*moderate partisans	-	-	-.02 (.04)
Clientelism*strong partisans	-	-	-.36 (.04)***
Left-right self-placement	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Left-right extremity	.16 (.00)***	.16 (.00)***	.16 (.00)***
Female	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Individual Income	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)*
Education	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***
Party system polarization	.07 (.03)*	.08 (.03)*	.08 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Electoral system disproportionality	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.01)
Income inequality	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Democracy level	-.00 (.03)	.09 (.04)*	.08 (.04)*
Party system Institutionalization	-.13 (.35)	.54 (.40)	.56 (.40)
Constant	1.93 (.53)***	-.17 (.81)	-.17 (.81)
Variance of random intercept	0.1506	0.1411	0.1411
Variance of residuals	0.8513	0.8513	0.8507
Number of observations	156,572	156,572	156,572
Number of country elections	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-209931.1	-209925.7	-209870.8
Akaike Inf. Crit.	419902.2	419893.4	419789.6
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	420101.4	420102.6	420028.7

Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country

elections. Non-partisans are the reference category for weak, moderate, and strong partisans.

Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table E2: Clientelism, partisanship, and citizen perceptions of affective polarization with an additional control for identification with governing vs. non-governing parties

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Clientelism	-	1.55 (.41)***	1.45 (.41)***
Governing partisans	.66 (.01)***	.66 (.01)***	.61 (.01)***
Non-governing partisans	.44 (.01)***	.45 (.01)***	.45 (.01)***
Clientelism*Governing parties	-	-	.35 (.04)***
Clientelism*Non-governing parties	-	-	-.03 (.04)
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (.00)**	-.00 (.00)**	-.00 (.00)***
Left-right extremity	.18 (.00)***	.18 (.00)***	.18 (.00)***
Female	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)*
Education	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***
Party system polarization	.08 (.03)*	.09 (.03)**	.09 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.02)*	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Electoral system disproportionality	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Income inequality	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Democracy level	-.01 (.03)	.09 (.04)*	.09 (.04)*
Party system institutionalization	-.20 (.38)	.60 (.42)	.55 (.42)
Constant	1.98 (.56)***	-.50 (.85)	-.43 (.85)
Variance of random intercept	0.1700	0.1563	0.1557
Variance of residuals	0.8745	0.8745	0.8738
Number of observations	162,225	162,225	162,225
Number of country elections	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-219688.7	-219681.9	-219623.2
Akaike Inf. Crit.	439415.4	439403.8	439290.4
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	439605.3	439603.7	439510.3

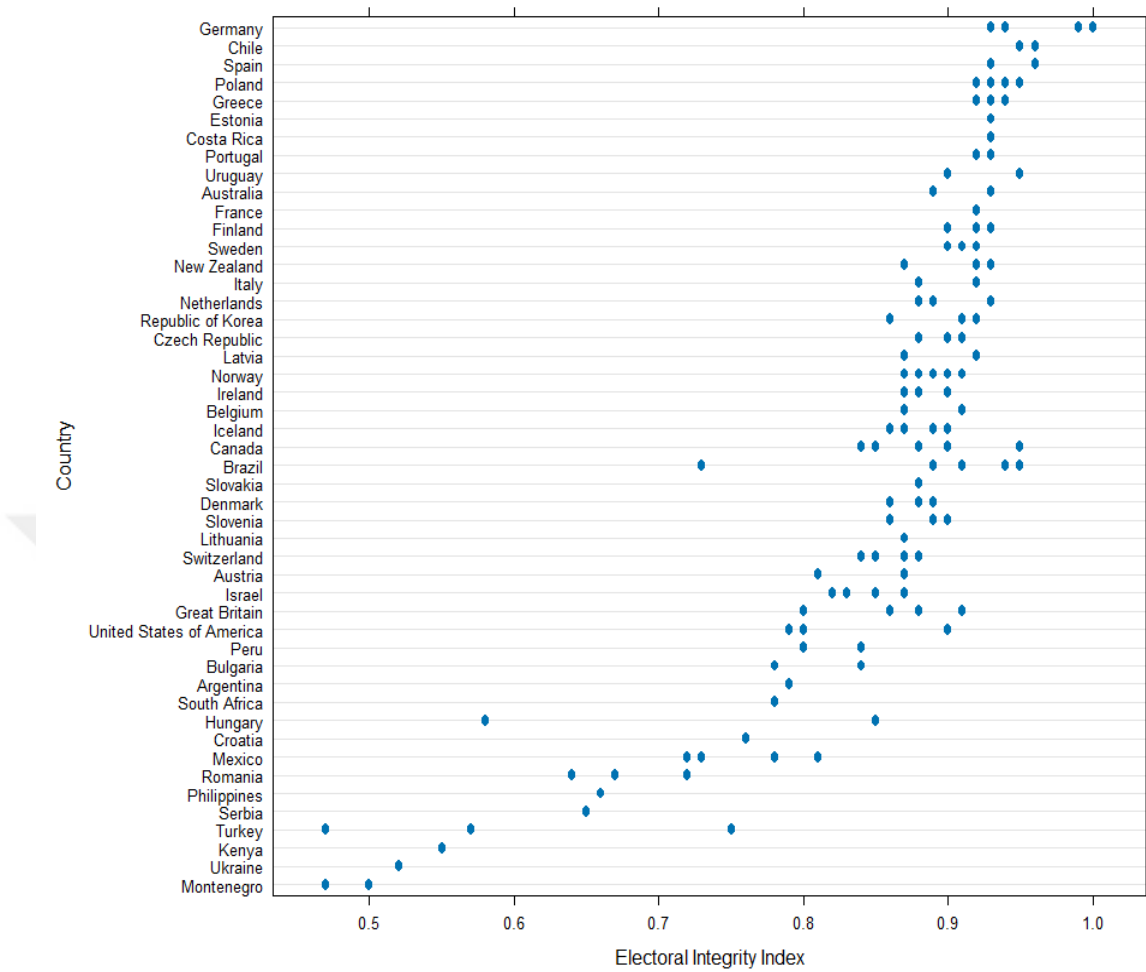
Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Non-partisans are the reference category for governing and non-governing partisans. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table E3: Clientelism, partisanship, and citizen perceptions of affective polarization with an additional control for having voted in the last election

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Clientelism	-	1.49 (.41)***	1.46 (.40)***
Partisans	.49 (.00)***	.49 (.01)***	.38 (.01)***
Clientelism*partisans	-	-	.05 (.03)
Voted	.30 (.01)***	.30 (.01)***	.30 (.01)***
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Left-right extremity	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***
Female	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***	.09 (.00)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Individual Income	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Education	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)***
Party system polarization	.08 (.03)*	.10 (.03)**	.10 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.00 (.00)*	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.02)*	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Electoral system disproportionality	.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Income inequality	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Democracy level	-.00 (.03)	.09 (.04)*	.09 (.04)*
Party system institutionalization	-.09 (.37)	.67 (.41)	.67 (.41)
Constant	1.73 (.55)**	-.64 (.83)	-.63 (.83)
Variance of random intercept	0.1631	0.1506	0.1502
Variance of residuals	0.8603	0.8603	0.8603
Number of observations	162,115	162,115	162,115
Number of country elections	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-218218.9	-218212.4	-218211.1
Akaike Inf. Crit.	436475.7	436464.8	436464.1
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	436665.7	436664.8	436674

Note: Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

APPENDIX F. ELECTORAL INTEGRITY IN 48 COUNTRIES, 1996-2020

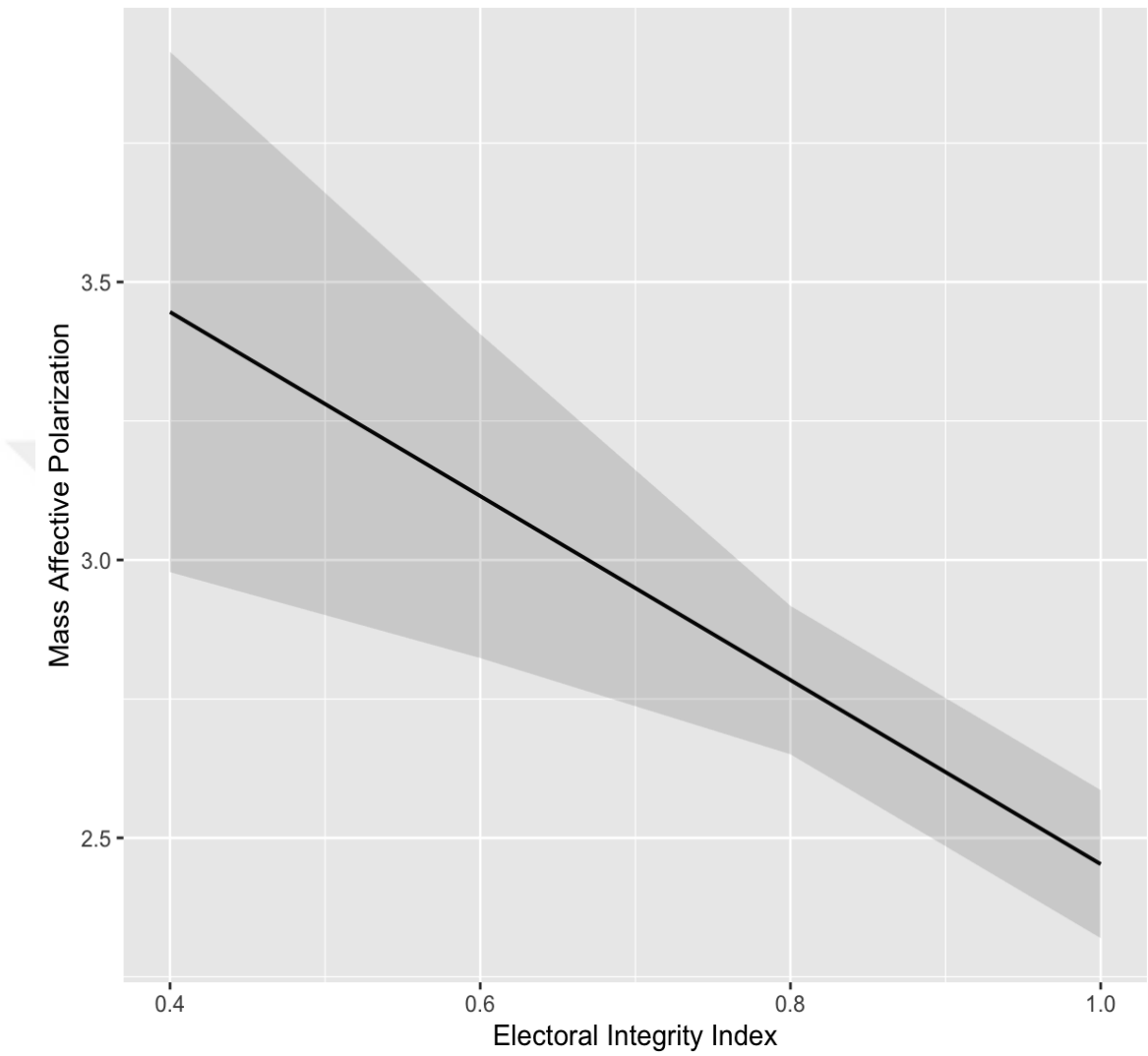


Source: IDEA.

APPENDIX G. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (CHAPTER III)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Mass affective polarization	237,352	2.38	1.15	0.00	11.29
Key Independent Variables					
Electoral integrity	258,459	0.86	0.09	0.47	1
Winner	186,769	0.48	0.5	0	1
Control Variables					
Left-right self-placement	210,050	5.41	2.53	0	10
Left-right extremity	210,050	1.94	1.67	0	5
Education	254,210	2.18	1.22	0	5
Age	255,867	47.38	17.33	18	115
Female	257,810	0.52	0.5	0	1
Income	211,764	2.95	1.4	1	5
Time elapsed since last election	254,600	43.22	64.22	0	362
Partisan	241,654	0.48	0.5	0	1
Perceived party system polarization	258,459	3.42	1.15	0.1	5.94
Party system fragmentation	258,459	5.03	2.44	2.1	18.02
Electoral system disproportionality	258,459	5.84	4.06	0.37	23.15
Party institutionalization	258,459	0.89	0.11	0.18	1
Income inequality	258,459	32.84	7.57	22.6	62.90
GDP per capita	258,459	32.76	21.24	1.33	87.98
Additional Variables for Robustness Tests					
Electoral integrity (PEI)	99,426	69.72	13.09	35.39	94.9
SMD	258,459	0.19	0.39	0	1
Federalism	258,459	0.85	0.36	0	1
Presidentialism	258,459	0.29	0.45	0	1
New democracy	258,459	0.38	0.49	0	1

APPENDIX H. PREDICTED VALUES OF MASS AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION
BY ELECTORAL INTEGRITY LEVEL



Source: IDEA and CSES.

APPENDIX I. ROBUSTNESS TESTS (CHAPTER III)

Table I1: Winning-losing and citizen perceptions of affective polarization with an alternative measure of electoral integrity

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Electoral integrity (PEI)	-.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)*	-.01 (.00)*
Election winners	-	.15 (.00)***	.31 (.05)***
Electoral integrity*election winners	-	-	-.00 (.00)**
Left-right self-placement	.01 (.00)***	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Left-right extremity	.19 (.00)***	.19 (.00)***	.19 (.00)***
Female	.08 (.01)***	.08 (.01)***	.07 (.01)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Education	-.02 (.00)***	-.02 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Partisan	.58 (.01)***	.48 (.01)***	.48 (.01)***
Government change	-.01 (.06)	-.01 (.06)	-.01 (.06)
Party system polarization	.09 (.03)**	.11 (.03)**	.11 (.03)***
GDP per capita	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Party system fragmentation	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)*
Electoral system disproportionality	-.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)*
Income inequality	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Democracy level	.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.03 (.02)
Party institutionalization	-.01 (.27)	.03 (.27)	.01 (.27)
Constant	1.91 (.41)***	2.04 (.41)***	1.96 (.41)***
Variance of random intercept	0.04453	0.0434	0.0431
Variance of residuals	0.91432	0.8415	0.8413
Number of observations	63,209	50,411	50,411
Number of country elections	57	57	57
Log-Likelihood	-86958.93	-67273.46	-67267.42
Akaike Inf. Crit.	173955.9	134586.9	134576.8
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	174127.9	134763.5	134762.2

Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table I2: Electoral integrity, winning-losing, and citizen perceptions of affective polarization with an additional control for SMD, presidential system, federalism

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Electoral integrity	-1.77 (.47)***	-1.88 (.47)***	-1.75 (.47)***
Election winners	-	.18 (.00)***	.44 (.05)***
Electoral integrity*election winners	-	-	-.29 (.06)***
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Left-right extremity	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***
Female	.09 (.00)***	.08 (.00)***	.08 (.00)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Education	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Partisan	.52 (.00)***	.44 (.00)***	.44 (.00)***
Government change	.06 (.06)	.07 (.06)	.07 (.06)
Party system polarization	.10 (.03)**	.11 (.03)**	.11 (.03)**
GDP per capita	-.01 (.01)**	-.01 (.01)**	-.01 (.00)**
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.01)*	-.03 (.01)*	-.03 (.01)*
Single-member district	-.12 (.11)	-.09 (.11)	-.09 (.11)
Presidential system	-.15 (.08)	-.14 (.08)	-.14 (.08)
Federalism	.16 (.09)	.16 (.08)	.17 (.08)
Income inequality	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Democracy level	.10 (.04)*	.10 (.04)*	.10 (.04)*
Party institutionalization	.16 (.36)	.15 (.36)	.13 (.36)
Constant	1.71 (.52)**	1.83 (.52)***	1.73 (.52)**
Variance of random intercept	0.1506	0.1471	0.1465
Variance of residuals	0.8769	0.8194	0.8192
Number of observations	164,259	131,896	131,896
Number of country elections	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-222660.4	-174371.6	-174360.9
Akaike Inf. Crit.	445364.7	348789.2	348769.9
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	445584.9	349014.4	349004.8

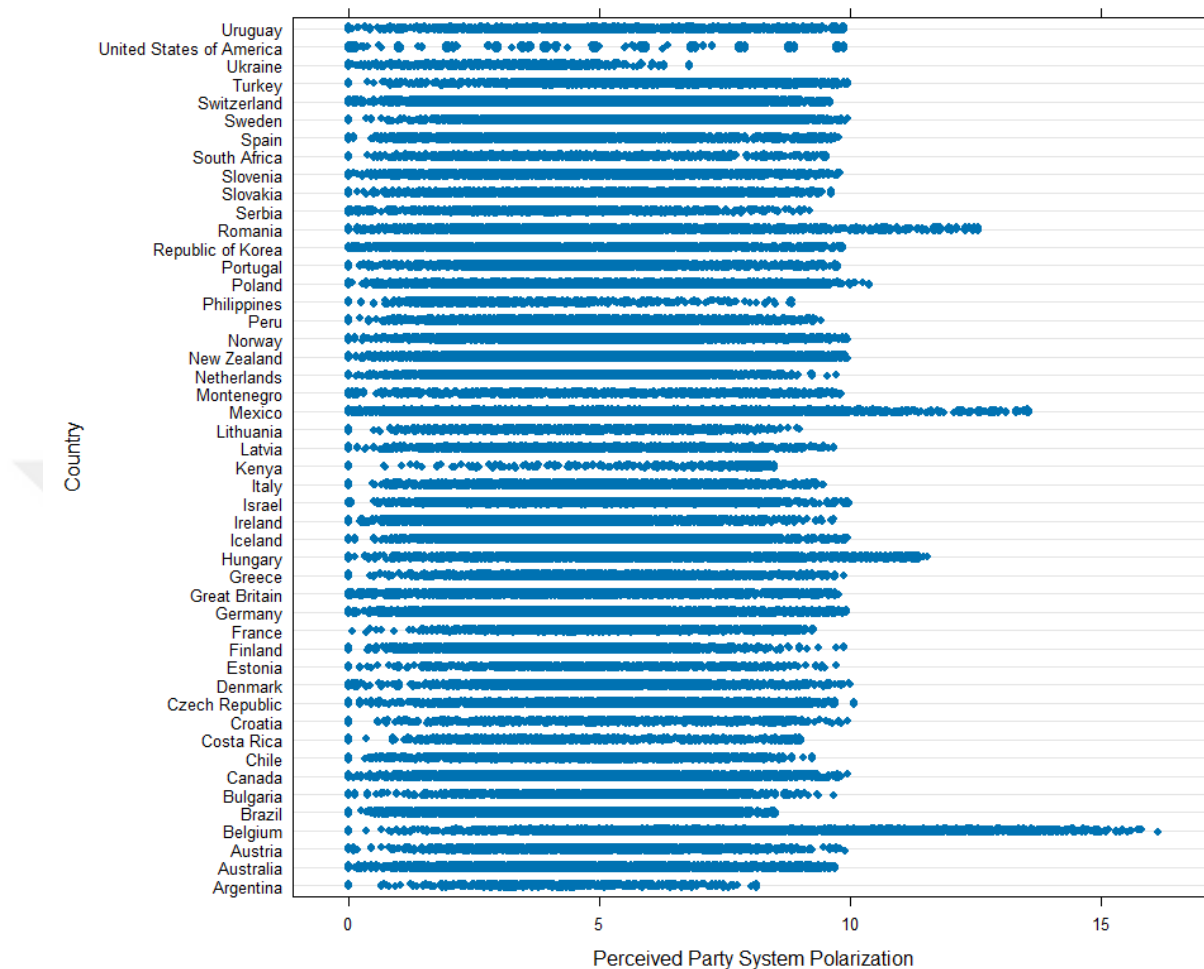
Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table I3: Electoral integrity, winning-losing, and citizen perceptions of affective polarization with an additional control for new vs. old democracies

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Electoral integrity	-.95 (.37)*	-1.01 (.37)**	-.87 (.37)*
Election winners	-	.18 (.00)***	.44 (.05)***
Electoral integrity*election winners	-	-	-.29 (.06)***
Left-right self-placement	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Left-right extremity	.17 (.00)***	.17 (.00)***	.14 (.00)***
Female	.09 (.01)***	.08 (.01)***	.08 (.01)***
Age	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***	.00 (.00)***
Income	-.00 (.00)	-.01 (.00)***	-.01 (.00)***
Education	-.02 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***	-.03 (.00)***
Partisan	.52 (.00)***	.44 (.00)***	.44 (.00)***
Time elapsed since last election	-.00 (00)***	-.00 (00)***	-.00 (00)***
Government change	.04 (.07)	.04 (.07)	.04 (.07)
Party system polarization	.07 (.03)*	.08 (.03)*	.08 (.03)*
GDP per capita	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party system fragmentation	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
Electoral system disproportionality	-.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Income inequality	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
New democracy	.10 (.12)	.13 (.11)	.12 (.11)
Party institutionalization	.31 (.38)	.33 (.38)	.31 (.38)
Constant	2.20 (.52)***	2.28 (.52)***	2.18 (.52)***
Variance of random intercept	0.1588	0.1551	0.1545
Variance of residuals	0.8769	0.8194	0.8192
Number of observations	164,259	131,896	131,896
Number of country elections	150	150	150
Log-Likelihood	-222665.5	-174376.7	-174366.1
Akaike Inf. Crit.	445370.9	348795.4	348776.1
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	445571.1	349001	348991.5

Note: Results are multi-level linear regression estimates with observations clustered by country elections. Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$.

APPENDIX J. PERCEIVED IDEOLOGICAL PARTY SYSTEM POLARIZATION IN 48 COUNTRIES, 1996-2020.



Source: CSES.

APPENDIX K. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (CHAPTER IV)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variable					
Perceived party-system polarization	217,994	4.91	2.16	0	16.12
Key Independent Variables					
Populism Index	263,103	7.15	4.91	1.71	26.18
Populism in Power	261,894	0.31	0.46	0	1
Radical Populism	263,103	0.68	0.47	0	1
Control Variables					
Left-right self-placement	214,338	5.40	2.53	0	10
Left-right extremity	214,338	1.95	1.67	0	5
Education	258,673	2.20	1.22	0	5
Age	260,511	47.45	17.35	18	115
Female	262,454	0.52	0.50	0	1
Income	216,188	2.95	1.40	1	5
Time elapsed since last election	259,244	42.70	63.79	0	362
Partisan	246,251	0.48	0.5	0	1
Party system fragmentation	263,103	5.06	2.42	2.1	18.02
Electoral system disproportionality	263,103	5.78	4.05	0.37	23.15
Party institutionalization	263,103	0.90	0.11	0.18	1
Income inequality	263,103	32.79	7.51	22.60	62.90
GDP per capita	263,103	33.73	22.27	1.33	87.98
Additional Variables for Robustness Tests					
Populism index (GPS)	42,070	6.55	3.28	2.59	16.71
Populism index (POPPA)	21,483	6.51	5.06	2.44	16.96
Populism index (CSES)	54,191	6.02	4.60	0.72	15.54

APPENDIX L: ALTERNATIVE MEASUREMENTS OF POPULIST POLITICS

An alternative dataset, the *Global Party Survey* (Norris, 2020), relies on expert judgments of populist rhetoric and provides a populism index for 1,043 parties in 163 countries. This dataset offers a 0-10 continuous scale for populist rhetoric. The GPS asks experts the following question:

Parties can also be classified by their current use of POPULIST OR PLURALIST rhetoric. POPULIST language typically challenges the legitimacy of established political institutions and emphasizes that people's will should prevail. By contrast, PLURALIST rhetoric rejects these ideas, believing that elected leaders should govern by bargaining, compromise, and checks and balances on executive power. Where would you place each party on the following scale? 0 Strongly favors pluralist rhetoric...10 Strongly favors populist rhetoric (Norris, 2020: 10).

There are certain differences between the GPS and *V-Party* datasets. For instance, for the 2017 Chilean election, while the GPS dataset provides information on the electoral coalition, *the Force of the Majority*, the V-Party dataset provides a separate populism index for each party in this coalition. Meijers & Zaslove (2020b) offer another alternative measurement of populism in the 2018 *Populist and Political Parties Expert Survey* (POPPA). The POPPA dataset measures parties' populist attitudes, political style, and party ideology (0-10 scale) in 28 European countries. The CSES also asks country experts to place parties' positions on a 0-10 populism scale in Module 5.

I rescaled the 0-10 continuous scale into a 0-1 scale so that the populism scale would be the same as the scale in the V-Party dataset. While using multiple measures can contribute to higher confidence in the robustness of the results, the populism index is only available for 25 country elections in the GPS dataset, 15 country elections in the POPPA dataset, and 34 country elections in the CSES. As the populism score in POPPA, GPS, and CSES datasets is limited to one country election, the populism score is not lagged by one election. The mean populism is 6.55 for the GPS index, 6.51 for the POPPA index, and 6.02 for the CSES data. The indexes are statistically significantly correlated with one another (see the table below). While using multiple measures can contribute to higher confidence in the robustness of the results, I found no statistically significant association between party-system polarization and the populism index borrowed from the GPS, POPPA, and CSES datasets. However, this

finding might be due to small number of observations, and with more observations, we might get similar results as with the V-Party populism index.



Table L1. Correlation Table for Alternative Measurements of Populism

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Party-system polarization	4.91	2.16				
2. Populism (V-Party)	7.15	4.91	.07** [.07, .07]			
3. Populism (GPS)	6.55	3.28	.05** [.04, .06]	.27** [.26, .28]		
4. Populism (POPPA)	6.51	5.06	-.05** [.07, -.04]	[-.04** .05, -.02]	[-.95** [.94, .95]	
5. Populism (CSES)	6.02	4.60	.06** [.07]	[.05, .82** .82]	[.82, .69** [.69, .70]	.84** [.83, .84]

Note: M and S.D. represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence intervals. ** indicates $p < .01$.

APPENDIX M: EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY-LEVEL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POPULISM AND PERCEIVED IDEOLOGICAL PARTY SYSTEM POLARIZATION

Figure C1 illustrates within-country changes in populism and citizens' perceptions of party system polarization in the Netherlands – a country where populist rhetoric is on the rise between 1998 and 2010. As the populism index increased from the elections of 2002 to 2010 (1.93 and 4.32 in 2002 and 2010, respectively), the party system polarization as perceived by citizens increased from 4.50 to 5.3. Figure C2 shows within-country changes in Switzerland – where the populism index is high ($\mu = 6.78$) – between 1999 and 2019. Starting from the 1999 elections, both populist rhetoric (4.94 and 7.63 in 1999 and 2019, respectively) and citizens' perceptions of party system polarization rose (4.29 in 1999 and 6.13 in 2019). The Dutch and Swiss cases support my hypothesis that citizens perceive more polarization in the party system when the populist rhetoric used by parties increases. The correlations at the country level provide preliminary support for my hypotheses that I further test with multi-level models of individual-level data. Multi-level models, with individuals nested in country elections, show the same direction of positive effect of populism on perceived ideological party system polarization as aggregated correlations.

Figure M1: Citizens' perceptions of ideological party system polarization and populism index in the Netherlands, 1998-2010

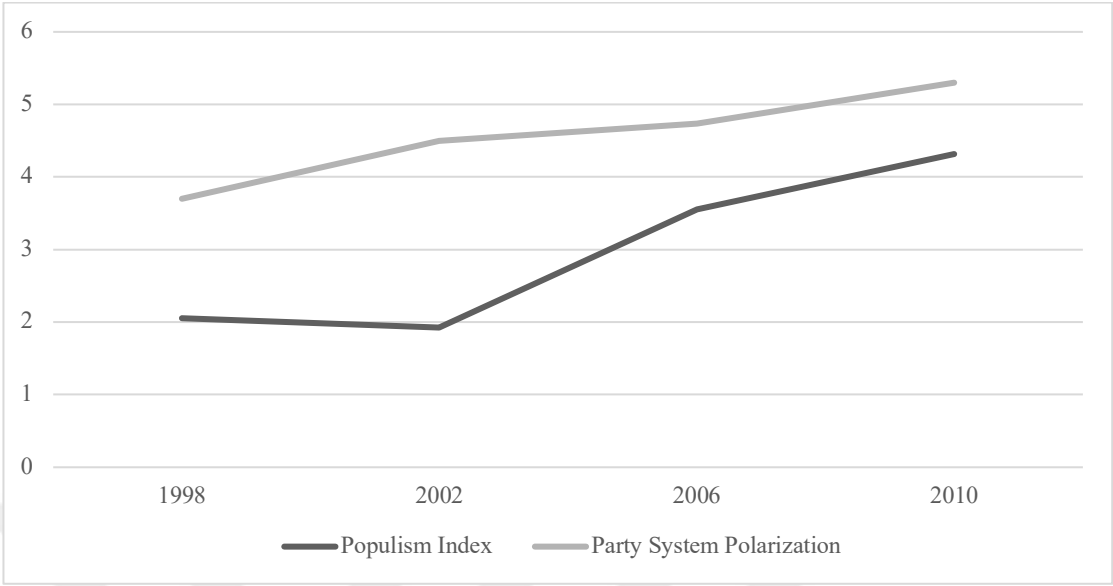
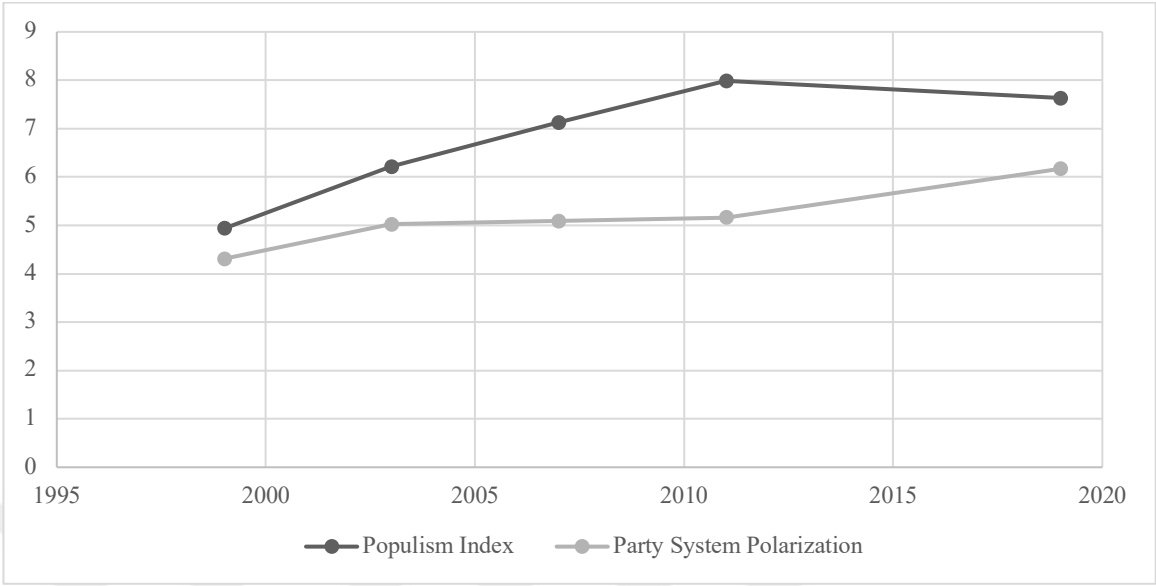


Figure M2: Citizens' perceptions of ideological party system polarization and populism index in Switzerland, 1999-2019



APPENDIX N: LIST OF RADICAL (RIGHT & LEFT) POPULIST PARTIES

Country	Party Name	Party Abbv	Radical- Right Populist	Radical- Left Populist
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	FPO	●	
	Alliance for the Future of Austria	BZO	●	
Belgium	Workers' Party of Belgium	PTB/PVDA		●
	Flemish Interest	VB	●	
Bulgaria	National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria	NFSB	●	
Canada	New Democratic Party	NDP		●
Chile	Communist Party of Chile	PC		●
Costa Rica	Citizens' Action Party	PAC		●
Czech Republic	Coalition for Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia	SPR- RSC	●	
	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	KSCM		●
	Dawn of Direct Democracy	UPD	●	
Denmark	Danish Peoples Party	DF	●	
Finland	Finnish Party / True Finns	SP/P	●	
Germany	Alternative for Germany	AfD	●	
	The Left	Linke		●
Great Britain	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	●	
Greece	Communist Party of Greece	KKE		●
	Popular Orthodox Rally	LAOS	●	
	Coalition of the Radical Left	SYRIZA		●
	Independent Greeks	ANEL	●	
	People's Association / Golden Dawn	LS/CA	●	
	Communist Party of Greece	KKE		●

Hungary	Hungarian Justice and Life Party	MIEP	●	
	Movement for a Better Hungary	Jobbik	●	
	Christian Democratic People's Party	KDNP	●	
	Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance	Fidesz	●	
Ireland	Sinn Fein (Provisional)	SF		●
Italy	North League	LN	●	
	Five Star Movement	M5S	●	
	Brothers of Italy	FdI	●	
Latvia	Harmony Centre	SC		●
	Latvian Association of Regions	LRa	●	
Lithuania	Order and Justice-Liberal Democratic Party	TT-LDP	●	
	Party of the Democratic			
Mexico	Revolution	PRD		●
	Labor Party	PT		●
Montenegro	Socialist People's Party of Montenegro	SNP-CG		●
	New Serbian Democracy	NOVA		●
	Democratic Montenegro	DCG	●	
Netherlands	Socialist Party	SP		●
	Party for Freedom	PVV	●	
New Zealand	New Zealand First Party	NZFP	●	
	Labour Party	LP	●	
Norway	Progress Party [Anders Lange's Party]	Fr	●	
Peru	Alliance for the Future	AF	●	
	Popular Force 2011	FP	●	
Poland	Solidarity Electoral Action of the Right	AWS	●	
	Movement for the			
	Reconstruction of Poland	ROP	●	

	Self-Defense of the Republic			
	Poland	SRP		●
	Law and Justice	PiS	●	
	League of Polish Families	LPR	●	
Portugal	Unified Democratic Coalition	CDU		●
Romania	Greater Romania Party	PRM	●	
	People's Party - Dan Diaconescu	PP-DD		●
Slovakia	People's Party Our Slovakia	ĽSNS	●	
	We are family - Boris Kollar	SR	●	
Slovenia	Slovenian Democratic Party	SDS	●	
	Slovenian National Party	SNS	●	
South Africa	Economic Freedom Fighters	EEF	●	
South Korea	Democratic Labour Party	DLP		●
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	SD	●	
Switzerl and	Swiss People's Party	SVP	●	
Turkey	Justice and Development Party	AKP	●	
	People's Democracy Party	HADEP		●

Note: Data is gathered from the PopuList, POPPA, Global Party Survey, and CSES datasets.

APPENDIX O. PARTY FAMILIES

Party family	Party abbrev.	Election
Communist/socialist	BDP, HDP	2011, 2015, 2018
Conservative	AKP SP	2011, 2015, 2018 2018
Nationalist	MHP IYI	2011, 2015, 2018 2018
Social democrat	CHP	2011, 2015, 2018

Source: ParlGov.



APPENDIX P. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS (CHAPTER V)

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Mass affective polarization	3,093	3.06	1.29	0	4.97
Perceived party polarization	2,910	6.29	2.03	0	9.95
Independent Variable					
Populism index of partisans	3,070	0.55	0.38	0	0.96
Control Variables					
Parties' left-right position	2,365	-13.08	9.41	-33.84	9.37
Party seat share	2,369	37.65	17.98	0	59.45
Socialist-social democrat parties	2,373	0.32	0.47	0	1
Conservative parties	2,378	0.58	0.47	0	1
Nationalist parties	2,376	0.09	0.29	0	1
Party age	2,376	34.17	33.87	1	95
Individuals' left-right position	2,774	5.98	3.01	0	10
Left-right extremity	2,774	2.6	1.8	0	5
Time since election	3,264	55.01	13.69	29	95
Age	3,216	39.8	15.06	18	90
Female	3,264	0.53	0.5	0	1
Income	3,036	3.17	1.69	1	8
Education	3,254	1.62	1.12	0	4