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Parties, Legislators, and the Origins of Proportional Representation*

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Abstract

A prominent line of theories holds that proportional representation (PR) was introduced in many European democracies by a fragmented bloc of conservative parties seeking to preserve their legislative seat shares after franchise extension and industrialization increased the vote base of socialist parties. In contrast to this “seat-maximization” account, we focus on how PR affected party leaders’ control over nominations, thereby enabling them to discipline their followers and build more cohesive parties. We explore this “party-building” account in the case of Norway, using roll call data from six reform proposals in 1919. We show that leaders were more likely to vote in favor of PR than rank-and-file members, even controlling for the parties’ expected seat payoffs and the district-level socialist electoral threat facing individual legislators. Moreover, using within-legislator variation, we show that the internal cohesion of parties increased significantly after the introduction of PR. (143 words)

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Studies of why so many European countries adopted proportional representation (PR) around the turn of the twentieth century have proliferated in the last generation. The most widely accepted explanation was first articulated by Braunias (1932) and Rokkan (1970), and later formalized by Boix (1999). In this “seat-maximization theory” of PR adoption, a fragmented bloc of conservative (bourgeois) parties favored PR as a strategic, defensive reform to preserve their legislative seat shares in the face of a rising socialist threat on the left and the inability to coalesce or cooperate effectively in single-member districts (SMDs) on the right.¹

Karl Braunias, of course, was not the only contemporary to study the reasons that motivated the adoption of PR in Europe. Georges Lachapelle, an early student of electoral systems, urged the adoption of PR as a way to improve the discipline of French parliamentary parties (Lachapelle, 1911). France’s two-round elections, Lachapelle argued, fostered diverse and conflicting local electoral alliances, which in turn produced factionalized and undisciplined parties incapable of advocating and pursuing coherent public policies. The adoption of PR, Lachapelle claimed, would begin to centralize control over nominations, thus enabling party leaders to curb indiscipline and empowering parliamentary parties to act as more cohesive voting blocs.

We first review several critiques of the dominant seat-maximization theory of PR adoption. We then develop the (implicit) logic of Lachapelle’s arguments to suggest a “party-building theory” of PR adoption. After considering why moving from two-round elections in SMDs to PR elections in multi-member districts (MMDs) should have improved national party leaders’ control over nominations, we explain how more centralized control over nominations should have improved both voting cohesion and party leaders’ ability to negotiate coalition governments. Our line of argument implies that party leaders should have been more favorable to adopting PR than their followers, and that parties

¹A second type of explanation focuses on how PR would affect the relations between labor and management in countries with differing varieties of capitalism (Cusack, Iversen and Soskice, 2007). The historical accuracy of the data underlying both types of explanation has received some scrutiny (e.g., Kreuzer, 2010). For responses to these critiques, see Boix (2010) and Cusack, Iversen and Soskice (2010). Leemann and Mares (2014) provide a clear review of the hypotheses and debates within this literature.

should have become more cohesive after its introduction.

Why would rank-and-file members have supported their leaders' proposals for PR? With a few recent exceptions (Leemann and Mares, 2014; Manow and Schröder, 2016), existing accounts of why Europe adopted PR have treated parties as unitary actors, ignoring the potentially disparate preferences of individual MPs within parties. Yet, in many cases, parties were internally divided on the question of whether to adopt PR. Following Leemann and Mares (2014), we argue that intraparty variation in support for PR among backbenchers can be explained partly by members' differing exposures to socialist electoral threats in their own local districts.

We provide empirical evidence for the party-building theory of PR adoption from the case of Norway, which figured prominently in the initial development of the seat-maximization accounts. From 1906 to 1918, members of the Norwegian parliament (Storting) were elected through a two-round runoff system in SMDs, which produced disproportional seat allocation outcomes across the main parties (Fiva and Smith, 2017*b*). In 1917, parliament appointed a commission to consider changes in the electoral system. We examine the roll call votes of members of parliament (MPs) on all six relevant reform proposals that emerged in 1919, and which culminated in the adoption of PR. The socialist Labor Party was an ardent supporter of PR. Our analyses show that, within the bourgeois Conservative and Liberal party blocs, the reform was propelled forward mostly by party leaders, but was also supported by members whose local districts exhibited higher vote shares for the Labor Party. Our analyses control (via fixed effects) for each party bloc's aggregate seat gain or loss from PR. Thus, we are better able to discern how the incentives of leaders pursuing the parties' long-term organizational interests and backbenchers pursuing their own short-term re-election interests affected the process of reform, controlling for each party's seat-maximization concerns.

In addition to providing a rare examination of support for PR at the individual level, we also investigate how PR affected party cohesion. If our party-building theory is correct, we should observe an increase in party cohesion, either after the adoption of PR in 1919

or after its implementation in 1921. Based on a comprehensive sample of roll call votes on either side of these junctures, we show that voting cohesion indeed increased significantly in Norway's three main parties following the adoption of PR, and continued to increase after its implementation. These findings complement a recent investigation by Manow and Schröder (2016), who use historical roll call votes from Germany to show that party cohesion increased after the adoption of PR in 1918.

All told, our analysis suggests that party leaders' desire to improve their own control over nominations, thereby improving their ability to discipline their MPs, was an important part of their motivation to introduce PR. We show that the adoption of PR, at least for the classic case of Norway, was not just about preserving or maximizing seats; it was also about building more disciplined and cohesive parties.

Critiques of the Seat-Maximization Theory

Several scholars have previously challenged the dominant seat-maximization theory of PR adoption. We review three lines of critique here: (1) support for PR was more widespread than would be consistent with seat maximization; (2) some parties that supported PR actually lost seats; and (3) the fragmented right had already figured out how to cooperate in SMDs with two rounds of voting.

The first line of critique stems from the fact that both the old elite parties and the socialists supported PR in many European countries. Blais, Dobrzynska and Indridason (2005, p. 184) note, for example, that “the very presence of a consensus in what is necessarily a zero-sum game (what a party gains when shifting from one electoral system to another is by definition at the expense of other parties) suggests very strongly that other factors...were at work” beyond seat maximization. Rodden (2009, p. 3), pursuing a similar line of argument, puts it this way: “Could it possibly be true that the socialists and their bourgeois enemies both simultaneously believed that the same electoral institution would be their salvation?” Since not every major party could have expected to

gain seats from the same reform, he sensibly concludes that there must have been other considerations influencing PR adoption.

Indeed, the second criticism of the seat-maximization theory is that many of the bourgeois parties actually lost seats as a result of the adoption of PR. Calvo (2009, p. 256) views Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway as cases in which PR reforms “did not help old elites to maximize their seat shares.” In the case of Norway, we show in the analysis to follow that the Liberals were earning a substantial bonus under the old system at the time that many of them voted to dismantle it. Other scholars, such as Ahmed (2013) and Barzachka (2014), have pointed to Belgium as another case in which the incumbent party supporting PR lost seats as a result of its adoption.

The third line of attack questions the central premise that, where the nonsocialist parties were evenly divided, “failure to reduce the electoral threshold would have led to an overwhelming victory of the socialist party” (Boix, 1999, p. 609). The two-round electoral systems in place in most of Europe prior to PR allowed a divided bourgeois bloc to unite after the first round—and such coordination was common and reasonably successful (Lachapelle, 1911; Blais, Dobrzynska and Indridason, 2005; Calvo, 2009; Manow and Schröder, 2016). Thus, it was possible for even a fragmented right to deal with a rising socialist threat within the existing electoral rules, again suggesting that seat maximization was not the only consideration in play.

To move beyond an exclusive focus on seat maximization by parties, we consider a wider range of actors. The adoption of PR in Europe was often a deliberate choice made by the incumbent MPs in each country.² However, backbenchers and leaders faced different pressures and incentives, and it is important to consider how these sometimes competing and sometimes coincident incentives are reflected in MPs’ support for PR. Backbench MPs should have been concerned not just with their party’s seats but also with their own re-election. Party leaders should have been concerned not just with their party’s share of seats but also with their ability to manage members and negotiate and

²There were exceptions such as Germany (where PR was adopted by decree) and Switzerland (referendum).

enforce deals with other parties. In the next section, we consider how PR affected the attainment of leaders' goals.

PR, Nominations, and Party Cohesion

In European democracies prior to the adoption of PR, the bourgeois parties had separate nominating committees in each SMD. In the countries with two-round systems, such as Norway, sometimes there were multiple local committees for each party, with each local committee putting up its own candidate in the first round. Central party leaders had no formal powers over these committees, meaning that the local actors operated with considerable autonomy.³ A leader seeking to influence local nominations through informal means, moreover, would have had to spread his fixed time and resources thinly across a large number of SMDs.

With the adoption of PR, there were fewer districts and hence fewer nominating committees. Indeed, in the nine West European democracies that switched to PR (and had modern parliaments beforehand), the average reduction in the number of districts was 82 percent.⁴ Thus, the adoption of PR allowed leaders to focus their lobbying resources on a considerably smaller number of targets. Even if not augmented by specific new formal rules giving national leaders a role in local nominations, the reduction in nominating committees alone would have helped to homogenize party nominations and improve central leaders' ability to monitor and influence them. Moreover, in order to run for office,

³Nomination procedures were extremely decentralized throughout continental Europe prior to the adoption of PR. In France, for example, "to become a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies all that is necessary is a declaration before the mayor, five days before the election" (Seymour and Frary, 1918, Vol. I, p. 373). In Belgium, candidates for the Chamber of Representatives "must be placed in nomination a fortnight before the election by fifty or a hundred voters of their district" (Seymour and Frary, 1918, Vol. II, p. 196). Rules like these, common throughout Europe, underpinned the autonomy of the local nominating committees.

⁴The countries included in this calculation are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden. The data are mostly from Nohlen and Stöver (2010). We exclude the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Spain, as they did not switch to PR at this time, Finland, as it had a four-estate parliament before switching to PR, and Switzerland, as it adopted PR via a referendum. In the Netherlands, we count the number of PR districts as 18, corresponding to the 18 "nomination districts."

candidates would need to be part of an official party list. Independent candidacies of rogue would-be nominees, which might undercut a party's nomination strategy, would not be possible.

Some contemporary observers and authors, such as Lachapelle (1911), predicted that party leaders would enjoy greater influence over nominations under PR. Consistent with this prediction, soon after PR had in fact been adopted, a common view was that "proportional representation has strengthened the influence of parties and weakened that of personalities..." (Herlitz, 1925, p. 585; see also McBain and Rogers, 1922). A bit later, Duverger (1954, p. 358) offered a similar view: "Proportional representation increases the influence of parties over candidates."

Contemporaries also drew the logical conclusion that PR should enhance the voting cohesion of parties. Lachapelle (1911) argued that closed-list PR could help cure the endemic factionalism of French politics, and thereby produce more cohesive and responsible parties. Similarly, party leaders in Austria believed they could combat socialism only if they offered a powerful set of social reforms, which would require "reformed, disciplined mass bourgeois parties" (Boyer, 1986, p. 167). In Austria, as in France, some viewed PR as part of the recipe to create such parties (Boyer, 1995, p. 619).

These arguments hinged on the idea that nomination control was a potent source of influence in all electoral systems. In his classic study of the United Kingdom, Ostrogorski (1902, p. xxx) argued that the pressure put on the parliamentary conduct of MPs by their local nominating committees turned them into "delegates" rather than "representatives." Although each MP had various political obligations, the nominating committee held the "first mortgage over his political conscience." A generation later, Schattschneider (1942, p. 64) gave the idea that control over nominations implied control over MPs its most memorable formulation: "he who can make the nominations is the owner of the party."

Although Schattschneider's aphorism is famous, systematic evidence on whether and how much European leaders increased their influence over nominations after the introduc-

tion of PR is scarce.⁵ If leaders' influence did increase, then we would expect two effects. First, party cohesion should improve. Second, leaders' positions on the new lists should have been favorable. Manow and Schröder (2016) show evidence that backbenchers in the bourgeois parties were more likely to defect from the party majority in roll call votes before the adoption of PR in the Weimar Republic. We offer similar evidence here, comparing the cohesion of Norwegian parties before and after PR.⁶ We are not aware of a systematic, comparative study of leaders' positions on early PR lists but offer evidence on how they fared in the case of Norway.

By increasing their influence over nominations, PR could also ease leaders' task in forming coalition governments or minority governments with stable legislative support. Under the old SMD-based systems, coalition deals could potentially be resisted by any faction in any party. In handling dissidents, party leaders could not threaten expulsion, as autonomous local selectorates controlled nominations in each district. After the introduction of PR, however, national party leaders had a new tool to secure agreement on the deals they struck—the threat of a lower list position or even de-nomination for MPs who pushed their dissent too far. This additional resource in securing agreement to coalition deals probably looked valuable to party leaders pushing for PR. In the countries that switched to PR, the median effective number of electoral parties in the last election under an SMD system was four. Thus, many party leaders must have suspected that their route to power in the future would often be through negotiations with other parties to form coalition governments.

In the case of Norway, within-bloc coalitions were already common prior to the adoption of PR. Coalitions between blocs did not ultimately materialize until the postwar

⁵There is some evidence from more recent settings of the relationships between electoral rules, party centralization of nominations, and cohesion (e.g., Hix, 2004; Carey, 2007; Sieberer, 2010).

⁶An alternative theory is that the introduction of PR increased cohesion by homogenizing MPs' electoral incentives. An anonymous reviewer suggests, for example, that pre-reform MPs might have catered to the (diverse) median voters in each SMD, while post-reform MPs would have catered to the (stable) party base in each MMD. However, the principal for an individual MP's reselection/re-election under PR is not the median voter of the party's base, but rather the party leadership or selectorate in the nominating committee. So a "change in the median voter" mechanism for explaining increased cohesion makes less sense than a "change in the selectorate" mechanism.

period. However, several of the governments formed between 1921 and 1945 were minority governments (Strøm, 1990), which would have at least required the legislative cooperation of the bourgeois parties across blocs. In order to sustain this cooperation, party leaders would need to ensure that their members followed suit with regard to any negotiated terms sustaining the government's support.

In sum, our argument is that party leaders and backbenchers may have favored PR for different reasons. Whereas support among backbenchers should be closely tied to their own re-election chances under the existing SMD system given the level of socialist threat in their districts (Leemann and Mares, 2014), party leaders should have more uniformly supported PR as a way to better control their own members and increase party cohesion. This motivation for party leaders comes close to what Benoit (2004) calls a “general interest” motivation for reform based on governability concerns, and stands in stark contrast to a simple seat-maximization account applying to parties as a whole or individual members in their districts.

Explaining British Exceptionalism

Great Britain provides a contrasting pattern to the argument just made for the continental European democracies, and it is instructive to consider why. The existing account of the British exception to the seat-maximization theory of PR adoption posits that party leaders simply miscalculated in the timing of their support (e.g., Andrews and Jackman, 2005). In the early 1900s, some Liberals were sympathetic to the idea of adopting some form of PR (Bogdanor, 1981; Hart, 1992), in part perhaps because of disproportional outcomes in general elections between 1886 and 1900. However, opinion was divided and would shift over the course of the next two decades, particularly following a successful electoral pact with Labour between 1906 and 1910. By the time the Liberals had reached a consensus on favoring PR following electoral defeats in 1918, Labour had secured its status as the second dominant party, and no longer supported reform.

This miscalculation may in part explain why Britain did not adopt PR. However,

an alternative account of party leaders' incentives fits the logic of our party-building theory. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Britain was the only country in Europe whose monarch had been continuously limited since the eighteenth century. The others had only recently secured parliament's power over the purse (Cox, 2016), only recently secured parliament's right to dismiss ministers via votes of no confidence, and were just beginning to regulate the monarch's prerogative power to choose ministers.⁷ In contrast, British party leaders had already exercised control over such matters—with the monarch mostly operating as a national figurehead—since the 1830s.

Having secured full power to govern, British party leaders quickly established whip organizations in the House of Commons, mechanisms to centrally regulate nominations, and extraparliamentary organizations large enough to secure majorities in the House of Commons (Cox, 1987).⁸ The whips kept up good relations with the local nominating committees, and party-affiliated clubs maintained lists in London of “pre-approved” candidates from which the local committees were supposed to choose. Members had to worry about being removed from the central list and also about satisfying their local committee. Thus, British party leaders needed PR neither to improve their control over nominations, nor to facilitate negotiations between parties for government formation. Elsewhere in Europe, in contrast, PR could further both of these goals.⁹

⁷In the case of Norway, parliamentary supremacy over the King of Sweden was established in 1884; full independence came about through a peaceful separation in 1905.

⁸Systematic data on party cohesion are available from 1836 onward. Eggers and Spirling (2016) show that the rebellious “tail” in the membership of Britain's main parties had largely disappeared by the 1860s, well before PR began to be seriously debated in Europe.

⁹Another impediment to PR that existed only in Great Britain was a strong Finance Minister (Chancellor of the Exchequer). Hallerberg and von Hagen (1999) have noted that Finance Ministers who are able to impose caps on “spending ministers” are difficult to sustain in multiparty coalitions, since an MP from one particular coalition partner will secure that office and the other partners will then fear a partisan use of its powers. Thus, one reason that Britain's Liberals decided not to push for PR may have been that they anticipated the difficulties a strong Chancellor of the Exchequer would create in such an environment.

The Norwegian Case

Norway provides a useful case for exploring our party-building account of the adoption of PR in Europe. The first electoral system used for the Norwegian Storting, established by the 1814 Constitution, was based on indirect elections. Two-round plurality runoff elections in SMDs were introduced after Norway gained full independence from Sweden in 1905. The runoff system, effective from the 1906 election, came under pressure after five elections, and in 1919 the Storting decided to adopt a system of closed-list PR in multimember districts (MMDs). The reform transformed the existing 126 SMDs into 29 MMDs with district magnitude ranging from 3 to 8 seats.¹⁰ In this section, we describe the political context prior to the introduction of PR, and then provide details on the various reform proposals, which constitute the main ingredients of our empirical analysis. We also provide qualitative evidence from contemporary Storting debates to illustrate the divergent thought processes of the party leaders and backbenchers.

The Political Context

Elections during the two-round runoff period (1906-1918) were dominated by three party blocs: **(1)** the Labor Party (*Arbeiderpartiet*), **(2)** the Liberals (*Venstre*) and the Labor Democrats (*Arbeiderdemokratene*), and **(3)** the Conservatives (*Høyre*) and the Progressive Liberals (*Frisinnede Venstre*). The Labor Party, representing a new socialist threat to the bourgeois establishment, gradually gained support after the extension of the franchise, first to men over 25 years of age in 1898, and then to women in 1913 (Aardal, 2002, p. 176).

Candidates were chosen in each local electoral constituency, with relatively little control exercised by national party elites (Mjeldheim, 1978). The national party organization would recommend that its members coordinate on the top-finishing candidate from the

¹⁰The size of parliament increased to 150. Seats were initially allocated by the D'Hondt method. For details of Norway's electoral system, see (Fiva and Smith, 2017b). Cox, Fiva and Smith (2016) examine the effect of the 1919 reform on voter turnout.

first round, but had no power to enforce this coordination. For the bourgeois parties, the first round of the two-round system often functioned like a primary election to determine which of several co-partisans or coalition partners in a district should be supported in the second round (Helland and Saglie, 2003; Fiva and Smith, 2017*a*), but additional candidates sometimes ran, and even candidates who did not run in the first round could enter in the second. The Labor Party, in contrast, eschewed coalitions or cooperation with the other parties, and less frequently ran multiple candidates in a district.

In line with the third line of critique against the seat-maximization theory of PR adoption, the bourgeois parties were largely successful at negotiating stand-down agreements. Fiva and Smith (2017*a*, p. 133) find that a failure of the bourgeois parties to coordinate between rounds—thereby splitting the vote and costing the bourgeois bloc the election—occurred in only a single district in elections between 1909 and 1918 (Nordland second district in 1915). In this instance, two Liberal candidates from different parts of the district ran in the second round, splitting the bourgeois vote and handing the seat to the single Labor Party candidate.

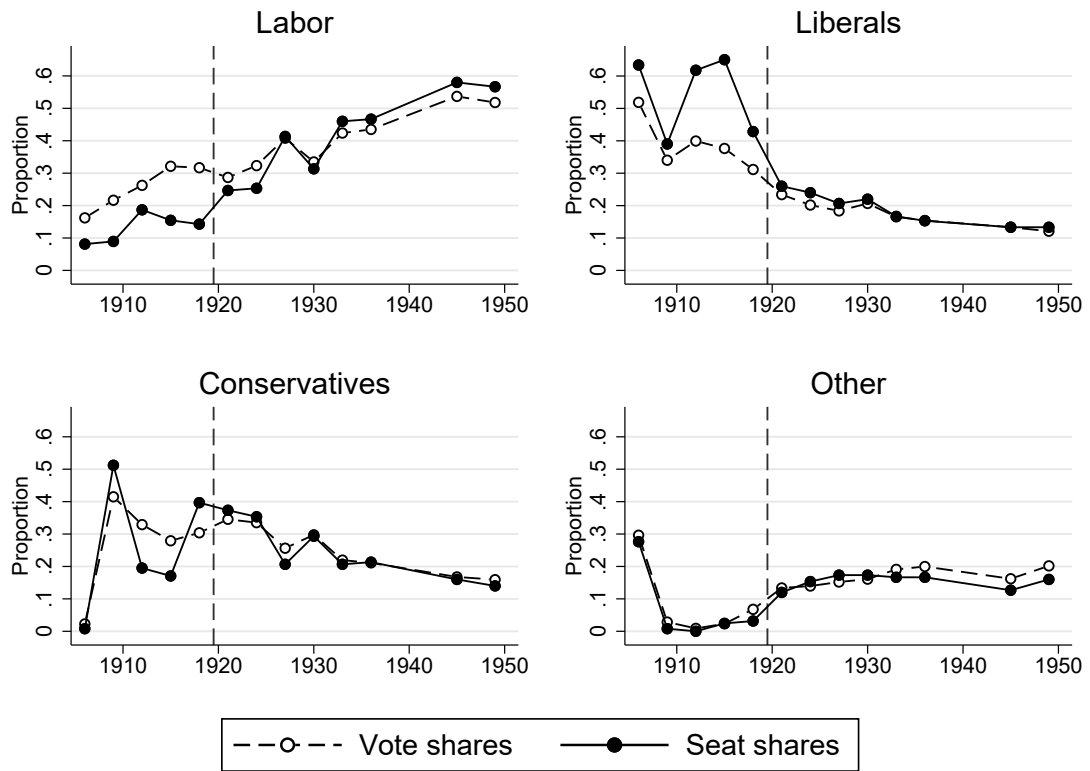
The SMD system produced disproportional translations of votes to seats. Figure 1 shows vote shares (white) and seat shares (black) for the main political blocs, and a residual “other” category (including independents and minor parties), over the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹ Because support for the Labor Party was relatively evenly spread out, the two-round SMD system resulted in the party’s consistent underrepresentation—mostly to the advantage of the Liberals, who formed a single-party government from 1913-1920.¹²

The 1814 Norwegian Constitution stipulated that 1/3 of MPs should be elected from towns and 2/3 from rural districts. This component of the electoral system, known as the “Peasant Clause,” historically led to the overrepresentation of urban, rather than rural,

¹¹The higher percentage of votes and seats in the “other” category in 1906 reflects the inchoate party system at the time of that first election.

¹²The Liberals lost their majority in the 1918 election, but continued to govern with a single-party minority government until after reform was passed. As the Labor Party continued to grow in the 1930s-1940s it received a “big party bonus” as a consequence of the D’Hondt method used for allocating seats. This eventually led to the adoption of Modified Sainte-Laguë in 1952.

Figure 1: Vote shares and seat shares across blocs



Note: The figure shows vote shares (white) and seat shares (black) for the four political blocs over the 1906 to 1949 period. The introduction of PR is marked with the dashed vertical line. The Social Democratic Labor Party of Norway, which ran in the 1921 and 1924 elections, and the Communist Party, which entered the political arena in 1924, are included in the Labor Party bloc.

districts. Although the fraction of urban citizens increased over time, in 1919 it was still below 1/3, and remained below 1/3 for all of the interwar period. In the 1906-1915 period, 123 MPs were elected in 82 rural and 41 urban districts. In 1918, three additional districts were established, but these new districts did not alleviate the problem of Labor Party underrepresentation.¹³

The Labor Party was, therefore, naturally the strongest advocate for electoral reform. The other parties may have been concerned by the growing radicalization and alienation of the Labor Party as a result of its underrepresentation (Rokkan, 1970), and so also publicly acknowledged a need for some kind of reform. In their 1918 party manifestos, both the Liberals and the Conservatives stated that they would work for a “more just electoral system.” The Liberal Prime Minister Gunnar Knudsen elaborated in the 28 November 1919 Storting debate:

It is both our right and duty to strive towards the ideal. It should be acknowledged that the current electoral rule does not fit with these principles... This was already obvious in the 1915 election, not to mention the preceding one... Hence, all parties acknowledged that the situation was such that this could no longer continue, and a better electoral rule should be found, a more just electoral rule, as we wrote in the Liberals program. After the 1918 election it became clear that the situation was even worse. Rather than winning 41 seats the [Labor] party only won 18 seats.¹⁴

Thus, the “fairness” of the electoral system was, at least publicly, part of the rhetoric surrounding reform. However, Rokkan (1970, p. 158) also argues that the decision to adopt PR was “clearly not just a sense of equalitarian justice but the fear of rapid decline with further Labour advances across the majority threshold.” This is consistent with his seat-maximization account.

¹³Most districts were comprised of several contiguous municipalities. However, *Kristiania* (the capital, Oslo) and some other large cities were split into multiple districts, and a few other districts, such as *Aalesund*, *Molde og Kristiansund*, were made up of two or more non-contiguous urban municipalities.

¹⁴Translated from Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2930.

Consistent with our party-building explanation, on the other hand, is that party leaders also hinted at the need, in the foreseeable future, for parties to negotiate interparty deals for governing, possibly in coalitions. For example, Prime Minister Knudsen stated:

When I arrived at the conclusion that I would recommend support for Proposal A_{iv} [adopting PR]—like many others—I wanted to take a political perspective. We have been used to having a majority for a single party, but since the socialists arrived...it will only rarely happen, if ever, that one party gets a majority. This will naturally have political consequences... Any party in the Storting must be prepared to engage in political and parliamentary connections with other parties.¹⁵

Rokkan (1970, p. 159) himself notes that, although the bourgeois parties were not willing to put aside their differences to join forces in a single list, “they were anxious to increase their representation through provisions for electoral cartels.”¹⁶ PR would allow parties to remain distinct entities, but also strengthen the ability of party leaders to make deals with the other parties for mutual gain, and enforce these deals among their members.

Some backbenchers in bourgeois parties pushed back on the need for reform, and particularly in opposition to the adoption of PR. As did several others in the debates, Fridtjov Otto Hegge of the Liberal Party took for granted that PR would strengthen party control over nominations:

And then comes the big and difficult question of nomination... I agree that it is through the party organization that political development must occur, so generally there is no harm in parties being strengthened... But it is also possible that it can go too far. It may be that the party organization...will become so great that it is at the expense of the individual voter’s freedom and perhaps more... The individual voter may be left out of the game...because

¹⁵Translated from Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2932.

¹⁶This was ultimately not advantageous to the Labor Party, which abolished cartels once it achieved power in 1945. The Modified Sainte-Laguë seat allocation method was introduced in 1952 to lower the threshold and placate the other parties.

he has to vote for the [candidates decided by the party], so we can understand things will be quite different with list elections using large counties as districts.¹⁷

Thus, while Hegge acknowledged that stronger parties might promote political development, as argued by Lachapelle and other PR advocates, he worried that the party organization might exert too much control. Another Liberal Party MP, Knut Otterlei, framed this worry more dramatically, arguing that the adoption of PR would “make the party organization or the nomination convention, practically speaking, almighty.”¹⁸ Otterlei faced a very low socialist electoral threat in his own district; he and other Liberal dissidents seemed to be more concerned about parties becoming too strong, to the point that they voted against the reform being advocated by their leaders.

The discussion about electoral reform also took place outside of the parliament and party organizations. The conservative newspaper *Aftenposten*, for example, wrote 157 articles in the 1918-1919 period that included the words “electoral rule” (*valgordning*); on average, one article every fifth day. A front-page editorial on the morning of November 29, 1919 (the day of the reform votes in parliament), noted Prime Minister Knudsen’s expectation of future coalition governments, and argued that the Liberals should seek to cooperate with the Conservatives rather than any parties on the left. It is clear that legislators and the electorate were aware of the various potential consequences of electoral system reform.

Reform Proposals

In July 1917, parliament appointed a commission to consider changes in the electoral system. This commission, which consisted of seven members, presented several different reform proposals in April 1919.¹⁹ The majority in the electoral reform commission

¹⁷Translated from Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2861.

¹⁸Translated from Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2896.

¹⁹The membership was as follows: R. Jacobsen (chair, Liberal MP), T. Aaen (Liberal MP), S. Aarrestad (Liberal MP), J. Castberg (Labor Democrat MP), M. Nilssen (Labor MP), H. C. J. Scheel (former Conservative minister of justice, supreme court judge), N. Skaar (Liberal MP).

proposed a system of PR in MMDs (Proposal A_{vi} in Table 1).²⁰ A minority of the electoral commission suggested instead to implement a system based on plurality rule and adjustment seats, similar to the system adopted by Denmark in 1915.²¹ A majority of the commission also suggested that the Peasant Clause be abolished.²²

The membership of the Storting in 1919 consisted of 18 Labor MPs, 54 Liberal MPs (including 3 Labor Democrats), 50 Conservative MPs (including 9 Progressive Liberals), 3 MPs from the Farmer's Association (a minor party), and 1 independent. In Norway, MPs who are appointed to cabinet resign their seats and are replaced in parliament by deputy MPs for the duration of their service in cabinet. Cabinet ministers do not vote on legislation.

²⁰The members in the majority were Castberg, Nilssen, Scheel, and Skaar.

²¹Denmark's mixed-member PR system was only used in one election, in 1918. In 1920, Denmark adopted open-list PR (Elklit, 2002).

²²The members in this majority were Aaen, Aarrestad, Jacobsen, Scheel, and Skaar.

Table 1: Reform proposals

Proposal	Rule	District Structure	Percent in Favor			
			Lab.	Lib. Con.	Overall	
Postpone	—	—	0	35	32	29
A (A_{viii})	PR (no diff. rural/urban)	MMDs of equal pop. size	100	0	6	17
B (A_{vi})	PR (some diff. rural/urban)	MMDs follow county lines Large cities → separate MMDs	100	4	26	27
C (A_{ii})	Mix of PR & plurality	Small cities → SMDs Large cities → MMDs Rural areas → MMDs	89	2	96	53
D (B_i)	Plurality with adjustment seats	126 SMDs 24 adjustment seats Inspired by Danish reform (1915)	6	83	18	44
E (A_{iv})	PR (separate rural/urban)	Small cities → disjoint MMDs Large cities → MMDs Rural areas → MMDs	94	72	66	73

Note: Proposal labels in parentheses correspond to the labels used in the actual Storting debates and votes. We assign alphabetical labels for ease of presentation. Proposal A (A_{viii}) and B (A_{vi}) included provisions to abolish the Peasant Clause. The descriptive statistics are based on the 1919 Storting which consisted of 18 Labor MPs, 54 Liberal MPs, 50 Conservative MPs, 3 MPs from the Farmer's Association, and 1 independent.

There was much debate over the reform proposals in the Storting, but votes were not cast until November 29, 1919.²³ After an initial vote on whether to postpone or move forward with electoral reform, there were five different reform proposals considered, as detailed in Table 1. For a reform to be adopted, it required a 2/3 majority. The order in which the proposals were considered was decided by the President of the Storting (the presiding officer of the parliament), who at the time was Otto B. Halvorsen of the Conservative Party.²⁴ Halvorsen proposed a voting sequence that he argued would “allow the largest number of MPs to vote according to their principal stances.”²⁵ This suggests that the order was set so that expressive preferences could be counted on proposals A through D, while the leadership was aware that proposal E would ultimately win out. In the debate leading up to the votes, there was some pushback on the decided voting order by a handful of Liberal and Conservative backbenchers, who soon conceded.²⁶

The official parliamentary record of the Storting provides complete data on how MPs voted on each of these six proposals. Using these data, combined with data on election results and leadership positions (Fiva and Smith, 2017*b*), we can explore whether there was more support for PR among party leaders in the Conservative and Liberal blocs, as well as among those MPs who faced a stronger socialist (Labor) threat in their own locales. To set the stage for this analysis, we first describe how many MPs were part of the party elite, and how much the socialist threat varied across MPs.

²³The final version of the reform bill was approved December 17, 1920, and the first elections held under the new system were in 1921.

²⁴Strøm (1995, p. 68) notes that the President of the Storting exercises considerable formal authority. Halvorsen would later become Prime Minister in 1920, after the reform was passed.

²⁵Translated from Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2979.

²⁶For example, Liberal MP Fridtjov Otto Hegge, who had previously expressed concern that PR would make parties too strong, wanted proposals to be voted on as labeled by the commission, viz. all “A” options first, followed by “B” (which he and many other backbench Liberals favored). He backed down following pushback by several Labor and Conservative MPs who insisted that the commission did not mandate a voting order, and a Liberal Party elite, Ivar Petterson Tveiten (former President of the Storting), who noted that such an order would force him to vote against his preferred alternative before his sincere preference, suggesting that the Liberal elite were aware that there might not be enough support for Proposal D (B_i) that was closest to the status quo (Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2979-2781).

Conservative and Liberal Party Elites

Our party-building theory suggests that party leaders who anticipated a future necessity of forming coalition governments or negotiating other forms of interparty agreements may have favored the introduction of PR to strengthen their hands vis-à-vis the party's rank-and-file members. In our regression analyses in the next section, we use a variable *Party elite* that equals 1 for any MP who was a pre-reform elite politician. We consider MPs who acted as party leader, parliamentary leader, cabinet minister, or national board member in the pre-reform period to belong to the pre-reform party elite. All told, 15 of 104 MPs fulfill this criterion. Because the Liberals were in government (and hence most of the party's elite members resigned their seats to become ministers), all but three of these elite MPs were from the Conservative Party.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on the sample of Liberal and Conservative MPs in the Storting at the time of the votes. Both party leaders and rank-and-file MPs tended to continue their political careers after the introduction of PR. However, while 73 percent of bourgeois party elites (11 out of 15) became top-ranked in at least one post-reform election, the same is true for only 28 percent of non-elites (25 out of 89). It is rare that pre-reform non-elites were promoted to post-reform cabinet ministerial positions (2 out of 89), but common for pre-reform elites (9 out of 15). Hence, the pre-reform elites enjoyed higher list positions and continued to enjoy their status in the party leadership after the reform.

All Socialist Threats Are Local

In the pre-reform period, as noted, the Conservative and Liberal blocs often used the first round election as a de facto party (or coalition) primary. The Labor Party, however, typically coordinated on a single candidate in the first round and never formed electoral coalitions with other parties in the second round. Hence, as support for the Labor Party grew, it posed a real threat to Conservative and Liberal candidates, particularly

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	Pre-reform non-elite		Pre-reform elite	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Conservative MP (freq.)	51	38	3	12
Ran post-reform (freq.)	27	62	2	13
Top-ranked post-reform (freq.)	64	25	4	11
Elected post-reform (freq.)	44	45	4	11
Cabinet minister post-reform (freq.)	87	2	6	9
Mean district socialist vote share (standard deviation)		0.24 (0.13)		0.30 (0.08)
		N=89		N=15

Note: Descriptives statistics for MPs belonging to the Liberal and Conservative bloc. MPs who acted as party leader, parliamentary leader, cabinet minister, or national board member in the pre-reform period are classified as belonging to the party elite. An MP is classified as top-ranked if he, in the post-reform period, was ranked first on a list nominated by the party he represented in 1919. The district socialist vote share is the 1918 electoral support for the Labor Party candidate in each MP's home district.

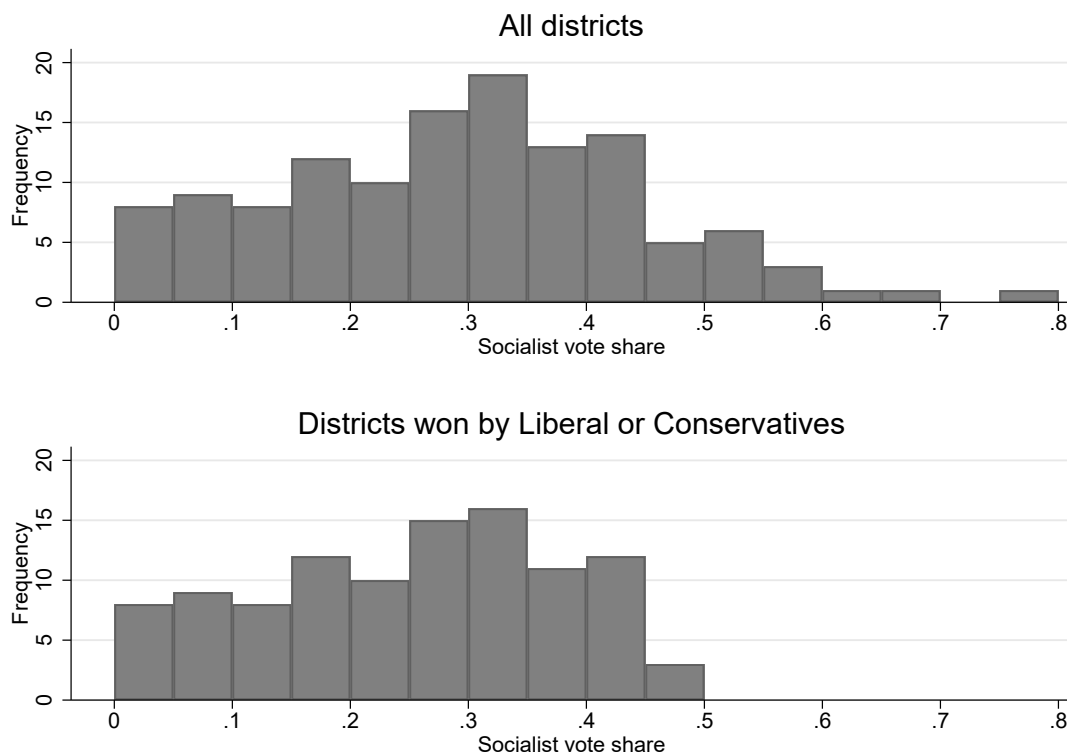
in districts where both parties ran, splitting the non-socialist vote. Nevertheless, this “socialist threat” was not uniform across districts.

In 1918, the Labor Party fielded a candidate in 124 out of 126 SMDs.²⁷ On average, the Labor Party received 29% of the votes cast in the first round; however, the top panel of Figure 2 illustrates how electoral support for the Labor Party varied considerably across the SMDs. The bottom panel shows Labor Party support in the 104 SMDs won by Liberal and Conservative candidates. Clearly, not all MPs from the bourgeois parties faced the same level of socialist threat in their local districts. On average, party elites faced a slightly higher threat than non-elites (see Table 2).

In our regression analyses in the next section, we measure the local socialist threat (*Socialist vote share*) as the 1918 electoral support for the Labor Party candidate in each MP's home district (per the bottom panel of Figure 2). For ease of interpretation, we standardize this variable to have mean of zero and standard deviation of one. For deputy

²⁷In two districts (*Strinden* and *Sandviken*), the Labor Party candidate was replaced with a different candidate between rounds.

Figure 2: First-round support for the Labor Party in 1918



Note: Socialist vote share is the share of votes for the Labor Party in the first round of the 1918 election. The top panel shows the distribution across all SMDs ($n=126$). The bottom panel shows the distribution for districts won by candidates belonging to the Liberal and Conservative blocs ($n=104$).

MPs, we use the level of socialist threat that faced the main candidate (for whom they substituted) in the election.

Analysis of MP-level Support for Reform

In Table 3, we present the results of a series of linear probability models of each MP's vote on five reform proposals (coded 1 if they voted in favor). We exclude the vote on Proposal A (A_{viii}) because all party elites and all Liberal MPs voted against it.²⁸ The main regressors are whether each MP was a member of the party elite, a dummy for the

²⁸In Appendix Table A.2, however, we show the results using a penalized maximum likelihood estimator (Firth, 1993), which other scholars have used to deal with this "separation problem" (e.g., Leemann and Mares, 2014).

Table 3: Results of linear probability model of voting for reform proposals

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Postpone	B	C	D	E
Party elite	-0.304*** (0.107)	-0.215** (0.093)	-0.057 (0.068)	-0.208** (0.090)	0.204* (0.120)
Conservative MP	0.054 (0.103)	0.224*** (0.071)	0.941*** (0.040)	-0.595*** (0.089)	-0.153 (0.098)
Socialist vote share	-0.068 (0.051)	0.088*** (0.032)	0.026 (0.029)	-0.045 (0.038)	0.121*** (0.044)
Constant	0.355*** (0.067)	0.067** (0.032)	0.027 (0.024)	0.836*** (0.053)	0.736*** (0.059)
N	104	104	104	104	104
R^2	0.075	0.192	0.892	0.457	0.101

Note: Dependent variable equals one if the MP voted in favor of the reform proposal (given in the table header), zero otherwise. Proposal A is excluded because all party elites and all Liberal MPs voted against it. Sample is limited to Liberal and Conservative MPs ($n=104$). Party elite is an indicator variable equal to one if the MP served as a cabinet minister, party leader, member of national board, or parliamentary leader, in the 1906-1921 period, zero otherwise. Conservative MP is an indicator variable equal to one if the MP represents the Conservative bloc, zero otherwise. Socialist vote share is the share of votes for the best performing Labor candidate in the MP's home district in the first round of the 1918 election; standardized to have mean zero and standard deviation one. Small sample robust standard errors (*vce(hc3)* option in Stata) in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Conservative bloc (with the Liberal bloc being the excluded category), and the size of the local socialist threat each MP faced. We consider each of these factors in turn.

Party Elites' Party-Building Incentives

According to our party-building account of the adoption of PR, party leaders in the Conservative and Liberal blocs would have had the most to gain from centralizing control over nominations and optimizing the bourgeois super-bloc's chances of forming the government. The results in Table 3 are consistent with the following story.

First, the leaders reached agreement on reform Proposal E, which introduced PR but limited its political effects, as the support for the Labor Party was isolated by the separation of rural and urban areas. This resulted in smaller-magnitude districts than

would have resulted under the other options considered. Presumably, the conservative parties would continue to perform well enough to win some seats in the cities, while Labor would have difficulty winning seats in the rural remainder of each county.

Second, the leaders arranged a voting agenda which, given reasonably accurate whip counts, would foreseeably lead to the adoption of their agreed proposal. The Conservative presiding officer of the Storting, Otto Halvorsen, ensured that the proposals were voted on in the “correct” order. Along the way, there were some sincere and some strategic differences between the partners, which may have been for electoral consumption. Halvorsen himself voted in favor of Proposal D (presumably his sincere, expressive preference), and then in favor of Proposal E.

If this account is accurate, then the key votes revealing how leaders’ interests diverged from otherwise similar rank-and-file members of their respective blocs are the first and last votes listed in Table 1, and captured in columns (1) and (5) in Table 3.²⁹ In the first vote, which allowed consideration of the various reforms in the pre-arranged order, the leaders of both bourgeois blocs were significantly more likely to vote against postponing consideration of reform until the next session. In the final vote, which gave the reform proposal a 2/3 majority and thus ensured its adoption, the party elite were more likely to vote for the proposal. Most of the effect in Table 3 is driven by the Conservatives, as the Liberals were in government (so had few elites who were eligible to vote). For the final proposal, 92% (11 of 12) elites in the Conservative Party voted in favor, compared to just 58% (22 of 38) of non-elites.³⁰ Two of the three Liberal elites voted in favor. Liberal leaders who were serving in cabinet (and hence did not vote) also encouraged their members to support the final reform proposal. For example, Otto Blehr, who was

²⁹A concern might be that strategic voting would prevent us from using the roll call votes to reveal MPs’ preferences. However, there would have been no reason for strategic voting on either of these two votes. For example, the last roll call was a binary choice between enacting reform Proposal E and retaining the status quo, so everyone should have voted their sincere preferences.

³⁰To test the sharp null hypothesis that elite status doesn’t matter for voting behavior for *any* conservative MP, we simulated 100,000 experiments in which 12 of the 50 observations were randomly assigned to treatment (see Gerber and Green, 2012, p. 63). This randomization inference approach yields a p-value of 0.04. The p-value reflects the probability that the observed difference between the treatment (elites) and control group (non-elites) is due to chance.

serving as Justice Minister and would later become Prime Minister, made a lengthy statement during the debate, concluding: “I, once again, strongly encourage you [MPs] not to take personal interests or district interests into account, but to make this giant boost for the fatherland” [and vote for Proposal E].³¹ If we code as “party elite” the four deputy MPs who were serving in place of Liberal cabinet ministers, the effect is strengthened (see Appendix Table A.1). All four voted in favor of Proposal E.

Parties’ Seat-Maximizing Incentives

Given that the Liberal bloc was consistently and substantially overrepresented under the old electoral system, the Liberals’ support for reform at the first and last votes was more surprising than the Conservatives’ support, who had a mixed experience under the old system (Figure 1). Indeed, most Liberal MPs continued to favor a system based on plurality rule in SMDs (Proposal D). It appears that Liberal leaders made a strategic choice to abandon their bloc’s advantages in votes-to-seats translation for the party-building advantages of PR—and also succeeded in securing Conservative leaders’ cooperation. The Conservatives’ favorite option was Proposal C, which would have made each small city its own SMD. Small cities were traditionally the safest bastions of the Conservatives, so it makes sense that they would favor retaining SMDs for small cities, while expanding their opportunities to gain seats elsewhere in MMDs under PR (Danielsen, 1984, p. 57). This preference, already evident in Table 1, is confirmed in the results of the multivariate analysis presented in Table 3.

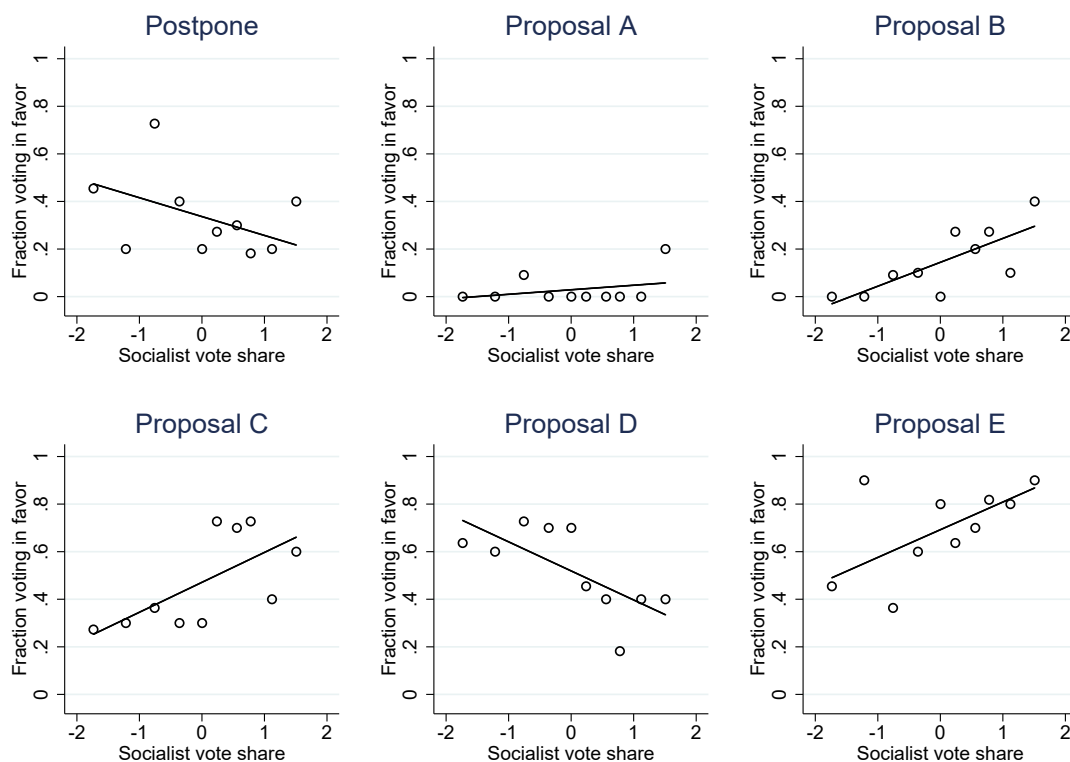
Individual MPs’ Seat-Maximizing Incentives

Finally, we can consider the office payoffs of individual MPs. Figure 3 shows that MPs facing a low socialist threat tended to (i) support postponing the decision; (ii) vote in favor of plurality with adjustment seats (Proposal D); and (iii) vote against Proposals B, C, and E (variations of PR).

³¹Storting debate records, 1919, p. 2971.

The multivariate regression results in Table 3 provide a more controlled look at how the socialist electoral threat affected Conservative and Liberal MPs. It shows that a one standard deviation increase in the local socialist threat that a member faced insignificantly reduced his or her probability of supporting postponement and significantly increased his or her probability of supporting reform Proposals B and E. These results are consistent with the MP-level patterns for the case of Germany investigated in earlier work by Leemann and Mares (2014).

Figure 3: Support for reform proposals plotted against district socialist vote share



Note: Sample is limited to MPs from the Liberal and Conservative blocs ($n=104$). The binned scatter-points represent averages across approximately 10 MPs. Socialist vote share is the share of votes for the best performing Labor candidate in the MP's home district in the first round of the 1918 election; standardized to have mean zero and standard deviation one.

Collectively, these MP-level results from the Norwegian case provide empirical support for the logic of our party-building account of why incumbent legislators in the bourgeois parties opted to switch to PR, as well as additional support for the well-established

socialist threat hypothesis.

PR and Voting Cohesion

An additional implication of our analysis is that PR should have increased the voting cohesion of the parties and blocs. To explore this claim, we focus on roll call votes from the last three legislative sessions before the PR system took effect (1919, 1920 and 1921) and first two sessions post-PR (1922 and 1923).³²

According to our explanation, PR should have pushed party leaders to centralize control over nominations, which would in turn have discouraged rank-and-file members from deviating from the party line on legislative votes. In fact, the Nomination Act of 1920, which came into effect with the new PR system, formally set down rules for nominating candidates (Valen, Narud and Skare, 2002). Under the new system, the composition and rank order of candidate lists was still determined through a decentralized process involving nomination conventions in each PR district.³³ National party leaders were technically not allowed to alter the decision taken at this level, but could still influence the outcome through informal channels, and would have had more of a say in districts near the capital, where many leaders were themselves candidates (Valen, 1956). Nevertheless, with just 29 districts post-reform as opposed to 126 SMDs in the pre-reform period, nomination decisions were relatively more centralized (at the regional level) than in the past.

³²The *Voting Archive* at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) includes roll call votes for Storting sessions since 1814. The data set includes a personal identifier allowing us to merge in data on elections from Fiva and Smith (2017b). However, for some years, such as 1924, the personal identifier is missing in the *Voting Archive*, which motivated our focus on the 1919-1923 period. The 1919 session was the first session following the 1918 election. These five years cover 483 votes and 66,073 MP-vote observations. We exclude votes in the *Lagting* chamber where only 1/4 of MPs belong, reducing the number of votes to 465 votes and the number of MP-vote observations to 63,617. We were unable to match 15,107 observations because (i) the data set does not identify deputy MPs and (ii) there are errors in the personal identifier of the *Voting Archive*. We also exclude absentees (8,262 observations), independent MPs (205 observations), and MPs from the Farmer's Party (2,876 observations), roll call votes concerning electoral reform (545 observation) leaving us with 36,622 MP-vote observations. We include a full picture of the data from 1910-1936 in Appendix Figure A.1.

³³Parties were not obliged to follow the Nomination Act, but it was mandatory in order to receive financial support for nomination meetings (Aardal, 2002, p. 190).

To identify the consequences of electoral reform, we estimate a fixed effects model which utilizes within-legislator changes in voting behavior. For each of the three party blocs, we estimate the following:

$$Deviation_{ijct} = \alpha_i + \gamma_c + \beta_1 PR_t^{adopt} + \beta_2 PR_t^{implement} + \theta Odelsting_j + \omega \mathbf{topic}_j + u_{ijct}$$

where i denotes MP, j denotes vote, c denotes cabinet and t denotes time. Our dependent variable, *Deviation*, equals one if the MP voted differently than a majority of his party bloc peers. β_1 and β_2 , the parameters of interest, capture how the adoption of PR in 1919, and its implementation in 1921, affected each MP’s probability of deviating. We include a set of cabinet fixed effects γ_c (*Halvorsen I*, *Blehr*, *Halvorsen II*).³⁴ For the purposes of identification, it is convenient that the Knudsen Cabinet (January 1913 to June 1920) surrounds the adoption of PR in 1919, and the Blehr Cabinet (June 1921 to March 1923) surrounds the implementation of PR in 1921 (both were Liberal cabinets). *Odelsting* is a dummy for the vote being cast in the Odelsting (“lower house”). The reference category is a plenary session.³⁵ Finally, \mathbf{topic}_j is a vector of dummies indicating the topic of the vote based on a simple string search in the title given in the *Voting Archive*, which we include as controls.³⁶ We cluster standard errors at the vote level (j).

Table 4 shows that the probability of deviating fell an estimated 5 to 10 percentage points for all blocs following the adoption of PR. The implementation of PR appears to have further reduced the probability of deviating for MPs in the Labor and Conservative blocs (columns 1 and 3). For the Liberal bloc (column 2), the effect is positive but small and not statistically significant.³⁷ In other words, the introduction of PR appears to have

³⁴Within our four year window there are five different prime ministers. Gunnar Knudsen (Liberals) served until June 1920. Next, Otto Halvorsen (Conservatives) formed a cabinet and served one year. Otto Blehr (Liberals) was in office from June 1921 to March 1923 before Otto Halvorsen returned and formed his second cabinet. Halvorsen died just two months later. The Finance Minister, Abraham Berge, then took over as Prime Minister while also continuing as Finance Minister. We do not separate between the Halvorsen II Cabinet and the Berge Cabinet. The Knudsen Cabinet is the reference category.

³⁵The *Lagting* (“upper house”) votes are excluded.

³⁶The topic areas are taxation, agriculture, railway, military, schools, alcohol, social welfare, the constitution, and the budget. The reference group includes all other topic areas.

³⁷In terms of topic areas, Liberal MPs were less likely to deviate from the party majority on legislation

Table 4: PR and voting cohesion (deviation from majority of party bloc)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Labor	Liberal	Conservative
PR ^{adopt}	-0.103*** (0.029)	-0.053* (0.031)	-0.056* (0.029)
PR ^{implement}	-0.057** (0.026)	0.009 (0.023)	-0.067** (0.030)
Odelsting	-0.026** (0.011)	0.020 (0.016)	-0.007 (0.017)
Halvorsen I cabinet (Con.)	0.049*** (0.019)	0.072*** (0.025)	0.014 (0.026)
Blehr cabinet (Lib.)	0.046* (0.025)	0.042 (0.027)	0.061* (0.033)
Halvorsen II cabinet (Con.)	0.079** (0.031)	0.010 (0.035)	0.081** (0.041)
<i>N</i>	8063	15170	14309
<i>R</i> ²	0.040	0.069	0.041

*Note: Linear probability model. Dependent variable, Deviation, is a dummy variable that equals one if the MP voted differently than a majority of his or her party bloc peers, zero otherwise. MP fixed effects and topic area dummies (see footnote 36) included in all specifications. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the vote level (282 votes in plenary meetings, 135 votes in Odelsting meetings). * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.*

made all major party blocs significantly more cohesive in legislative voting, with a large portion of the impact occurring before the new rules even went into effect.³⁸

Discussion

We have argued that European party leaders should have favored PR more than their followers, and have shown evidence that indeed they did in the case of Norway. But if PR increased leaders' control over nominations and facilitated their negotiations to enter government, then two questions arise. First, why didn't leaders push for PR earlier? Second, were there any functional equivalents (other reforms that could have achieved the same ends) and, if so, why didn't leaders opt for these?

As to why PR emerged when it did, note that cohesive parliamentary parties are considerably more valuable to power-seeking leaders when (a) parliament controls who gets into the cabinet and (b) the cabinet controls the national budget. Condition (a) hinges largely on whether parliament can remove ministers from office via votes of no confidence. But confidence procedures existed only in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Norway in the 1830s; the rest of the continent followed relatively slowly. Such procedures were not instituted in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Portugal, and Sweden until the opening decades of the twentieth century. Condition (b) was also relatively new in several countries. Sometimes this was because parliamentary power over the purse was a late development (as in Austria, Denmark and Germany). In France, the Third Republic's unusual lottery-based budget procedures effectively deprived the cabinet of any privileged position until the reforms of 1910 (Cirone and Van Coppenolle, 2017; Cox,

related to railways and alcohol. The Conservatives were more likely to disagree on matters of railways, schools, and social welfare spending.

³⁸In Appendix Figure A.1, we observe that party blocs became more cohesive over time from 1910 to 1936; thus, one concern is that our results in Table 4 might be explained by a secular time trend. However, this appears not to be the case. Appendix Figures A.2 and A.3 show a fall in deviation (and increase in cohesion) even if we allow for separate linear trends in the windows tightly surrounding the adoption and implementation of PR. The exception is the "PR adoption effect" for the Labor bloc, which is not robust to the inclusion of separate linear trends on each side of the cutoff (top left panel of Appendix Figure A.2).

2016, pp. 44-45). Thus, one reason that PR emerged when it did is that the value of forming cohesive parliamentary parties increased only when conditions (a) and (b) were both met, which did not happen until near or after 1900 in most countries.

Of course, political entrepreneurs might have reacted to parliament's newfound importance as a vehicle to power by (i) seeking to establish a one-party regime, (ii) seeking to found a majority-seeking party (as in the UK), or (iii) seeking to form a smaller party which could then join coalition governments. Several countries in Western Europe chose the first option, sometimes after adopting PR (Austria under Dollfuss, Germany under Hitler, Italy under Mussolini) and sometimes without doing so (Portugal under Salazar, Spain under Franco). In the remaining Western European nations, political leaders typically chose to form small parties, meaning that PR could help enhance their internal authority and bolster their bargaining ability.

But were there other reforms that could have achieved the same ends for the small-party leaders? We cannot consider the entire array of possible electoral systems. But we can consider the other option that was clearly on the table—the status quo. It would have been possible to centralize control over nominations in the old two-round systems, by establishing some central committee that oversaw all nominations. Such committees have functioned in various countries with low-magnitude districts, including Chile, Japan, and the UK. Central committees could then have been used as fora within which to trade withdrawals, thereby ensuring a more favorable translation of votes into seats within whatever alliance might be negotiated.

European party leaders were well aware of British practices. However, the UK system of central nomination lists worked because there were only two major parties and candidates were not required to reside in the districts in which they ran. Two parties made it maximally difficult for a particular district nominating committee to opt out of its party, if it did not like the potential nominees its party offered on the pre-approved list. The lack of residency requirements meant that the party could offer a large menu of potential nominees.

On the continent, in contrast, there were already many parties when PR was adopted; and there were often *de jure* or *de facto* residency requirements (including in the case of Norway).³⁹ Thus, the central parties would have had to compile information on each SMD's situation, in order to recommend local candidates, and the local selectorates could have more easily ignored centrally compiled lists.

In addition to “imitating the British” being expensive and unlikely to succeed, centralizing nominations while keeping the SMDs would have exposed parties to greater electoral risks than PR (per Calvo, 2009), and would have been less flexible (since central nominating committees under majoritarian electoral systems typically tie a party into a single alliance). Thus, there was not a close substitute to PR available to the small-party leaders based on the existing electoral rules.

Conclusion

The Braunias-Rokkan-Boix theory holds that Europeans adopted PR in the early twentieth century because the old elite parties, fragmented on the right and facing a rising socialist vote on the left, foresaw electoral disaster if they kept the existing SMD systems. But the two-round system used in many countries prior to PR already allowed reasonably successful coordination (Calvo, 2009; Blais, Dobrzynska and Indridason, 2005); and some bourgeois parties supported PR even though their seat shares seemed unlikely to increase *ex ante*, and declined *ex post* (Calvo, 2009; Rodden, 2009). These empirical discrepancies undermine the credibility of the simple “seat-maximization” theory for the origins of PR.

Contemporary advocates (and opponents) of reform sometimes highlighted PR's effect on internal party cohesion, rather than its effect on party seat shares. In Lachapelle's analysis, for example, electoral coordination in two-round systems came at the cost of parliamentary discipline. The members of any given party would divide into factions, depending on which other parties' support each MP needed to secure election in his

³⁹Officially, only current and former cabinet ministers were exempt from the residency requirement.

or her own district. For the case of Germany, Manow and Schröder (2016) similarly conjecture that backbench MPs in the bourgeois parties might have been less likely to toe the party line because they were beholden to the diverse interests of the *coalitions of parties* that supported their district-level election, not just their own party leadership. Closed-list PR would enable parties to commit to national policy platforms, since MPs would be beholden for their nominations to regional and national party leaders.

Although the idea that PR might promote party discipline was common in the decades before and after its adoption, systematic evidence of such an effect was not marshaled by contemporaries. In this paper, we have revisited the idea that PR adoption was motivated by a desire to increase the discipline of bourgeois parties, rather than to preserve their seat shares. Theoretically, we argue that increased discipline and cohesion should have been valuable to party leaders because it would enable them to commit to policy platforms and facilitate their efforts to negotiate coalition governments.

Empirically, we have focused on the case of Norway—which originally inspired Rokkan’s account. Our analyses show that (1) the leaders of the bourgeois parties were more likely to support PR than their backbenchers, holding constant their parties’ expected seat gains/losses and their own personal electoral situations; (2) the voting cohesion of the bourgeois parties increased after PR; and (3) leaders tended to receive favorable list positions after PR was implemented. This pattern is consistent with the idea that party leaders acquired significantly greater control over nominations under PR than they had enjoyed under the old SMD system.

Looking beyond the Norwegian case, is there similar evidence that PR was favored because of its expected effects on party discipline and, hence, on the formation of coalition governments? In some cases, such as France (Lachapelle, 1911), advocates explicitly argued for PR on the basis of its disciplinary effects. In the case of Germany, although PR was ultimately introduced by decree in 1918, Manow and Schröder (2016) have shown that voting cohesion increased after its introduction, as in Norway. We also know that party leaders throughout post-World War II Europe routinely received favorable list positions,

although we do not know whether this pattern emerged immediately after the adoption of PR.

Cumulatively, the evidence suggests that European party leaders in the early twentieth century were familiar with the claim that PR would improve their control over nominations and hence improve party discipline. To the extent they credited such claims, leaders should have favored PR. Thus, we argue that the decision to adopt PR was influenced not only by calculations of party seat gains (or losses), but also by calculations of party portfolio gains (or losses), mediated by leaders' enhanced control over nominations.

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