2007

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POLARIZED PLURALISM

Riccardo Pelizzo and Salvatore Babones

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to argue that polarization, in polarized pluralist party systems, reflects not simply the number and the depth of political cleavages but also changes in contextual conditions. We test whether the polarization of party systems in the French Fourth Republic, the Italian First Republic, the Spanish Republic and the Weimar Republic was influenced by changes in economic conditions. Specifically, we test whether worsening economic conditions led to higher levels of polarization. The data analysis reveals that, with the exception of the Spanish republic, the levels of party system polarization increase when economic conditions worsen. In the concluding section we address both the theoretical and the practical implications of our findings.

KEY WORDS ■ anti-system parties ■ constitutional breakdown ■ party systems ■ polarization ■ polarized pluralism

Introduction

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Sartori's party system typology, not the least because, as Peter Mair recently pointed out, 'there has been very little new thinking on how to classify systems since the seminal work of Sartori' (Mair, forthcoming). In the words of Wolinetz, the importance of Sartori's taxonomy was not simply the fact that it provided a better way to categorize party systems, it was also, and more importantly, the fact that 'it provided an explanation to an important puzzle – why certain kinds of multi-party systems had led to cabinet instability and system collapse, while others had not' (Wolinetz, forthcoming). For Sartori it was, in fact, quite obvious that party systems of the polarized pluralist type were unlikely to sustain stable executives and could create the conditions for constitutional breakdowns (Sartori, 1982: 43).[1]

Interestingly, while considerable attention has been paid to polarized pluralism as an independent variable, relatively little attention has been paid to polarized pluralism as dependent variable and to the conditions that make polarized pluralism possible. For Sartori, polarized pluralist dynamics were likely to occur in party systems characterized by fairly large numbers of relevant parties and by high levels of ideological polarization, and these characteristics, in turn, were believed to reflect the number and depth of the political cleavages (Sartori, 1976: 135; 1982: 9 and 21). In the years following the publication of Sartori's classic work, less attention has been paid to the determinants of polarization in polarized pluralist party systems.

The purpose of the present article is to argue that polarized pluralism reflects not simply structural conditions, as Sartori correctly pointed out, but also contingent conditions, such as economic. In order to do so, we construct an index of polarization that captures fairly well one of the basic features of polarized pluralist party systems, namely 'the enfeeblement of the centre, a persistent loss of votes to one of the extreme ends (or both)' (Sartori, 1976: 136). We then proceed to test whether changes in polarization (as measured by this index) are associated with changes in the macro-economic conditions in each of the polarized pluralist party systems identified by Sartori, namely the Spanish Republic, the Weimar Republic, the French Fourth Republic and the Italian Republic. Governments in these regimes were all highly unstable; they were all quite dysfunctional; and in three instances out of four their dysfunctionality created the conditions for constitutional breakdown.

In the course of the article we proceed as follows. In the first section we discuss the notion of polarization, and in doing so point out that the concept of polarization in not undifferentiated, but can be used to denote four different phenomena, namely the spread of opinion at the elite level, the spread of opinion at the mass level, the distance between parties on the ideological spectrum and the distribution of votes and/or parliamentary seats along the left–right spectrum. Building on this discussion, we present our index of polarization and show how this index can be computed for each of the historical polarized pluralist party systems. In the second section we discuss macro-economic variables and how these can be properly operationalized to test whether changes in levels of polarization are associated with, indeed caused by, changes in the macro-economic conditions. In the third section we present the results of our data analysis, and in the fourth and concluding section we discuss the implications of our research.

Polarization

Polarized pluralist party systems are polarized and pluralist because they are characterized by a fairly large number of relevant parties and by fairly high levels of ideological polarization.[2] One of the points that Sartori has

more frequently reiterated is that polarization is not a positive, linear function of fragmentation (Sartori, 1982: 254). For Sartori, it was quite clear that the ideological distance between the leftmost and rightmost parties in a party system with three relevant parties could be greater than the distance separating the leftmost from the rightmost party in a party system with five relevant parties. In other words, low levels of polarization could be found in highly fragmented party systems and high levels in non-fragmented party systems. This is why measures of polarization such as those introduced by Taylor and Herman (1971) do not provide an adequate estimate of a party system's polarization. The measures developed by Taylor and Herman (1971), i.e. ordinal disagreement and variance, are both sensitive to (changes in the) fragmentation of the party system: they increase if the number of parties increase. This is exactly the opposite of what Sartori was arguing.

What is polarization? According to Sartori, ideological polarization is the total spread of opinion, the quantum of ideological difference. This spread of opinion, according to Sartori, can be measured at elite or at mass levels.[3] These types of polarization are conceptually different, and though they may be related to one another, from an analytical point of view they should not be confused.

Beginning with the spread of opinion at the elite level, it is worth noting that this can be measured by estimating parties' positions in the political space, by identifying which parties represent the 'two poles apart' of the party system, that is the parties that occupy the leftmost and rightmost positions in that party system, and by measuring the distance between these most distant parties. Parties' positions can be estimated on the basis of a variety of data, such as expert surveys, mass surveys and, possibly, party manifestoes (Pelizzo, 2003: 67–89).

Polarization at the mass level is measured on the basis of mass survey data. Specifically, voters are asked to locate themselves in the political space by choosing a position along the left–right continuum. By measuring the median voter position we estimate the position of the electorate, while by measuring the standard deviation we generate an estimate of the electorate's spread of opinion, that is of its polarization.

However, survey data are not always available. Voters in the Weimar Republic and the Spanish Republic were never surveyed to ascertain their locations in the political space. The Italian case, in the First Republic, is not much better. For most of the First Republic, very few mass election survey data were collected. In fact, until the Istituto Cattaneo started surveying the Italian electorate in the early 1990s, the Italian electorate had been surveyed only twice: once in 1968 and once in 1972 (Barnes, 1968; Barnes and Sani, 1972). Hence, in each of these cases it is not possible to estimate the polarization of the electorate by calculating the spread of opinion in individual level survey data.

This does not mean that we cannot make some estimate of the polarization of the electorate in cases for which mass survey data are not available.

If we have qualitative knowledge of how parties are distributed along the left–right continuum, and we know which parties represent, from an ideological point of view, the two poles, we can take the vote for these parties as a proxy for polarization. This is perfectly consistent with Sartori's own work. In fact, while Sartori (1976) tends to discuss polarization as distance or total spread of opinion, he often seems to indicate that polarization of the party system is a function of the strength (measured in terms of the number of parliamentary seats or vote shares) of the parties located at the extremes of the party system itself.

Building on Sartori's intuition that the electoral strength of the parties located at the extremes provides an indication of polarization, Pelizzo and Babones (2003) have constructed an index of polarization that can be used to quantify polarization as distribution of seats along the left–right dimension.[4] This index thus captures the distribution of opinion rather than ideological distance. Specifically, Pelizzo and Babones suggest that polarization can be measured by the following formula:

[(extreme left vote + extreme right vote) – center vote], or more simply (extremes) – center.

Although it is fairly obvious, in the light of what has been said so far, why the vote for the extremist parties is a good indication of the polarization of the party system, the reasons for subtracting the vote of the center are more subtle. In Sartori's view the reason why extreme, anti-system parties move centrifugally and polarize the system instead of converging centripetally (toward the center) is that the center position is occupied. The presence of a center party is as important as the presence of anti-party system parties located at the leftmost and rightmost extremes of the party system in generating polarized pluralist party system dynamics. Hence, to measure the polarization of a polarized pluralist party system, it is necessary to measure the strength of the center as well as of the extremes. The Pelizzo–Babones index not only represents a theoretically appropriate way of calculating the polarization of polarized pluralist party systems, it is also a better measure from a technical point of view.[5] This index reduces measurement error by eliminating from consideration segments of the vote that are orthogonal to the issue of polarization. Votes for the moderate left (e.g. the Social Democrats in Germany) or the moderate right (e.g. the Christian Democrats in France) have little effect on the polarization of the party system, since these parties are capable of forming coalitions with the center party and with extreme parties on their own wings. Similarly, votes for single-issue parties, such as the Radicals in Italy, are ignored, since such parties can potentially form coalitions with any government. The resulting polarization index focuses only on vote proportions that are relevant to the object of study.

It is worth noting that the index of polarization values can technically vary from a minimum of –100, when the center party wins 100 percent of

the vote, to a maximum of +100, when the parties located at the extremes of the political spectrum win 100 percent of the vote. These values are algebraically possible, but politically and practically impossible for a polarized pluralist party system. In fact, if either the center party or the extreme parties were able to win 100 percent of the vote, the party system would no longer be a polarized pluralist party system. If a party from the center or from one of the extremes were able to win 100 percent of the vote, in Sartori's terminology the party system would be a one-party, hegemonic or predominant party system depending on how competitive the electoral competition was that produced this electoral outcome. If instead the parties located at the extremes were jointly able to win 100 percent of the vote, the party system would qualify as a two-party or predominant party system depending on the distribution of seats between the two relevant parties. Hence, while the values of this index of polarization could range, algebraically, from –100 (total concentration) to +100 (total polarization), in reality they have a much smaller potential range.

With this caveat in mind, note that this formula can easily be applied in the case of each of the polarized pluralist party systems identified and discussed by Sartori (1976). In the Spanish Republic, where the extreme left was made up of the communists and the maximalists, the extreme right of the monarchists and the conservative catholics, and the center of the radicals, the index of polarization designed by Pelizzo and Babones takes the following form:

$$[(\text{communists} + \text{maximalists} + \text{monarchists} + \text{conservative catholics}) - \text{radicals}]$$

In the Weimar republic, the communists occupied the extreme left position of the party system, the Nazis the extreme right and the Zentrum/BPP the center. Hence, in the Weimar republic, the Pelizzo/Babones index of polarization takes the following form:

$$[(\text{communists} + \text{Nazi}) - \text{Zentrum/BPP}]$$

In the French Fourth Republic, the extreme left was made up of the PCF, the extreme right of the Gaullists and the Poujadists, and the center of the MRP.[6] In this case, the index of polarization is measured as:

$$[(\text{PCF} + \text{Gaullists} + \text{Poujadists}) - \text{MRP}]$$

Finally, in the Italian case the vote for the extreme left corresponds to the vote for the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the 1963 elections, to the vote of the PCI and of the Partito Socialista Italiano di Unita' Proletaria (PSIUP) in the 1968 and 1972 elections, and to the vote of the PCI and of Proletarian Democracy in the 1976, 1979, 1983 and 1987 elections. The vote for the extreme right simply corresponds to the vote of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) for the 1963 and 1968 elections, and to the vote of the Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale for the elections

held from 1972 to 1987. The vote for the center corresponds to the vote for Christian Democracy (DC).

Polarization values for the Spanish Republic, the Weimar Republic, the French Fourth Republic and the Italian First Republic are presented in Table 1.

In the light of its theoretical and technical qualities, it is not so surprising that, at least in the Italian case, the polarization index has greater reliability with respect to multiple economic indicators than does the center, left, or right vote in isolation. In a previous study, Pelizzo and Babones correlated vote proportions with six economic indicators: economic growth, employment growth and inflation, each operationalized in both contemporaneous and lagged variations. Only polarization correlated significantly with all six economic series. The center, left and right votes all correlated inconsistently with the economic variables.

Table 1. Political polarization

	Extreme Left	Extreme Right	Center	Polarization
Spain				
1931	0	3.6	26.5	−22.9
1933	0.2	8.4	27.2	−18.6
1936	14.7	4.8	8.6	10.8
Weimar				
May 1924	12.6	6.6	16.6	2.6
Dec. 1924	8.9	3	17.3	−5.4
May 1928	10.6	2.6	15.2	−2
Sep. 1930	13.1	18.3	14.8	16.6
July 1932	14.6	37.3	14.2	37.7
Nov. 1932	16.9	33.1	15.3	34.7
May 1933	12.3	43.9	14.1	42.1
France				
Oct. 1945	26.1	0	36	−9.9
Jun. 1946	26.2	0	39.6	−13.4
Nov. 1946	28.6	1.6	40.3	−10.1
Jun. 1951	25.9	21.3	22.5	24.7
Jun. 1956	25.9	16.6	24.6	17.9
Italy				
1963	25.3	5.1	38.3	−7.9
1968	31.3	4.4	39.1	−3.4
1972	29.1	8.7	38.7	−0.9
1976	34.4	6.1	38.7	1.8
1979	30.4	5.3	38.3	−2.6
1983	29.9	6.8	32.9	3.8
1987	26.6	5.9	34.3	−1.5

Macro-economic Variables

The selection of economic variables for a study of the political economy of polarization should focus on those aspects of economic performance that a democratically elected government might reasonably be held accountable for. For example, in the broadest terms, governments are more likely to be held accountable by the electorate for short-term (year-on-year) changes than for long-term secular trends. Similarly, governments are more likely to be judged on the basis of annual changes in industrial production than on annual changes in agricultural output, since any particular year's harvest is highly conditional on environmental factors. Finally, voters are more likely to judge governments on the basis of variables that closely relate to the state of the economy in the country as a whole than on the basis of their own personal conditions. In the words of Lewis-Beck (1988), evaluations of the economy are generally 'sociotropic' rather than 'pocketbook'. These examples suggest some guiding principles for the selection of economic series: (1) That they reflect short-term performance; (2) that they focus on industry (at least for the period under consideration here); and (3), that they reflect as closely as possible the state of the economy.

Spain during the interwar period is a particularly data-poor environment. While not an ideal series, we use changes in industrial production as reported in Mitchell (1992). In the absence of monthly or quarterly data, we use the year-on-year percentage change in industrial production between the year of the election and the previous year. Since data are not available for the full year 1936 (on account of the Civil War), we use change 1934–1935 as a proxy figure for the 1936 election. While the Spanish data are far from ideal, they are sufficient to give us some indication of the relationship between economic performance and political polarization during the study period.

Data for Weimar Germany are far more detailed and complete. We use quarterly unemployment figures from the *Statistisches Jahrbuch fuer das Deutsche Reich* for the relevant years. Economic performance relevant to each election is operationalized as the percentage change between the average level of unemployment in the calendar quarter of the election and the calendar quarter one year previously. Quarterly averages are used instead of monthly figures to reduce volatility. Where available and applicable, employment/unemployment series are preferred to indices of industrial production since they more directly reflect voters' immediate experience of the economy. One of the reasons why we decided to use percentage change in the level of unemployment instead of using the undifferenced unemployment rate is that the statistical series for unemployment is characterized by a strong secular trend. Unemployment rises almost monotonically between 1925 and 1933. This means that when the percentage share of the Nazi vote or the index of polarization is regressed on unemployment, results are robust but likely spurious.[7] Using the percentage change in the level of unemployment allows us to minimize the risk of spurious coefficients.

France in the post-war period should also be a data-rich environment, but the fact that three of the five elections under study occurred in the immediate aftermath of World War II is a major complicating factor. Detailed monthly or quarterly employment figures are not available for 1945, nor very relevant for 1946 because of the continuing after-effects of World War II. Thus, for France and for Spain we rely on annual percentage changes in the industrial production figures reported by Mitchell (1992).

For post-war Italy we use industrial employment data from the International Monetary Fund (1998). We compute the percentage change between the average levels of industrial employment in the calendar quarter of the election versus the same calendar quarter one year previously.

The resulting economic performance indicators used in each country for each election are reported in Table 2. Note that, for Germany, positive

Table 2. Economic indicators

	Industrial production annual % change	Unemployment quarter vs. year previous % change	Industrial employment quarter vs. year previous % change
Spain			
1931	−10.3		
1933	−1.1		
1936	3.4		
Weimar			
May 1924		4.1	
Dec. 1924		−15.6	
May 1928		−0.9	
Sep. 1930		12.5	
July 1932		10.6	
Nov. 1932		4.5	
May 1933		7.5	
France			
Oct. 1945	28.6		
Jun.1946	68.9		
Nov. 1946	68.9		
Jun. 1951	13.3		
Jun. 1956	7.8		
Italy			
1963			3.02
1968			−0.56
1972			−1.81
1976			−0.94
1979			−0.16
1983			−3.74
1987			−3.29

numbers represent *poor* economic performance, while for the other three countries positive numbers represent *good* performance.

Results

We have two sets of findings to report. The first concerns the role of polarized pluralism in constitutional breakdown, while the second concerns the effect of economic variables on polarized pluralism itself. Our discussion of results draws on the data presented graphically in Figures 1–4.

We begin with a discussion of constitutional breakdown in polarized pluralist party systems. In three of the four cases, polarization of the parliamentary party system rendered governments so unstable and dysfunctional that the series of government crises led in the end to a regime crisis and constitutional breakdown. Only the Italian case is exceptional in this respect.

The Italian case is exceptional because, although the Italian governments had been notoriously unstable and ineffective, the crisis of the First Republic was more the result of the Clean Hands (*Mani Pulite*) corruption investigations than of a breakdown induced by polarized pluralism. In fact, by the time the Italian transition began with the crisis of the First Republic, the Italian party system could no longer be considered a case of polarized pluralism. The Italian party system had been a case of polarized pluralism because, for more than 40 years, the Christian Democratic Party had occupied the center position, the Italian Communist Party the extreme left position and the (neo)-fascist Italian Social Movement the extreme right
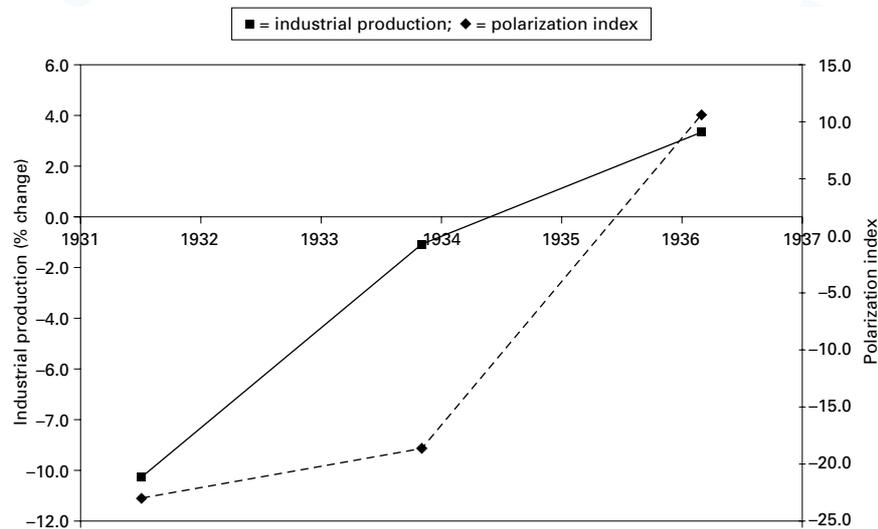

Figure 1. Spain (*r* = 0.82)
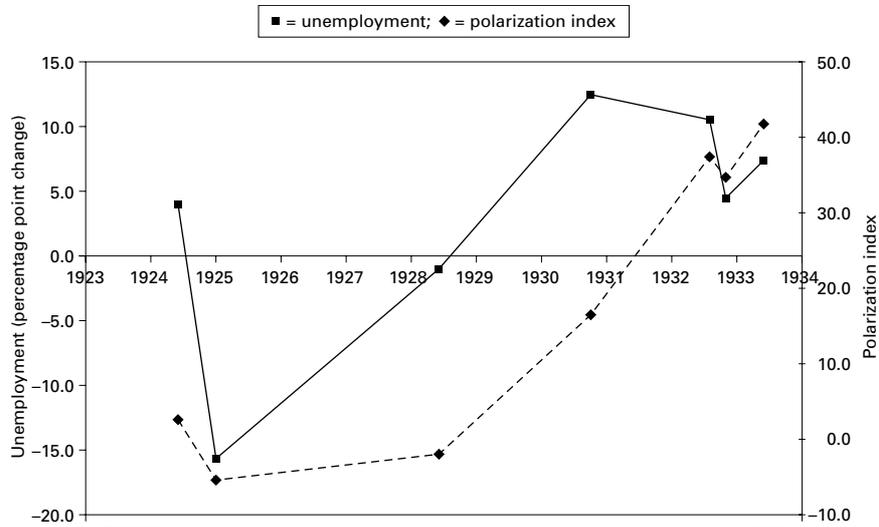
■ = unemployment; ◆ = polarization index

Figure 2. Germany (*r* = 0.67)

position. But by the time the Italian transition started in 1992, the Italian Communist Party (PCI) no longer existed. The PCI, in the course of two very tumultuous years, had transformed itself into a party consistent with the values and principles of the social-democratic tradition, had joined the Social-ist International and had changed its name to the Party of the Democratic Left (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, PDS). With the transformation of
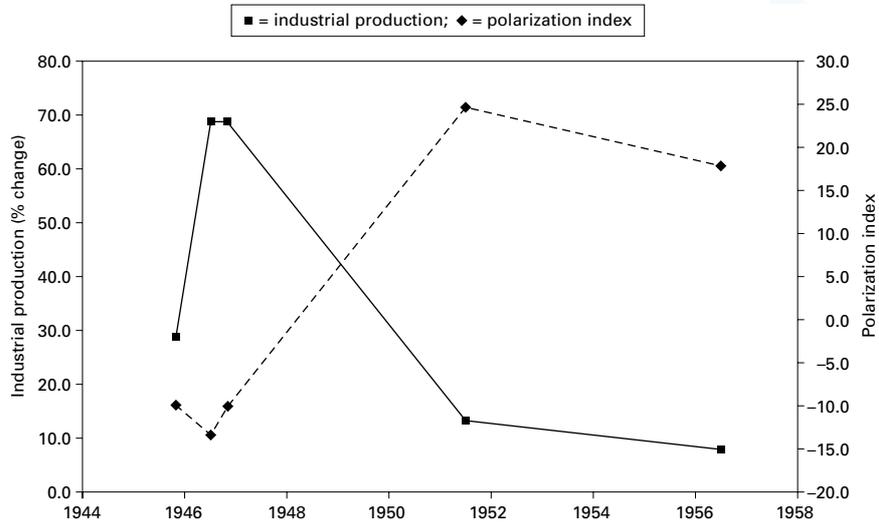
■ = industrial production; ◆ = polarization index

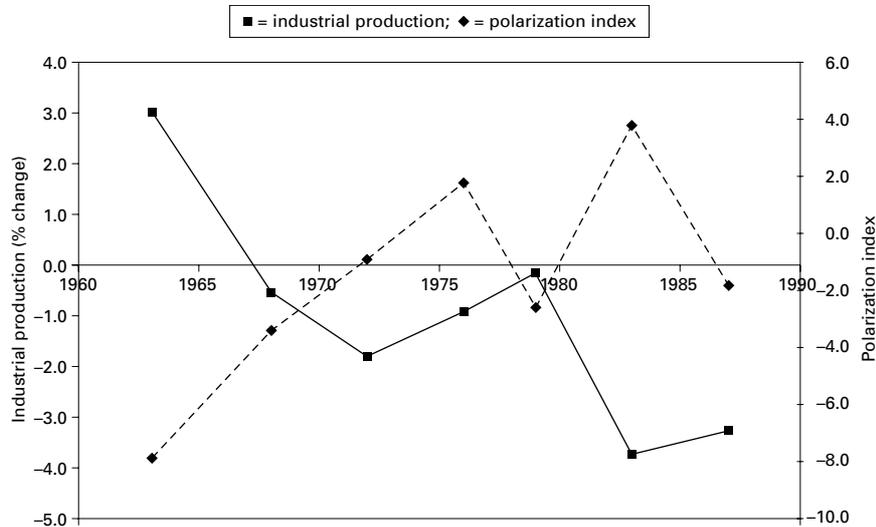**Figure 3.** France (*r* = −0.83)

Figure 4. Italy (*r* = −0.82)

the PCI into the PDS, the Italian party system no longer had an anti-system party located at the extreme left of the political spectrum or leftward centrifugal pull. In sum, the Italian party system by 1992 was still plural but no longer polarized.

In the other three cases under study, a constitutional breakdown occurred under the pressure of polarization. In the Spanish case the constitutional breakdown occurred at the point of maximum polarization. Similarly, in the case of the Weimar Republic the constitutional breakdown occurred exactly when polarization had reached its peak, while the French constitutional system collapsed under the fairly high levels of polarization recorded throughout the 1950s.

Turning to our second question, does polarization increase because of changes in economic conditions? Three cases out of four are consistent with the hypothesis that polarization increases in times of economic hardship, while the case of Spain 1931–36 does not.[8]

Results for the Weimar Republic support the hypothesis that poor economic performance leads to polarization of the electorate. The correlation between the change in unemployment in Germany and political polarization is 0.67, which is just significant at the $p = 0.05$ level (one-tailed) and in the right direction. This is consistent with the findings of the recent studies of economic voting in the Weimar Republic (Stogbauer, 2001). Moreover, in five out of six elections, the direction of change in economic conditions corresponds to the direction of change in polarization, the sole exception being the July 1932 election.

The case of France 1945–56 also follows the expected pattern. The correlation between changes in industrial production and the index of polarization is –0.83, which is significant at the 0.05 level (one-tailed) and in the correct direction. While much of the observed correlation is driven by long-term swings in both industrial production growth and polarization, the overall pattern of low polarization in times of growth and high polarization in times of stagnation is clear.

The post-war Italian First Republic (1963–87) remains the clearest example of political polarization driven by economic performance. This is not surprising, given the relative stability of the country over the study period (compared to the other three cases) and the superiority of more recent economic statistics. The correlation between changes in industrial production and the index of polarization is –0.82, which is significant at the 0.05 level (one-tailed) and in the correct direction. Moreover, in every election but one (1976), the direction of movements in the polarization index mirrors the direction of movements in economic performance.

By contrast, in the Spanish case polarization exhibited a secular increase over the three elections studied, irrespective of economic performance. The correlation between polarization and change in industrial production is nominally 0.82 (non-significant and in the wrong direction), but this figure is rather meaningless. It is based on just three data points, for one of which (1936) the economic figure is not of the appropriate date. These findings are not surprising. Polarization of the Spanish party system was due to structural conditions, that is, to the cleavage structure in the country (Bernecker, 2000). To use the terminology devised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), the Spanish Republic was crossed by three cleavages, namely an economic cleavage (which opposed the economic interests of the *latifundia* in the South-West to the economic interests of the medium-sized farms in Catalonia and the Basque countries), a religious cleavage (which opposed the secular urban middle class and the rural proletariat to the Catholic landowners) and a center–periphery cleavage (which opposed the economically advanced and politically weak parts of the country, such as Catalonia and the Basque countries, to the central government in Madrid). The social divisions produced by these cleavages were profound, politically salient and insensitive to contextual factors such as short-term fluctuations in macroeconomic conditions. The social divisions or cleavages that polarized the Spanish party system, that made the governments of the Spanish Republic so unstable, and that ultimately led to the collapse of democracy in 1936, had also been responsible for the governmental instability of the 1917–23 period, for the crisis of the state and for the establishment of 'a dictatorship of notables' in 1923 when Primo de Rivera took power and established an authoritarian dictatorship. Hence, since polarization of the Spanish party system was due to long-term, historical conditions, it is not surprising that polarization was not affected by short-term fluctuations in the economy.

Conclusions

The main purpose of the present article has been to show that polarization may not only reflect structural conditions, as Sartori (1976) suggested, such as the number and depth of political cleavages, but that it may also reflect certain contextual factors, such as fluctuations in macro-economic conditions. The results of the data analysis provide evidence consistent with our claim. In fact, with the exception of the Spanish case, in which polarization is due entirely to structural conditions, the other three cases of polarized pluralism analyzed in the article do show that the polarization of the party system increases as macro-economic conditions worsen.

The importance of this finding is twofold. At the theoretical level, it sheds some light on the determinants of polarization: polarization is affected by changes in the macro-economic conditions. This finding is also quite important at the practical, or policy, level. If polarized pluralism undermines the effectiveness of democratic governments leading, in the end, to the collapse of a constitutional regime, and if, as we have shown, polarization reflects changes in the macro-economic conditions, then a major implication is that in order to secure the consolidation and survival of a democratic regime it is vital to maintain good economic conditions.

This conclusion is not terribly important in Western Europe, which has now experienced, with few exceptions, five decades of democratic rule, but it may be quite important for all those newly established democratic regimes that have emerged in the course of the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991) and which are characterized by some of the characteristics (high number of relevant parties, presence of a center party, ideological polarization, etc.) that according to Sartori (1976) may be conducive to polarized pluralist party system dynamics. If democracy is to work well and survive, it is necessary to preserve pluralism and get rid of polarization, and maintaining good macro-economic conditions is one way to achieve this result.

Notes

1 The average duration of the cabinets in the Spanish Republic, in the French Fourth Republic, in the Weimar Republic and in the Italian First Republic was very short. From 22 January 1947, when the first government of the French Fourth Republic came to office, to the end of the De Gaulle government, on 1 January 1959, France had 22 governments lasting on average less than seven months. From 1919 to 1933, when Hitler took power, the Weimar Republic had 20 governments lasting, on average, less than a year. In the Italian First Republic, government was of similarly short duration. From 1948, when the Italian Constitution was enacted, to 1992, when the Bribesville scandal ended the First Republic, there were 45 governments lasting, on average, less than a year.

2 Sartori proposed two basic rules for assessing whether a party is relevant. His first counting rule states that 'a minor party can be discounted as irrelevant whenever it remains over time superfluous in the sense that it is never needed or put to use for any feasible coalition majority. Conversely, a minor party must be counted, no matter how small it is, if it finds itself in a position to determine over time, and at least at some point in time, at least one of the possible governmental majorities'. Sartori's second counting rule states that 'a party qualifies for relevance whenever its existence or appearance affects the tactics of party competition and particularly when it alters the direction of competition – by determining a switch from centripetal to centrifugal competition either leftward, rightward or in both directions – of the governing-oriented parties' (Sartori, 1976: 122–3).

3 This is why for Sartori 'the concept of polarization is not unambiguous' (Sartori, 1982: 256).

4 At this point, a word of clarification is in order. For Sartori, the parties located at the extremes of the party systems are not necessarily anti-system parties; however, in the case of the four polarized pluralist party systems examined here, all the parties located at the extremes were anti-system. This is why our operationalization of polarization is consistent with what Sartori had in mind. We also have to note that our index of polarization can be applied to cases that have already been recognized, on the basis of qualitative information, as polarized pluralist.

5 It goes without saying that this index is not appropriate for estimating the polarization of the party system in two-party or moderate pluralist party systems.

6 The Gaullists were an extreme, anti-system party in the Fourth Republic because 'de Gaulle did unwaveringly oppose and delegitimize the Fourth Republic as an unworkable assemblear regime' (Sartori, 1976: 157).

7 The correlation of our polarization index with the mean level of unemployment in the quarter of the election yields a Pearson $r > 0.99$; this near perfect linearity reflects parallel secular trends in both series.

8 While it is possible that the arrow of causality could run in the opposite direction, with polarization of the party system leading to economic decline, we believe it unlikely that the direction is primarily or exclusively reversed, in light of the fact that we operationalize economic performance using the year leading up to an election. More likely is the intriguing possibility of positive feedback loops connecting polarization with economic performance.

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