Measuring Intra-Party Factional Conflict

A Comparative Approach Using Leadership Contests

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Mike Cowburn
Zeppelin Universität
mike.cowburn@zu.de

Amelia Malpas
Harvard University
amalpas@g.harvard.edu

Rachel M. Blum
Oklahoma University
rblum@ou.edu

Intra-party factions have attracted increased scholarly attention in the twenty-first century as party systems have fragmented. Yet, we still lack a comparative approach to identify factional conflict. We offer a novel qualitatively derived approach to operationalize factional conflict using patterns of support in leadership contests. We apply our approach to an original dataset of 247 leadership contests from thirty-one parties in seven democracies between 1990 and 2024. We find that rates of factional conflict in leadership contests in mainstream parties increased significantly from the first decade of the twenty-first century onwards. Niche parties did not experience increasing factional conflict during this period. We discuss the benefits and limitations of our contribution, implications of our empirical finding, and directions for future development and application.

Keywords: faction, leadership contest, intra-party conflict, intra-party democracy, personalization, policy diversity

Intra-party factional conflict[1] is a persistent feature of party politics, shaping elite coordination, party identity, and electoral performance (Bolleyer and Kölln 2024; Giannetti and Laver 2008; Pedersen 2010). Though a vast literature has explored how parties differ from one another, fewer studies have systematically examined how they fracture internally—and how those fractures manifest, evolve, and shape party behavior over time and space. One important obstacle to meaningful comparison of intra-party politics is the lack of a consistent operationalization of factional conflict. This paper marks our initial attempt to establish and apply such a measure using the most observable arena of factional conflict: party leadership contests.

Leadership contests offer an ideal vantage point for understanding factional conflict. As moments when authority is openly contested, and competing visions of the party's future are articulated, leadership races bring to the surface the cleavages that lie beneath the surface of routine party activity (Blum and Noel 2024; Ceron 2019). Leadership contests make intra-party divisions visible: actors choose sides, coalitions form, and the outcomes have direct consequences for the distribution of power within the party. Though factional dynamics permeate many aspects of party life, leadership contests are especially well-suited for comparative and longitudinal analysis.

We present a three-step approach to quantifying factional conflict in parties using leadership contests. First, we identify factions in a given party. Second, we position candidates in leadership elections as proximate to a faction based on support networks and policy congruence. Third, we identify leadership contests that are factional when the leading candidates receive support from distinct blocs within their party. Our empirical approach treats factional conflict as an emergent property of leadership contests, rather than assuming the existence or structure of factions *ex ante*. Doing so allows us to capture variation across contexts and over time. Importantly, our approach is not bound by institutional context, timeframe, party family, or contest mechanism, and can be used to identify factional conflict in any party that holds leadership contests.

[1] We use the term "conflict" deliberately here, as opposed to similar terms like "competition." Our focus is on in-fighting within parties to determine a given party's directions, not on electoral competition between parties at the system level.

We demonstrate the applicability of our approach using an original dataset of 247 leadership contests in thirty-one parties from seven democracies between 1990 and 2024. Our goal is to use the measure to understand temporal trends in factional conflict. We focus on the distinction between mainstream and niche parties because these party types face fundamentally different strategic, organizational, and ideological pressures. Mainstream parties, typically of the center-left and center-right, aim to aggregate broad electoral coalitions and are comparatively exposed to their (increasingly) heterogeneous electoral coalitions. In contrast, niche parties appeal to narrower electorates, allowing for greater internal cohesion and clearer programmatic focus. We show that mainstream parties exhibit increasing levels of factional conflict from around 2008 until the end of our period of analysis. Niche parties did not become more factional during this period. Our findings therefore suggest a more fractured party landscape than might be expected from party system fragmentation alone: many mainstream parties have declined electorally while becoming more riven with factional intra-party conflict, whereas many niche parties have grown electorally while avoiding the same degree of intra-party division. Mainstream and niche parties once experienced factional conflict at roughly the same rate; mainstream parties now appear far more divided.

In making this contribution, we first discuss difficulties in measuring factionalism cross-nationally and the merits of leadership contests as sites of observable factionalism. We connect factionalism to party system fragmentation, from deriving hypotheses about the relative prevalence of factionalism in different types of parties. We justify our case selection via existing theories of system-level features that impact factionalism. Finally, we explain our three-step method for measuring factionalism in party leadership contests and illustrate its use via our results.

The development of an approach to measure factional intra-party conflict in leadership contests marks an important contribution to party politics, with implications for scholars and party actors. By foregrounding the role of leadership contests as a site and signal of factional conflict, this paper makes both an empirical and conceptual contribution to the study of (intra-)party politics in a comparative setting. The development of this conceptual approach marks only the first step in our research agenda, and we recognize that focusing solely on leadership contests may fail to fully capture

the diversity and multidimensionality of factional conflict in parties (see Dilling 2024). We therefore conclude with a discussion about how we intend to advance this approach conceptually and empirically in our future scholarship.

The Challenge of Studying Factional Conflict

Party system fragmentation, defined by the emergence of new parties into the political system, is well documented in the comparative literature (see e.g., Best 2013). Yet, the twenty-first century has also been notable for increasing fragmentation among partisan elites (Pildes 2023) and growing intra-party affective and policy distinctions among voters (Groenendyk, Sances, and Zhirkov 2020; Young and de-Wit 2024). Theoretical scholarship on the role of party factions can therefore offer important analytical leverage to empirical scholars working on the topic, enabling more granular understanding of what is happening within the "black box" of political parties (Basedau and Köllner 2005; Boucek 2009). Intra-party factional conflict is a normatively important phenomenon that influences electoral strategies, policymaking, and broader democratic processes (Bolleyer and Kölln 2024; Ceron 2015; Pedersen 2010). Yet, despite this importance, there is no universally accepted framework or methodology for systematically measuring factionalism across parties and political systems, hindering our ability to study the subject empirically or to identify trends, causes, and effects across different contexts.

Absent an agreed comparative measure, studies on party factionalism are often fragmented and limited to specific case studies, leaving the field dominated by studies "based either on anecdotes or known factions" (Kölln and Gunderson 2024). Most empirical studies therefore continue to rely on small-n case studies, elite interviews, or manual coding of legislative behavior—approaches that are often constrained by limited comparability, replicability, and generalizability. As a result, much of the literature remains descriptive or episodic, unable to identify long-term patterns or test competing hypotheses across time and space. Further, quantitative analyses overwhelmingly treat intra-party factional conflict as a unidimensional concept—typically ideological—thereby overlooking the

complex and multifaceted nature of factions. Consequently, intra-party politics remains methodologically underdeveloped relative to the study of inter-party competition.

Without a broader understanding of how factionalism operates across various political systems, it is difficult to assess how institutional features at both the country and party level structure the nature and intensity of factional conflict. The lack of comparability also prevents researchers from identifying generalizable patterns or trends that could provide deeper insights into the role of factionalism in political stability, party behavior, or democratic governance. This methodological limitation is a serious obstacle for advancing theoretical and empirical research in the field. The lack of a comparative measure also has practical implications for governance and democracy as factionalism affects the internal dynamics of parties, influencing party unity in leadership contests and policy decisions. In extreme cases, factionalism can lead to party splits, unstable coalitions, or ineffective governance. The gap in knowledge leaves parties and policymakers ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of intra-party dynamics.

We understand factions as organized party sub-groups with a distinct set of policy positions or personalistic preferences and some degree of temporal stability. This definition reflects our previous scholarship on the topic (Blum 2020; Blum and Cowburn 2024; Cowburn 2024; Malpas 2024), and is rooted in a longstanding scholarly tradition of understanding these intra-party blocs as having met specific criteria of purpose, organization, and durability in order to be considered as a faction (Belloni and Beller 1976; Boucek 2009; DiSalvo 2012; Noel 2016; Roback and James 1978; Zariski 1960). Following DiSalvo (2012, 5),[2] we consider the criteria for an intra-party bloc to be a faction to include: positional consistency, organizational structures, temporal durability, a distinction from other same-party members, and the ability to influence the direction of the party.

Leadership Contests as Sites of Factional Conflict

Leadership contests are perhaps the most common site of factional conflict and therefore provide an ideal starting point to identify intra-party fissures. Leadership contests concentrate political attention

[2] For a review of different definitions used in the literature, see Cowburn (2022) or Kölln and Gunderson (2024).

and often serve as focal moments in which internal tensions become overt, making them ideal settings for empirical analysis (Blum and Noel 2024; Ceron 2019; Cohen et al. 2008). Groups within the party have strong incentives to promote an aligned member to the position of party leader to advance the careers of like-minded members, to follow a strategic approach that they perceive is better, and to pursue policy goals that members of the faction support (Ceron 2012). Consequently, these contests reveal cleavages within the party, with different factions supporting candidates who best reference their interests (Cross and Pilet 2015). Leadership contests have therefore been conceived as "critical moments" that illuminate the broader dynamics of party cohesion and division and enable researchers to understand how power and resources are distributed within parties (Boucek 2009).

Contests for the leadership are also normatively important for the direction of the party, serving as both a reflection of existing internal divisions and the events that reconfigure power dynamics within parties. The outcomes of leadership contests have long-term effects on party ideology, structure, and inter-factional relations (Ceron 2012; Deschouwer 2008; Harmel and Janda 1994; Hilton 2021). Leadership contests are therefore a central arena where intra-party politics is contested. By analyzing factional alignment and contestation in these events, we gain insight into both immediate intra-party tensions and broader organizational trends.

Leadership contests are one place where factional conflict is easier to observe. Intra-party factions' organizational structures and policy preferences are revealed during leadership challenges by the declaration of individual or group endorsements, campaign alliances, and support networks. The visibility of factional conflict in leadership elections contrasts with more diffuse or opaque arenas of intra-party contestation, such as behind-the-scenes negotiations or informal patronage networks. Following the approach pioneered by Blum and Noel (2024), we do not therefore contend that party leadership contests capture the totality of factional conflict within a party, though we do think these are the sites where factional conflicts are most likely to emerge and be visible, and that other factional disputes within the party will largely align with those in leadership contests.

Factional conflict in leadership selections typically occurs under standardized procedural rules and institutional constraints, making cross-case comparison easier and more meaningful to interpret

(Pilet and Cross 2014). Leadership contests, with their relatively clear structures and available evidence, provide a useful empirical entry point that facilitates both cross-national comparison and longitudinal analysis. Although this approach inevitably leaves out aspects of factionalism—such as informal influence, local activism, or legislative bargaining—it provides a replicable foundation from which more expansive analyses can be developed. Leadership contests therefore serve as a useful starting point for a research agenda focused on factional conflict.

Fragmentation and Factional Conflict

Party factions have gained renewed prominence in many consolidated democracies in the twenty-first century, where they have been broadly understood as structuring parties' internal dynamics and influencing their ideological trajectories on both sides of the Atlantic (DiSalvo 2012; Kölln and Polk 2023). Factionalism has (re)emerged within various political parties, including the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States and the Conservative and Labour parties in the United Kingdom, reflecting a broader trend of increasing intra-party divisions and ideological conflict across Western Europe and North America. In multi-party democracies including Germany and Spain, both long-established mainstream (SPD, CDU, PP, PSOE) and emergent challenger parties (AfD, die Linke, Vox, Podemos) have also experienced growing internal conflicts in recent years. Indeed, the phenomenon appears increasingly common across consolidated democracies regardless of political institutions or electoral systems.

We hypothesize that this increase in factional conflict is likely connected to the phenomenon of party system fragmentation. The long-standing dominance of "catch-all parties" (Kirchheimer 1966) has given way to more pluralized and volatile electoral competition, characterized by the rise of new parties, new cleavages, and declining partisan loyalties (Mair 2008). At the same time, these parties and changing conditions have brought new—at times divisive—issues into the domain of policies that mainstream parties take positions on and that are subject to intra-party contestation (Hopkin and Blyth 2019). As the external party system becomes more fragmented, mainstream parties face mounting pressure to accommodate diverse and sometimes conflicting constituencies.

This external diversification is mirrored internally, as parties must absorb a wider array of ideological tendencies, strategic preferences, and—increasingly personalistic (Rahat and Sheafer 2007)—leadership ambitions into the party tent. We demonstrate the well-established phenomenon of party system fragmentation in the supplementary material by descriptive plotting the effective number of parties in each of the countries in our study.

We therefore expect that party system fragmentation alters the logic of party cohesion. As parties lose status and operate in increasingly competitive contexts, their ability to mediate internal divisions becomes strained. Electoral fragmentation may translate into intra-party factional conflict, as leaders contend with internal veto players, diverse policy demands, and shifting coalitions (Giannetti and Laver 2008). In such an environment, leadership contests become arenas for airing internal disagreements and reorganizing elite alignments—contributing to the rise of factional conflict. The personalization of politics further exacerbates this dynamic. Under more fragmented, digital-oriented, and candidate-centered structures, political authority increasingly attaches to individuals rather than party organizations (Karvonen 2010; Rahat and Sheafer 2007). Personalization incentivizes political elites to build personal brands, compete for leadership to assert factional influence, and distance themselves from competitors, serving as a centrifugal force within parties.

Media fragmentation—defined as greater diversity in both the supply of and demand for media content in a high-choice environment (Van Aelst et al. 2017)—accelerates this process by lowering the cost of dissent and amplifying intra-party conflict. In the digital era, factional actors can communicate directly with supporters, bypassing formal party structures and leveraging personalized platforms to mobilize support, thereby weakening the gatekeeping function of party elites and making it harder to enforce discipline. The emergence of new issues, often through emergent channels in a more fragmented media ecosystem, offers new issues for parties to disagree over substantively (preference misalignment), strategically (issue prioritization), and reduces their ability to 'hide' their differences (strategic ambiguity).

At the same time, institutional processes—including leadership and candidate selection—have become more inclusive and decentralized (Cowburn and Kerr 2023; Hazan and Rahat 2010), further enabling factional contestation. Though democratization of leadership selection may enhance legitimacy and engagement, the process has also provided an entry point for intra-party rivals to mount challenges in many countries (Grenier 2021; Russell 2016). When combined with a fragmented electoral and media environment, these reforms likely further contribute to growing intra-party factional conflict. Issues that might once have been resolved through behind-the-scenes negotiations now play out in public, exposing and reinforcing factional divisions.

These changes suggest that intra-party factional conflict is both structurally conditioned and increasingly common. The growing complexity of party environments, changes in how leaders are selected, and the transformation of media ecosystems suggest a long-term trend towards more factional conflict. We therefore expect the developments of the early twenty-first century have made factional conflict more common:

> **H1**: The rate of factional conflict within parties will increase over time between 1990 and 2024, especially in the twenty-first century

Factional Conflict in Mainstream and Niche Parties

We do not expect that these changes have affected all parties equally. In particular, we think that the rise of new parties on the political left and right likely makes factional conflict in mainstream parties of the political center more likely. Whereas mainstream parties once competed with parties closer to the ideological center of their party system, they are now flanked on both sides. For example, center-right conservative parties once primarily competed against center-left social democratic parties in elections. They now find themselves competing not only with their traditional rivals but also having to defend their ideological flanks from forces on the radical right. The rise of green parties and, in some countries, overtly leftist parties present similar challenges to mainstream parties of the center-left.

Given our focus on supply-side politics, we use the purely functional definitions of the terms mainstream and niche parties (for an alternative perspective see Crulli and Albertazzi 2024). Accordingly, mainstream parties are defined by their centrality in the party system, identified as commonly serving in the government or as the main opposition (De Vries and Hobolt 2012; Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Meguid 2005). In contrast, niche parties are defined as "parties that compete primarily on a small number of non-economic issues" (Wagner 2012, 845) and are therefore distinct from mainstream parties in their policy positions, electoral strategies, and perception among voters (Jensen and Spoon 2010). Accordingly, we differentiate between mainstream parties of the ideological center—including social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative, and liberal parties—and niche parties on the ideological periphery, including radical left, green, radical right, and regionalist or ethno-nationalist parties. In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that our empirical results are robust to an alternative specification based on vote-share threshold in the previous national election.

We expect that our theorized drivers of factionalism affect mainstream parties to a greater extent than they affect niche parties. The incentives, organizational norms, and electoral strategies of these party families differ in ways that matter for factional conflict. This heterogeneity is recognized in the extant literature, with factionalism tending to be more prevalent and policy-oriented in mainstream parties, who span more constituencies and represent more diverse interests than niche parties (Dilling 2024; Katz and Mair 2009). Mainstream parties tend to be broad coalitions aiming for large-scale electoral appeal, often spanning multiple ideological or social constituencies (Kirchheimer 1966; Sartori 1976). As the changes discussed in the previous section emerge, it is these parties that face growing internal pressure. Moreover, factions in moderate parties campaign more than those in ideologically extreme parties (Invernizzi 2023).

In contrast, niche parties are often founded on a focused ideological identity or programmatic goal, such as Euroscepticism, environmentalism, anti-immigration sentiment, or class struggle (Meguid 2005). Niche parties are also more likely to be personalistic, revolving around strong founding figures or tightly knit leadership circles. Furthermore, whereas mainstream parties

consistently respond to shifts in public opinion in a model of "dynamic representation" (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995), niche parties are unresponsive to such shifts (Adams et al. 2006). Despite existing across the ideological spectrum, from far-right to green parties, and having varying types of internal party organization, niche parties are distinct from mainstream parties in a way that matters for factionalism. Niche parties are typically characterized by a narrower policy focus than mainstream parties, and by prioritizing policy domains or taking positions not staked out by mainstream parties. The tighter focus of niche parties, along with their posture towards the mainstream parties, may suppress or preempt internal competition, thereby limiting factional conflict.

Niche parties also have implications for factionalism within mainstream parties (Meyer and Miller 2015). The presence of "non-coalitionable" niche parties (such as the AfD in Germany) may increase internal cooperation in mainstream parties that are ideologically distant from that niche party. At the same time, non-coalitionable parties might increase factional conflict in ideologically-closer mainstream parties, with the question of whether to cooperate with the verboten party serving as a source of internal conflict. Niche parties can also influence the diversity of issues in the landscape of party politics by introducing new policies onto the political agenda.

Given these differences for mainstream and niche parties, we expect that the increase in factional conflict will be more pronounced among mainstream parties, with little to no increase for niche parties:

> **H2**: The increase in factional conflict will occur in mainstream parties of the ideological center, rather than in niche parties from ideological poles.

Data Scope

We apply our analytical approach to parties from a range of democracies that vary across the systemic features identified by scholars as influencing factionalism. We test the development of intra-party factionalism in Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (USA). Given that we hypothesize that parties have become more factional in the twenty-first

century, we examine temporal change across the thirty-five year period between 1990 and 2024. This period coincides with the end of the Cold War, and was a time that has become popularly understood as marking the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1993)—where historic cleavages and ideological competition abated and the modern era of party competition (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009) and the unipolar liberal democratic order was established. We include all national parties that gained substantive representation in the national legislature, as well as some prominent regional parties. The full list of thirty-one parties is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Parties Included

Country	Parties
Canada	Conservative Party, Liberal Party, New Democratic Party (NDP), Bloc Québécois
France	Rassemblement pour la République, Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), Les Républicains, Parti Socialiste, Renaissance, Rassemblement National (RN), Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF)
Germany	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union Bayern (CDU/CSU), Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Alliance 90/Die Grünen, Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP), die Linke, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)
Mexico	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA), Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)
Spain	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), Partido Popular (PP), Ciudadanos, Vox, Podemos
UK	Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP)
USA	Democratic Party, Republican Party

Beyond all being democracies,[3] these countries vary on many of the most important structural and institutional features. The literature suggests several macro features that influence factionalism. The system of government—parliamentary, presidential, or semi-presidential—structures party organization by shaping the relationship between the (main) governing party's leader and the polity's head of state. Separation of powers also makes intra-party conflict more likely (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Federal systems that have decentralized local parties encourage factionalism in the national party by allowing local party brands to emerge (Key 1964; Peskin 1984; Polsby 1981; Zariski 1960). The electoral system also matters for factionalism, where plurality systems tend toward bi-factionalism while proportional systems have multi-factionalism, as the former only have serious electoral competition in one political direction while the latter can have it in multiple directions (Zariski 1960). Relatedly, the number of parties shapes factionalism, with less factionalism in more

[3] Mexico's democratization occurs within our time period.

proportional systems as factions more commonly splinter into new parties (Emanuele, Marino, and Diodati 2023).

The proportionality of a country's electoral system and the cost of starting a new party relative to the cost of running in an existing party further shape whether prospective political blocs take the form of an intra-party faction or a minor party (Ceron 2015; Lee 2020). For example, the French case of factionalized parties and recurrent merges between them illustrates a majoritarian semi-presidential system where parties have tight control over candidates but it is relatively easy to start a new party. In addition, factions can have formal or informal representation in party congresses, where their concerns and members are incorporated (Belloni and Beller 1976; Ceron 2015; Poguntke and Hofmeister 2024; Reiter 1981).

In Table 2, we show how these countries differ in their governmental systems, degree of centralization, electoral systems, positions of the executive, method of party financing, ages of democracy, and formal roles of factions in the legislature. Previous scholarship has identified that these institutional factors structure the degree of factionalism within parties (Emanuele, Marino, and Diodati 2023). Given the institutional differences between these countries, we contend that identifying consistent patterns of factionalism would indicate that these trends are not the result of any one feature of that country's politics. In short, our cases are diverse.

Table 2: Summary of Political Systems

	Canada	**France**	**Germany**	**México**	**Spain**	**UK**	**USA**
Degree of Centralization	Federal	Centralized	Federal	Federal	Devolved	Devolved	Federal
Electoral System	Plurality: FPTP	Majoritarian: Two-round runoff	Mixed: FPTP & PR	Mixed: FPTP & PR	Proportional: PR[4]	Plurality: FPTP	Plurality: FPTP
Party System (Effective # of Parties, *year last available*)	Two+ party system: (2.76, *2021*)	Multi-party system (3.72, *2022*)	Multi-party system (5.51, *2021*)	Two-party system (2.13, *2021*)	Multi-party system (3.44, *2023*)	Two-party system (2.39, *2024*)	Two-party system (2.00, *2022*)
Position of the Executive	Within the legislature	Independently elected	Within the legislature	Independently elected	Within the legislature	Within the legislature	Independently elected
Party Finance	Public & private	Public & private	Public	Public	Public & private	Public & private	Private
Age of	Old	Old	Medium	Young	Young	Old	Old

[4] Though Spain has a PR electoral system, it is not very proportional (Hopkin 2005).

Democracy							
Formal Legislative Factions	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

What constitutes a leadership contest in our data varies between countries. We therefore detail our inclusion criteria here. In the USA, parties have no official leaders; instead, presidential candidates, as the only nationally elected office, are widely considered to serve the role of party leaders(Davis 1992). We therefore include all presidential primaries in our dataset. In the UK and Canada the role of party leader is clearly defined, though parties take different approaches to leadership selection. For German parties, we include all party chairs and contests to be the chancellor candidate. Party chairs are central figures in German parties (Detterbeck and Rohlfing 2014), presiding over the party organization with relevant intra-party power and are therefore considered as party leaders (Detterbeck 2013). Conversely, chancellor candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*) are the most visible and well-known politicians in national election campaigns and so could also be considered analogous to a party leader (Helms 2021). For Spanish political parties, we include contests for the party chair position. The specific name of the role varies by party—e.g., party president in the PP, secretary general in the PSOE—but party chairs are the highest position on the party board, usually ascending as prime minister if their party becomes the governing party (Barberà et al. 2014). In France, contests for party leader and presidential candidate are distinct. The president, however, serves as *de facto* party leader (Thiebault 1993). We therefore include both types of contests in our data. For Mexican parties, we include contests for party presidents. Party presidents hold considerable power in determining their party's direction, which legislative candidates will stand for election, and politicians' career trajectories within the party (Langston 2007; Tovar and Arturo 2013). Conceiving of leadership contests in this way gives us a total of 247 leadership contests between 1990 and 2024.

Measurement

To identify factionalism in party leadership contests, we take a three-step approach. First, we identify active factions within each party in our dataset using a combination of extant literature, accumulated

individual case knowledge, and contemporaneous news coverage in both international English-language media and domestic native-language media. We provide qualitative accounts of factionalism over time within every party in the supplementary material. This qualitative approach ensures deep contextual understanding of the opaque nature of intra-party politics in each of our thirty-one parties throughout the period of investigation. This process of identifying factions within parties is time and knowledge intensive. However, developing an understanding of particular factions in parties via literature and news coverage is eminently possible across comparative contexts with parties.

Second, having identified factions within parties, we collected data on all party leader selection candidates for all parties in our dataset in years when they held party congresses or other leader nominations. For each candidate, we identified which faction they aligned with or received support from, if any. Most candidates were clearly identifiable with a faction in the party; this was true in nearly all cases for the candidates who received first, second, third highest shares of votes, regardless of the composition of the selectorate. Our factional description of candidates in the dataset is based on the qualitative summaries of party factions described in supplementary material. Being aligned with a faction may include receiving formal support from organizations associated with that faction, for example Momentum in the UK Labour Party. Alternatively, it may include having the support or endorsement from the leading figures in that faction, for example Jeremy Corbyn or Bernie Sanders. We also identified factional alignment via the congruence between leader campaign policy positions and stated positions of factional leaders within the parties. For example, this could include supporting Medicare-For-All or the Green New Deal in the USA Democratic Party or the Hartz IV reforms in the German SPD (see Cowburn and Kerr 2023). At the end of this stage, we had a dataset with all candidates in all party selection contests between 1990 and 2024, with their factional alignment.

Third, having identified the factional support or alignment of candidates in the leadership contest, we then dichotomously code whether a leadership contest can be considered 'factional.' We code contests as factional (1) when the two highest-placed candidates received support from distinct factions in the party. When these candidates do not come from distinct factions, we code contests as

'non-factional' (0). Accordingly, we require at least two candidates to stand in a leadership contest in order for the contest to be classified as factional.[5] This approach enables us to show descriptive changes in the rate of factional leadership contests—our proxy for intra-party factional conflict—across time, party family, and country.

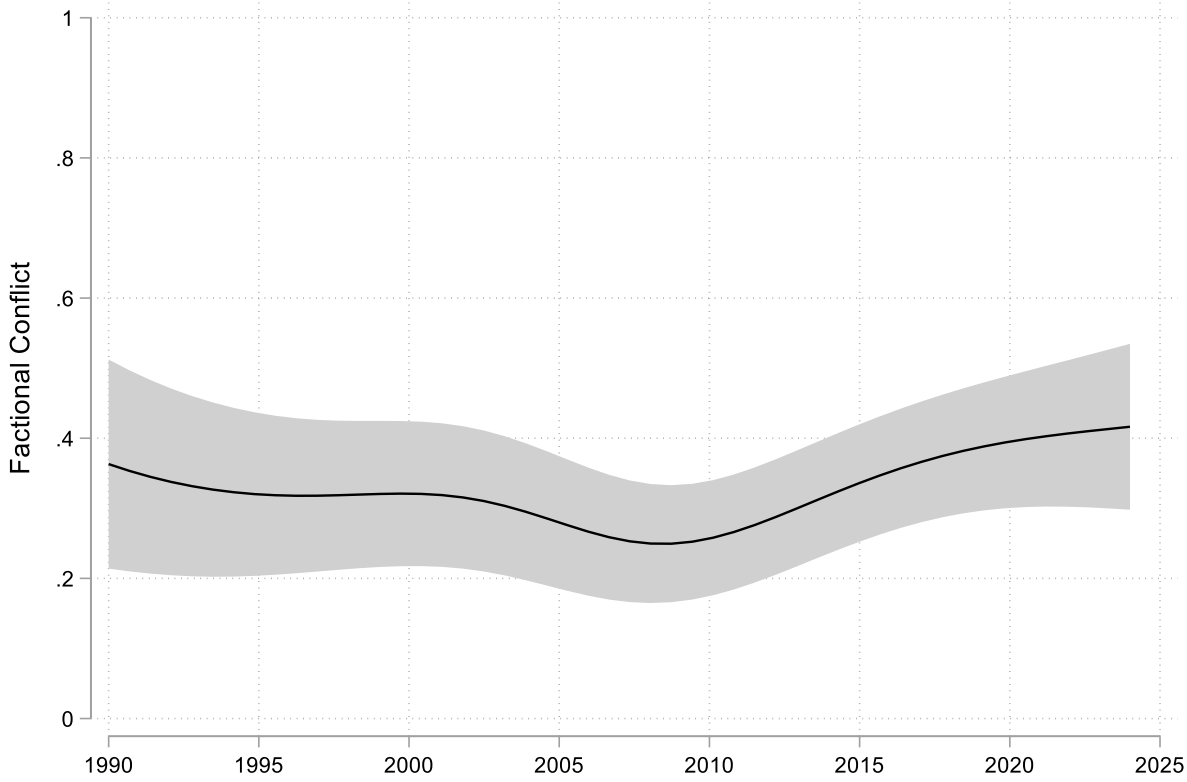
There are some costs in implementing our approach, such as knowledge of specific factions within parties sufficient to place candidates. However, this is possible to do across disparate contexts. Given the great cross-national and cross-party differences in party leader or legislative candidate nominations or legislative discipline, our comparative qualitative approach mitigates the risk of misinterpreting factionalism across contexts that might emerge in purely quantitative approaches without individual case knowledge. Because of the absence of empirical comparative work on intra-party factions, our intention is to create an approach that measures factionalism comparatively in the seven countries included here and that other scholars can use to measure factionalism in parties in other countries or time periods.

Empirical Application

In this initial application of our approach, we identify temporal variation in intra-party factional conflict between 1990 and 2024. In hypothesis one (**H1**), we expected that, when considered in terms of all parties, we would observe an increase in factional conflict, especially during the twenty-first century. Figure 1 shows the rolling average of factional conflict in all parties across each four-year period[6] with 95% confidence intervals and local mean smoothing to identify underlying trends, depicting temporal variation while accounting for short-term fluctuations and uncertainty in the data. Though there is a slight decline in the period between 1990 and 2008, followed by a slight increase between 2008 and 2024, these trends are not statistically significant, indicating that, at the aggregate level, parties have not become significantly more factional during this period. We therefore do not find support for H1.

[5] In the supplementary material, we demonstrate that our empirical results are robust to various different inclusion criteria.
[6] We used a data-driven approach to determine the optimal bandwidth based on local smoothing.

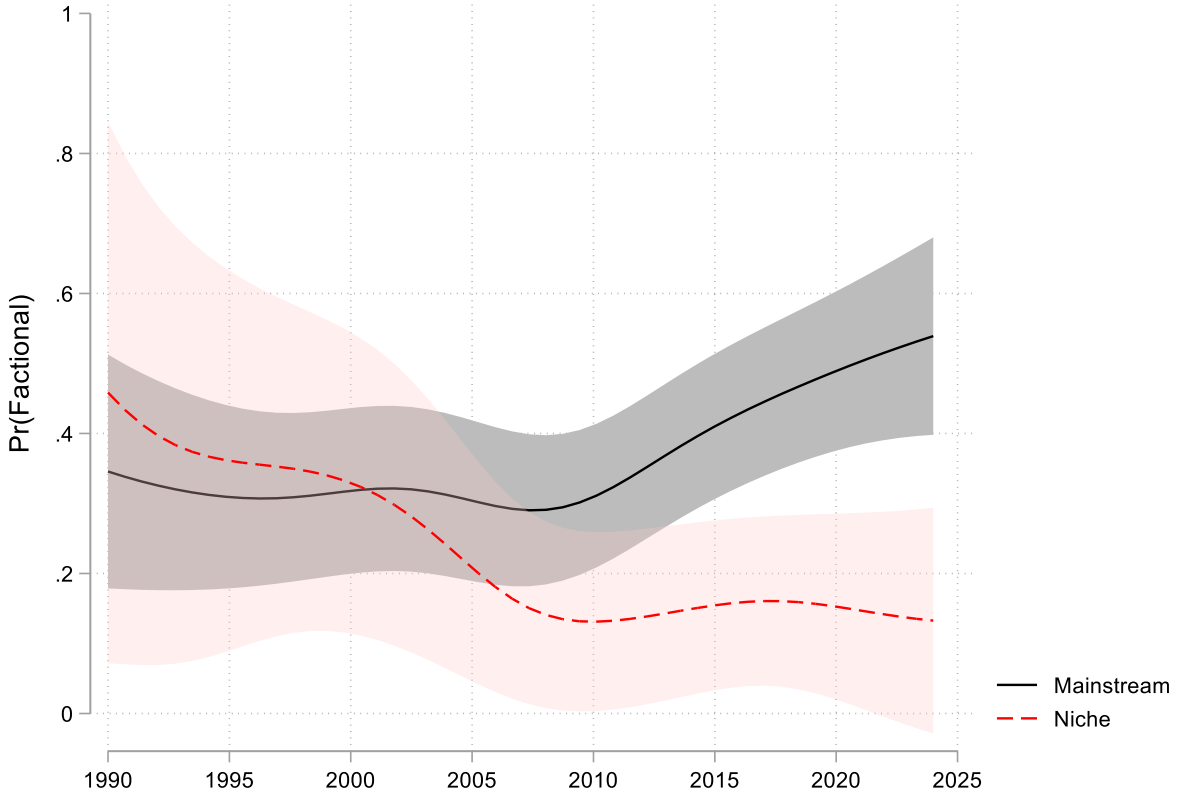
Figure 1: Factional Conflict (All Parties)



Having considered the general trend in our data, we are next interested in heterogeneity in terms of party groupings (**H2**). Following the functional definition outlined previously, we code the parties in our data according to the established rubric of party families in the literature (see e.g., Langsæther 2023) and then group these families into the categories of "mainstream" and "niche" parties. Mainstream parties belong to historically dominant party families and typically operate within the political center or center-left or right of a given political system (Meguid 2005). In party family terms, these include social democrats, conservatives, Christian democrats, and liberals. Niche parties arise outside the traditional party system or operate on the periphery of dominant party families, often focused on a narrower set of issues, or with the aim to disrupt established political norms and challenge the status quo (Abou-Chadi 2016).[7] In party family terms, these include green parties, radical right and left parties, and regional parties.

[7] The full breakdown of mainstream and niche parties is shown in the supplementary material. We also present the trends by party family and country in the supplementary material.

Figure 2: Factional Conflict (Mainstream versus Niche Parties)



We present our temporal trends by party grouping in Figure 2. As expected in hypothesis two, there is little difference between the groups in the 1990s and early 2000s. From 2008 onwards however, mainstream parties became steadily more factional over time, with around thirty percent of contests being factional in 2007 compared to more than fifty percent of contests being factional by 2024. In contrast, factionalism in niche or challenger parties remained stable at roughly fifteen percent during the same period, and may have slightly declined before this time.[8] The post-2008 increase in factionalism shown in Figure 1 is concentrated in mainstream parties. Whereas rates of factional conflict in mainstream and niche parties were once indistinguishable, mainstream parties now have factional leadership contests at a far higher rate, with more than half of these contests being factional in 2024. This finding supports H2.

As we show in the supplementary material, there are variances between types of mainstream and niche parties and countries in these aggregate patterns of factionalism. For center-right (conservative and Christian democratic) parties, roughly half of their leadership contests were factional in the early 1990s. This fell to around a third before 2008 before subsequently rising to nearly 60% in the early 2020s. In center-left (social democratic) parties, about a third of leadership

[8] The wide confidence for these parties in the 1990s in particular give us caution in interpreting trends here.

contests were factional from the early 1990s to 2008. Since then, the share of factional leadership contests has steadily risen, with roughly half of all contests being factional in the early 2020s. Centrist (liberal) parties were generally not factional until 2008, sharply rising thereafter.

The prevalence of factionalism also varies by countries. In general, it is higher in countries with fewer distinct parties where it is more difficult to start new viable parties. For instance, at the end of our period, the United States has the second highest frequency of factionalism of any of our countries and the lowest effective number of parties. Germany, on the other hand, has the lowest prevalence of factionalism but the highest number of effective parties. With the exception of France, where factionalism is slowly declining over time, every other country either experienced declining or flat factionalism before 2008 with an increase in factionalism thereafter. Taken together, these results underscore the value in a comparative measure of factionalism that travels easily across time, place, and party.

Discussion & Conclusion

We offer a new approach for identifying factional conflict in parties using leadership contests. In our initial application of this approach to thirty-one parties in seven democracies, we show that factional conflict became more common in mainstream parties from around 2008 onwards. For niche parties, we observe no such trend. This finding reflects broader transformations in the structure of party competition: as party systems have fragmented, mainstream parties have come under growing pressure to reconcile diverse tendencies. The erosion of once-stable electoral alignments has made it harder for these parties to maintain internal consensus as they try to manage diverging coalitions. Intra-party factional conflict, as seen in leadership contests, has become more commonplace in mainstream parties during the twenty-first century as a result.

Methodologically, our approach enables researchers with case knowledge of parties to meaningfully compare the level of factional conflict across parties and national contexts. Rather than assuming the existence of predefined factions or relying exclusively on deductive categorizations, our approach builds factional maps based on empirical observation of elite alignments during leadership

races. Doing so enables researchers to capture the dynamics of factionalism in practice, rather than imposing theoretical structures that may not fit specific cases. By rooting our approach in observable behaviors—such as endorsements, campaign roles, and voting alliances—our framework allows for dynamic cross-national comparison. In doing so, we also hope that our behavioral approach helps provide further clarity on what constitutes a faction. The result of this approach may also serve to normalize factional conflict in parties. Factionalism continues to have negative connotations—not least in the United States, where cautioning against the "mischiefs of faction" (Madison 1787) has become part of political folklore—potentially shaping both public discourse and empirical scholarship on the phenomenon. Our framework offers one avenue for further empirical enquiry in a comparative setting.

Empirically, our finding that mainstream parties became more factional from 2008 onwards but niche parties did not, prompts further questions. In this initial application of our framework, we posited a theoretical mechanism rooted in the fragmentation of party (and media) systems, internal party democratization, and the diversity of issues in the public sphere, but did not empirically test the relative contributions of these factors. Our forthcoming research agenda will therefore investigate the causal mechanisms underpinning the descriptive trends identified here.

Our empirical findings help us understand intra-party politics in a comparative setting. The evidence of a steady rise in factional conflict in mainstream parties since 2008 reflects broader struggles that parties of the center-left and center-right have experienced in recent decades.[9] As these parties attempt to maintain broad coalitions under conditions of ideological fragmentation, shifting electoral alignments, and declining partisan loyalty, leadership contests have become increasingly important moments of renegotiation and redefinition internally. In these moments, factions have become vehicles for internal adaptation and realignment (Blum and Cowburn 2024; DiSalvo 2012).

The rise in factional conflict in leadership contests may also have implications for democratic accountability and party legitimacy. Though internal competition may reflect democratic engagement

[9] It is possible that what looks like an increase in factional conflict reflects the increasing visibility of such conflicts rather than their frequency. We take this possibility seriously, ensuring that our data-collection process relies on variables that are reliably reported in the same way over our period of study. We believe this criticism would be more difficult to overcome if we were studying factional conflict over a longer period of time.

within parties, it also carries the risk of prolonged instability, elite fragmentation, and inconsistent messaging to voters. In highly visible leadership races, public displays of disunity may have electoral consequences, particularly when factional divides become permanent. Whether factional divisions strengthen or weaken parties remains contested, with some studies suggesting that parties with lower levels of intra-party conflict are perceived as more unified and will therefore perform better in elections (McGann 2002; Snyder and Ting 2002) and others contending that internal conflict can help garner support from voters through broader policy positions (The Benefits of Conflict 2022). In addition, comparative research to date still has little to say on the relationship between factional conflict and the outcomes of the legislative process, either in terms of efficiency (Volden and Wiseman 2014) or design (Hurka et al. 2025). We think that our approach to operationalizing factional conflict can be of benefit here, and our forthcoming research agenda will also include the potential consequences of factional conflict in terms of party electoral performance, legislative efficiency, and legislative design. For example, do governing parties with high levels of factional conflict produce less legislation? And is that legislation deliberately vague to appease the distinct factions within the party?

The divergence between mainstream and niche parties in patterns of factional conflict invites reflection on the organizational resilience of different party types. Niche parties, often organized around core ideological principles or individual leaders, appear better insulated from rising contestation, at least in the context of leadership selection. This dynamic prompts questions about the trade-offs between internal cohesion and inclusiveness, and about whether the centralization of authority in niche parties might insulate them from the instability affecting mainstream parties. Such questions offer fertile ground for future work on party institutionalization, elite coordination, and the position of party families.

One limitation of our approach is the sole focus on party leadership contests, likely too narrow a perspective to fully understand factional contours within the party (Bentancur, Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt 2019; Dilling 2024). In recent years, the subject of candidate selection has become increasingly contested in a range of parties, often serving as an important further site of factional

conflict (Cowburn and Kerr 2023; Hazan and Rahat 2010). In parties such as the UK Labour Party, candidate selection has been explicitly used by leaders from distinct factions as a tool to wield power over the party by selecting factionally-aligned candidates, and "purging" incumbent MPs in the process (le Duc 2024). One obvious extension of our approach is to shift focus beyond leadership contests to not only analyze each leadership contest systematically, but also to gauge the level of intra-party conflict around the process of candidate selection itself. Before examining the causes and consequences of factional conflict, we therefore intend to broaden our approach to factional conflict beyond leadership contests to also include candidate selection processes, and conflict in the legislature.

A second limitation is the need for deep understanding of the contours of factions within the cases. Applying this framework therefore requires that researchers understand parties' historical developments, culture, norms, and networks. This need for contextual familiarity may limit the scalability and generalizability of our approach. A faction that appears cohesive and influential in one leadership contest may be ephemeral or context-specific, defying comparison with similar-looking groupings in another case. Scholars working across countries or parties without established literatures may find it particularly difficult to achieve the level of immersion necessary to identify factions in this way. In these contexts, our approach may fail to produce reliable or valid insights unless supplemented with elite interviews, archival work, or long-term observation. Though we demonstrate the potential for mapping factional structures through leadership contests in a way that enables meaningful temporal and cross-case comparison, we also recognize that our approach is context-bound, demanding interpretive engagement with each case.

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Supplementary Material

In this supplementary material we present some additional results, the breakdown of our parties into mainstream and niche groups, and our qualitative examination that serves as the first step in our approach to identifying factional conflict.

Descriptive Statistics

In Table A.1 we present the descriptive statistics of our data including numbers of observations, means, and standard deviations.

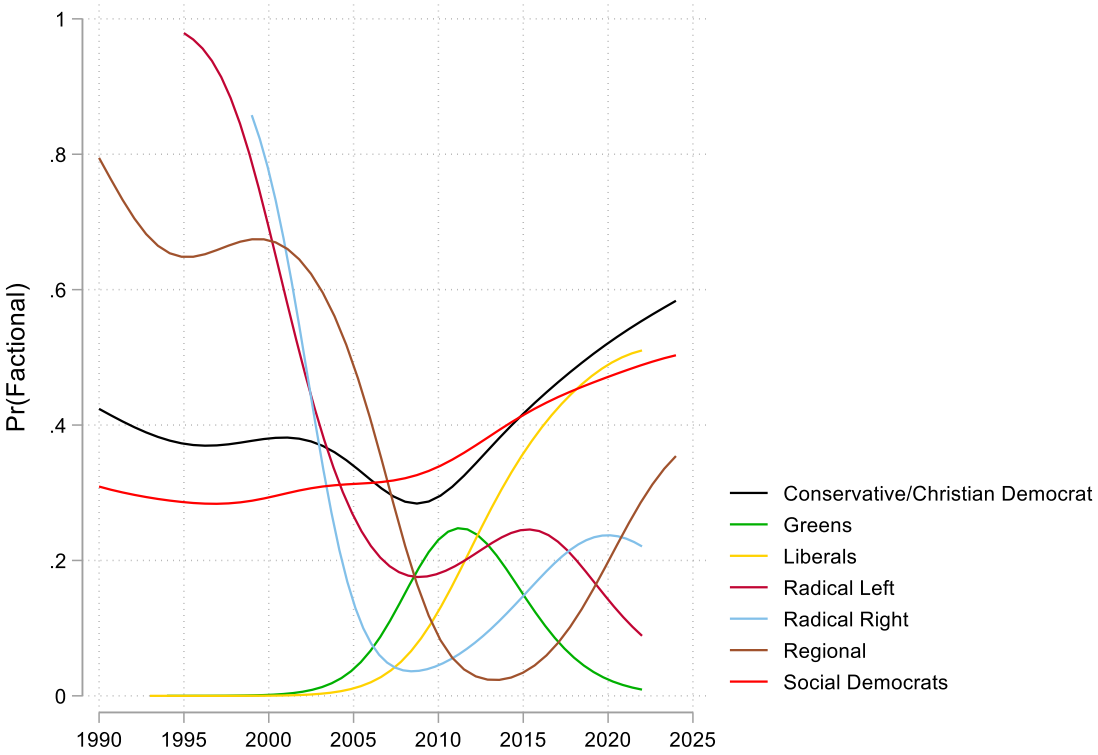
Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Contest Year	247	2009.283	9.716	1990	2024
Contested	247	.494	.501	0	1
Factional	247	.332	.472	0	1
Country Num	247	4.053	1.767	1	7
Party Num	247	14.721	8.446	1	29
Family Num	247	4.142	2.59	1	7
Mainstream	247	.741	.439	0	1
Election %	247	.256	.15	0	.688
Effective Number Parties	247	4.195	1.334	2.027	7.136

Results by Party Family

In Figure A.1 we plot our trends by party family rather than just using the mainstream-niche divide, we see further reflection of the trend of increasing factionalism in mainstream parties among parties of the center-right (conservative/Christian democrat), center (liberals), and center-left (social democrats). Conversely, we see mixed results among the different families in the niche group, with parties away from the ideological center (radical right, radical left) and regional parties both declining in their level of factional conflict and green parties generally having low levels of factional conflict.

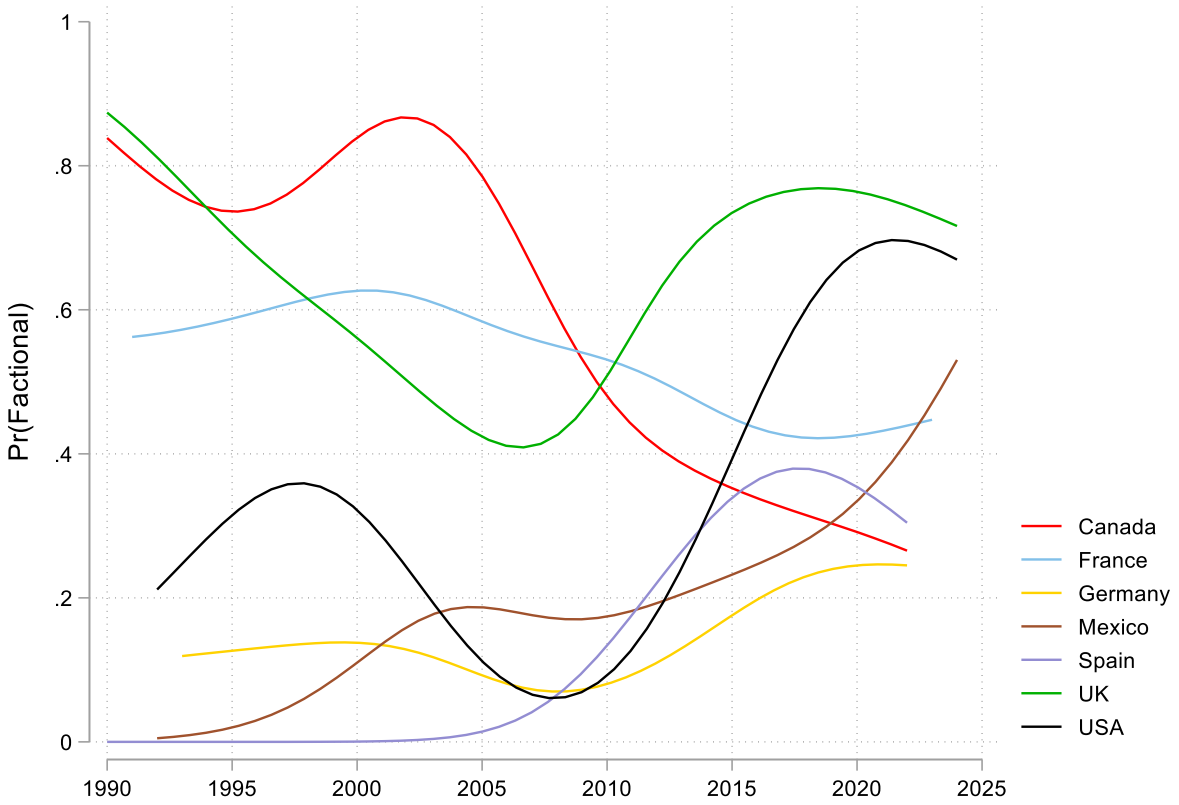
Figure A.1: Factional Conflict by Party Family



Results by Country

In Figure A.2, we show our trends by country. The plot shows mixed results, with some countries exhibiting a clear decline in the overall rate of factional conflict (e.g., Canada), some showing a general fluctuation (e.g., USA), and others showing an increase (e.g., Mexico, Spain). These diverse trends indicate that the overall trends observed in the main paper are not specific to any

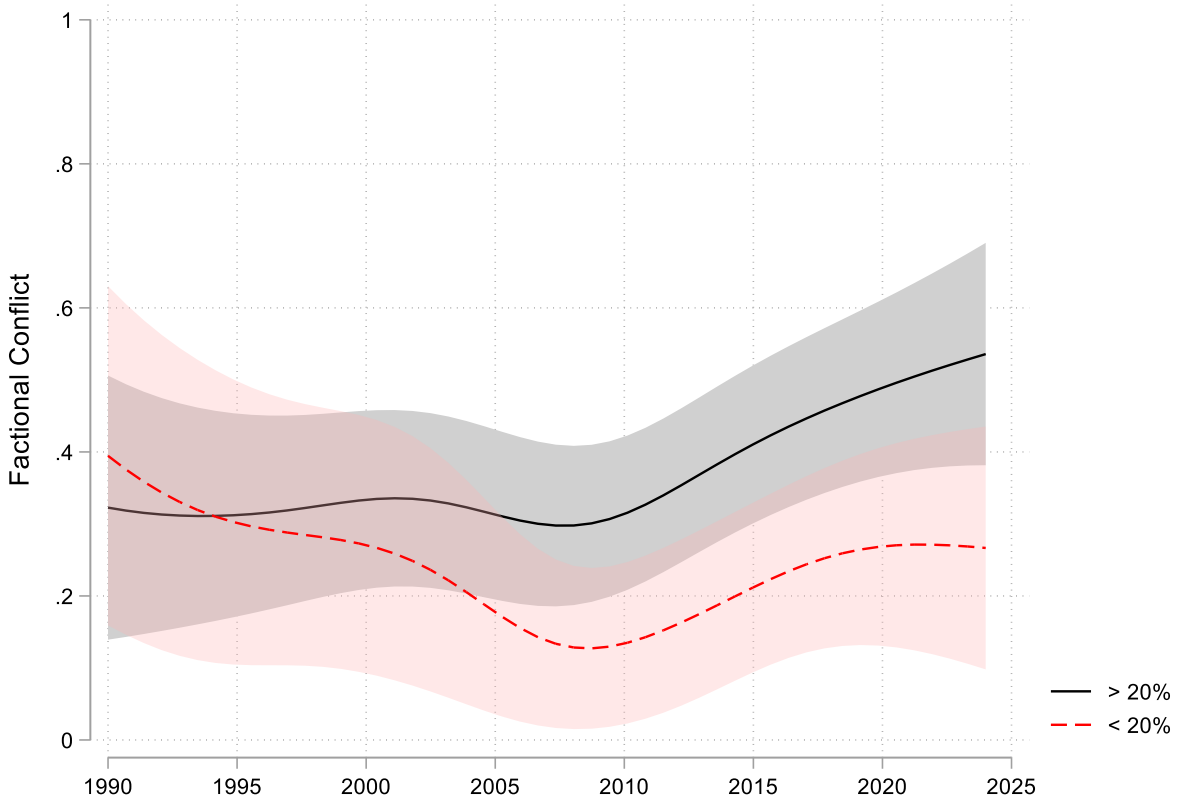
Figure A.2: Factionalism by Country



Results with Electoral Threshold

As a robustness check to our division of parties into mainstream and niche parties based on party family, we also present the results of an analysis segmented by whether parties received twenty percent of the vote share in the previous national election in Figure A.3. The results presented here broadly align with those in the main manuscript, with no difference between larger and smaller parties prior to around 2007 and then an emergent difference with larger parties becoming more factional thereafter.

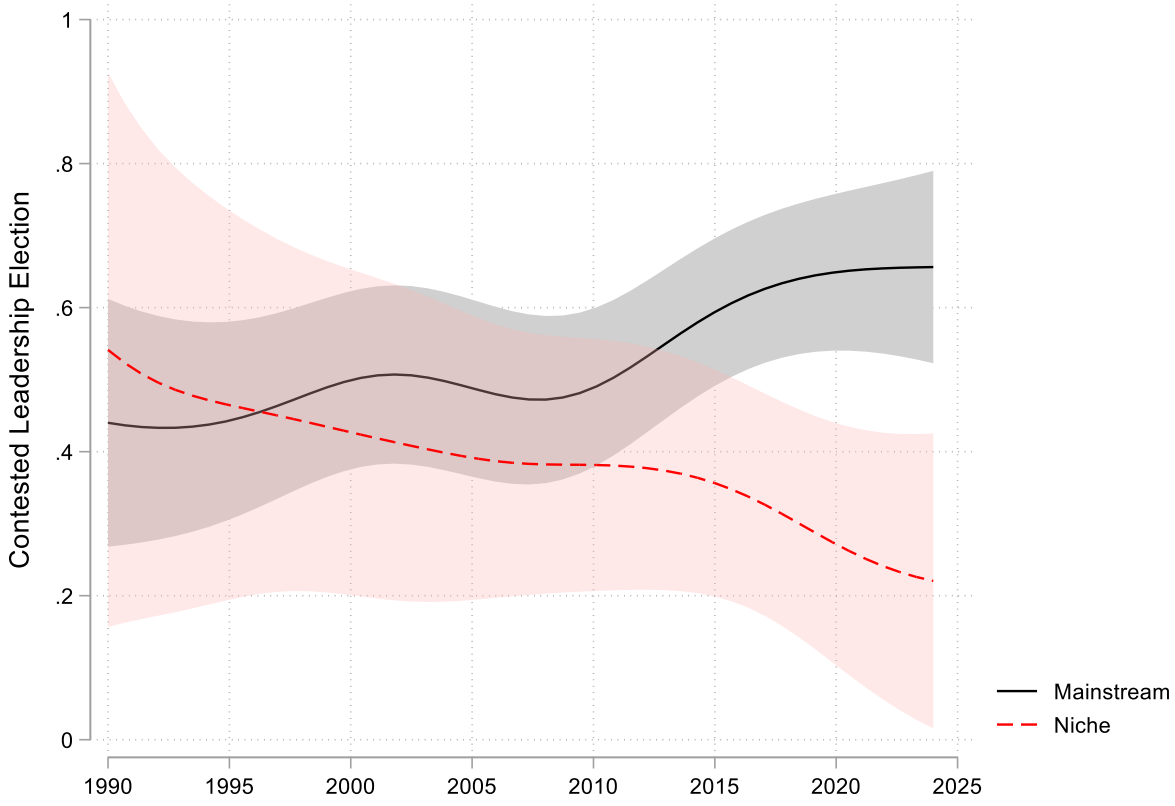
Figure A.3: Factional Conflict – 20% Vote Threshold



Contested Leadership Contest as DV

In Figure A.4, we show the rate of contested (rather than factional) leadership contests in mainstream and niche parties. Though these results somewhat align with those in the main manuscript, with an emergent gap between mainstream and niche parties' levels of factional conflict after 2008, we think that contested leadership contests are only a partial measure of intra-party conflict. Leadership contests happen for a wide array of reasons, and are often contested not between distinct factions within the party. Our goal with our measure of factionalism is to go beyond a simple measure of contested leadership elections, towards understanding why the leadership contest is being fought, what the patterns of intra-party support for the candidates are, and whether they have distinct policy positions. The diverging trends between mainstream and niche parties in our main manuscript are noticeably stronger than those observed here. Though, of course, contested leadership contests are also a partial indicator of intra-party factionalism.

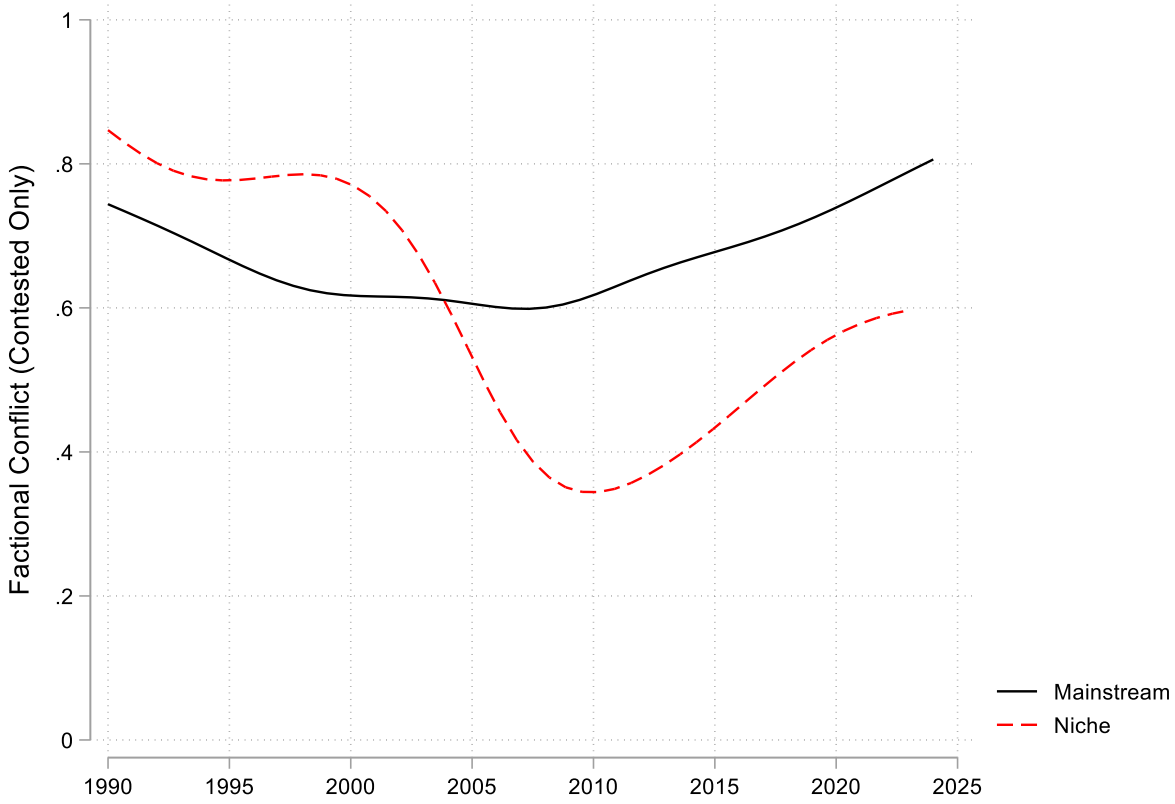
Figure A.4: Rate of Contested Leadership Contests



Factionalism in Contested Leadership Contests Only

In Figure A.5, we show the rate of factionalism in contested (rather than all) leadership contests in mainstream and niche parties. As discussed above we think that the presence of a contested leadership contest is itself a partial indicator of factional conflict in the party, meaning we present factional conflict as a percentage of all leadership contests in the main manuscript. Yet, we also want to show that similar trends hold if we subset these contests just to those contests that are contested. Of particular note here is the decline in factionalism in niche parties.

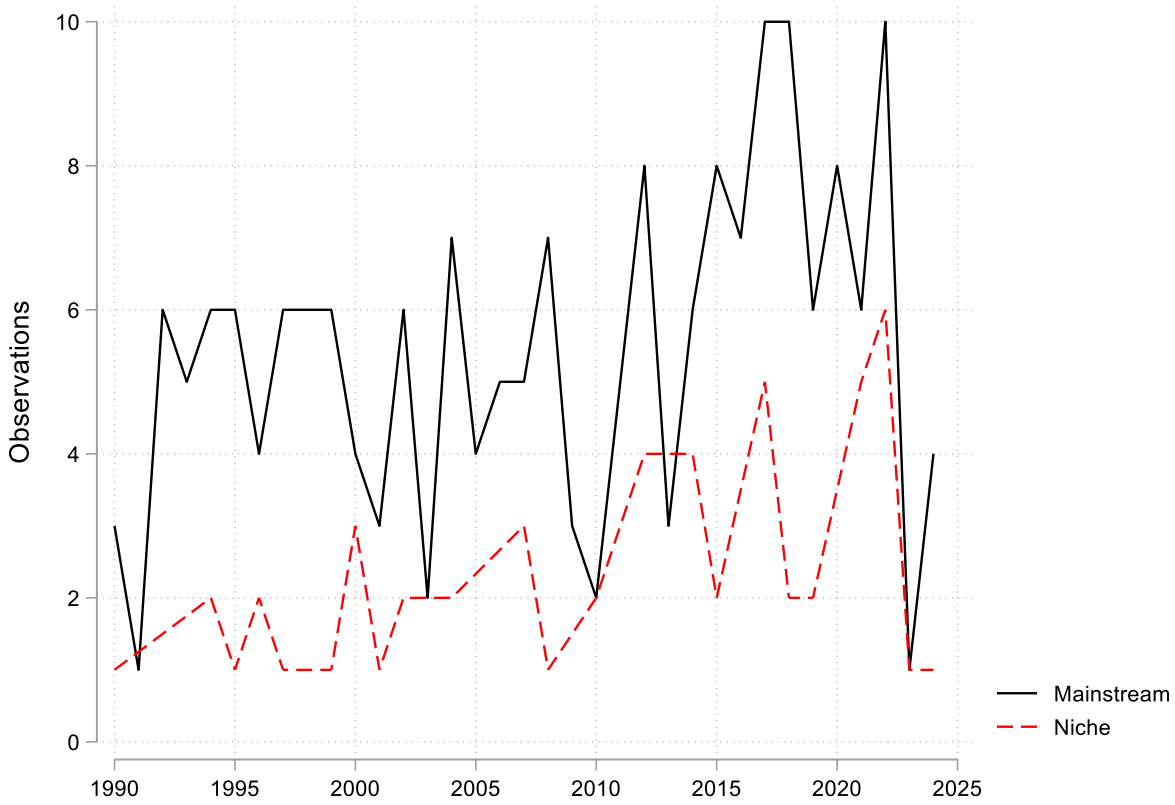
Figure A.5: Factional Conflict – Contested Leadership Contests Only



Observations per Year

In Figure A.6 we present the number of observations of mainstream and niche leadership contests per year. Throughout the period, we have more observations of mainstream party leadership contests compared to niche parties. This is particularly true in the 1990s, accounting for the wider confidence intervals shown in the figure in the main manuscript during this period.

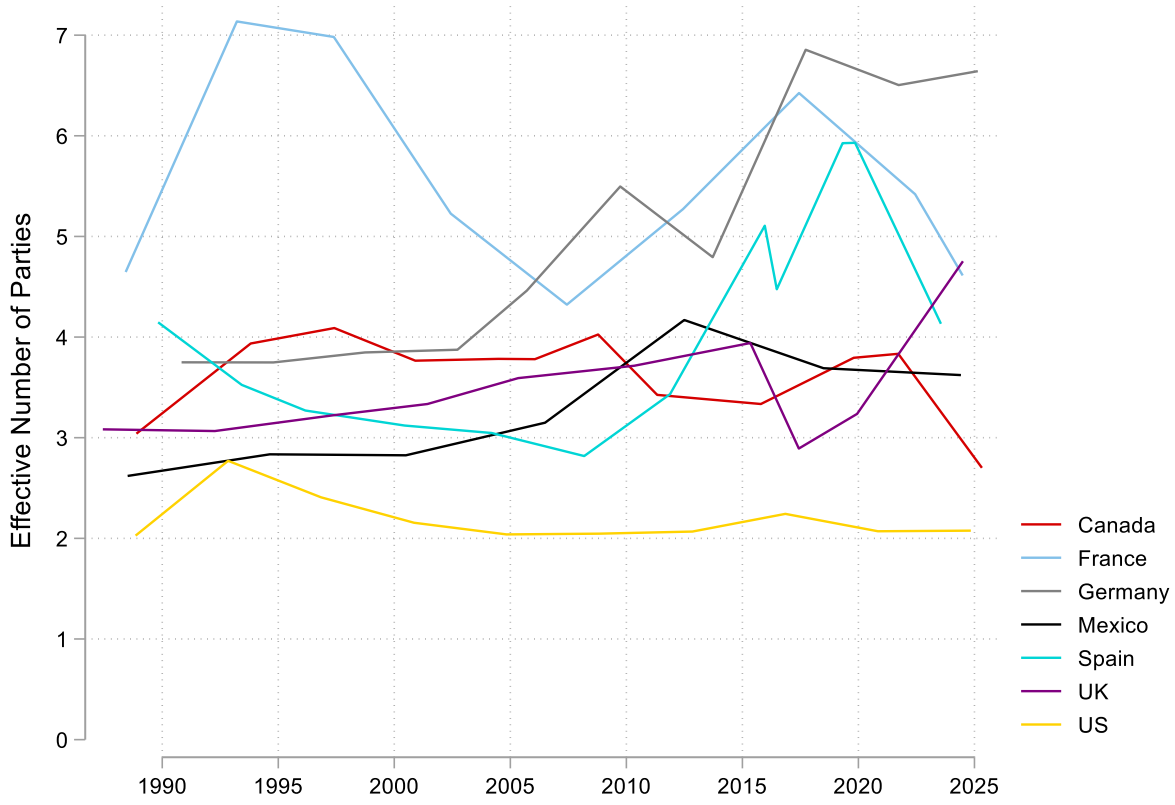
Figure A.6: Leadership Contests per Year



Effective Number of Parties

In Figure A.7 we show the effective number of parties in each of our countries following each national election. We follow the well-established literature to construct the measure, weighting parties by their share of the vote and applying Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) formula to calculate the effective number of electoral parties in each national election. We observe an upward trend in Germany, Mexico, Spain, and the UK during this period. In France, we see fluctuation likely connected to the merging of former parties. In Canada and the USA this trend is broadly flat. These patterns somewhat align with the country-level results shown in Figure A.2.

Figure A.7: Effective Number of Parties



Mainstream and Niche Parties

Following the definition of mainstream and niche parties outlined in the main text, we present the division of our thirty-one parties into these two groups in Table A.2.

Table A.2: List of Mainstream and Niche Parties

Mainstream	Niche
CDU/CSU	AfD
Ciudadanos	Bloc Quebecois
Conservatives (UK)	die Linke
Conservatives (Canada)	die Grünen
Democratic Party (US)	NDP
FDP	Podemos
Labour	RN
Liberal Democrats	SNP
Liberal Party (Canada)	Sumar
MORENA	Vox
PAN	
PP	
PRI	
PS	
PSOE	
RE	
Republican Party (US)	
The Republicans (France)	
SPD	

Qualitative Examination of Cases

Below, we present the qualitative examination of each of our cases, serving as the first step in our approach to identifying factional conflict.

United States

Party factions had long been seen as declining sites of power within both major parties in the United States, which were widely understood as becoming increasingly homogenous in an era of growing partisan polarization (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Theriault 2008). This narrative was upended by the emergence of the Tea Party on the right of the Republican Party in 2009. Since this time, the party has been riven with internal conflict over policy and personal fealty to the singular figure of Donald Trump. The Democratic Party has also been increasingly defined by internal factionalism, with a progressive faction that has grown in strength since Bernie Sanders's first run for president in 2016 (Malpas 2024). Given the strong two-party system in the United States, we include the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in our dataset.

The **Democratic Party** has been defined by a bifactional structure since at least the late 1960s, with a comparatively progressive faction emerging out of the "New Left" competing against a

more business-friendly center-left faction (Cowburn 2024b). In the early 1990s, the center-left grouping, organized around the New Democrats and the Democratic Leadership Committee, came to dominate the party. The 1992 presidential election of Bill Clinton, who had vowed to be a "different kind of Democrat" (quoted in Hale 1995, 232) and advocated for a reduced role of government once in power—"the era of big government is over" (Clinton 1996)—adopting market-oriented approaches, passing significant welfare reform, and signing international free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), against opposition from progressives within his party (DiSalvo 2012).

By the early 2000s, moderate groups had solidified control of the Democratic Party with the support of the DLC, which brought the once-conservative Blue Dog Democrats into their coalition in Congress (Thomsen 2017). In presidential nomination contests, the center-left establishment faction continued their dominance through the nomination of Al Gore in 2000[10] and supporting John Kerry against Howard Dean in 2004. Having spent the 1990s and early 2000s on the sidelines of the party, the progressive faction of the Democratic Party was re-energized following Dean's presidential campaign. The campaign's most important legacy was the founding of Democracy for America, which built grassroots support for progressives and served as a template for future organizations.

Following Dean's defeat, progressives successfully supported Barack Obama's candidacy in 2008, with minimal concern over his New Democrat policy positions and focused instead on broad messaging such as "Hope" and "Change We Can Believe In," and the image of a more inclusive America now willing to elect a Black president. Though most establishment Democrats supported Hillary Clinton in 2008, they were not openly hostile to Obama's candidacy, understanding that he was unlikely to pursue a progressive policy agenda. In 2016, establishment Democrats resolutely supported Clinton, perceiving Bernie Sanders' candidacy as significantly misaligned with their values and policy positions, and believing he would be unelectable to general election voters. Progressives perceived unfairness in the 2016 nomination process, which, when combined with the fallout from a general election defeat to "the most unpopular candidate in history" (Sanders, quote in Worley 2017), left the party deeply divided along ideological lines. Intra-party conflict was rife not only among party elites but also among the Democratic voter coalition (Pew Research Center 2017). The ideological cleavage between progressive and establishment candidates remained salient in the 2020 presidential primary, with opposition to Trump serving as the central unifying force. Once Biden was elected, progressives within the party continued to pressure him from the left (Hacker et al. 2024), particularly around issues such as Israel-Palestine.

Though the Democratic Party has been viewed as containing two, largely stable factions since the mid-twentieth century, the **Republican Party** has instead been characterized by a series of

[10] An election in which large numbers of progressive voters abandoned the party and voted for Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, likely determining the outcome in an election won by a razor-thin margin.

rightward insurgencies that have served to move the party rightward (Blum 2020; Blum and Cowburn 2024; Cowburn 2024a). Though the party contained liberals and conservatives in the mid-twentieth century, New Right conservative groups made consistent gains throughout the 1970s and 1980s such that by the 1990s, "The New Right became the governing establishment of the Republican Party" (Sin 2017, 35). As the Democratic Party adopted neoliberal economic policies under Clinton, social and moral issues, such as abortion, gay rights, and school prayer, became more salient (Hunter 1991). These cultural cleavages were accentuated by Newt Gingrich and the Republican majority in the House of Representatives following the party's landslide 1994 mid-term victory, and it reached a further height during Clinton's 1998 impeachment trial. The greater distance between the parties in the 1990s was largely a consequence of the congressional Republican Party solidifying around conservative ideology, with reduced intra-party distance and fewer moderate Republicans in Congress by the end of the decade.

Having been responsible for the party's successful 1994 midterms, conservatives remained ascendant in the Republican Party in the early years of the twenty-first century. Moderate Republicans in Congress became ever scarcer. At the presidential level, conservative Republicans supported the Bush–Cheney ticket in 2000, in no small part due to the vice-presidential candidate. The faction supported Bush's conservative positions on cultural and economic issues, though it disliked policies such as the No Child Left Behind education reforms (Greenstein 2003).

Challenges to traditional conservatives' dominance of the party emerged following the 2008 election of Barack Obama and the subsequent formation of the Tea Party movement—stemming from a combination of White[MC1] racial resentment over the nation's first Black president, and economic anxiety following the 2008 recession—further divided the party in Congress. The Tea Party apparatus helped "reactionary Republicans" enter and gain influence in Congress, and laid the groundwork for the election of Donald Trump (Gervais and Morris 2018). This faction gained control of formal organizations in Congress, such as the Republican Study Committee, which were previously the domain of establishment conservatives. Between 2006 and 2020, reactionaries went from being on the sidelines to the center of the Republican Party, further moving the party rightward.

The reactionary Republicans can be understood as explicitly ideological and to the right of establishment conservatives. As Skocpol and Williams wrote in The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism: "What distinguishes Tea Party supporters more precisely are their very right-wing views, even compared to other conservatives" (Skocpol and Williamson 2012). The rise of this faction can be understood as a re-emergence of a highly conservative tendency within the Republican Party dating back to the John Birch Society and sections of supporters of Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential bid (Skocpol and Williamson 2012, 78). These supporters had been at least somewhat neutralized by conservative successes, particularly in retaining the presidency, when, between 1980 and 2004, they won five of seven elections.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, establishment conservatives were commonly understood to have lost control of the party apparatus. By 2016, three of the leading candidates for the party's presidential nomination—Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio—were, to different degrees, aligned with this reactionary faction, reorienting the party rightward. Since 2016, Republican intra-party divisions at the elite and mass level have been primarily connected with proximity to Donald Trump, a figure who has come to singularly dominate the party (Blum, Cowburn, and Masket 2024).

The shifting position of Republican elites, with the adoption of policy positions further to the right, focus on cultural threats, use of overtly racist language, and open hostility toward the Democratic Party, has been the main driver of the decline in bipartisan activity in Congress (Mann and Ornstein 2012). Though progressives have gained a foothold in the Democratic Party through organizations like the Congressional Progressive Caucus (Thomsen 2017a), they have yet to dominate the party in the way that "insurgent" forces have been able to "capture" the Republican Party (Blum 2020). The movement of the Democratic Party to the left and, especially, the Republican Party to the right is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the evolution and salience of intra-party factions in the past thirty years.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom, like the United States, has long been classified as a two-party system with only the Conservative Party and the Labour Party able to win national elections and form a government in Westminster. Yet, unlike the US, the UK also contains several important smaller parties whose presence in the legislative chamber has important consequences for the contours of power. We therefore also include the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party in our dataset.

The **Conservative Party** has long been understood as having three main factions: traditionalists, one-nation conservatives, and free-market Thatcherites (Bale 2011). The party was dominated by one-nation conservatives until the leadership of Thatcher in 1979. One-nation conservatives prioritize institutions of state to help ensure social cohesion, with a willingness for government interventions that often leave them positioned to the left of the other factions in the party (Walsha 2003). 'New-right' free-market Thatcherites are economic liberals who support supply-side economic measures and the reduction in the size of the state (S. Evans 2014). Conservative traditionalists are often understood as being furthest to the right of the party and primarily focus on cultural issues around the family and the church (Garnett and Hickson 2013). The latter two groups are generally the most Eurosceptic, with the issue of Europe serving as an internal cleavage in the party for many decades (Philip Lynch and Whitaker 2013).

Following Thatcher's resignation in 1990, the Thatcherite John Major was selected as leader and prime minister in 1990, narrowly winning the 1992 general election, which many in the party expected to lose. Following the crushing defeat in 1997, William Hague continued the Thatcherite sway over the party before being replaced by Iain Duncan Smith in 2001. In both cases, the Thatcherite candidate defeated Ken Clarke, who received support from the one-nation conservative faction (Clarke 2016). Duncan Smith was soon perceived to be an ineffective leader and was replaced by Michael Howard, who was unopposed in 2003 but was widely understood to have been aligned with the one-nation conservatives. Following another electoral defeat in 2005, Howard was replaced by one-nation conservative David Cameron, who defeated the Thatcherite David Davis. Cameron's electoral successes were undone by the Leave victory in the 216 Brexit referendum, and he resigned the following day, having supported remain. He was replaced by Theresa May, who continued the one-nation path Cameron had set out, the traditionalist Andrea Leadsom was due to be her opponent, but pulled out before the vote. May's position as a remainer undermined her premiership, and she resigned in 2019.

Boris Johnson's ascendancy was seen by some as a return to the party's traditionalist roots (Saunders 2022). Though Johnson himself claimed that he embodied the one-nation faction (Parker 2014), one-nation conservatives rejected these claims and distanced him from the group (Heseltine 2019). Johnson's decisive 2019 election victory was attributed to a combination of clear Brexit policy and personal appeal that helped unite the party (Trehan 2019), yet his premiership was hampered by the partygate scandals that alienated him and eventually led to his resignation in 2022 (Rawnsley 2021). In his wake, a factional leadership contest was won by arch-Thatcherite Liz Truss, whose short-lived premiership pursued free market policies well to the right of Thatcher herself (Eaton 2022). Her resignation after just forty-nine days led the party to coalesce around the previously defeated Rishi Sunak, who attempted to implement a more moderate economic vision in the one-nation conservative mold while pursuing anti-immigrant policies as a way to appease those on his party's right (Crerar et al. 2024; Wickham 2024). In recent years, the once-stable Conservative Party factions appear to have become increasingly fragmented, with leaders such as Johnson and Truss not neatly fitting with the party's historical groupings. This trend has also aligned with a general drift rightward in the wake of the Brexit referendum, partly seen as a response to the electoral threat posed by parties associated with Nigel Farage (UKIP, the Brexit Party, Reform UK) on the right of the political spectrum (Hayton 2021).

Like many other center-left parties, the British **Labour Party** has long been said to contain two ideological factions, with a comparatively centrist faction of social democrats looking to make broad electoral appeals and a more leftist or progressive faction focused on transformational politics (Jacobs and Hindmoor 2024; Miliband 1961). Organizationally, the more moderate faction is embodied in the Tribune Group, Progress, and Labour First (Cowburn and Kerr 2023). These groups

are generally considered to be more pro-business and believe in competitive free markets to support social democracy as the central underpinning of 'Third Way' politics. Conversely, the faction further to the left receives support from organizations like The Campaign Group, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Momentum, and from unions such as Unite (Hannah 2018). These groups are more critical of the institutions of free market capitalism, particularly globalized financial systems, for their negative impact on inequality at both a global and national level (Cronin 2016). Progressives are also more inclined to prioritize marginalized groups, whereas moderates may be more reluctant to engage in perceived "identity politics" on electoral grounds for fear that they may alienate traditional supporters (Denham and Devine 2018; Hayhurst 2020).

In the 1990s, Labour moved towards the center under the leadership of first John Smith, and then Tony Blair, whose Third Way project rebranded the party as New Labour, with the adoption of a new version of Clause IV abandoning the socialist principles of the original text, seen as evidence of the move to the center. Blair's Third Way politics helped the party win elections in 1997, 2001, and 2005, enabling the center-left to dominate the party throughout this period. Progressives rebelled on some key issues, most notably the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, which saw Robin Cook and Clare Short resign from the cabinet on principle (Cook 2007; Short 2003), and some members of this faction, such as John Prescott, remained key figures in the Third Way era. Following Blair's resignation in 2007, he was succeeded by his long-time chancellor Gordon Brown. After the 2010 electoral defeat, Ed Miliband (soft-left) defeated his brother David (Third Way) in a leadership bid that primarily drew support from trade union affiliates (2010 Labour Party leadership election (UK) 2024).

Following the 2015 defeat, Miliband resigned and, helped by new leadership selection rules, leftwing Jeremy Corbyn defeated three more moderate opponents. Corbyn's leadership connected directly to party supporters and was not well received among the parliamentary party, as evidenced by the internal leadership challenge of Owen Smith in 2016, which Corbyn survived, his position was further strengthened by the party's performance in 2017, in which the party received forty percent of the vote and resulted in a hung parliament. Following the crushing electoral defeat in 2019—blamed on a combination of Corbyn and Brexit (Goes 2020)—the 2020 leadership election again revealed a party rife with factionalism, with those on the party's left supporting Rebecca Long-Bailey's unsuccessful campaign as Kier Starmer became party leader (Proctor 2020). Though Starmer initially campaigned on a platform of continuing much of the Corbyn-era manifestos, he quickly turned against the left, in particular by framing his response to accusations of antisemitism as evidence that the party was "under new management" (Stafford 2024). Corbyn himself was kicked out of the party, amid accusations of a 'purge' by Starmer with many left-leaning candidates deselected shortly before the 2024 election (Stacey, Crerar, and Stewart 2024), and seven progressive MPs having the whip removed in the early weeks of the Starmer government (Francis and Eardley

2024). The general trend of the Labour Party, particularly since 2015, is of deepening factionalism. In this increasingly hostile intra-party atmosphere (the threat of) candidate selection has been a weapon that both factions have been increasingly willing to deploy (Grew 2018; Quinn 2024).

The **Liberal Democrats** can be broadly understood as containing both a free market center-right faction that promotes economic liberalism and a center-left socially liberal faction that has been dominant for most of the party's history. Organizationally, the social liberal faction is coordinated in the Social Liberal Forum and the Beveridge Group. The center-right faction was embodied in the Liberal Reform group and, more recently, through the "Orange Book" group that went on to provide three of the party's leaders.

Throughout the 1990s, the party pursued center-left policies under the leadership of Paddy Ashdown with closer cooperation with the more centrist Labour Party. The relationship between Ashdown and Blair, dubbed 'The Project', gave way to the possibility of formal electoral cooperation, which failed to materialize due to Blair's landslide victory in 1997 (Wager and Bale 2019). Ashdown resigned in 1999 and was replaced by Charles Kennedy, who continued to pursue a center-left agenda, distancing the party from New Labour over the Iraq War. In 2006, the party again selected a leader from the center-left faction in the form of Menzies Campbell, broadly seen as an ineffective leader, and was constantly plagued by questions about his age (Brady 2007).

As a result, the party had another leadership contest in 2007, which was won by the much younger and more charismatic Nick Clegg. Clegg came from the party's center-right market liberal faction, which had been increasing its internal power since the publication of The Orange Book (Marshall and Laws 2004), which featured chapters by Clegg, Vince Cable, and Ed Davey, all of whom would go on to lead the party. The party's internal division can be understood as increasing in intensity during this period, with the center-left faction responding directly to the market liberals (Brack et al. 2007). Following a strong performance in the 2010 general election, Clegg agreed to enter a coalition with the Conservative Party (Bale 2012).

Entering the coalition further fractured the party ideologically and damaged its standing with supporters. Though Clegg and the center-right faction felt comfortable working with the Conservatives, most party members still came from the socially liberal faction, and many voters had been attracted by policies such as the promise to end tuition fees (Atkins 2020; Butler 2021). When the coalition instead implemented economic austerity following the 2008 recession and tripled tuition fees, the center-left majority in the party was left deeply dissatisfied, and the party lost almost all of its seats in 2015.

The flurry of leadership elections that followed reflected the ongoing factional battle of how to respond to this electoral defeat even as the issue of Brexit served as a unifying force, with Tim Farron (center-left, 2015), Vince Cable (center-right, 2017), Jo Swinson (center-left, 2019), and Ed Davey (center-right, 2020) leading the party. Davey's more conciliatory tone with his party's center-

left and targeted opposition to the Conservative government contributed to the party's historic performance in the 2024 election (Walker 2024).

Two dimensions of factional conflict persist within the **Scottish National Party** (SNP). Given that the party is united by a shared desire to see Scotland leave the United Kingdom, wide ideological differences exist within the party, ranging from the center-right to the left of the traditional political spectrum, though most members of the party are left-of-center and conflict is primarily between the center-left and left groupings (Peter Lynch 2013). A secondary dimension of intra-party conflict relates to the pace of change and the approach to achieving independence, with gradualists favoring a slower transition away from the Union and fundamentalists preferring an immediate exit (Peter Lynch 2013). These cleavages can therefore be said to be centered around both policy and strategy, and though those further to the left ideologically generally favor a quicker exit, these dimensions are not completely aligned.

Since the 1990s, the center-left gradualist faction has been dominant, winning all seven party leadership contests during this period. Since 1990, the party has only had four leaders, all of whom were aligned to this faction: Alex Salmond (1990–2000; 2004–2014),[11] John Swinney (2000–2004; 2024–present), Nicola Sturgeon (2014–2023), and Humza Yousaf (2023–2024). In the 1990s, these victories came against the party's fundamentalist faction (Seenan and MacAskill 1999). More recent election victories have come against the party's center-right faction, who were particularly incensed by the party's progressive legislation on transgender rights and gender self-identification (Gender Recognition Reform Bill), which was later blocked by the UK government in Westminster (Walker and Brooks 2023).

Germany

Germany is a multi-party democracy, and we include all parties that entered the national legislature (Bundestag) during our period of analysis. We therefore include the center-right Union parties, the center-left SPD, the liberal FDP, the Greens, and the parties of the left (die Linke) and right (AfD).

The **Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich-Soziale Union Bayern** (CDU/CSU), or **Union** parties have long contained two factions based on economic positioning. The economically further-right faction is embodied in the Parlamentskreis Mittelstand in the Bundestag and the Mittelstandsvereinigung in the wider party. The comparatively moderate Arbeitnehmerflügel pursues center-right economic policies. Since 2017, these longstanding economic factions have been supplemented by aligned cultural groups, with the socially conservative Werteunion initially competing with the more liberal Union der Mitte (Sältzer 2020). The Werteunion then split away in early 2024 (Right-wing faction of Germany's conservatives form splinter party

[11] Salmond was previously a member of the further-left gradualist faction the 79 Group which moved the party leftwards during the 1980s before disbanding. His leadership of the party largely aligned with the center-left however.

2024). These groups largely align along a single ideological dimension, meaning we can consider conflict as primarily existing between center-right and right-wing party factions. A further source of intra-party conflict emerges in the form of positional and organizational differences between the Bavarian CSU and the Germany-wide (not Bavaria) CDU. The CSU is widely considered to be more conservative than the CDU, and this tension is particularly visible when the center-right CDU faction is ascendant. One such example of this tension came following Chancellor Angela Merkel's response to the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015, with many CSU politicians publicly criticizing the party's position. When these tensions become particularly visible, public debates about whether the CSU should establish itself as a national party often follow (CDU, CSU und der Bundestagswahlkampf 2017; Graw 2017).

The Union is sometimes seen as Germany's 'default' party of government, having only been in opposition for two relatively short periods (1998–2005; 2021–present) since the early 1980s. For most of the period since the 1990s, the center-right faction has maintained control of the party leadership. The chancellorship of Helmut Kohl delivered German Reunification, seen within the party as a validation of center-right politics and policies, bolstering the party and country against further-right forces (Bornschier 2012; Helms 2000). In response to the electoral defeat of 1998, the party's right-wing faction gained internal power, and its preferred candidate, Edmund Stoiber (CSU) was selected as the candidate for chancellor in 2001.

Following another electoral defeat, factional conflicts continued with the center-right Angela Merkel becoming the parliamentary group leader in 2002 instead of the right-wing Friedrich Merz through an agreement with Stoiber dubbed the Wolfratshauser Frühstück (Wolfratshauser Frühstück 2024). Merkel's electoral successes returned the party to government in 2005, and her high approval ratings and perceived strong leadership helped the center-right reassert internal control and moved the party towards the center (Kampfner 2024). Merkel's handling of the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015 prompted significant backlash from the right both inside and outside of the party and was a key driver of the formation of the Werteunion in 2017 (Galkowski 2020). The selections of center-right Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (2018) and Armin Laschet (2021) as party chairs and, in the case of Laschet, as the candidate for chancellor, were seen as further evidence of the center-right's hold over the party. Having stood and lost every party chair nomination contest since 2002, the right-wing Friedrich Merz finally became the party chair in 2022, with the party again in opposition. Under his leadership, the party has moved significantly to the right on both economic and social issues (Kampfner 2024).

As in the British Labour Party, the **Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands** (SPD) contains a more progressive left and a moderate center-left faction. Organizationally, the progressive left coalesces in the Parlamentarische Linke and Demokratische Linke 21, and it receives significant support from the party's youth wing, Jusos. The center-left faction coalesces around the Seeheimer

Kreis and Netzwerk Berlin (Cowburn and Kerr 2023). The differences in positions between the groups can be understood as both economic and cultural, with the Seehimer Kreis to the right on economic and social issues, Netwerk Berlin to the right on economic matters but more left on social issues, and the Parliamentarische Linke to the left on both dimensions (Bernauer and Bräuninger 2009).

As in other center-left parties in consolidated democracies, the party's more moderate faction has been largely ascendant in recent decades. The party moved rightward in the late 1990s, away from the leftist worldview of Oskar Lafontaine towards the Third Way politics of Gerhard Schröder, who was elected chancellor in 1998. The party leadership contests that preceded Schröder tended to be fought on factional grounds; the party largely coalesced around center-left candidates such as Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Sigmar Gabriel, and Martin Schulz in leadership elections for party chair or chancellor candidate in the twenty-first century.

This broad agreement among elites was not always well received by those on the party's left. In response to the Agenda 2010 reforms to welfare and labor relations, the separatist group Arbeit & soziale Gerechtigkeit – Die Wahlalternative (WASG) formed and broke away from the party, later joining with Die Linke (see below) (Schnelle 2007). Notably, when the party chairs were elected by the members in 2018, the leftists Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans defeated the center-left candidates Klara Geywitz and Olaf Scholz, an outcome seen as connecting the leadership back to the further-left preferences of ordinary members (Cliffe 2019) in a manifestation of May's law (May 1973). Other controversial issues for the party's progressive faction included the Hartz IV reforms to unemployment benefits and the expropriation of private companies for public benefit (Knight 2019).

The **Alliance 90/Die Grünen** (die Grünen) has also long been held to contain two factions, divided primarily over the purpose of the party but with an aligned ideological dimension. The Fundis (fundamentalists) see the role of the party as primarily a social movement whose function is to pressure governing parties to adopt legislation in different areas, most obviously in terms of environmental and climate change policy. Conversely, the Realos (realists) want to govern and work with the SPD to implement incremental changes in these areas. In terms of policy positions, the Realos are more moderate and promote the idea of ecologically sustainable growth, whereas the Fundis largely dismiss the notion of economic growth due to its impact on the environment.

In the 1990s, the conflict between the Fundis and Realos defined the party. Having been founded out of the anti-nuclear and environmental movement in 1980, many Fundis—also known as deep greens or dark greens—continued to see their function as an external pressure group, whereas Realos, such as Joschka Fischer, wanted to work with the SPD. The party's entrance into the coalition government as the junior partner to the SPD in 1998 was seen as the final victory for the Realos (Kade 2016). Since this time, the Realo approach to entering governing has become broadly accepted, and the remaining divisions are around ideology rather than methods, often along regional lines, with the party in West German states such as Baden-Würtemburg more centrist and those in

the former East further to the left (Viatkin 2020). Though further left politicians such as Claudia Roth and Angelika Beer have held leadership positions in the twenty-first century, the party has largely been dominated by center-left Realos such as Annelena Baerbock and Robert Habeck, who hold key ministries in the Greens' second national coalition government (2021–present, with the SPD and FDP).

The **Freie Demokratische Partei** (FDP) was the kingmaker in coalition governments with either the Union or the SPD until the late 1990s (Patton 2015). Consequently, the party contained a socially liberal center-left faction (Freiburger Kreis) that favored coalitions with the SPD, and a market liberal center-right wing (Liberaler Mittelstand) that preferred coalitions with the CDU/CSU. The emergence of die Grünen as an alternative coalition partner on the center-left from 1998 onwards helped the market liberal faction gain ascendancy within the FDP (Bukow 2019). The market liberal faction promotes pro-business (right) on economic issues but liberal—even libertarian—social policies that promote state non-intervention. The party's focus on tax reduction and deregulation positions it to the right of the CDU/CSU on economic issues (Franzmann 2015) but to the left of the SPD on cultural issues such as gay marriage (Bukow 2019). The almost complete dominance of the market liberals, albeit with some concessions to social liberal policies, means that the FDP is perhaps the only German party that has become less factional in the modern era.

Die Linke (the left) formed when the WASG split from the SPD (see above) and merged with the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS) in 2007. The PDS was a left-wing party that was the legal successor to the East German Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED). As a result, the party has long been internally fractured, with some parts holding more traditional or old left positions, and others more progressive or reform-oriented. The traditional left faction is supported by a combination of the Kommunistische Plattform, Antikapitalistische Linke, Marxistische Forum, and Geraer Dialog/Sozialistischer Dialog. Some of the organizations have been labeled as extremist by the federal constitutional court due to their unwillingness to accept the German Basic Law (Verfassungschutzbericht 2018). The reform-oriented faction is supported organizationally by Sozialistische Linke, Bewegungslinke, Emanzipatorische Linke,[12] and Netzwerk Reformlinke. One source of conflict between these factions is the willingness to recognize their predecessor's role in the East German government and, by extension, relations with extreme and anti-democratic groups (Verfassungschutzbericht 2009). These factions also have an ideological component, with the traditional left more willing to embrace Marxism.

These longstanding intra-party divisions came to a head following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Though most of the party supported sanctions on Russia, a significant minority coalesced around Sahra Wagenknecht to oppose these measures (Oltermann 2022). This division can be

[12] *Emanzipatorische Linke* is sometimes identified as being between the two factions.

understood as a continuation of the longstanding split between "progressive" supporters who are either middle class or from more diverse backgrounds and therefore more willing to engage with topics such as intersectionality and social justice, and the party's traditional working-class supporters whom Wagenknecht now appeals to on economic grounds. Wagenknecht and nine other MPs left the party in October 2023 to form a new party, Büdnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW). The BSW received 6.2% of the vote in the European elections in June 2024 (more than double that of die Linke), attracting voters from the SPD, Linke, and AfD (Holzhauser 2024).

Since the emergence of the **Alternative für Deutschland** (AfD) in 2013, the party has contained a longstanding division into two distinct factions (Knight 2023). Conceived initially as a conservative party and organized around the ideas of economics professor Bernd Lucke and journalist Konrad Adam in 2013, the party focused on an anti-European economic agenda with economic policies targeting CDU/CSU voters who disliked increasing integration and believed that Germany would be required to support other countries (Petersdorff 2013). At the founding meeting in Oberursel in Hessen, the party was named in response to then-Chancellor Merkel's statement that euro rescue was "without alternative" (Jahn 2013). Since this time, this faction of the AfD has been pre-eminent in former West Germany, primarily advocating neoliberal economic policies such as pension privatization, abolition of the national minimum wage, and the lowering of income taxes (Moll 2021). More recently, this faction has often been associated with the ideas of Jörg Meuthen—another former West German economics professor and now an MEP—who resigned as party leader in 2022 following intra-party disagreements with extremists (Pittelkow, Riedel, and Schmidt 2022).

This largely West German faction of professors (Professorenpartei) has frequently come into intra-party conflict with the more extreme Wing (Der Flügel). Der Flügel heralded[13] mainly hailed from former East Germany and served as the coordinating force for the party's far-right. Rather than focus on neoliberal economic policy, this faction instead advocates anti-capitalist views on economic issues, a greater focus on far-right social issues such as the need for ethnic homogeneity, and closer collaboration with far-right movement politics. Key figures in this faction include the chief of the party's parliament group in Thuringia, Björn Höcke, Brandenburg Landtag leader Andreas Kalbitz, and Saxon Bundestag MP Tino Chrupalla.[14] Differences between the factions are therefore rooted in policy differences, geography, class,[15] and strategy.

[13] The organizational apparatus of *Der Flügel* was officially disbanded in 2020, yet evidence indicates that the faction remains co-ordinated.

[14] Saxony-Anhalt party chairman André Poggenburg was also associated with this faction untl leaving the party in 2019.

[15] *Der Flügel* have been derisiveley referred to as the 'sweatpants wing' (Löer 2021).

Spain

The decade following the financial crisis saw both the increasing factionalization of established parties and the emergence of new, electorally successful, parties in Spain. We include the traditional mainstream parties, the center-right Partido Popular that grew out of an amalgamation of conservative and pro-Franco forces and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español, one of Europe's oldest socialist parties that was reconstituted during Spain's late 1970s democratic transition after existing in greatly diminished form in exile. We also include several newer parties: the centrist Ciudadanos, far-right Vox, and far-left Podemos and its erstwhile left coalition entitled Sumar. All were founded after the 2008 financial crisis, save for Ciudadanos, which was founded just before.

The **Partido Socialista Obrero Español** (PSOE) began the 1990s as the governing party in Spain. Its reformist, moderate renovadores faction dominated against a marginalized Marxist izquierda socialista faction representative of the party's pre-exile past (Gillespie 1995; Kennedy 2013; Verge and Gomez 2012). The party leader, Felipe González Márquez, from the early 1980s to 1996, belonged to the renovadores (Verge and Gomez 2012). Politically, the party continued pursuing economic liberalization that it had begun in the 1980s and antagonizing trade unions to make the country internationally competitive on labor to quell extremely high unemployment. During this period, PSOE also possessed ambiguous views toward Spanish ascension to NATO and pursued a hardline strategy against Basque separatists (Kennedy 2013). Especially, these economic issues exacerbated factional divisions. Throughout the 1990s, the position of the left guerrista faction fell in the PSOE: it was removed from the PSOE government in 1993 and minimized at the party's congress four years later (Kennedy 2013; Verge and Gomez 2012). At this 1997 congress, Joaquín Almunia won the party leader selection, continuing the moderate faction's dominance.

The PSOE was out of government between 1996 and 2004. In 2000, the party chose José Rodríguez Zapatero as its leader, now leading the moderate faction under the name of Nueva Via or the "new way" in mild emulation of the dominance of "Third-Wayism" in other social-democratic parties and in recognition of a generational shift within the party (Kennedy 2013). PSOE's next period in government from 2004 to 2011 had relatively muted factional divides as it pursued economic and social liberalization (including legalizing gay marriage). The party's response to the financial crisis of increased austerity ignited some disputes within the party, and there were pronounced internal divisions at a spontaneous party conference in 2011 (Hopkin 2020). After the party lost the 2011 election, it selected another moderate, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, as party leader. In a 2014 party congress held following party losses in the European election, Pedro Sánchez won the leadership. He, too, is a moderate, although in more recent years has moved in a more left direction. In 2016, there was factional disagreement over whether the party should join a center-right PP government. That year also saw a broader party crisis with significant resignations, including Sánchez's (Lancaster

2017). Subsequently, an oficialistas faction in favor of returning Sánchez to party leadership formed while a faction of "Critics" opposed the move. Sánchez remains party leader today.

The **Partido Popular**, rebranded as such in 1989 as part of an ideological pivot to the center in a bid to become electorally successful, weathered the 1990s with minimal factional disagreement (Alonso and Field 2021; Verge and Gomez 2012). This shift proved successful: the party won the 1996 election with a plurality of the vote and an outright majority in 2000. Its leader from 1989 to 2004 was José María Aznar, affiliated with the moderate faction (Alonso and Field 2021). PP's economic agenda of continuing economic liberalization and privatization of public companies, begun by the PSOE, earned broad party agreement. However, there was some factional and regional disagreement over anti-terrorism measures and increases in Basque autonomy. Out of governance after 2004, the PP won again in 2011, implementing further austerity measures (Hopkin 2020) and with factional divides over devolution to greater regional autonomy that eventually led to a splinter of the new party, Vox, out of the PP. Most of its leadership contests in this period were essentially "coronations" (Barberà et al. 2014).

The greater success of the liberal party Ciudadanos after 2015 inspired the PP's movement to the ideological center around 2015, while right-wing Vox's subsequent success inspired conservative policy movement and an alliance between the PP and Vox in local elections. Moving in a nationalist direction throughout his tenure, Mariano Rajoy was party leader from 2004 till 2017. The PP was rocked by corruption scandals and a vote of no confidence in the prime minister Rajoy in 2018. He also resigned as party leader, replaced by Pablo Casado of the party's conservative faction in a divided party (EDITORIAL 2018; Lucas 2018). That same year, PP allied with Vox for local elections. The party's internal chaos and newfound competition with both Ciudadanos toward the center and Vox on the right increased the salience of ideological factions within the party (Alonso and Field 2021). In 2022, Alberto Núñez Feijóo won the party leader contest, restoring a relative moderate to the party's helm (Lamet 2023). Since then, there has been weak factional disagreement over the role of the Church in Spanish public life.

The smaller Spanish parties have shorter histories. **Ciudadanos** was founded in 2006 as a liberal party in opposition to Catalan autonomy, and it first entered parliament in 2015 (Alonso and Field 2021). Since then, the party's increasing economic and social conservatism has provoked some factional disagreement over a retreat from its prior commitment to civil liberties. Alberto Rivera, a moderate, was the party's leader from its foundation until steep electoral losses in 2020. He was replaced by Inés Arrimadas, who is aligned with the party's conservatives.

Vox was founded in 2013 as an offshoot of the PP, first winning parliamentary seats in 2019. Its motivating issue was restricting regional nationalisms and recentralizing power in Spain that had been devolved to autonomous communities (Hopkin 2020). It gained significant electoral support following the Catalan independence crisis in 2017 (Alonso and Field 2021). Its leader since inception

has been Santiago Abascal. In the 2020s, as the party's electoral and legislative clout grew, an emergent factional divide grew too. One espouses more economically liberal positions and is more focused on economic than cultural issues. Abascal is now affiliated with this faction. The other draws on the Franco era Falangist, quasi-fascist movement, emphasizing cultural and religious issues (Colom 2024; Galaup 2023).

Podemos began in 2014 against the intense austerity measures implemented by both mainstream parties in response to Spain's debt crisis (Hopkin 2020). Co-founder of the party, Pablo Iglesias, led it from 2014 to 2021. He was a polarizing figure within the party: in 2016, Podemos had three factions: the pablistas who backed Iglesias, errejonistas who supported a more populist competitor Íñigo Errejón, and anticapitalistas, a left current that predated Podemos but had recently joined the party (Chazel and Fernández Vázquez 2020; Lourenço, Conceição, and Jalali 2024). Most of their disagreement was over internal party organization and personalistic power within it, not programmatic (Biancalana and Vittori 2021; Lourenço, Conceição, and Jalali 2024). After the 2019 elections, Podemos joined a coalition government led by PSOE. There were some divides within the party over European Union and NATO membership, with a majority favoring Europe but wanting Spain to withdraw from NATO. From 2021 onward, its leader is Ione Belarra. From 2016 onward, Podemos was part of an electoral coalition with other minor left parties called Unidos (then Unidas) Podemos. In 2022, a new left coalition **Sumar,** replaced it. Since then, it has been led by Yolanda Díaz. This coalition has yet to experience major factional conflict, although its various left constituent parties have diverging views on foreign and economic policy. Podemos left Sumar at the end of 2023.

France

We include four French parties in our investigation. On the center-right, this is the succession of parties and alliances that began with the Rassemblement pour la République (founded in 1976) and Union pour la Démocratie Française (founded as an alliance in 1978 and party in 1998), joined the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire in 2002, and became Les Républicains in 2015. On the center-left, this is the Parti Socialiste (PS), which was renamed such in 1969 from a socialist party begun in 1905. These were the dominant political parties in France from before our analysis began in 1990 until 2017. We also include the two other parties that have held the presidency or made it to the second-round elections since the electoral implosion of those traditional parties. These are the liberal party, first known as En Marche and now Renaissance (RE), and the Rassemblement National (RN), previously Front National.

In the 1990s, the center-right party was **Rassemblement pour la République** (RPR)—or Rally for the Republic. From its founding until 1994, moderate Jacques Chirac was the party leader (Fougier 2012). After the party's electoral alliance won the 1993 legislative elections, Chirac did not want to return to being prime minister cohabiting with the Socialist president. Édouard

Balladur, with more economically liberal and socially conservative positions, took the post instead (Fougier 2012). In 1995, Chirac won the presidential election. To promote his reelection in 2002, the party joined the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire along with the centrist Union pour la Démocratie Française and Démocratie Libérale.

The **Union pour la Démocratie Française** (UDF) participated with the Rassemblement pour la République in the Assembly in the 1990s. UDF members were split between two RPR presidential candidates in 1995, as the alliance failed to field its own. François Léotard became the leader in 1996 over further right Alain Madelin. In 1998, the UDF became a proper party. François Bayrou was selected as leader in 1998 without competition. In 2002, the UDF joined the UMP.

The **Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)** combined parties of different families with competing views, especially on issues pertaining to European integration: members suggested formal recognition of factions, although these remained unofficial for another decade (Cole 2003). Following Philippe Séguin's leadership between 1997 and 2002, Alain Juppé, of the moderate Chirac faction, was the party's leader until he resigned in 2004 after the party sustained poor electoral performances in both regional French and EU elections. Nicolas Sarkozy succeeded him as party leader. In 2007, Sarkozy became the party's presidential candidate, aiming to make it internally unified (Fougier 2012; Smith 2016); his abdicated party leader position was filled by interim leader Jean-Claude Gaudin. The party suffered losses in the 2011 legislative elections and lost the presidency in 2012.

This loss triggered the rise of factionalism within the party, which had moved right in a number of issue domains emphasized by further right parties while Sarkozy was president (Fougier 2012; Cole 2003). The 2012 party congress was the first time that factions of various ideological stripes were formally organized within the party, and "movements" on policy issues were recognized (Cole 2003; Fabre 2024). The leadership contest was between Jean-François Copé, a right-wing neo-Gaullist candidate supported by party activists, and François Fillon, a more moderate former prime minister with support from the mainstream of the party (Crumley 2012). Copé narrowly won, suggesting the implementation of primaries to determine the party's next presidential candidate in part in response to the party's factionalism. In 2014, Copé resigned as UMP leader amid a party crisis of overlapping scandals pertaining to spying, corruption, and previously hidden debts that ended with Sarkozy in prison. Sarkozy subsequently returned to the party leader.

In 2015, the party changed its name to **Les Républicains**, a move not without broader political controversy. Sarkozy was the rebranded party's first leader, followed by Laurent Wauquiez, who served with a brief abrogation when there was no party leader between 2016 and 2019. In 2017, the party did historically badly for the center-right in the legislative elections and did not make it past the first round in the presidential election. Christian Jacob became party leader in 2019, replacing an interim leader. These leaders have all been on the right of the party. That year, the

party maintained its majority in the Senate. From 2022 until present, Éric Ciotti served as party leader, steering it in a more right direction. In the 2024 snap legislative elections, he expressed support for an electoral alliance with the Rassemblement National. He was expelled from the party for his willingness to break the party's historic separation from the far right, before being reinstated after a judicial challenge (Controversial right-wing party leader Eric Ciotti announces his re-election in parliamentary elections 2024). This episode provoked intense internal divides.

The **Parti Socialiste** began the 1990s holding the presidency. The party had moderated their economic agenda prior to François Mitterand's last election, pursuing European integration over some of their traditional economic priorities. At the 1990 party congress, the pro-Mitterand forces in the party were split over the candidacies of Lionel Jospin and Laurent Fabius, the latter of whom was further left (J. A. J. Evans 2003). Jospin won; in 1992, Fabius became party leader. Shortly thereafter, a left segment broke off from the party over the Gulf War and Maastricht Treaty, in an extreme form of factionalism (Evans 2003). After the party lost a sizeable number of seats in the 1993 French and 1994 European elections, Henri Emmanuelli, on the left of the party, became party leader as part of the party's leftward movement. In a broader left coalition that included the Communist and Green parties, the party commanded a parliamentary majority in 1997. In 2002, PS failed to advance past the first round of presidential voting.

At the 2005 party congress, there were factions: a moderate plurality, a left faction aligned with Fabius, and a second left faction prioritizing institutional reform. The party has long tolerated factional organization at party conferences (Fabre 2024; Cole 2003). In 2008, the moderate Ségolène Royal prevailed in a factional contest for party leader. She defeated Bertrand Delanoë, of the left, who wanted to restore the party's past grand left coalition, Martine Aubry, also of the left, who wanted to overcome the party's intense divisions over the EU constitution, and Benoît Harmon, who was furthest left. As a result of this win, some on the left abandoned the PS. In 2012, PS won back the presidency with moderate François Hollande. After Hollande ended his term with historically low approval, the party performed terribly in 2017 and even worse in 2022, falling from its prior status as a main partisan contender. In 2017, left Harmon became party leader, followed by moderate Olivier Faure the following year in a period of increased internal division (Fabre 2024).

Renaissance, as En Marche has been known since 2022, is a socially and economically liberal party. It was founded in 2016 and won the presidency in 2017 as Les Républicains and the Parti Socialiste collapsed electorally, drawing in some former members of those parties (Fabre 2024). That year, it also won a legislative majority (Fabre 2024). At the first party congress in 2017, Christophe Castaner ran unopposed for the party leadership; some in the party protested the lack of internal party democracy, since it is the only of these French parties where an internal party council, rather than members, selects the party leader (Fabre 2024). In 2018, Stanislas Guerrini became party leader, followed by Stéphane Séjourné in 2022. The party has explicitly tried to minimize factions from

developing (Fabre 2024). In power, the party has pursued a center-right economic agenda, including controversial items like pension reform.

The **Rassemblement National** (RN), called the Front National until 2018, is the second oldest of these parties, although its current prominence in French politics is newer. A strongly anti-immigrant radical right party, the RN increased its share of the vote in the early 1990s, although the electoral system rendered a discrepancy between its vote share and parliamentary seats (Cole 2003; Fougier 2012). In 2002, the party's presidential candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen made it to the second round, where he was obliterated. From its foundation until his resignation in 2011, Le Pen was party leader—a particularly powerful position within this party (Fabre 2024). A less extreme rival, Bruno Mégret, attempted to oust him in 1998 (Fabre 2024; Le Corre 2015). His daughter Marine Le Pen replaced him. Under her, RN has moderated on some issues and pursued an electoral strategy of softening its image to win new voters, moving from being a fully eurosceptic party to one advocating EU reform, like keeping the common market but limiting freedom of movement. In the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections, the party made it to the runoffs. In 2024, RN won the most votes in the snap election, but the third most seats in the second round as parties of the center to far left formed a "new popular front" to prevent the prospect of the RN controlling parliament.

Mexico

We include the three Mexican parties that held the presidency over the last century and one significant opposition party. The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was the ruling party from the Mexican Revolution through 2000. The Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) is a Christian democratic party that served as the main opposition for most of the twentieth century before winning the presidency in the 2000 elections. The Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) was a social democratic party from 1989 until 2024. The Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA) is a broadly left party that emerged in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and has held the presidency since 2018. The factional and programmatic trajectories of the Mexican parties deviate most from our other cases in our period of study. Additionally, the earliest Mexico could possibly be considered an electoral democracy is 2000 (Levitsky and Way 2010; Sánchez-Talanquer and Greene 2021), making it the only country in our sample whose democratic transition is fully within our time period.

The **Partido Revolucionario Institucional** (PRI) has experienced factionalism as both the ruling party in a competitive authoritarian state and as a poorly performing party in an electoral democracy. In the mid-1980s, when the PRI was still Mexico's ruling party, the Corriente Democrática—democratic current—was founded to advocate for greater democracy within the party and move the party leftward economically. In the 1990s, the party pursued policies of economic liberalization and signed trade deals like NAFTA. It also recognized the Catholic Church for the first

time since the Revolution (Langston 2017). The party's factionalism in this period was primarily regional (Paolino 2009), although this also corresponded to divides over economic policy. From 1992 to 1999, the PRI had 10 party leaders, often with repeated turnover within the same year. Most of these selections were not contested. PRI factionalism increased after the party lost the majority of both branches of Congress in 1997 and the 2000 presidential election for the first time.

In the early 2000s, the party tried to restrict factionalism, and its members in Congress occasionally voted in factional blocs (González Tule 2010). The PRI's loss of the national presidency also heightened the salience of the internal party leader (Pacheco Méndez 2013). Roberto Madrazo of a dissident faction became party leader in 2002, followed by Mariano Palacios Alcocer in 2005. Beatriz Paredes Rangel, of a more left faction, became leader in 2007 in a more factionally driven selection process following the party's electoral losses the prior year (Pacheco Méndez 2013). The party fared better in the 2009 legislative and 2012 presidential elections, when they once again secured the post for the first time since they historically relinquished it in 2000. During 2011 and 2012, the party cycled through five leaders. In slightly slower succession, the party also had five different leaders between 2015 and 2018. The party's return to the presidency lessened the salience of the party leader (Pacheco Méndez 2013). The PRI lost the 2018 and 2024 presidential elections, which has reactivated internal division. The leader since 2019 has been Alejandro Moreno Cárdenas, who won over a more reform-oriented candidate. From 2021 onward, some in the party have made an effort to move in a social democratic direction to compete with MORENA (CNN Español 2024; LatinUS 2021).

The **Partido Acción Nacional** (PAN) had increasing success as an opposition party in the 1990s and won the presidency in 2000 (Vázquez 1998). Its leaders, Carlos Castillo Peraza, Felipe Calderón Hinosa, and selected in 1993 and 1996, respectively, were moderates. A conservative string followed in triennial elections between 1999 and 2005: Luis Brava Mena won two terms, and Manuel Espino Barrientos followed him. In command of the presidency from 2000 through 2012 with Vicente Fox and Felipé Calderón, PAN subsequently pursued an agenda of privatization and acted in favor of expanding free trade while remaining conservative on cultural issues. PAN maintained the presidency and won a plurality in both chambers of Congress in the 2006 election, which it lost in the 2009 legislative elections. Division in the party increased after PAN lost the 2012 election (Rodriguez Aceves 2013). Between 2014 and 2018, PAN had eight leaders with rapid turnover, most of whom were moderate if they expressed a clear ideological orientation at all. The leader since 2018 is Marko Cortés Mendoza, another moderate. More recently, amid mixed electoral success, it has faced internal divides while many leadership aspirants express objectives of uniting the party (Aguirre 2024).

The **Partido de la Revolución Democrática** (PRD) was founded in 1989 as a social democratic opposition party. This founding coalition included some members of the PRI's corriente

democrática faction as well as other marginal left political parties (Bolívar Meza 2016). In 1993, the party selected Porfirio Muñoz Leido as party leader, to follow an interim leader; he was of the party's corriente democrática faction. In 1996, Andrés Manuel López Obrador was selected as leader over Amalia García, although both represented the same Foro Nuevo Sol faction. After a brief interim leader, she succeeded him in 1999. In 2002, the party selected the center-left Rosario Robles over a left candidate; in 2005, Leonel Cota Montaño defeated a Nueva Izquierda factional leader aspirant. The party suffered severe internal conflict in 2008, cycling through multiple interim leaders (Bolívar Meza 2016). The nueva izquierda faction, which had its basis in socialist non-PRI forces at the party's founding, was dominant in the party from 2008 until 2015 (Bolívar Meza 2016), with Jesús García selected in 2008, Jesús Zambrano Grijalva in 2011, and Agustín Benítez in 2015, with many interim leaders interspersed. After the party's congress in 2009, the various factions were logged, with several major corrientes and many minor ones: these factions tend to be more organized around personalities than programs, as López Obrador's exit to MORENA along with supporters makes evident (Bolívar Meza 2016). In 2016, Benítez resigned in part over factional issues in the party. The tides turned to the center-left Izquierda Democrática in 2016 with the leadership selection of Alejandra Barrales. The following year, Manuel Granados Covarrubias prevailed in an uncontested selection. After many more interim leaders in short succession, Jesús Zambrano Grijalva was reselected to the post in 2020.

Similar to some newer Spanish parties, the **Movimiento Regeneración Nacional** (MORENA) was born out of factional conflict in Mexico's existing social democratic party in 2011. Previously a nonprofit focused on corruption, it entered electoral politics in 2014 (Castro Cornejo 2023). MORENA's first party leader was Martí Bartres, who belonged to the more moderate wing of the party. The following year, in 2015, Andrés Manuel López Obrador succeeded him as a more populist politician (Sánchez-Talanquer and Greene 2021). Its first major factional split occurred in 2017 over the replacement of the party leader following Lopéz Obrador's presidential candidacy. One faction wanted to move the party to the left while incorporating more grassroots engagement and directing attention locally. The other was more moderate and aimed to maintain the party's broad electoral coalition. Moderate Yeidckol Polevnsky won. Winning the presidency in 2018, MORENA has positioned itself as being against neoliberal economic policies and the binational "war on drugs," for predistribution over redistribution, and in favor of cultural diversity, indigenous and LGBT rights (Sánchez-Talanquer and Greene 2021). In 2020, another moderate, Mario Delgado Carillo, replaced him as party leader. While internal party rules prohibit factions, they continue to exist today between the left and moderate wings.

Canada

Canada has a "two-party plus" system (Epstein 1964). The Liberal Party, which advocates for social reform and a more active governmental role, and the center-right Conservative Party dominate

national Canadian politics. A host of smaller parties have created regional footholds and have carved out some seats in the national parliament; most prominently, the further-left New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Québécois. We include these four parties in our analyses. Other minor parties include the Green Party of Canada (which has never won more than three seats in federal elections), the Social Credit Party (1930s–1980s), and varying regional parties representing the interests of the formerly autonomous colonies, including French-speaking Quebec, the maritime provinces in Eastern Canada (e.g., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island), and the agricultural interests of Western provinces.

Though the level of factionalism within Canadian parties varies, some constant features of the party system are worth noting. One is provincial fragmentation (Johnston 2017). Provincial parties across Canada's ten provinces have distinct leadership and ideological orientations and their own records. In addition, there is some variation in the regional reach and organization of Canadian federal parties. Some, like the Bloc Québécois, only field candidates in a specific province (Quebec). Others, like the NDP, have an officially affiliated presence in a majority of provinces. While most provinces have some version of a conservative party, many of these are regionally-specific Progressive Conservative parties rather than sub-national branches of the federal Conservative Party. The Liberal Party of Canada does have sub-national branches, with some Liberal Party presence in seven provinces and one territory. However, only four of these Liberal Parties are organizationally affiliated with the Liberal Party of Canada.

Despite the historical existence of "wings" within the two major Canadian parties, such as high versus low tariff and pro versus anti British wings (Godbout and Høyland 2017; Scarrow 1965), the Liberal and Conservative parties do not have official factions. The absence of official factionalism relates to several structural factors. In Canada's parliamentary structure, the priorities of a given party have more to do with their proportional strength and bargaining power than factional demands. The victorious party finds itself in the role of balancing multiple interests across a broad coalition, while the Official Opposition is typically more unified. Second, Canadian Parties have a stratarchical organizational structure, understood as one in which the different levels are mutually autonomous, with minimal control either from the bottom or the top (Coletto and Eagles 2011) (Coletto and Eagles 2011). In this structure, the party has two "faces". The party in public office (at the regional or provincial level) is an elite party and is responsible for determining party policy. The party on the ground has significant local autonomy, running its affairs as it sees fit. It is primarily responsible for choosing candidates and organizing their campaigns, a process that requires incumbent parliamentarians to return to the local party for renomination.

Both faces play a major role in the party's internal life (Carty and Cross 2006): the party in public office can demand support for the leader and their policies, and the party on the ground can choose or remove the leader. The significant control afforded to the party on the ground, combined

with fluctuating membership bases, provides ideal conditions for the development of local and fleeting "personal" factions. Carty and Cross argue that these factions also "represent contests over competing orientations on important social, economic and constitutional issues...fought out in nomination and leadership contests rather than policy conventions precisely because that is where the party on the ground has real influence and cannot be ignored" (Carty and Cross 2006, 100). For example, following Paul Martin's 1990 Liberal leadership defeat, his supporters spent a decade inserting factional members into every level of the party. In 2003, they controlled enough party organization to force the ouster of the party leader and to shape the next election in their favor.

The contemporary **Conservative Party** is relatively new, having formed in 2003 from the merger of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada (1942–2003) and the Canadian Alliance of the Reform Party of Canada (a right-wing populist party founded in 1983) and several regional Tory parties. The Progressive Conservative Party (PCP) traced its roots to one of the oldest Canadian Parties, the Conservative Party of Canada (1867–1942), which was the other major governing party in Canada before 2006. Historically a big-tent party, the PCP contained tensions between a more traditionally conservative wing known as the "Red Tories" and a more neo-liberal wing (in the style of Goldwater, Reagan, and Thatcher) called the "Blue Tories" (Blizzard 1995). The Party also historically struggled to gain votes in French-speaking and Western areas of Canada (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000). Between 1993 and 2004, the conservative Canadian vote was split between the more moderate PCP and the more ideological Reform Party/Canadian Alliance. Some viewed the merger of the PCP and the Canadian Alliance as a hostile takeover by the populist right-wing Alliance supporters. Nevertheless, the new Conservative Party was in government from 2006 until 2015, after which it became the official opposition party in the House of Commons.

Although the contemporary **Conservative Party** is a big-tent party that has centered its platform around fiscal responsibility, individual rights, and national defense, it still contains several visible factions.. These include vestiges of the cleavage between the Red and Blue Tories, as well as a divide between more moderate members (exemplified by party leaders Andrew Scheer and Erin O'Toole) and more right-wing populist elements (e.g., Pierre Polievre). The Conservative Party is only organized at the national level. However, conservative-style parties exist in most Canadian provinces. These provincial parties are, for the most part, holdovers from the erstwhile federal Progressive Conservative Party (with some notable exceptions, such as the conservative Saskatchewan Party). Although the national Conservative Party maintains informal ties with many of these regional parties, the relationship between regional and provincial Conservatives is sometimes fraught with tensions. For example, in 2007, Progressive Conservatives in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador sparred with the federal Conservative Party over the budget, culminating in a formal breach between the federal party and leading Newfoundland and Labrador politician Danny Williams. Elsewhere, relations between the federal and Alberta's Progressive

Conservative Party were strained throughout the 2000s. Disputes primarily emerged over issue positions, such as a mismatch between the federal and provincial parties' positions on trade. These tensions were exacerbated by the emergence of the further-right Wildrose Party in 2008, with some Conservative MPs endorsing Wildrose candidates, and others endorsing Albertan Progressive Conservative candidates in Alberta elections (Taras 2019). The two provincial parties merged in 2017, forming the United Conservative Party of Alberta, which is the official governing party of the province and is opposed by the Alberta NDP.

The **Liberal Party** is Canada's oldest and most successful party, dating back to Confederation, and is regarded by many as its natural governing party. The nineteenth-century Liberal Party was the creature of middle-class, reformist French Canadians and Catholics. Throughout the twentieth century, it became more of a generically center-left party, touting liberal-style values around free markets, personal responsibility, and ethnic tolerance, as best exemplified by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The party became more left-wing following World War II, a movement spurred by Pierre Elliott Trudeau's vision of a more activist government and a just society. Following a worsened financial situation, the next two liberal prime ministers (Jean Chretien and Paul Martin) pushed the party in a more fiscally conservative direction. Today's liberal party is a big-tent coalition that continues to champion a combination of fiscal responsibility, a somewhat active role for government, and social progressivism.

The Canadian Liberal party does not contain formal factions, although it is widely understood as containing two ideological wings—the Red Liberals (more progressive) and the Blue Liberals (more centrist). Others discuss the liberal party factions in terms of "camps" of MPs. These "camps" are more of teams surrounding prominent leadership candidates than ideological groupings (Kam 2006). In its early days, the Liberal Party provided an example of cooperative factionalism by merging pre-confederation splinter parties (e.g., the Clear Grits of Upper Canada and the Rouges of Lower Canada) with conflict-diffusing arrangements (Boucek 2009). Organizational features that mitigate factionalism include the leader's authority in managing intra-party conflict (Mulé 2001) and its decentralized franchise model of organization (Carty 2004).

To the left of Canada's Liberal Party, the **New Democratic Party** (NDP) is a social democratic party. Although the party has never won a majority of seats in parliament, it often wins the third or fourth most seats (in 2011–2015, it formed the Official Opposition), and often provide important votes during minority Liberal governments, as in 1963–1968, 1972–1974, and 2004–2006. It played a similar role in the Conservative minority government of 2006–2011. It has a sub-national presence in six provinces and the territory of Yukon, and is the governing party of British Columbia and Manitoba as well as the Official Opposition in Alberta, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan. It has had at least some presence in every provincial legislature except Quebec's. The NDP contains a Socialist Caucus, which stands as an unofficial left-wing faction, often endorsing their own

candidates in leadership campaigns. The Socialist Caucus is also active in provincial party disputes and has made several (typically unsuccessful) attempts to influence the NDP's platform.

The NDP has an unusual amount of integration between its federal and provincial branches. Membership in one of its provincial branches translates into automatic membership in the federal party. The NDP currently forms government in British Columbia and Manitoba, and has formed government in five other provinces. Unlike most other federal Canadian parties, the NDP also has a history of presence in Quebec. The party was officially integrated from 1963-1989. Following a period of rupture over sovereignty, the NDP of Quebec re-established in 2014 (although it does not maintain an official affiliation with the federal NDP).

The **Bloc Québécois** is Canada's leading separatist party, founded in 1990 by former Progressive Conservative Lucien Bouchard. The party is ideologically left-wing and only runs candidates in Quebec. Internally, the party is riddled by factions. These factions often revolve around different orientations towards Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada, ranging from hardline separatists to moderates who are more focused on social issues than on sovereignty. The Bloc's prominence in federal elections has waxed and waned. Between 1993 and 2011, it was the largest party in Quebec and the second or third largest party in the House of Commons. It lost most of its seats to the NDP in 2011, along with its official party status, and regained its official status in 2019. Along with the NDP, the Bloc has shared the balance of power with Liberal minority governments since 2019.

Although the Bloc is a provincially-focused party, it does not have an official presence at the provincial level. There, the separatist position is maintained by the Parti Québécois (PQ). Both the Bloc and the Parti have wide-ranging coalitions in Quebec, ranging from conservative rural voters to members of labour unions. These varying groups unite under the cause of Québécois nationalism.

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