

REPORT

Polarized Politics – Pre-ISA Workshop

March 14-15, 2016

Hosted by Jennifer McCoy, Georgia State University

Summary. The Polarized Politics workshop conducted a lively discussion over one and half days about causes, consequences, and measures of societal and political polarization. Twenty-two scholars from Universities and Research Institutions in ten countries and representing four disciplines participated as memo writers, moderators, and discussion participants. Eighteen memos were written for the workshop and used as a jumping off point for substantive discussion. Moderators of each panel commented on the papers and raised targeted questions regarding polarization.

The Problem: Democratic politics provide opportunities for newly-emerging or previously-excluded sectors of the population to strive for and reach political power. In both new and existing democracies, we have seen cases where these sectors have come to power through the ballot box but then exercised unilateral, majoritarian governance, leading to new forms of exclusion and either electoral authoritarian outcomes or deep societal polarization, instability and conflict. Even with very different underlying cleavages (class, ideology, religion, ethnicity, urban-rural), the processes and outcomes remain similar. Examples range from transitional Egypt with Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government and ouster by coup; to youngish and Third Wave democracies with Chávez in Venezuela, Morales in Bolivia, Correa in Ecuador, Erdogan in Turkey, Thaksin in Thailand, ongoing crisis in Ukraine, Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Zuma in South Africa; to post-invasion Iraq; to polarized politics in Europe (especially Hungary and Greece) and even the United States.

The Puzzle – why does the arrival to power through electoral politics of previously excluded sectors sometimes result in new forms of exclusion, backlash and conflict, while in other cases the conflict management mechanisms of democratic politics appear to allow for peaceful inclusion? When polarization reaches the societal level, impeding not only governance but also peaceful coexistence, what factors can successfully overcome it?

Purpose and Objectives of Workshop: to identify commonalities of apparently disparate cases; explore innovative methodologies including new survey measures of societal polarization, neurological experiments, experimental surveys, and social media analysis; and potentially build a collaborative interdisciplinary and international research team for sponsored research proposals over the next three years. Selected participants will contribute to a special issue journal comparing cases for the most immediate outcome.

Substantive Conclusions and Future Directions

Jennifer McCoy, workshop organizer, began with a short presentation outlining a dynamic chronological process of polarization resulting from the inclusion of previously excluded groups through the electoral process:

Prior political, social, economic exclusion → New majority wins political office → New majority governs unilaterally, creating new exclusions → Reaction and backlash → Conflict, ouster, or deepening concentration of power.

This outline was both the initial inspiration for holding the workshop and a guide for portions of discussion. The dynamic process was particularly helpful in the last two sessions when participants discussed future directions of this work on polarization, collaborations, and publications.

Conclusions

A first and paramount conclusion is the need for a clear typology of polarization. Continued work is necessary to synthesize the analytical concepts of polarization across the disciplines represented at the workshop (e.g. anthropology, political science, social psychology). Such a typology should clarify the differences and the overlap among societal polarization, political polarization, and social fragmentation. Second, a threshold for negative polarization needs to be determined to limit the scope of the problem being studied: participants recognized there is a natural tension in every democracy, differences always need to be managed, and polarization may have beneficial effects in the political party system. Nevertheless, the focus of the participants is on more pronounced experiences of polarization with pernicious consequences for participation, governance, and democracy.

Third, proper means of measurement and identification of each form of polarization need to be developed, particularly for the more understudied societal polarization, as well as the relationships between societal and political polarization, and mass and elite polarization. Thus methodological innovation (from experiments to surveys) in studying polarization at the individual, aggregate, and state level should be welcomed. Fourth, the relationship between populism and polarization was repeatedly noted by various scholars present; further discussion of the links that exist and the potential for incorporation of populism into the overall typology of polarization is required to bring conceptual cohesion to this area of research.

Fifth, the initial model of the dynamics of polarized elections was adopted by participants, with the need to further specify the causal mechanisms within each stage, looking for patterns across regions and regime type. The consequences for democracy and for each group's continued participation need to be further theorized.

Finally, policy implications are particularly interesting in terms of further work to identify measures to prevent and overcome such pernicious polarization experiences – ranging from institutional engineering to individual socio-psychological experiences.

Future Publications

There was unanimous interest in a follow-up workshop prior to, or in conjunction with, next year's ISA conference. In addition participants want to explore proposing a series of panels on polarization at ISA 2017 in Baltimore, Maryland. The workshop and panel papers are aimed toward publication in one or more special journal issues. The structure and organization of the workshop, panels, and journal are being determined based on workshop discussions.

Participants are exploring the possibility of a longer-term collaborative research proposal with external funding to continue pursuing comparative and interdisciplinary work on polarized polities.

Appendix 1: Agenda

AGENDA

Workshop on Polarized Polities

Pre-ISA Workshop hosted by Global Studies Institute, Georgia State University

Organizer: Jennifer McCoy

March 14-15, 2016

Location: Basement, GSU Law School, 85 Park Place

Monday, March 14, 2016 1:00-5:30pm

1:00-1:30 pm Introductions of Participants and workshop goals and strategy
Jennifer McCoy – Georgia State University

1:30-3:30 Systemic and Actor Roles – Positive and Negative Aspects of Polarization

Moderator: Rick Doner, Political Science, Emory University

Memo-writers:

Adrienne LeBas – American University, Party systems (sub-Saharan Africa),

Sam Handlin – University of Utah, States and Polarization (Latin America)

Aries Arugay – University of the Philippines Diliman,

(Un)democratic Civil Societies (SE Asia and Latin America)

Dan Slater – University of Chicago, Oligarchs and Populists (SE Asia)

3:30-3:45 Break

3:45-5:30 Emerging Polarizations with Concentration of Power or Paralyzed Governance

Moderator: Carrie Manning, Chair, Political Science, GSU

Memo-writers:

Greece, Yannis Stavrakakis – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Budapest

Hungary, **Federico Vegetti** – Central European University in

Turkey, **Murat Somer** – Koc University, Turkey;

Hasan Kosebalaban – Istanbul Şehir University, Turkey

S. Africa, **Roger Southall** (tentatively by Skype) – University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

6:00 pm **Dinner at Alma Cocina (Dutch treat with participants' per diems)**

Tuesday, March 15, 2016 9:00 am – 6:30 pm

9:00-10:45 am **Patterns of New Majorities, Ousters, Conflict, and Repression**

Moderator: Tom Legler, Ibero-American University, Mexico City

Memo-writers: Venezuela, Maria Pilar Garcia - Universidad Simón Bolívar

Egypt, Hesham Sallam – Stanford University;

Carrie Wickham – Emory University

Thailand, Prajak Kongkirati – Thammasat University, Thailand

Burundi, Jennie Burnet – Georgia State University &

Yolande Bouka Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)

10:45-11:00 **Break**

11:00-12:45 **How Innovative Methodological Approaches Might Apply to Understanding and Overcoming (Mass) Societal-Level Polarization**

Moderator: Ryan Carlin, Georgia State University, Political Science Dept.

Memo-writers:

Federico Vegetti- Central European University in Budapest,

Experimental Surveys on Left-Right Labeling in Polarization

Rengin Firat – Georgia State University,

Neuro-psych experiments on In-group/Out-group formation

Tony Lemieux – Georgia State University,

Experiments, augmented reality and framing in media studies

Ioannis Andreadis - Aristotle University Thessaloniki ,

Survey methods and questions to test populism and polarization

Camilo Camacho - European Project LIVEWHAT ,

Survey methods and testing “perspective” (empathy)

12:45-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00 Open Discussion on Avoiding and Overcoming Polarization – Success stories and Policy Relevance?

Moderator: Jennie Burnet

Brainstorming on cases who have avoided polarization while including a new popular sector into power roles (e.g. Brazil’s Worker’s Party); or who have taken steps to overcome extreme polarization (e.g. Spain after Franco, Northern Ireland, Rwanda post-genocide). Which examples pose positive models vs failed attempts, for potential diffusion to other cases?

3:00-3:15 Break

3:15-4:45 Next Steps – possibilities

Moderator: Jennifer McCoy

Special Issue of a Journal

Longer-term research project

Second workshop at ISA next year

5:00-6:30 Reception – 85 Park Place Basement Level

Appendix 2: Budget Justification

Original budget summary was approved for \$16,959. This amount included funds for travel for seven international flights, hotel stays for 12 scholars, per-diem for 16 scholars, lunches on the full workshop day, a graduate assistant, and other miscellaneous fees.

	Budget Allocated	Claimed	Remaining
Participant Reimbursements:	15694	14817.06	876.94
On Site Lunch	320	320	0
Graduate Research Assistant	600	600	0
Wire Transfers	225	75	150
Hardship ISA Dues	120	110	10
TOTALS:	16959.00	15922.06	1036.94

Georgia State University provided matching funds of \$3000. These funds covered two alternate scholar flights (Aries Arugay and Hasan Kösebalaban), a part time graduate assistant to aid in planning the workshop, and a concluding reception to the workshop.

Participants to be reimbursed by ISA are listed here. Receipts are submitted and all will receive pay pal returns except for one noted below.

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