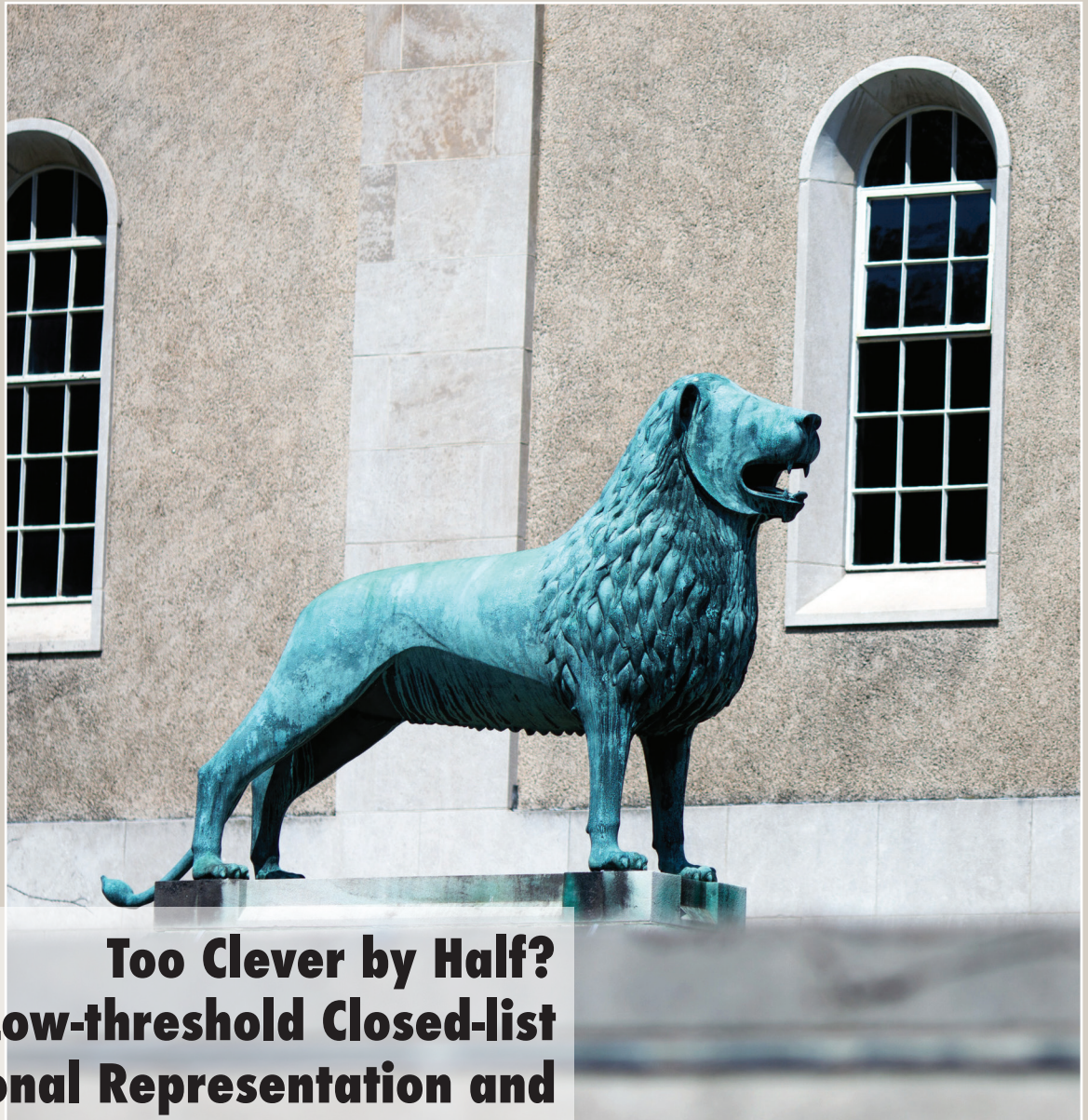# CES Open Forum Series
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Too Clever by Half?
Low-threshold Closed-list
Proportional Representation and
Party Split in Weimar Germany,
1919-1930

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Too Clever by Half? Low-threshold Closed-list Proportional Representation and Party Split in Weimar Germany, 1919-1930

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Abstract

Electoral systems of proportional representation (PR) feature prominently as explanations of high levels of party fragmentation. These accounts engage a demand-side point of view: diversity in electoral preferences of the electorate entails party diversity in parliament. From a supply-side point of view, of members of parliament (MPs) as those who provide the electorate with a variety of policy offers, we add a qualification to these accounts. We identify succumbing to the leadership's wishes or splitting from the party as two routes for MP behavior under PR. We derive these routes from a trade-off faced by party leaders: Disciplining MPs via reducing their chances for re-election within the party entails a relative increase in profitability from the point of view of these MPs of splitting from the party and running for another party or on their own in the next election. Since this tradeoff is particularly pronounced in low-threshold PR systems, we argue that it is these systems rather than PR in general that witness high levels of party fragmentation. We provide evidence for our claims with the help of a series of novel datasets on candidates, MPs, and MP behavior in roll call votes in the German Imperial and Weimar eras. Our findings also go beyond enduring findings on determinants of the "upper bound" of the number of competitive parties in electoral systems.

Keywords: Electoral systems; Roll call votes; Party systems; Weimar Germany.

1. Introduction

Cohesive parliamentary parties have been characterized as "a necessary condition for the existence of responsible party government" (Bowler, Farrell et al. 1999). It has been argued – sometimes with explicit reference to the experience of the Weimar Republic – that proportional representation (PR) is a "fair weather" electoral system (Hermens 1941, Abraham 1988). While PR might be a "kinder, gentler" system in normal times (Lijphart 1996), it might reveal less sympathetic traits in times of crisis. Under PR, "as people react against the governments presiding over crisis, larger numbers of voters drift to the extremes on the radical right and left of the political spectrum", which may make it "more difficult for mainstream parties to retain control of the government or to respond decisively to the crisis". In single-member district (SMD) systems, however, "the effects of this protest vote are muted by first-past-the-post electoral dynamics" (Hall 2010: 24).

However, we should judge the working of an electoral system on how it impacts on behavior of actors (voters, candidates, legislators, party leaders) both in the electoral *and* legislative arenas. Indeed, the lower the risk of spoilt votes in the electoral arena are, the more willing may adherents of smaller or extremist parties be to also vote for them rather than choose the lesser evil of larger or moderate parties. Still, this is only the demand side of the electoral market. There also need to be candidates or parties that actually compete on a "small" or "extremist" platform. In this vein, differences in the incentives emanating from electoral institutions to legislators-as-party-members are not confined to a SMD-PR divide, where members of parliament (MPs) are prone to pursue idiosyncratic "pork barrel" politics aimed at pleasing their individual districts in SMD systems but collective "party ideology" politics aimed at pleasing their party leaders in PR systems. We argue that individual MPs have incentives to act as individualistic under PR as they do under SMD, if the electoral threshold is sufficiently low as to render party split a viable option for reelection. This is why this paper addresses this "supply side" of the electoral market – the "production" of parties in parliament as the legislative arena of political competition.

This implies considering the interaction of strategic incentives related to the two arenas (Cox 1987, Carey 2009) and, thus, a micro-level account of voters', candidates', legislators', and party leaders' strategies. We employ data on this on the German parliament of the Weimar era (1919-32). Whereas the Weimar voter has been analyzed over and over again, the Weimar MP has received only very scant attention (but see Debus and Hansen 2010, Lehmann 2010). In particular, the way PR affected MPs' behavior in the Reichstag has, to the best of our knowledge, not been systematically investigated. What happened in the legislative arena, however, had important electoral consequences, as we will show below, so that the isolated treatment of either elections or legislation inevitably misses crucial elements of the functioning of Weimar's system.

In our paper we focus on the electoral-cum-legislative dynamics of an electoral system that combines party leaders' tight control over MPs' legislative behavior (closed-list PR) with little control over the entry of new parties (low thresholds). We start our analysis with the observation that with the introduction of PR in 1919 party discipline increased considerably. Germany's majoritarian two-round, two-ballot system of the Imperial Period had provided party leaders with few means to discipline MPs who were not toeing to the party line. Under this system, candidate selection as well as electoral coordination took place almost exclusively at the district level, i.e. in a purely decentralized way – without any decisive involvement of the party leadership (Reibel 2007, Reibel 2011). This completely changed with the introduction of PR – no surprise that party elites desperately seeking control over their backbenchers had been central proponents of PR.

Party leaders' influence upon the electoral list composition under PR provided them with a long sought instrument to sanction dissenters (Carey and Shugart 1995). But as the new electoral system shifted the balance of power within the party from MPs to party leaders, and thereby resulted in unprecedented levels of voting cohesion in the Reichstag, an increasing number of MPs started to consider "exit" in response to tightened control. Those not at ease with the party line could leave their party group and form new parliamentary alliances given that entry into parliament remained relatively unrestricted under Weimar's permissive legal threshold. First parliamentary and then also electoral party fragmentation was the consequence of these new electoral incentives. Whereas candidate selection under PR – monopolized by party leaders – enhanced *intra-party* legislative coordination, the increased party discipline in turn fostered parliamentary fragmentation, rendering *inter-party* legislative coordination hard to achieve, if not – given ever growing fragmentation within the bourgeois camp – futile. It was only after 1949 that Germany's mixed electoral system with higher legal thresholds brought both high party discipline *and* low party system fragmentation (Klingemann and Wessels 2001, Saalfeld 2005).

Our paper proceeds as follows. We first briefly lay out our basic argument about the interplay between the legislative and the electoral agenda under PR (Section 2). We then describe the German status-quo ante – the working of the electoral system in place during the Wilhelmine era (1890-1918): absolute majority representation with top-two runoff. We subsequently address the profound changes that came with the switch to PR in 1919 (Section 3). We then document the significant increase in voting cohesion in parliament during the Weimar Republic. We test whether those few MPs who still dared to deviate from the party-line were punished in subsequent elections. We then analyze changes in party group membership in the Weimar years and how they spilled over into a dramatic increase in attempts on part of whip-less MPs in founding "their own party" or joining other, usually smaller parties. We show that this resulted in a splintering of the bourgeois camp even before the Great Depression, pitting individual bourgeois parties against each other electorally (Section 4). We close with a brief summary of our findings (Section 5).

2. Tradeoffs of ballot-control under PR: parliamentary discipline vs. electoral fragmentation

Control over access to the ballot allows party leaders conditioning re-nomination of backbenchers on past conduct, particularly on past voting behavior in parliament. This is a staple insight of politicians as well political scientists (Carey and Shugart 1995). Not surprisingly, the allusion to "party tyranny" or "oligarchy" (Michels 1957 [1911]) was a standard objection against PR in debates about electoral reform. Likewise, the hope that PR would finally bring about "real parties"

served as a standard argument on the side of its proponents (Ahmed 2012). That the switch to proportional representation would, via centralized nomination in a closed-list system, help over-coming the "absence of real parties" – a common problem under MR with its decentralized nom-ination procedure – was thus a promise for some (party leaders) and a peril for others (backbench MPs). This well-established argument is implicitly based on linking phenomena of the electoral arena with those of the legislative arena. In the legislative arena, backbench MPs accept the pre-rogative of party leaders over parliamentary business in, e.g., voting as demanded, refraining from the introduction of private bills, or not ostracizing cabinet members if their party is in govern-ment. For party leaders this has the advantage of fostering the construction of voting blocs at their command that ultimately serve as a resource on which their policies can be based in inter-party negotiations. For backbenchers, this has the disadvantage of being indistinguishable from each other to voters (i.e., in the electoral arena) and, thus, being unable to individually control their fate during electoral campaigns. This disadvantage is compensated by party leaders re-nominating well-behaved MPs. Ahmed's "real party" then results from a deal between party lead-ers and all backbench MPs. Individual MPs trade support for their leaders' preferred policies for party leadership support for re-nomination.

These insights from the literature provoke the question about the conditions that allow sticking to this deal to be in equilibrium. In the following we build on the office-related incentives of this deal since, with re-nomination as motivation, these incentives are at the heart of the argument above. Our account thus only covers MP-side office-related incentives while leadership behavior is taken as fixed to the deal, i.e. we assume definite re-nomination of each MP that abides by her obligations. This means that each MP's list rank is fixed with a view to the next election, for there is no reason for party leaders to "promote" or "demote" an MP with a view to the deal – given that all MPs stick to their commitment. We do not assume however that the deal as such is irrev-ocable for a legislative period as a whole. An immediate consequence then results from the dif-ference between re-nomination and reelection. The lower an MP's list rank, the lower are, ceteris paribus, her chances for reelection. The less likely the party leadership then is to secure its recent stock of mandates next time, the less attractive is it to her to behave according to the deal rather than considering her other options. As a parliamentarian, she has two of these: staying within her party and overturning the recent order of MPs on the list, and looking for a more attractive rank on another list – i.e. leaving the party. We do not address the first option in this article since, fol-lowing the argument above, such a coup d'état, would only result in a new deal.

With a view to leaving the party as her second option, she again faces a choice. She could either join another party, i.e. sign a deal with another party's leadership. In this deal she trades obedi-

ence to the other party leadership's parliamentary commands in return for a more attractive rank on the other party's list.[1] As a consequence of taking this first option ("party switch"), the relative strength of parliamentary leaderships in terms of their respective voting blocs changes. In terms of measures of party system fragmentation, the Effective Number of Parties (ENP, cf. Laakso and Taagepera 1979)[2], the ENP will rise if she joins a smaller party. If she joins a larger party, the ENP will fall. But there is no general effect from party switches towards either higher or lower party system fragmentation. Also, the (simple) count of parties present (CPP) will remain as before. As a second option, she could also form a party of her own and hope to attract sufficiently many votes in the next election as to guarantee her mandate ("party split"). The ENP will then, c. p., generally rise, and so will the CPP. If she additionally attracts other MPs that enter into a deal with her, she would even become a party leader herself. The ENP will then rise even further until her party is larger than the smallest pre-existing party.

So while party system fragmentation is not bound to evolve into a specific direction after party switches, there is a curvilinear relationship ensuing from party splits. Fragmentation will first rise, and only fall again once a stream of party switches directed at the new party has rendered this new party large enough as to balance the losses in relative strengths of all pre-existing parties affected by the switches. However, there is indeed no guarantee that the new party will ever attract as many switches. What is more, the new party may itself become subject to MPs switching (or splitting). This is why we argue that the choice between switching and splitting faced by dissenting MPs is a crucial one: Party switching neither affects the division of power between MPs and party leaderships nor contributes to party system fragmentation systematically. Party splits however both challenge the distinction between "ordinary" MPs and the party elite as defined in the deals at the outset of the legislative term, and the configuration of the party system as defined in the underlying elections.

The question then is whether it is more attractive to switch or to split from the point of view of individual MPs. We argue that a crucial determinant for this choice is the electoral threshold, i.e. the share of the vote needed to achieve parliamentary representation.[3] The lower this threshold is, the easier is it for a party to attract sufficiently many votes as to guarantee participation in the distribution of mandates. This entails a continuum of electoral systems as regards the proneness

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[1] This "more attractive" rank need not also be a higher rank. If the other party can muster more votes than the recent party, a lower rank may still be more attractive. Likewise, a higher rank on the list of a party with less votes than the recent party may be less attractive.

[2] The ENP sets the number of parties running into relation with each individual party's vote-share.

[3] Regulation on electoral thresholds in individual PR electoral systems may, of course, stipulate also a certain number of votes in districts or nation-wide, or (in mixed electoral systems) a number of district mandates, or a combination of the two as the hurdle to be taken for achieving parliamentary representation. But these stipulations all are related to vote-shares at some territorial and/or regulative level of the electoral system – even if all votes are not equal then.

to party splits. At one extreme, the threshold may be as high as to require the setup of an encompassing party platform, and/or a professional party organization in order to garner sufficiently many votes as to pass the hurdle. At the other extreme, with a nation-wide threshold defining a vote-share equivalent to just one mandate, each MP could even form a party with only herself as member and campaign on a platform as narrow as specific to a small segment of society. As regards our above notion of the supply side of the electoral market: Market access is the less costly the lower the threshold.

So, while PR is bound to increase intra-party discipline in parliament as compared to single-member districts systems, this very increase can in turn increase party system fragmentation. The extent of this effect from the legislative arena on the electoral arena depends on the legal threshold. While party leaders might be able to exert efficient control over ballot rank and access to the party label, and via this control also over "their" MPs' voting behavior, this does not necessarily mean that they also control the entry of new parties.

Conditional on the control over party entry under PR, i.e. on low or high legal thresholds, we distinguish 1) a virtuous from 2) a vicious-cycle of delegation. Both scenarios can happen against the background of the same, stable societal cleavage structure – so that the degree of party fragmentation is driven institutionally rather than societally (Neto and Cox 1997, Clark and Golder 2006, Stoll 2008).

 (1) Under proportional representation, party leaders exert effective control over the ballot. They decide who will run on the party list and on which list rank. A high hurdle requires a substantial vote-share for participation in the distribution of parliamentary mandates. This renders re-nomination by party leaders the only viable means for securing reelection from the point of view of individual backbench MPs. Party split is a vain effort with a view to this. As a consequence, MPs profit from staying true to the party line. Then, party labels can effectively function as "information circuits" (Aldrich 1995, Carey 2009). They provide voters with a clue as to which kind of legislative government- or opposition-behavior they can expect from the respective parties. Manifestos fulfill a "you-see-what-you-get" function (Manin, Przeworski et al. 1999, Powell 2000). Given this effective signaling function of party labels, electoral competition takes place *between* parties representing dominant societal camps and party fragmentation remains moderate. Voters are confronted with a clear choice between a set of candidates or party labels, and can judge performance on the basis of an assessment of how close a party stuck to its promises and how adequate these proved to be in response to the "tasks of the day" during the last term (Manin 1997, Mansbridge 2003).

(2) We can, however, also conceive of a less benign scenario under PR: party leaders, again, exert control over the ballot. They decide who will run on the party list and on which rank. This is still an efficient instrument to enforce discipline among their MPs. But now the electoral threshold is so low that a vote-share that can be attracted without a fully-fleshed party organization, perhaps equaling just one mandate, is sufficient for gaining parliamentary representation. Voting cohesion within parties in parliament, as a consequence of party leaders' grip on re-nomination, will still be strong. But now, from the point of view of each individual MP, the probability of her individual reelection through fostering a label of her own is positive. If it is also higher than the probability of their reelection through fostering the party brand, she will split from her party. On the long run, party fragmentation increases. Voters are subsequently confronted with a higher number of parties representing ever more specific societal interests. Electoral competition also happens *within* main societal camps. This reduces the information function of party manifestos, electoral volatility between parties with a similar programmatic profile increases, party-identification declines or does not even evolve in the first place. Moreover, with higher party fragmentation comes a much lower pre-identifiability of the possible coalition options (Powell 2000), the process of government formation is less transparent and therefore less legitimate. And since parties compete electorally for similar segments of society, cooperation in office is subject to parties outbidding each other. Government stability declines, legislative performance deteriorates. So does voter satisfaction, and, ultimately chances for reelection for MPs – and for backbench MPs in particular. This forces these MPs to contemplate further splits, fragmenting the party system even more, and rendering inter-party cooperation still more complicated.

We now turn to an account of this latter scenario with a view to Germany, as a case where the introduction of PR in 1919 did substantially change the intra-party balance of power in parliament, but where a low threshold points towards an enduring increase in party system fragmentation in the ensuing years.

3. How MR worked and what PR changed

Under absolute majority representation (MR), the system in place in most West-European countries before the near universal switch to PR in the first two decades of the 20th century (Carstairs 1980, Blais, Dobrzynska et al. 2004), parties had a precarious status as "corporate actors". In Germany, parties did exist as organizations (Michels 1957 [1911];,Neumann 1932, Stillich 1908), yet party leaders did not possess the means to coerce their party rank and file into coherent action. To the contrary, many parties were relatively loose associations of electoral committees, led by local notables (see Duverger 1951, Nipperdey 1961, Colomer 2007, Nohlen and Stöver 2010).

With some degree of party organization in place since the 1850s, candidates usually subscribed to some party label. But neither was this mandatory, nor universal, nor were party officials even necessarily interested in running nation-wide campaigns – it were the results within the 397 single-member districts that counted after all, and not the total number of votes. Consequently, and with the exception of the socialist SPD, no party ever fielded candidates in all districts. MPs were district delegates sent to parliament and tied to a diversity of locally-minted behavioral constraints rather than partisan trustees representing a clear-cut party stance on national policy questions (Pitkin 1967, Mansbridge 2003, Andeweg and Thomassen 2005). They thus translated the socio-economic structure of their district into political representation at the national level (Nipperdey 1993, Anderson 2000) and to the extent that their local platforms diverged programmatically, the interests of local principals regularly trumped considerations of party unity (cf. Carey 2007). These local constraints on MP behavior ran against party leaders' attempts to form cohesive party-policy positions as their response to the secular process of "nationalization of politics" (Caramani 2004). But there was little party leaders could do. Candidate nomination, electoral coordination with other parties, and often even the organization of campaigning all were the business of local committees (cf. Nipperdey 1961). This "committee party" (Duverger 1958 [1951]) was a sensible and successful way of organizing party politics locally. It could not, however, deliver what became increasingly important in times of nationalized politics: party cohesion in parliament.

The Weimar electoral system differed from Imperial electoral rules in virtually all aspects. Instead of conferring single mandates to individuals that garnered an absolute majority of valid votes within single-mandate districts, Weimar-style PR foresaw a three-step process of mandate allocation to closed lists. As a first step, one mandate was allotted to each 60.000 votes per list within each of 35 districts. So let us say that some party X has received 175.000 votes for its list in district A, and 80.000 votes in district B. It then receives two mandates in A, and one mandate in B. 55.000 votes from A, and 20.000 votes from B are not converted into seats at this step.

Votes that were not converted into mandates at this first step were transferred, as "remainders" to a second level of 16 "district-unions", each of which contained two or three adjacent districts. In order to receive mandates at this step, district lists had to be declared as connected with other district lists in the district-union as a "list-union" in advance of an election. Totals of votes for each list-union were then taken with a view to each constituent list's remainder from the first step, and assigned an additional mandate for each 60.000 votes. Mandates were allotted to those lists within list-unions that had attained the highest numbers of remainders, if this list had at least 30.000 remainders. So party X with its 55.000 remainders from A, 20.000 remainders from B, and thus a total of 75.000 votes as a list-union in a district-union A-B receives an additional mandate

at the second step. This mandate is allotted to its list in A since this list has most remainders. X could have formed its list-union with still other lists in these two districts (even if these lists had been set up by other parties) and thus have helped another list with at least 35.000 remainders to a mandate. Still, it did not, and so 25.000 votes for X have not been converted into mandates at this step. The number of 30.000 votes required for participation in mandate allocation at this step roughly equaled the average number of votes needed for a mandate also in the districts under MR before 1919. But now district sizes had multiplied: district magnitudes stood between 17 and 51 mandates empirically in the Weimar era.[4]

Finally all votes that were not converted into mandates in the first two steps were transferred to the national level. As with the district-unions, lists had to be declared connected at this level in advance of elections in order to receive mandates at a third step of mandate allocation. This step however did not draw on district lists. Rather, the national level served as an upper-tier district of its own. Each group of connected district lists had to agree on a separate, national list ("Reichswahlvorschlag", RWV) as the receiving list of all its constituent district lists' remainders from the first and second steps. Again, each 60.000 votes were converted into a mandate, with a remainder of at least 30.000 equal to one further mandate. However, the maximum of mandates allotted to an RWV could at most be equal to the total number of mandates allotted to all lists connected to this RWV in the first two steps. With a view to party X with its 25.000 remainders from district union A-B, and, say, 10.000 remainders from district-union C-D-E connected to it, receives an additional mandate for its total of 35.000 remainders on its RWV. As an upper-tier district, the RWVs empirically varied in magnitude with overall electoral fragmentation of the party system (with magnitudes between 58 in 1993, and 91 in 1930), but exceeded the magnitude even of the largest district-union by 100 percent in seven out of eight elections. With the exception of 1933, between 15 and 20 percent of all MPs were elected on an RWV. Also, since the electoral law only recognized "lists" but not parties, small parties could connect their district lists at the district union, and national levels in order to make most use of their remainders. This spurred numbers of RWV mandates – and the composition of RWVs frequently either ensued from negotiations among smaller parties or presented the party leadership.

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[4] Numbers relate to the district-unions of Pommerania-Mecklenburg (May 1924, 17 mandates) and of Saxonia-Thuringia (1933, 51 mandates). One district, East Prussia (12 mandates in May 1924, 18 in 1933), formed a district-union of its own. This still made sense, since a party could then present its own list to voters, connect this individual list with other parties' list (if they accepted this offer) at the district-union level and thus hope for receiving a (additional) mandate from the district-union level to be allotted to its very district-level list.

This procedure had three consequences for the relationship between party leaders and individual MPs, and one consequence for inter-party parliamentary coordination. First, the new electoral rules centralized control over who would run on a list on national rather than local party leaderships the more a party relied on mandates from the RWV (cf. Carey and Shugart 1995, Carey 2007). Second, since party leaders and Reichstag parliamentary leaders usually were identical (Neumann 1932), this reverberated into an increase in control of party leaders over legislative behavior of individual MPs.

However, while these two consequences favor party leaderships vis-à-vis backbenchers, there is a downside to Weimar-style PR from the point of view of party leaders: the very low threshold of 30.000 votes per list at the district-union level. Depending on the number of voters in a district-union (and, of course, on turnout), this meant a mere 1.6 to 4.4 percent of the vote being sufficient for taking part in mandate allocation.[5] So a party platform that addressed a minority of less than five percent of voters at least at the regional level had a good chance of getting as a minimum one mandate and, thus, qualifying for as many extra mandates from the RWV for remainders in other districts. This implies a third consequence: party split was now a viable option for dissenting *individual* MPs – and, thus, party fragmentation was bound to increase over time.

4. Low-threshold PR, Party Cohesion and Inter-party Coordination in the Weimar Republic

We now turn to testing our expectations against evidence from the Weimar republic. With a view to its high number of parliamentary parties of different size (see table 1), some but not all of them representing a fixed "milieu" (Winkler 2005, King, Rosen et al. 2008), and a post-war polity under severe economic stress, inter-party coordination was of the essence on the one hand (and this was clear to contemporaries, see Neumann 1932), but did come at a cost on the other (as was also clear to contemporaries, ibid.). Interwar Germany thus lends itself as a test-bed for our expectations.

Table 1: Reichstag seats as percentages of parliamentary party groups, 1919-1933

Party	KPD Communist	USPD Socialist	SPD Social-democrat	DDP Left-Liberal	Z Catholic	BVP Catholic-Regionalist	DVP National-Liberal	DNVP Con-servative	(.) Peasant	(.) SMI	(.) Other Rightist	NSDAP Fascist
1919	.	5.2	38.7	17.6	21.1	.	5.5	9.7	1.2	0.0	1.0	.
1920	0.4	17.4	24.2	9.7	14.4	4.3	13.3	12.9	2.1	0.0	1.3	.

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[5] This is with the exception of the single-district district-union of East Prussia, where this was at most 6 percent (in the elections of May 1924). Numbers in the text are for the district unions of Saxonia-Thuringia (elections of 1933, 1.6 percent), and Pommerania-Mecklenburg (May 1924, 4.4 percent).

1924a	13.1	0.0	21.2	5.9	13.8	3.4	9.3	20.3	2.5	1.5	2.1	6.8
1924b	9.1	0.0	26.6	6.5	14.0	3.9	10.3	20.9	2.6	2.4	0.8	2.8
1928	11.0	0.0	31.2	5.1	12.6	3.3	9.2	14.9	4.5	5.1	0.8	2.4
1930	13.3	0.0	24.8	3.5	12.0	3.1	5.2	7.1	4.9	4.0	3.6	18.5
1932a	14.6	.	21.9	0.7	12.5	3.5	1.2	6.1	0.8	0.5	0.5	37.8
1932b	17.1	.	20.7	0.3	12.2	3.3	1.9	8.7	1.0	0.2	1.0	33.6
1933	12.5	.	18.5	0.8	11.4	2.8	0.3	8.0	0.5	.	0.6	44.5

Notes: first row: party name (if single party); second row: ideological affiliation (following Nohlen and Stöver 2010), "SMI": small business/middle classes/groups representing savers having lost assets during the inflation.

Our data cover all results at the district and national levels for the six elections of 1919, 1920, May 1924, December 1924, 1928, and 1930, including individual-level information on party lists. We can thus track, for every individual that ever served as an MP in the Weimar era, his or her party list and rank in each of these elections. We also can identify all MPs that switched parties or split form their parties within legislative terms. We utilize data on all 1,797 MPs of the Weimar era, and on the 29,051 candidacies on the lists (district, and RWV) of 125 parties. As for gauging coherence of parliamentary behavior we use a dataset on Reichstag roll call votes (RCV) for the period 1890-1933, covering 1,166 RCVs. Data were assembled from primary sources, i.e. publications of the German Statistical Office on the six Weimar elections; the official Reichstag handbooks, and annexes to the Reichstag protocols (National Assembly and 1st to 8th Reichstag terms) on MPs; and the Reichstag protocols (8th to 13th Imperial Reichstag, National Assembly and 1st to 8th Weimar Reichstag) on individual-level RCV results.

We start with a description of PR's immediate effects on the composition of Reichstag MPs in 1919. This concerns our notion of PR as a solution to the problem of unwieldy MPs with their roots at the local level from the point of view of party leaders through the set-up of party lists under control of the party leadership. We then turn to voting cohesion as a means for inquiring into what deviating from the party line meant for an MP's prospects of reelection on a list of her pre-existent party. This concerns the effects of party leadership control over party lists as regards MP behavior. We then turn to the downside of Weimar-style PR with its low threshold from the party leadership point of view, i.e. the propensity of MPs to split from their party.

4.1   PR and its Immediate Effects: Candidate Nomination in 1919

The November Revolution of 1918 swept the socialist parties (the SPD, and the more extremist USPD) to power. The provisional SPD-USPD cabinet, the Council of People's Deputies, immediately introduced PR. In early December, the Council called elections for a Constitutional Assembly, to be held in Mid-January 1919. Until then, with the exception of the socialist and catholic parties (the Zentrum, Z), both campaigning and candidate nomination had been dealt with by

local committees of notables at the district level. This process used to begin once the end of the legislative period came into sight, i.e. several months in advance of elections, and typically also took several months filled with meetings of these notables aimed at selecting candidates, negotiations with other parties on possible joint candidates, raising funds, and then campaigning.

Setting up a party list at the regional level within six weeks, under the near-anarchic circumstances of 1918/19, and with local committees not even formed, proved to be an entirely different story. Ultimately, it rendered the Berlin-based party leaderships the sole arbiters in terms of coordinating local-level would-be candidates of at least similar political denominations on regional lists (on the Conservatives see Liebe 1956, as for the liberal parties see Hartenstein 1962). And the elites acted swiftly. Especially leaders of rightist parties (the national-liberal DVP, and the conservative-agrarian DNVP) succeeded both in barring the majority of their pre-1919 colleagues from entry to their lists and in providing those MPs that did run with advantageous ranks (see table 2).

Table 2: Incumbents and Non-Incumbents running and succeeding in the 1919 elections

Camp	MPs 1912 (Total)	MPs running 1919 (% of 1912)	Rank on list 1919 (avg.)		Success rate 1919 (% elected on list)		Return rate 1912/19 (%)	MPs 1919 (Total)
			MP 1912	All other	MP 1912	All other		
SPD	123	71.0	2.9	12.0	77.6	18.8	56.1	203
DDP	50	60.3	2.7	12.5	73.7	14.5	40.0	84
DVP, DNVP	123	24.2	2.8	13.9	61.1	7.6	13.0	66
Z	108	39.2	3.3	11.7	78.7	16.7	27.8	96
Other	35	66.7	4.0	9.8	50.0	11.9	25.0	8
Ethn. Mino.	23	0.0	.	.	.	.	.	0
Total/Avg.	462	41.8	2.9	12.5	74.2	14	30.7	458

Note: MP totals refer to all MPs in the legislative periods 1912-19 and 1919-20 respectively; data on national-liberal (DVP) and conservative (DNVP) MPs of 1912 are presented in same row since many conservative MPs of preceding Reichstag factions (DtKP, DRP, CS/WVg) joined the DVP and vice versa (Sources: Deutscher Reichstag 1914, Bureau des Reichstags 1916, Statistisches Reichsamt 1919).

Of the quarter of rightist pre-1919 MPs that made it on a list, some 60 percent were also elected – a number roughly ten times as high as that for all other rightist candidates. Despite a return rate of only 13 percent for rightist MPs (indicating catastrophic results, cf. Manow 2007), their leaders nearly universally managed to gain a mandate in the 1919 National assembly – and were joined by handpicked backbenchers. Similar results also hold for the left-liberal DDP and the Zentrum. So the immediate effects of PR – leadership control over lists and its consequences on the composition of parliamentary parties conform to our expectations.

4.2   High Party Cohesion and its Causes

As regards the effects of closed-list PR on parliamentary party cohesion, we measured the degree to which MPs of the five major Imperial and Weimar Reichstag parties followed a joint line in

votes taken in parliament. We thus calculated Rice scores for each RCV in the period 1890-1933. We then took the legislative period-wise means for these parties, i.e. for the 8th to 13th legislative terms of the Imperial Reichstag, the National assembly, an the 1st to 8th term of the Weimar Reichstag. The higher Rice scores are, the more cohesively did MPs of a party behave, in the sense of the less MPs voting against the party line. If a Rice score is one, all MPs of a party vote identically. If it is Zero, the party is divided into two same-sized camps of MPs that vote differently from each other.[6] Summary statistics of Rice scores over all pre-1919 and post-1919 RCVs for these parties are presented in table 3. Both in terms of mean scores and standard deviations, levels of cohesion went up substantially in the Weimar years exactly for those parties that had witnessed the lowest scores in the Imperial era: the DVP, and the Zentrum (see figure 1).

Table 3: Average Rice scores for five major Reichstag factions pre- and post 1919.

|	SPD			DFP → DDP			NLP → DVP			Zentrum			DtKP → DNVP		
	1	2	Ch.	1	2	Ch.	1	2	Ch.	1	2	Ch.	1	2	Ch.
Mean	0.99	0.98	-0.02	0.94	0.91	-0.03	0.86	0.95	0.09	0.86	0.94	0.08	0.93	0.95	0.02
St.Dev.	0.06	0.11	0.05	0.17	0.21	0.03	0.23	0.15	-0.08	0.24	0.16	-0.08	0.18	0.16	-0.02

Notes: 1 = 1890-1918; 2 = 1919-1933; Ch.: Change; Data 1919-1933 for KPD (formed 1920): Mean=0.97, St.Dev.=0.11; USPD (formed 1918): mean=0.94, St.Dev.=0.15; NSDAP (formed 1919/24): Mean=0.97, St.-Dev.=0.14; Sources: own compilation of Reichstag roll call votes.

For those parties that had already attained high levels of cohesion before 1919, scores roughly remain at previous levels (for the DNVP) or drop slightly (for the DDP).

Enhanced party discipline was not the upshot of a long-term process (see figure 1). Average Rice scores weighted for mandates of parties kept meandering around 0.85 during the Imperial era and even were in decline in the final legislative period 1912-18. Under PR, scores jump to around 0.95 on average (see figure1, upper left graph). Parties however still diverge with a view to the degree to which this average accounts for their individual scores. This is particularly pronounced for the DDP with its relatively low Rice scores in the early 1920s. However, it is also the only major party that witnessed an increase in these scores during the 1920s.

Figure 1: Evolution of Rice scores (averages for years, and quadratic fits) 1890-1917, 1919-1930

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[6] Rice scores are calculated by first determining, for a given vote, the number of MPs of a party that voted in support of the bill in question, and the number of MPs of this party that voted against the bill. The lower of the two numbers is then subtracted from the higher number, and finally divided by the sum of these two numbers.
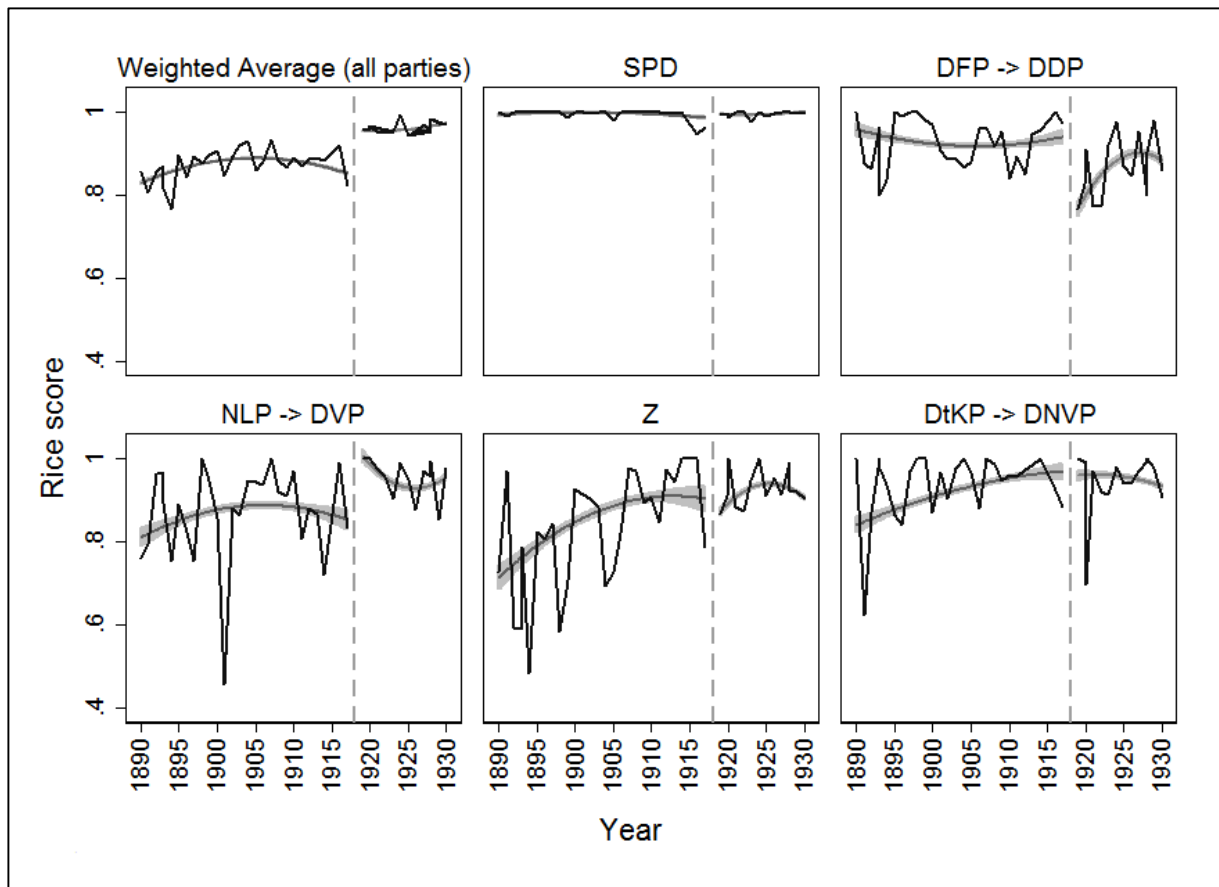
Can this variation at still high levels of intra-party unity (Carey 2007) as compared to the pre-war period be related to party leaders being able (and willing) to discipline those MPs that did not follow the party line? We assess this by combining our data on RCVs with individual-level information on party lists and positions of candidates on these lists. Specifically, we expect deviance of an MP from the party line in RCVs to result in demoting this MP on her party list in the next election. As explained above, this should, however, only affect those MPs that did not switch parties or left office within the recent legislative term. Some issues of operationalizing "position on list" then arise: MPs were allowed to run on multiple lists, as long as there did not run on more than one list per district (with RWVs counting as a district of their own). These multiple candidacies also occurred frequently, for 85% of our observations. We thus took the "best" position of each MP in each election (in which he or she took part) as our dependent variable. Still, with districts varying in size and the party vote spread unevenly among them, running on, say, third rank may mean safe passage in one district and peril in another. We address this issue by looking at the chance of empirically gaining a mandate on any rank of any list. We first define as point Zero all lowest ranks on all party lists that still led to a mandate in that district. Each rank further above on these lists (if any) received a score equaling its distance in ranks to point Zero. Each rank further below received a negative score equaling this distance. If, for example the list of the SPD in the district of Hamburg held 11 candidates with candidates on ranks one to four

receiving mandates, rank four served as point Zero, rank three received as score of 1, rank two a score of 2, and rank one a score of 3. Rank five then received a score of -1, rank six of -2, and so on, with rank 11 receiving -7. We then assigned these scores to all candidates that only ran on one list. For candidates running on multiple lists we assigned the highest scores gained on any of those lists. These scores serve as the dependent variable in the following OLS.

Table 4: OLS on change in relative position on best list (models 1-3), logistic regression on determinants of party switches (model 4)

Model	1	2	3	4
Observations	1373	1373	1254	3287
F test/LR test	6.11	9.34	21.15	594.4
Prob > F	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R2 / Pseudo R2	0.01	0.01	0.22	0.35
Adj. R2	-	0.01	0.15	
	Coefficient (S.E.)	Coefficient (S.E.)	Coefficient (S.E.)	Odds Ratio (S.E.)
share dissident	-0.09* (0.036)	-0.24*** (0.056)	-0.17** (0.052)	1.12*** (0.026)
(share dissident)^2		0.01*** (0.003)	0.01*** (0.002)	
Previous best score			-0.18*** (0.053)	
In government			-2.45*** (0.293)	1.83* (0.250)
Parties				
BVP			3.59*** (0.688)	
DDP			3.24*** (0.764)	0.02*** (0.535)
DNVP			2.73*** (0.639)	0.12*** (0.318)
DVP			3.83*** (0.696)	0.01*** (0.555)
KPD			2.20** (0.776)	0.27*** (0.326)
NSDAP			12.92*** (1.138)	
SPD			2.80*** (0.611)	0.01*** (0.469)
USPD			3.46*** (1.012)	2.01 (0.431)
WP			3.06*** (0.712)	0.03*** (0.607)
Z			4.31*** (0.677)	0.02*** (0.440)
Other				0.01*** (0.537)
Legislative period				
1920-24			0.97* (0.381)	4.58*** (0.339)
1924a			0.91* (0.379)	0.33 (0.603)
1924b-28			0.68 (0.399)	1.71 (0.413)
1928-30			1.48*** (0.377)	3.75*** (0.368)
Constant	0.35** (0.112)	0.47*** (0.117)	-2.07** (0.647)	0.30** (0.397)

Party dummies: other is reference category for model 3. Membership in BVP or NSDAP is reference category for model 4 due to no switches from BVP.

We measure intra-party dissidence at the individual level as the share of RCVs in each legislative period in which each MP voted differently than the majority of MPs of his or her party. This is the main independent variable of interest to us. In order to account for outright party splits over policy, we however also add a quadratic term of this share. We also include the following variables in order to control for events that affected the electoral fate of MPs: a dummy variable on whether each MP's party took part in a cabinet in the recent legislative period, a series of dummies on all Reichstag factions, a series of dummies on legislative periods (with the term of 1919-20 as reference category), and a control for each MP's score of his best rank in the previous election. We finally restrict analyses to only those MPs that stayed in office for the recent term as a whole, that never switched party, and to each first RCV of each day in order to exclude cases in

which repeated rolls were called as a strategy of parliamentary obstruction. Results of a baseline model with only share of dissident RCV votes (model 1), of a model including the quadratic term (model 2) and of the full model (model 3) are shown in table 4. They conform to our expectations: in the full model, a one-percent increase in RCV-dissidence results in a loss of 0.2 points on the best-list score. The average score of the best list of MP's under scrutiny in these regressions was 1.95, and there were 100 RCVs held on average in each legislative period. Coefficients of the dissidence-variable thus point to a sustained influence of parliamentary behavior on the electoral prospects of individual MPs with a view to their re-nomination.

4.3 The Low Threshold and its Consequences

But as we argued above, party leaders faced a trade-off when disciplining MPs. The more they insisted on intra-party unity, and the less the party line fit the interest of individual MPs, the more likely should dissenting MPs be to split from their party. We test this in model 4 (see table 4). Indeed, the more often an MP deviated from the party majority vote, the more likely was he to switch. There are however considerable party-specific differences in the degree to which MPs were ready to split. This is depicted in figure 2, for the SPD, and the DNVP.

Figure 2: Predicted probabilities of an MP splitting from party on whose list elected for conservative DNVP MPs and social-democratic SPD MPs, a function of the number of this MP's dissenting votes in RCVs.
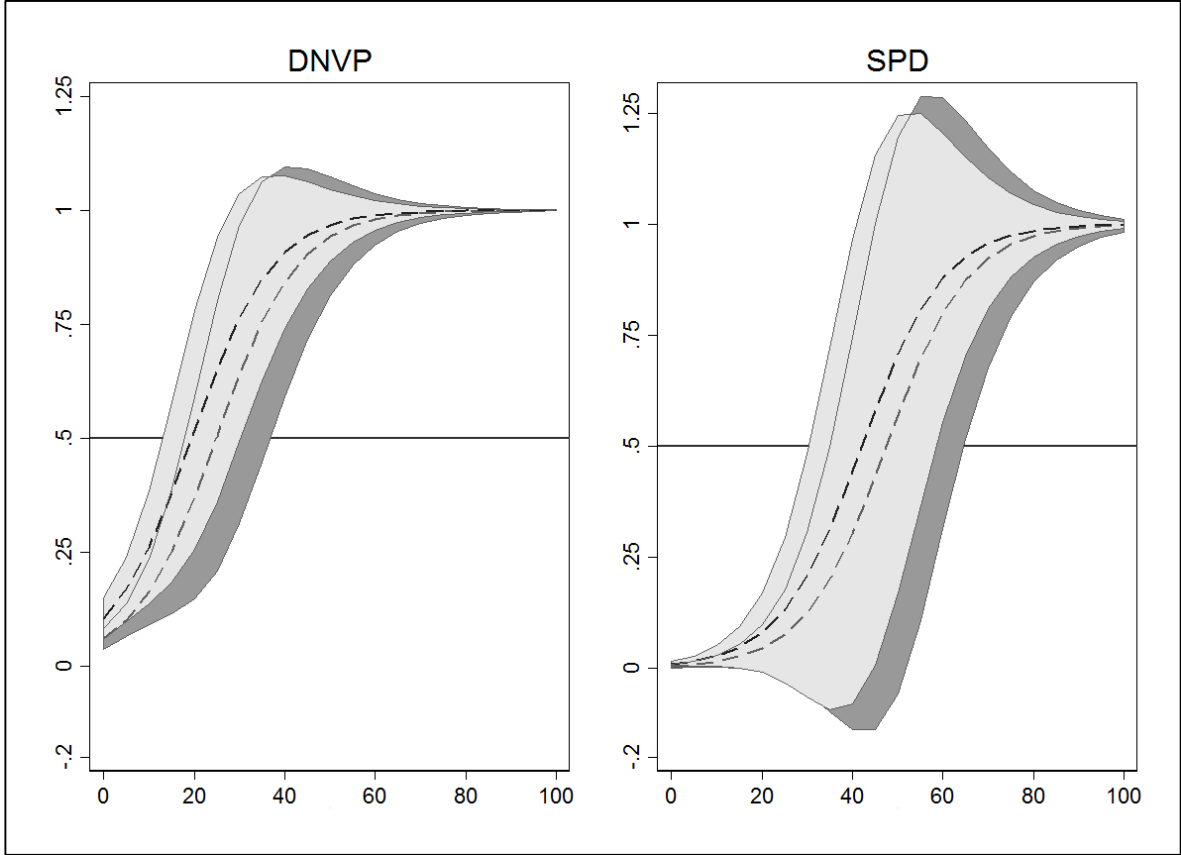
This difference points to differences in the degree to which the third consequence, of dissident MPs setting up a party of their own, had an effect on party system fragmentation. With a view to our argument on parties representing specific components of the electorate, the task for an MP then is to find a sufficiently large group of voters to appeal to. According to Lepsius (1993) there were two large "milieus" in Imperial and Weimar, each represented by its specific party: the working class by the SPD, and the catholic population by the Zentrum. But for everyone else (i.e. the protestant non-working-class population) there did not exist a genuine, specific party. There did, of course exist the other three main Imperial *parties*: the Left-liberals, the National-liberals, and the Conservatives. But none of these parties represented a clear-cut segment of society. The Left-liberals had supporters among, e.g. clerks and employees and the "free professions" in large cities as well as among rural smallholders; the National-liberals were favored by these segments of society in smaller towns, and among employees in the Ruhr area; the Conservatives represented owners and employees of large agricultural estates in the North-east, the protestant middle class in Northern Bavaria and a host of other smallish components (Sperber 1997). We thus expect fragmentation to mainly affect these three parties.

In order to assess the degree of party splits over time, we calculated the effective number of parties (ENP, cf. Laakso and Taagepera 1979) "within" those parties for the six elections from 1919 to 1930 that were represented by MPs who were members of either of the five "pre-1919" parties. Thus, if there were no splits from a party that also resulted in the formation of a new party, the within-ENP is always one. If however, for example, a group of DNVP-MPs split, formed their own party, and ran in the next election, the within-DNVP ENP rises in this next election. Results are presented in table 6. For the DDP and DVP the within-ENP is always close to 1. With a view to our findings on relatively low intra-party cohesion of DDP-MPs in RCVs this is not surprising – by our argument, low cohesion points towards low levels of sanctioning in instances of dissident behavior, thereby lowering incentives to split. Still, the overall vote-share of the DDP was also in constant decline – falling from 18 percent in 1919 to 1 percent in 1933. First the DVP gained from this, but only to suffer a similar decline towards less than 1 percent of the vote-share in the 1930s. For those parties however where cohesion goes up – namely the Zentrum and the DNVP – we observe within-ENPs to rise, with de-facto fragmentation of the DNVP into more than three parties by 1930. Finally, the SPD, where within-ENPs are also low, had experienced a major split already in 1916 when its left wing formed the USPD, and later the communist KPD. These findings point towards substantial movement on part of MPs to split from their party, even if their newly formed parties did not always perform as well as to guarantee reelection.

Table 5: Effective Number of Parties (ENP) for main Imperial parties and related splitting parties

	Within-ENP					Parties of former MPs
	SPD	DDP	Z	DVP	DNVP	
1919	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	(.)
1920	1.00	1.00	1.65	1.00	1.00	Z: Christian People's Party, Bavarian People's Party (BVP)
1924a	1.00	1.00	1.46	1.03	1.00	Z: BVP; DVP: National-liberal Union
1924b	1.00	1.00	1.51	1.00	1.00	Z: BVP
1928	1.01	1.00	1.48	1.00	1.57	Z: BVP; DNVP: German Peasants' Party (DLV), Saxonian Peasants' Party (SLV), People's Rights Party (VRP);SPD: Old SPD
1930	1.00	1.00	1.48	1.00	3.14	Z: BVP; DNVP: Christian-Social People's Party (CSVD), Conservative People's Party (KVP), DLV, SLV, VRP; DVP: Christian National Middle Classes' Party
1932a	1.02	1.00	1.49	1.00	1.41	Z: BVP; DNVP: CSVD, VRP, CSVD; SPD: SAPD
1932b	1.01	1.00	1.49	1.00	1.34	Z: BVP; DNVP: CSVD, VRP, CSVD; SPD: SAPD
1933	1.00	1.00	1.46	1.00	1.24	Z: BVP; DNVP: CSVD

5. Conclusion

The substantial increase in parliamentary party cohesion due to the introduction of closed-list PR in Weimar Germany provided MPs with incentives to break away from their party group and establish new electoral platforms. Due to Weimar's relatively low electoral entry barriers this was a promising strategy for all those not willing to toe the party line. So the new electoral rules did indeed allow party elites to sanction dissenting MPs by demoting them to much less promising list positions in the upcoming elections. But party leaders' grip on backbench MPs was brittle: Party splits were encouraged by a low electoral threshold.

A large literature has analyzed the nexus between electoral rules and the number of parties (Neto and Cox 1997, Clark and Golder 2006, Stoll 2008) – with differences in the cleavage structures across societies as an often identified explanatory variable for differences in the (effective) numbers of parties under similar electoral rules. Our paper allows identifying institutional parameters explaining the variation in the number of parties while holding cleavages constant. Thus, our findings extend beyond the "German case" at least as regards improving the precision of findings beyond the notion that PR tends to raise the effective number of parties.

As concerns Germany however, when the members of the parliamentary council agreed on a new electoral system in 1949 – the by-now famous mixed electoral system combining a PR- and a majoritarian-tier (Massicotte and Blais 1999, Shugart and Wattenberg 2001, Manow 2016, Massicotte forthcoming) – the experiences of the Weimar years were still looming large and had a decisive influence on decision makers (Bawn 1993). A crucial element of the new electoral system was then a legal threshold at five percent for the PR-component of mandate allocation at the regional level. After its introduction in the first Bundestag election of 1949 the threshold was tightened twice, in the two following elections of 1953 and 1957. It now requires five percent of

the vote at the national level.[7] The succession of electoral systems, from the majoritarian rules of the Imperial times, to the "hyper-proportional" rules of the Weimar era, and to the combination of PR with moderate to high legal thresholds in postwar Germany therefore resembles an enduring learning-process that finally resulted in the stable high party discipline/low party fragmentation equilibrium of the Federal Republic.

We doubt that legislators fully understood the complex interaction between party cohesion in parliament, electoral fragmentation and, finally, the breakdown of inter-party coordination in the Weimar Reichstag. But the more restrictive legal threshold under the electoral system of post-war Germany confronted parties and candidates with quite distinctive incentives. The high number of parties in the parliament of the Federal Republic of 1949 decreased massively in the course of only eight years (Klingemann and Wessels 2001). Germany's new electoral system then allowed for the combination of highly disciplined parliamentary parties with a relatively low (effective) number of parties.

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[7] In 1949, in the first federal election, parties had to pass a five-per cent threshold *in any state* in the PR-component, or had to meet a one-seat threshold in the plurality-component nationally. In 1953, the PR-threshold became more restrictive, since it was now applied to the federal level: to enter parliament, parties had to gain at least 5 per cent of all votes cast nationwide. The one-seat threshold, however, remained, and was only increased to three seats in the 1957 election Klingemann, H.-D. and B. Wessels (2001). The Political Consequences of Germany's Mixed-Member System: Personalization at the Grass Roots? Mixed-Member Electoral Systems. The Best of Both Worlds? M. S. Shugart and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 279-296.
. These rules have stayed in place ever since

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