NATIONALIZATION, SECTIONAL INSURGENCY, AND VOLATILITY
CANADA AS A CRITICAL CASE

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Abstract: The Canadian party system exhibits episodic volatility that accompanies shifts in its degree of geographic integration and in its fractionalization. In comparative work, the case is commonly presented as a prime example of local Duvergerian bipartisan equilibration combined with failure in coordination across locales, where the latter reflects the diminished importance of the national policy agenda relative to province-specific ones. I show that a significant fraction of the fractionalization occurs at the local level precisely as the three parties that are rivals for government run candidates everywhere and seek to nationalize their votes. Volatility is closely related to episodic breakthroughs by regional insurgents as they push back against the nationalizing pressure or as their votes are absorbed by the mainstream parties. The paper solves some puzzles and points to yet others. The paper is intended to convey the essence of a manuscript in progress, an analytical history of the system.

Keywords: Duverger's Law; volatility; fractionalization; nationalization; party competition.
Introduction

Canada has always been a puzzling case, a difficult fit for standard theories of party competition. Its reputation for electoral volatility seems to defy any sort of classification (LeDuc 1984). Although it has motivated important theorizing, notably in the realm of electoral fractionalization and Duverger’s Law, the case is a poor fit to the problem. And the puzzle of the system goes deeper than electoral fargmentation.

The critical fact is that Canada combines a deeply divided society (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972) with an unforgiving majoritarian electoral framework. The framework induces inclusive strategies, with nationalizing intent and effect. But it has also privileged a specific subset of the electorate, which in turn enabled something close to one-party domination. No less important than the fact of domination is the ideological location of the dominant agent: in the centre. A further consequence was a peculiar pattern of electoral volatility, alternation between chronic third-party insurgency and episodic massive swings to the system’s second-place party. The swings produced electoral coalitions that were incoherent and unsustainable. Overlaid on all this was gradual growth by a party of labour, with a completely separate dynamic.

After a brief introduction to the parties, I move to the system’s reputation for electoral volatility. Volatility is enabled by multipartism, another distinctive feature, both in its overall volume but also in its composition. The standard account is that Duverger’s Law holds locally but not nationally. It turns out that it does not hold locally as well, even as the now-standard account of sectional voting misses more targets than it hits. Unpacking the problem leads to a unified account of nationalization, insurgency, and volatility.

The Parties

Two Canadian parties predate the creation of the federation, and to this day only these parties have ever formed the government. These are the Liberal and Conservative parties, in the left panel of Figure 1. The Liberal brand has been consistent from the beginning and only once did the party campaign under a different name, as the “Opposition” in 1917. Conservatives have campaigned under various labels, but there is little confusion about their organizational continuity. Among the “new” parties, many are actually quite old and some are defunct. The CCF-NDP refers to a single party, which changed its name, from the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. The change of name signals the party’s maturation as a party of

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1 The starting point is 1878, the first election with the secret ballot. In the 19th century and early in the 20th candidates recognizably in an affinity contested elections under subtly different labels. Also, parties occasionally modified their label from election to election with little break in organizational continuity. For Figures 1, 5, and 6, “Conservatives” include Conservatives (1867-1940, 2004-11), Liberal Conservatives (1867-1911), Unionist (1917), National Government (1940-5), and Progressive Conservatives (1945-2000), “Liberals” include Liberals (1867-2011) and Opposition (1917), and the CCF-NDP includes the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (1935-1958) and the New Democratic Party (1962-2011).
labour. I distinguish it from all other new parties, which I label collectively as “insurgents.” The label is arbitrary and is used for convenience. Many of these parties are “anti-system” in the enlarged sense proposed by Capoccia (2002). Most are “niche” parties (Meguid 2005) in that they contest only one dimension of the larger policy space. The most important of these are: the Progressives, a mainly western and agrarian group that flourished briefly in the 1920s; Social Credit, a party that began as a monetary reform entity but that morphed into a party of regional defence with a conservative cast and with two quite separate manifestations, one in the West (1935-68) and one in Quebec (1962-1980); the Bloc Populaire, a Quebec focused ethnoregional party that emerged in 1945 and then disappeared; Reform (later Alliance), 1988-2003, a conservative and mainly western party; and the Bloc Québécois, 1993-present, an ethnonational party officially committed to secession by Quebec. I use “insurgent” simply to flag that their initial appearance is typically sudden and that most fade away. By pooling the insurgent vote, Figure 1 masks the group’s volatility.

![Figure 1 The Parties](image)

The figure shows that old parties have yielded vote share to the new ones, although not on a single dynamic. The decline of the Liberal party has been mainly gradual, at least until 2011. The division of the rest of the vote has often been such that the Liberals routinely governed, if on an eroding base. The Conservative vote has been marked by severe volatility, with a series half again as volatile as the Liberal one.\(^2\) A similar asymmetry is visible among the new parties. The CCF-NDP is the complement of the Liberals in that the party’s growth has mainly gradual, subject to only modest reverses (with the exception of the 1990s). The insurgent share shows no real trend and features extended periods of decline. And the share is something of a fiction; it is the composite of an even more fissiparous set of sub-series.

\(^2\) Specifically, the standard deviation of the Conservative series is 11.0 points where that for the Liberals is 7.4.
Volatility

Given this parade of names, it should come as little surprise that among long-standing democracies Canada exhibits relatively high volatility values ((Mainwaring and Zoco 2007, Table 1), higher for postwar elections than for any Anglosphere comparator and higher than in most old European democracies. Simple averages understate the case, however, as does the focus on postwar elections. Canadian electoral punctuations are remarkable as much for their timing as for their scale, and Figure 2 brings out this peculiarity. The figure presents 20th-century volatility values (Pedersen 1979) election by election, along with a smoothed plot to facilitate visual comparison. The comparators are the Anglosphere, with US Presidential and Congressional data presented separately. Critically, all are single-member district (SMD) systems.3

\[\text{Figure 2} \quad \text{Time path of electoral volatility:} \]
\[\text{Anglo-American SMD systems}\]

\textit{Note:} Entries are volatility values (Pedersen 1979), smoothed by loess, bw = 0.30.

In the other systems, with the partial exception of US Presidential elections, inter-election volatility peaks in the 1930s or before. This is true even for the generally stable US House. Volatility peaks at the other systems’ transitions to class politics, and marks enduring structural change. After 1945, volatility in these countries never approaches the pre-war peak. Canada too saw high volatility in the

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3 The New Zealand series stops in 1993 to reflect that system’s shift in formula from First Past the Post (FPP) to Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP).
1920s and 30s, on about the same scale as elsewhere and for somewhat parallel reasons. But there are more eye-catching swings after 1945 than before, with notable peaks in 1958, 1984, and 1993. The 1993 peak—a volatility reading of 41—is especially large, the single most volatile result among old democracies outside the immediate aftermath of global war (compare Bartolini and Mair 1990, Figure 3.1).

**Fractionalization**

The Canadian system is also well known for its multipartism, which makes it the classic deviant case for Duverger’s Law. Figure 3 scales Canada’s fragmentation to that in the SMD comparators with smoothed plots of the “effective number of parties,” or ENP (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Smoothing enables all five Anglo-American systems to appear on a single graph with a reasonable aspect ratio. Australia may seem like an inappropriate comparator, as it uses a majority formula, but it serves to reinforce the main point about Canada. Where FPP makes no concessions to coordination failure and thus is said to force voters to consolidate into two camps, the majority formula is more accommodating in that it allows first preferences to be less consolidated than are single non-transferable preferences elicited by FPP (Sawer 2004). So Australian first preferences ought, in principle, to set the Anglosphere’s upper bound for fragmentation.

**Figure 3**

Effective number of electoral parties: Anglo-American SMD systems

*Note:* Entries are ENP values (Laakso & Taagepera 1979), smoothed by loess, $bw = 0.30$

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4 Even the staggering Italian volatility reading for 1994 does not quite scale the Canadian heights.
At the beginning of the 20th century, the Canadian system was the least fragmented. Values for the US peaked in the 1910s and for New Zealand and Britain in the 1920s. Here again we see the transition to class politics. In the US this meant the marginalization of socialist parties and the eventual reorientation of the Democrats to a class basis and a privileged relationship with organized labour. In New Zealand and Britain this meant the emergence of a Labour party as a serious force, which in turn induced rivals on the centre-right to jockey for strategic advantage and ultimately to consolidate into a single party of the moderate right. This produced the drop in ENP values in the 1930s. In Canada, fractionalization came later but when it came it endured. From the 1930s to the 1980s, the Canadian system harboured nearly one extra “equivalent” party relative to its early years and (until the 1970s) relative to Britain and New Zealand. This was the situation when Rae (1969) put the first systematic comparative findings on the record: from a Duvergerian point of view, the US, Britain, and New Zealand were well behaved and Canada was the deviant case. Canada’s deviance is all the more striking when Australia is brought into the comparison. In the first two decades of the 20th century the disparate pre-1901 party systems of the formerly separate Australian colonies were swiftly consolidated. As in Britain and New Zealand, the advent of the Labor party induced a crisis, with the attendant fractionalization/defractionalization sequence. The second Australian peak, in the 1930s, reflects a temporary breakdown on the Labor side. When the Australian system settled down in the 1940s, its ENP was 2.8. If the contrast between Australia, on one hand, and the US, New Zealand, and Britain, on the other, is easily interpretable on Duvergerian terms, the contrast with Canada is not. In this period, notwithstanding Canada’s persistence in FPP, the Canadian system was not just more fractionalized than its FPP comparators but more fractionalized than Australia with its weaker electoral formula. Rae’s identification of Canadian exceptionalism started the eventual rethinking of Duverger’s Law by Riker (1976, 1982) and Cox (1997).

An obvious explanatory starting point is that Canada is a federation. According to Gerring (2005), a strong federation such as Canada is worth about 15 percentage points in total third-party share, quite apart from other forces in play. From a pure two-party baseline, the emergence of a third party of this size, discounting the other two parties equally, would add 0.6 “effective” parties to the system. But fractionalization on this scale is not supposed to happen in SMD systems. Riker (1976) and Cox (1997) crack the door for a Canadian explanation by arguing that Duverger’s Law applies locally; coordination across locales requires a different logic, which reflects the increased centrality of the national policy agenda. Chhibber and Kollman (2004) push the door wide open by running the national agenda logic in reverse and arguing that as the federal government’s role shrinks, so does the imperative to coordinate party labels across federal units. On this account, competition at the district level, and probably province-wide, should feature two parties only. ENP values greater than two should reflect mainly differences across locales in the identity of the two locally dominant

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5 Probably assisted by the fact that before 1919, Australia used FPP.
parties.

The argument is elegant but not supported by a close reading of the case. The Canadian system is much more fragmented than Gerring would predict, and Chhibber and Kollman supply no more than half the explanation of Canada’s total pattern. The peculiarity of the case is fully revealed in Figure 4. Three plots appear, one for overall ENP and one each for the local and extra-local components. The overall component is basically that from Figure 3, this time, because the details are critical, without the smoothing. The local component is the average ENP within constituencies and the extra-local component—the indicator of sectional breakdown—is the difference between the total and the local ENP. The logic of this figure originates with Chhibber and Kollman (2004).

Extra-local fragmentation is the component that Chhibber and Kollman (2004) emphasize, and it unquestionably supplies the fireworks. It erupts in bursts, an anticipatory breakthrough in 1921, a spasm in 1945, and enduring lifts of roughly 0.5 “effective” parties each in 1935 and 1993.

But, contra Chhibber and Kollman, the timing of insurgency does not correspond to the importance attached to the national government. Instead it obeys logic of its own, an episodic one of surge and decline. The key surges—1921, 1935, 1945, and 1993—came in moments of crisis in which Ottawa
was a critical actor. In no sense can these be characterized as initiating periods of federal-government irrelevance. Rather, their timing directs us to theories about party entry, where relations among parties in the same arena are critical (Hug 2001).

No less awkward is that, sooner or later, extra-local values retreat. To see this, first set the extra-local plot before 1921 as the baseline for assessing post-1921 values. Four moments after 1921 bring regression to the pre-1921 baseline: 1930, 1958, 1984, and 1988. Whatever the mechanisms that produced them, each reversionary election returned a Conservative majority government, two of them as landslides, and between 1911 and 2011 only these elections returned such an outcome. In the 20th century, Conservative accession to majority status involved soaking up the sectional tension of the preceding years. Once every generation, a grand consolidation occurs, the effective number of parties shrinks, and the Liberals are chased from office. Superficially, this looks like Duvergerian equilibration, in that deconsolidated opposition forces overcome their differences and successfully coordinate. But if this is equilibration, it struggles against powerful disequilibrium dynamics, as Conservative hubris is always followed swiftly by nemesis: each Conservative majority in the 20th century collapsed spectacularly. When it did, sectionalism returned with a vengeance.

Moreover, this dynamic occurs at the “wrong” level: although the non-local component ebbs and flows, local fragmentation continues to grow. After 1921, local values began a secular climb, from 1.9 before 1921 to 2.4 in 1930s-40s-50s, to 2.6 in the 1960s-70s, to 2.7 since 1980. That is, the typical riding has come to feature something like three-party competition. In principle, an ENP number like this could be produced by many very small parties, none well positioned to affect the contest between the frontrunners (Dunleavy and Boucek 2003). Alternatively, there could be what Cox calls a non-Duvergerian equilibrium, where three contestants are just too close for voters or elites to discern which pair is strategically privileged. In Canada, however, as Johnston and Cutler (2009, Figure 6.6) show, the third-place party is typically more than large enough to cover the margin between the first- and the second-place finishers but is not itself positioned to displace either of them. As a result, coordination failure is ubiquitous in Canadian elections.

All this discussion slides over the fact that national ENP values in Britain and New Zealand approached the Canadian level in the 1980s, and that British (again) and Australian values did so in the 2000s. I return to this in the conclusion.

The Imperative of Nationalization

The local pattern in Figure 4 reflects response by three parties to the imperative of nationalization. In this Canada exemplifies the logic identified for Europe by Caramani (2004), in which parties that are not constituted on sectarian or ethnoregional lines move swiftly to offer candidates pretty much across the entire national landscape. They do so in advance of the changes in sociology or political

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6 From the 1920s to the 1940s, local fractionalization did move in sequence with the extra-local component, although all along riding an upward trend. After 1945, the local trend became much smoother.
economy that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identify as critical to the nationalization of politics. According to Figure 5, the two old parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, were contesting over 90 percent of all seats by the beginning of the 20th century and 100 percent by the century’s end. The party of the labour-left, the CCF-NDP, originally ran candidates selectively, mainly in the West, but by the 1960s also resolved to contest all seats.

From the universalization of contestation should have followed the nationalization of the electorate. This did occur, but not without resistance. This is the lesson of Figure 6, which gives a time plot of the standard deviation of party shares across constituencies for the three parties just mentioned. For all three, the trend is downward; this is not just an illusion created by the notable high points in early decades. The shifts to 1911 were accomplished in spite of the fact that the electorate was undergoing a dramatic westward expansion, with the incorporation of four new provinces. Some of the flux reflects change in parties’ sizes, as the Liberal and Conservative parties were on average rather smaller after 1921 than before. The low values for the Conservatives in the 1990s reflect the party’s abject weakness, reversed in the 2000s with a concomitant lift in SD values. All along, the CCF-NDP line usually lies below the others, as the party was the smallest of three. These artifacts aside, the trends mainly reflect substantive processes of geographic spread. But the downward trends are broken by more than just ordinary short-term flux. The spike in 1917 was the result of a breakdown in the system’s ability to integrate all sections of the electorate, as French and English, Catholic and Protestant, Quebec and the rest were at loggerheads over conscription for overseas
service in World War I. The high points of 1945 and 1979-80 also reflect French-English tension.

Centrifugal-Centripetal Dynamics I: Old Parties

In fact, Quebec has been a major dividing line for almost all of Canada’s electoral history, and Figure 7 shows gaps at the boundary for the traditional parties. For most of the 20th century, the Liberal party has been stronger and the Conservative party, weaker in Quebec than elsewhere. Down to 1980, the gap averaged 15-16 percentage points for each party (12-13 points if the peak observations for 1917 and 1979-80 are dropped). Then for a decade or so, it reversed. Although Figure 7 does not show this directly, the gap between these parties within Quebec was very wide, wider than in the rest of the country.

Which is to say that within Quebec votes were historically highly consolidated. Whichever party won, won big. This combined with Quebec’s size, holding by itself 25 percent or more of all seats in parliament, made Quebec the pivot for government. For the Liberals over most of the 20th century securing a Quebec bloc was both necessary and sufficient for winning an election. That is, almost without fail when the party carried Quebec en bloc it carried the country. Conversely, if the Liberal party failed to carry Quebec this way it was practically guaranteed to lose the election. To substantiate these claims I present a simplified form of Qualitative Comparative Analysis, or QCA, in Table 1.

FIGURE 6 Nationalization of electoral forces, core parties

*Note:* for classification of candidacies, see note 1.
To qualify as a regional bloc, I propose that a party return 20 percent or more of all House seats from a region, that is, by itself the region puts the party almost half way to a single-party majority. The 20 percent threshold is frankly inductive. Over the 20th century, Quebec and the West each contained at least 25 percent of Canada-wide seats, while Ontario held 35 percent (over 40 percent in the 19th century). In 75 percent of elections from 1878 to 1988 the Quebec winner exceeded the 20-percent threshold—put another way, the winning party took 80 percent or more of the province’s seats. By winning an election Canada-wide, I mean forming the government. Most of the time this means forming a majority government, but not always. With one exception (1926), a minority government is formed by the party with the largest number of seats.\(^7\)

Focusing on the dichotomies at thresholds keeps the analysis close to the original qualitative intuitions in QCA, and stays off the contested turf of “fuzziness” (Ragin 2005; Seawright 2005). A QCA-like analysis, meanwhile, leaves open the possibility that one party’s path to victory is not just the mirror image of the other’s. So it is useful to gauge the impact from bloc-like success or failure not just in Quebec but also in other provinces or regions. By setting up the data as input to QCA, it is easy to read off how often a party clears the 20-percent threshold in a region and what happens when it does. The results appear in Table 1, with annotations to sort out thorny issues.

Analysis starts by declaring the 20-plus share as a dummy variable for each region where it appears.

\(^7\) Four times, the minority-government party did not have a plurality in votes.
Such a share can never appear in Atlantic Canada, the smallest region. Likewise, the Liberals never returned such a bloc from the West, so that region also does not appear in the Liberal analysis. Only for the Conservatives are three regions relevant. The table is then ordered by party and, within each party, into necessary and sufficient parts. The data are not interrogated for detailed Boolean logic.

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### Liberal

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#### Liberal

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#### Conservative

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<td>0.46</td>
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<td>1917 (coalition), 1958 (landslide), 1979 (minority)</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>1984</td>
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1. Strictly speaking, minority government.
2. Popular vote and seat plurality, but Liberals retained office with Progressive support. Conservatives acceded to office mid-1926, King-Byng crisis ensued.
3. Precedes mass settlement of the West.
about all alternative paths to a given result; only basic outcome probabilities appear. If a Quebec bloc is a necessary condition, a party should never form the government in the absence of such a bloc. If it is sufficient, the party should always form the government in the presence of such a bloc. We can also ask the same question of the other relevant regions.

For the Liberals, as already mentioned, a Quebec bloc nearly is both necessary and sufficient for victory. In 31 elections from 1878 to 1988, the Liberals failed to return 20 percent or more of the House from Quebec eleven times. Only once when this happened did they win the overall election. That exception is 1963, when they just missed the cut, so to speak: the Liberals’ Quebec bloc was 18 percent of the House and the result was minority government. So carrying Quebec is de facto a necessary condition.

It is also pretty close to a sufficient condition. Of the fourteen elections in which Quebec and only Quebec gave the Liberals a 20-plus share, the party won eleven. Of these eleven, seven were majority results. One of the losses was the conscription election, 1917, an extreme case of cultural polarization. The other two elections yielded Conservative minority governments. Six times the Liberals returned 20-plus blocs from both Ontario and Quebec, and each election yielded a victory — unsurprisingly, given the arithmetic. Of these six, three (1935, 1940, and 1949) were Canada-wide landsides, so in a sense Quebec and, especially, Ontario were not really acting as blocs on an otherwise deconsolidated field; rather, they were swept along in a tide. Still of all elections in which the Liberals swept Quebec, 85 percent yielded Canada-wide victories.

The pattern for Ontario is instructive in the negative on just how distinctive Quebec is. The Liberals failed to extract 20-plus blocs from Ontario 24 of 31 times. They nonetheless won 15 of these elections, fourteen because they swept Quebec and the fifteenth because they almost did so. When they exceeded the threshold in Ontario, they won six of seven. But the seventh instance is telling: this was an election, 1891, in which they did not sweep Quebec.

The pattern for the Conservatives is more complex. As already noted, the West is relevant, and so the number of alternative routes to power is also greater. Of the 31 elections, the Conservatives failed to sweep Quebec in 27. (This leaves seven elections in which neither party swept the province.) Quebec is less necessary to Conservative victories than to Liberal ones: of these 27 elections, the Conservatives won eight. Not a necessary condition, but not a great track record for the party either. Two of these eight were before 1900, that is, before growth in the West took off, when Ontario could still deliver a really big bloc. Of the other seven, three were minority results. A fourth was the Unionist victory of 1917. The other outright majority victories without a Quebec sweep came in 1911, 1930, and 1958. Even in these cases, Quebec delivered an important boost to the Conservatives, as I show below. To be sure, the largest subset in these elections (13 observations) comprises occasions when the Conservatives were weak everywhere, so in many years the story of Conservative weakness is not just a story about Quebec.
A case could be made that sweeping Quebec is at least a sufficient condition for Conservative all-Canada success. On all four occasions in which the party did sweep the province, the party won majorities. One of these was the landslide of 1984, to which Quebec was useful but not necessary. Two of these were in the 19th century and are part of a sequence that indicates Quebec’s pivotal status. In the fourth election, 1988, Quebec was the sufficient condition: its seats kept the Conservatives in power.

Again, Ontario is instructive. The pattern is not as negative as for the Liberals but neither is it one of resounding pivotal status. For the Conservatives, carrying Ontario is not quite a necessary condition, although it helps mightily. Of the fourteen elections where the Conservatives fell short in the province they carried the country in only two. One was 1962, an exceedingly weak and short-lived minority result. The other was 1988, when Quebec stepped into the breach. But carrying Ontario is hardly sufficient for Conservative victory: the party won ten of the 17 times it extracted 20-plus seat blocs from Ontario, a 59 percent success rate. In six of these ten, the party extracted a big bloc from at least one other region. Of these six, three were landslides, including 1917, so no region was pivotal. Two cases predate the growth of the West, that is, when Ontario was simply enormous, relatively speaking.

With one exception, every 20th-century Conservative majority government featured an important swing in the Quebec vote. This includes the two times the Conservatives actually swept the province (1984 and 1988). Although in the party’s three other majorities (1911, 1930, and 1958), they did not cross the 20-point threshold they made serious gains in Quebec, usually larger gains than elsewhere. But sooner or later—usually sooner—every majority victory brought disaster on the party. Indeed, as the century unfolded the dynamic became more and more explosive.

Figure 8 captures the pattern in essence, by showing the surge from the pre-majority baseline in each of Quebec and the rest of Canada, followed by the decline when the majority is lost. The baseline is usually the election immediately before the majority result. The exception is 1958, where the baseline is not 1957 but 1953; the Conservative surge came in two stages. The decline usually follows immediately. For the 1980-93 sequence, however, the decline follows a second, consecutive majority result, although the point of comparison for 1993 is 1984, the year of the initial surge. For 1911, the year of decline is deemed to be 1921, despite the fact that the government retained its majority in 1917. The latter result, as should be clear by now, was exceptional, the product of a wartime coalition. So parallel to 1984, the baseline for this sequence is the first election, 1911.

Three times in four, surges were bigger in Quebec than elsewhere, and the same is true for declines. In 1911, Conservative gains were slightly larger in Quebec than elsewhere. In 1930, the Quebec surge was essentially the only one; elsewhere the vote hardly changed. In 1958, the surges were broadly similar inside and out: a bigger surge outside Quebec if the baseline is 1953 (but a larger one, not shown, inside Quebec if the baseline is 1957). In 1984, the Quebec surge was massively bigger. Among declines, Quebec ones were bigger in 1921, 1958, and 1993.
Over the century, the pattern is explosive. Each Conservative surge in Quebec is larger than the one before, in each pair by roughly a factor of two. Each Quebec decline is greater still than its surge, sometimes massively so. Outside Quebec, the pattern is more subtle but with the same ultimate result: although declines do not grow systematically until the last one, two out of three are massively larger than the preceding surge. The net effect was to make the party worse off outside Quebec than when it started, just as happened inside Quebec. The only episode to leave the Conservatives better off outside Quebec than before was the 1953-63 one.

Each episode corresponds to a critical moment on extra-local line in Figure 4. For the first, 1911-21, the story is mostly about the end point, the collapse of the Conservatives both in and out of Quebec. Outside Quebec, the collapse came mainly in the West, so the shift in that region combined with the Quebec result sent the extra-local component to the highest point for the next 70 years. The next sequence, 1926-35 is more symmetrical. The rise of the Conservative vote in Quebec, combined with little change elsewhere reduced the extra-local component to the first post-1921 low point. The collapse of 1935 took the party back to the starting point, especially weak in Quebec and the West. This in turn sent the extra-local line back up. The next low point came in 1958, the product of a Canada-wide sweep. In this sweep, the Conservatives made up disproportionate

**FIGURE 7  Episodes of Conservative Surge and Decline**

ground where they were formerly weak, in Quebec and the West. Their subsequent collapse was especially great in Quebec but also in Ontario, and so again the extra-local line goes back up. The last episode was, again, impressive for regional convergence in 1984 and even more impressive for the carnage of 1993. In 1993, the Conservatives crashed in both regions that had been pillars of their electoral coalition in the preceding decade.

Suffice it to assert that the Liberal party was not the sole or even the principal object of Conservative gains or losses. Although Liberals do gain or lose in opposite rhythm to the Conservatives, the amplitude of their short-term swings is much smaller. In sum, for old parties there are two dynamics, one episodic and one secular and these in turn make distinctive contributions to nationalization and denationalization. Both old parties seek to spread their vote, but the the most dramatic gains accrue to the Conservatives, who then dissipate them immediately, often denationalizing the system further.

**Centrifugal-Centripetal Dynamics II: New Parties**

Just as two dynamics operate among the old parties, so, complementarily, do they operate among the new ones. As mentioned at the outset, “insurgents” are always geographically concentrated, sometimes in individual provinces (including Quebec) and sometimes in the multi-province region of the West. Almost all disappear sooner or later. The CCF-NDP, in contrast, has grown slowly and with usually only modest reverses. And as Figures 5 and 6 show, they emulate the old parties in seeking to broaden their base. These two rhythms—one secular and the other, cyclical and episodic—correspond roughly to Figure 4’s components of fractionalization. The episodic dynamic of insurgent parties complements that for the Conservatives in driving the extra-local component, up and down. The local component—the propagation of three-party competition at the district level is the result of the growth and diffusion of CCF-NDP support.

This is captured by Table 2, which identifies the partisan components in each kind of fractionalization. One strategy involves a simple time-series analysis for the national aggregate lines in Figure 4. Local and extra-local ENP values are regressed on CCF-NDP shares and a combined “insurgent” share. The divergence is clear: although each party or party group is relevant to each kind of fractionalization, insurgents are more critical to the extra-local component and the CCF-NDP is more critical to the local one. On the extra-local side, where running the insurgent share from zero to 20 percent of the vote increases the ENP value by 0.67 “parties,” doing the same for the CCF-NDP increases it by 0.4. In fact, the maximum combined insurgent share is closer to 40 percent (in the 1990s with the mainly Western Reform party and the Quebec-specific Bloc Québécois), with an implied extra-local ENP value of about 1.4. On the local side, the roles are reversed. Where running the CCF-NDP share to 20 percent increases the local ENP by 0.63, doing so for insurgent parties adds only 0.36.

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8 In the West, contrast, the Conservatives actually built on their 1953-8 gains, such that the major regional contrast outside Quebec was reversed.
The national estimates slice the data rather thinly, so I supplement the evidence with time-series cross-section evidence for province-level ENP. There is upward bias within provinces, such that ENP for a province must be higher than the average ENP for the districts within it. But ENP differences among provinces will be driven mainly by the fractionalization of local results within provinces. So provincial ENP should be driven mainly by CCF-NDP shares—and so it is, according to the rightmost column in Table 1. The NDP coefficient is more than twice that for “others.” This yields a slightly wider gap between CCF-NDP impact and that from “others.” By either estimation,

\[ \text{TABLE 2} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partisan Sources of Fractionalization</th>
<th>National(^1)</th>
<th>Provincial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra-local</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Other” parties’ share</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCF-NDP share</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>1.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2) adjusted</td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSE</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\bar{\Delta})</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Elections since 1900, all provinces.
\(^1\) Prais-Winsten estimation with AR(1).
\(^2\) Entries in parentheses are panel-corrected standard errors, common AR(1) across panels.

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\[^9\] I opted to use panel-corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz 1995) after preliminary investigation. The toughest test and the one closest to causal inference would involves fixed effects, which focuses solely on the dynamic component in variation. The test is unbiased but inefficient. Also, it leaves aside is the cross-sectional element, which is historically important. Random-effects setups allow this variation in but at the risk of bias. A Hausman test for bias in the random-effects setup indicates that there is none, so I opt for random effects with the further correction for bias in panels with correlated errors.
the historical growth of the left vote from a nullity to about 20 percent of the vote added the equivalent of 0.67 “parties” to the typical local race. Only at the very extreme values would insurgents make a like contribution to local fragmentation.\textsuperscript{10}

**Discussion**

Volatility is—or was—endemic to the system, a product of coexistence between deep cultural division and the logic of Westminster parliamentarism. The expectation that governments will comprise one party only forces parties seeking to govern to run candidates everywhere, to create the appearance (and, with luck, the reality) of country-wide credibility. Running candidates everywhere militates against electoral cooperation in single-member districts. Mutually competitive relations within each district makes post-election coalition-building in parliament very difficult, and so the circle is closed.\textsuperscript{11} Any party that wants to enjoy power must, then, seek a multi-region electoral base. But one of these regions must always be Quebec. The propensity of Quebec voters to coordinate on the single acceptable alternative warped party competition in the rest of the country. The Liberal party almost always won and the Conservatives could beat the Liberals only by assembling an extraordinarily inclusive coalition. Every Conservative government paid a severe price for victory, always in Quebec and usually outside that province as well.

A further consequence of this history is the survival of a party of the ideological centre. So when the party of the labour-left made its entry, the system was not convulsed, in contrast to the experience in each Westminster comparator. The strength of the Liberals, thanks to Quebec, obviated the need to coalesce to defeat an unacceptable left alternative. The same logic applied on the centre-left: there was no pressing need to coalesce to block the Conservatives. Meanwhile, a disconnected electoral coalition of the left and right to defeat the Liberals was never feasible.\textsuperscript{12}

But the NDP did resolve to seek power and to that end joined the old parties in running candidates everywhere. In time doing so induced a gradual spread of the NDP base. Most of the ground yielded to the NDP came from the Liberal party. So accompanying the episodic dynamic that linked the Conservatives to insurgents was a secular one linking the Liberals to the NDP.

The system was probably unsustainable, so events since possibly 1984 and certainly 1993 suggest. The swing to the Conservatives in 1984 did echo earlier shifts but the Conservative collapse in 1993

\textsuperscript{10} Reproducing the setups for Table 2 but substituting Conservative and Liberal shares for “other” and CCF-NDP ones produces a nearly exactly complementary pattern: the Conservatives do the heavy lifting for the extra-local component and the Liberals, for the local component. In the provincial ENP TSCS estimations, the parties have identical coefficients (that is, indistinguishable by a Wald test) but the Conservatives supply massively greater flux.

\textsuperscript{11} There are isolated instances of cross-party coalitions in Canada but without exception each coalition led to the extinction of one or both participants. The federal example is the 1917 Unionist coalition, which all but destroyed the Conservative party in Quebec and seriously compromised the Liberal party in the West.

\textsuperscript{12} This is not to say that both Conservative and NDP strategists failed to recognise the need to bring the Liberals down. The parties often conspired to this end, but cooperation never extended to mutual withdrawal of candidates or coalition cabinets.
did not return the province to the Liberals. Instead for the first time Quebec opted out of the government-formation game. Subsequent governments, including Liberal ones, were built on different bases from the traditional ones. And once they finally lost power in 2006, the Liberals embarked on a free fall, with the NDP ultimately nosing them aside as the official opposition. This might bring the Canadian party system in line with its Westminster cousins. But Quebec remains the wild card. It supplied the vital dynamic that shot the NDP to opposition status. How sustainable this position is remains an open question. Frankly, most accounts of Quebec’s electoral behaviour since 1993 are just-so stories. They also beg the obvious question, how was it that millions of Quebec voters could stay so coordinated on power for preceding century and more—and then suddenly stop doing so?

Even if Canada is not converging on its comparators, its *sui generis* history is important in the negative for understanding the trajectories of the others. It points to unacknowledged conditions that sustain Duvergerian-style two-party politics, in particular a high degree of cultural homogeneity—or at least suppression of functional equivalents of Canada’s national question. And it may now be an example in the positive. New Zealand may have got out from under FPP just in time, and the Canadian case may help us understand the unravelling of what used to be the very cynosure of a Westminster system. Britain increasingly looks like Canada: riven by sectionalism, a fractionalized electorate, and a coalition experience that one or both partners must already regret.\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^\text{13}\) A cursory look at constituency-level ENPs for Britain in the CLEA party nationalization data set (clea_ENP_20140402) suggests that fractionalization in that country is much like that in Canada, with local breakdown being very significant.
References


