

Crashing the Party? Elites, Outsiders, and Elections^{*}

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July 3, 2019

Running Title: Crashing the Party?

Word Count: 9,890

Keywords: Outsiders, Political Parties, Polarization, Electoral Competition

^{*}We are grateful to Scott Ashworth, Dan Bernhardt, Benjamin Brooks, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, Micael Castanheira, José Cheibub, Wioletta Dziuda, Jon Eguia, Shigeo Hirano, Stefan Krasa, Darl Lewis, Benjamin Ogden, John Patty, Carlo Prato, James Robinson, Konstantin Sonin, Michael Ting and various seminar audiences for helpful comments. Peter Buisseret gratefully acknowledges the hospitality of the Department of Economics at Örebro University School of Business.

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Abstract

We consider an election between two parties that nominate candidates for office. The parties are polarized along a traditional cleavage, but are also internally divided along a second issue dimension. We introduce a threat of entry from Outsider candidates, who have the prominence and resources to bypass party elites. We consider when voters will turn to Outsiders, and identify the conditions under which Outsiders will enter the election through an established party's nomination process, as opposed to circumventing established parties via a third-party challenge. We further explore when the elites will fail to respond to the threat of Outsider candidates. Our framework highlights how established parties will be especially vulnerable to Outsider primary entry in periods of intense ideological polarization between the parties, and that this vulnerability is especially heightened for the majority party.

1. Introduction

In the United States, and elsewhere, recent elections have exposed the vulnerability of established parties and party systems to the entry of *Outsider* candidates. A defining feature of these candidates is their ability to enter politics and contest elections without the support of traditional party elites. Some Outsiders, such as Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, and Roy Moore, pursued their campaigns by seeking the nomination of established parties, despite strong initial opposition from party elites and insiders. Others, including Ross Perot, Imran Khan, and Beppe Grillo's Five Star movement, bypassed existing parties entirely, pursuing third-party or independent campaigns—or even creating new parties of their own.

Under what conditions will voters support Outsider candidates, either in party primaries or in general elections, instead of more experienced and vetted candidates? What forces shape an Outsider's decision to enter an election through an established political party, rather than as a third-party candidate? And, why might party elites fail to take the necessary steps to mitigate the Outsider threat?

We explore these questions in a theoretical model of electoral competition between two established parties. A novel ingredient that we introduce is that there are two issue dimensions of policy conflict. The first issue dimension—for example, redistribution and the size of the state—represents a traditional issue cleavage on which there is polarization *between* parties. The second issue dimension represents a cleavage on which there is polarization *within* parties. While the model can be applied to any environment in which there is polarization both between and within parties,¹ our running interpretation of this second issue dimension

¹For example, in the United States, the civil rights era created division within the parties that were distinct from the traditional cleavages that divided the parties (e.g., [McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2008](#)). In other contexts, the cleavage might represent a religious or cultural divide.

is ‘globalism’ versus ‘anti-globalism’. We initially assume that each party’s presumptive nominee is an ‘establishment’ candidate that reflects its globalist faction’s preferred policy.

We introduce the threat of entry by an *Outsider*, who is distinguished from establishment candidates in two important respects. *First*, she has the resources, name recognition, or grassroots support to participate in either the primary or the general election without the support of party elites; thus, if she enters the contest, she may advocate for either faction’s preferred policy. *Second*, establishment candidates have valuable skills and experience that the Outsider lacks. Formally, this is captured by assuming that voters derive a value from an establishment candidate that is independent of her policy.

The first feature of the Outsider ensures that she constitutes a viable threat to established political parties, while the second gives party elites a limited defense against the Outsider threat. The Outsider decides whether to enter the election by mounting a primary challenge inside an established party or, alternatively, to compete outside of the established parties as an independent, third-party candidate.

Primary or Third Party Challenge? A main contribution of our analysis is to show how an Outsider will attempt to challenge the prevailing party system. As such, we begin by assuming that each party’s establishment candidate represents its globalist faction and consider the Outsider’s decision to pursue a primary or third-party challenge. In both cases, the Outsider differentiates herself from higher quality candidates by running as an anti-globalist. When deciding between a primary or a third party campaign, the Outsider is unsure of the division of voters *between* the parties and between the factions *within* parties. She is also unsure of the relative intensity of polarization on the intra-party (in our running example, ‘globalization’) issue cleavage versus the traditional inter-party issue dimension.

If the Outsider chooses a primary campaign, the party’s globalist voters oppose her candidacy: they prefer the establishment candidate on both policy *and* quality grounds. Nonetheless, if there is sufficient polarization between the parties, the Outsider anticipates that—if

she wins the primary contest—she has a large prospect of rallying *both* party factions in the general election. The reason is that even those who opposed the Outsider in the primary are likely to prefer her to the opposing party's nominee. The gamble of early defeat may be worthwhile if it carries the prospect that the Outsider could command the unified support of the party in the general election. The Outsider therefore enters the election through a primary challenge if there is sufficiently intense *inter-party polarization*.

When inter-party polarization is instead relatively low, the Outsider anticipates that the globalist faction within the party would likely fail to rally behind her if she won the party's nomination on an anti-globalist platform. In the general election, she would therefore require a majority of anti-globalists across both parties to defeat the unified globalist vote in favor of the *other* party's globalist nominee. By staying out of the primary, in contrast, the Outsider ensures that both parties are represented by elite-backed globalist candidates. This has the consequence that, in the general election, the globalist vote is fractured across party lines, making it possible for the Outsider to win even if anti-globalists only constitute a plurality of the electorate. In this case the Outsider prefers to enter as a third-party candidate.

General Election Prospects. Conditional on winning a primary challenge, there are two paths for an Outsider to win the general election. First, she has a chance of subsequently uniting the party's factions behind her candidacy; this happens when polarization between the parties trumps polarization between the party's internal factions. In that event, she wins the general election if and only if the party commands the support of a majority of voters. Second, she may unite anti-globalists in both parties behind her candidacy. This happens when policy conflict between the party's internal factions surpasses polarization between parties. The Outsider cannot simultaneously achieve both goals—she may, in fact, achieve neither.

Nonetheless, conditional on winning a party's primary, the Outsider could *raise* the party's prospects of winning the election, versus the party's establishment globalist. On the one hand, an Outsider nominee creates the possibility that the party's factions will split in the

general election. On the other hand, the Outsider may be able to win over anti-globalist supporters from the opposing party—something a globalist establishment candidate could never achieve.

When the united party is likely to be in the majority, the first effect dominates, and the Outsider's nomination *lowers* a party's general election prospects. But, when the united party is likely to be in the minority, the Outsider's nomination *raises* these prospects. This contrasts with a standard one-dimensional model of elections in which an extremist Outsider is likely to be further from the median voter and so less likely to win in the general election. By incorporating a new issue cleavage, we find that an Outsider can differentiate without necessarily proposing a more extreme policy. Indeed, her platform may be better-aligned with the electorate.

Elite Response. An Outsider campaign is disruptive to the established parties—regardless of its ultimate success. Why, then, do party elites not take firmer steps to prevent Outsider challenges?

We address this question by introducing an office-motivated party elite, and consider how this elite might attempt to deter the Outsider's entry into the party's primary contest. We assume that the elite receives an office rent normalized to one when an establishment candidate wins the election, and receives a fraction of this rent if the Outsider wins the election as its nominee. We allow this fraction to range from zero to one, reflecting different possibilities of how an elite might discount an election victory when its nominee has no historical ties or record of party loyalty.

First, we ask: if the elite could simply block the Outsider from mounting a primary challenge against an establishment globalist, would it want to use that power? We show that if there is sufficient inter-party polarization, the answer is *no*—the elite would prefer inaction, encouraging the Outsider to enter the party's primary. This is true even if the elite derives *no value whatsoever* when the Outsider wins the election as its nominee.

The reason is that blocking the Outsider's entry in the primary forces the Outsider to instead pursue a third-party challenge. This challenge is likely to divide the party's factions in the general election, raising the prospect that the other party's nominee wins with only a plurality of votes. The best hope for an establishment candidate may be to face the Outsider's challenge head-on in the primary, since if they defeat the Outsider they ensure a united party in the general election.² Since the risk of a third party challenge taking votes from only one party is larger when polarization is larger between parties, the elites have the greatest incentive to accept a primary challenge in this case.

Thus, significant polarization *both* encourages Outsiders to enter elections through established parties, *and* encourages party elites to refrain from directly blocking these challenges, even when they have the power to do so.

In many contexts, party elites may not have the power to prevent the Outsider from participating in the party's nomination process. Nonetheless, the Outsider's appeal in a primary contest hinges on her ability to offer policies that would otherwise go unrepresented by establishment candidates. We therefore allow the elite to put forward establishment candidates that can represent either faction's preferred policy in the primary, or to hold an 'inclusive' primary in which the elite backs *both* a globalist *and* an anti-globalist candidate. An inclusive primary deters the Outsider from entering in the primary as effectively as formally blocking her, since establishment candidates enjoy a quality advantage.

Absent the Outsider threat, an office-motivated elite would *always* strictly prefer to hold an inclusive primary between a globalist and an anti-globalist candidate in order to nominate the most electable candidate. However, if polarization is large enough, an office-motivated party elite prefers to back a candidate either at the globalist or anti-globalist faction's preferred

²For example, in 2015 it seemed that the Republican party establishment was far less concerned about Donald Trump contesting the Republican nomination than him running as a third party candidate and taking votes from the Republican nominee.

policy, *but not both*, in order to induce a primary rather than a third-party challenge from the Outsider. And, so long as the elites initially expect that globalists are in the majority, they opt to back an establishment candidate aligned with the party’s globalist faction, as in our benchmark model.³

So, the Outsider threat only arises in the primary when elites restrict the policy representation of the party’s factions at the nomination stage—and office-motivated elites only opt to restrict this policy representation in the presence of an Outsider threat!

Our results can shed light on the contemporary US paradox of “strong partisanship, weak parties” (e.g., [Azari 2016](#)). Our framework shows that it is precisely when polarization between parties is strongest that party establishments are most vulnerable to entry from Outsiders, and elites are least likely to respond. In light of the increase in polarization between the parties documented in recent decades (e.g., [McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2008](#)), our prediction that primary entry is relatively more attractive to Outsiders in periods of heightened partisanship is consistent with the fact that Ross Perot pursued a third-party candidacy in the 1990s, whereas Donald Trump pursued a primary challenge in 2016.

Related Work. We view our results as relevant to a number of theoretical and empirical literatures on electoral competition and the internal organization of political parties.

Primaries. A large literature documents a shift in the internal organization of parties towards more democratic candidate selection procedures across a number of countries. Primaries can reveal information about candidates’ quality ([Serra 2011](#); [Adams and Merrill 2008](#); [Slough, York and Ting 2019](#)), and voters’ policy preferences ([Meirowitz 2005](#)). They may also provide incentives for candidates to invest in high-quality platforms ([Caillaud and Tirole 2002](#); [Crutzen, Castanheira and Sahuguet 2010](#)). At the same time, primaries may exacerbate policy

³Obviously, if the elite were policy motivated and aligned with the globalist faction, this would provide an additional motivation to push establishment candidates towards the globalist position—even absent an Outsider threat.

conflict between parties ([Kaufmann, Gimpel and Hoffman 2003](#); [McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2008](#)) and mitigate conflict within parties ([Hortala-Vallve and Mueller 2015](#)).

We focus on understanding when Outsider candidates choose to contest primary elections rather than bypass internal party democracy entirely by entering elections as third-party candidates. Moreover, our framework identifies circumstances under which holding a primary *lowers* the expected quality of the party's nominee relative to elite selection.

Party nomination decisions. Our results address the types of candidates that are likely to be nominated when party leaders and rank-and-file members are misaligned. [Cohen, Karol, Noel and Zaller \(2009\)](#) argue that the party establishment in the United States typically plays a *decisive* role in party nominations. Nonetheless, party elites are not always successful in imposing their preferred candidates on primary voters. This was demonstrated, for example, by the inability of Republican party elites to forestall the nominations of Donald Trump and Roy Moore. Our analysis sheds light on how party elites can influence the process and derives predictions about when “the party decides” and when, instead, the party *divides*, with primary voters abandoning elite-backed candidates.

Formal models of political parties. Our paper relates to existing work in which parties aggregate preferences or information—for instance, [Levy \(2004\)](#), [Roemer \(1999\)](#), and [Dewan and Squintani \(2016\)](#). In [Morelli \(2004\)](#), parties coordinate voters in elections in multi-district contests, in one dimension of policy conflict. [Eguia \(2011\)](#) shows how durable voting coalitions endogenously form in a legislative assembly. [Krasa and Polborn \(2018\)](#) consider candidate selection in multi-district legislative elections, in a one-dimensional model.

Outsiders, populists, and entry. A large body of work considers established parties competing under threat of third-party entry, including [Palfrey \(1984\)](#), [Callander \(2005\)](#) and [Buisseret \(2017\)](#). These papers ask how incumbent parties deter third-party entry by way of differentiated platforms. Our goal is different. We are primarily concerned with an Outsider's decision of *how* to enter the contest. We also consider more than one dimension of policy conflict. And,

rather than asking how a threat of entry might lead to polarization between established parties, we pose the reverse question: how does polarization between the parties heighten the threat of entry, and determine its form—inside an existing party, or via a third-party challenge?

Finally, we contribute to a small but growing literature on populism. In [Acemoglu, Egorov and Sonin \(2013\)](#), policymakers choose extreme policies in order to signal that they are not captured by elites. [Eguia and Giovannoni \(2019\)](#) argue that electorally disadvantaged parties may invest in extremist platforms. [Rodrik \(2018\)](#) empirically associates populism with new issues and distributive conflicts brought about by globalization. In [Di Tella and Rotemberg \(2018\)](#), voters demand incompetent leaders as a means to ensure against elite betrayal. [Guiso, Herrera, Morelli and Sonno \(2017\)](#) and [Karakas and Mitra \(2017\)](#) assume Outsiders have a comparative advantage in offering populist policies or rhetoric; in contrast, we emphasize why voters may turn to Outsiders *even if* they are presumed to be riskier, or less competent.

2. A Model of Outsider Challenges

Environment. A unit mass of voters is divided into two political parties, \mathcal{L} and \mathcal{R} . In addition to voters, each party consists of an *elite* and a set of *establishment candidates*. The elite could represent the party leadership, such as the Republican or Democratic National Committee, a group of senior legislative politicians, or major donors. Finally, there is an *Outsider* candidate, whose decisions will be the sole focus of our baseline model.

There are two dimensions of policy disagreement, and in each dimension there are two policy positions, 0 and 1. Hence the policy space is $\{0, 1\}^2$, depicted in Figure 1. Parties are organized along the horizontal policy dimension: a voter with ideal policy $x = 0$ is a member of party \mathcal{L} , and a voter with ideal policy $x = 1$ is a member of party \mathcal{R} . This dimension could be interpreted as a traditional left-right cleavage, such as *more* ($x = 0$) versus *less* redistribution ($x = 1$).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The vertical dimension of policy represents any emerging issue cleavage that potentially divides voters within their respective parties. The interpretation of this issue cleavage will depend on the particular context: for example, it could reflect policies concerning a religious, ethnic, or social divide. To facilitate exposition, and to reflect contemporary election contexts in both the United States and elsewhere, we will interpret this dimension as capturing competing views on globalization. Thus, voters located at $y = 1$ favor *globalist* policies, e.g., open immigration policies and free trade; by contrast, voters located at $y = 0$ favor more restrictive trade agreements and immigration controls. We emphasize that we adopt this nomenclature purely for exposition—what is crucial is that the issue may generate ideological rifts within established political parties.

The distribution of voters' preferences is uncertain. A fraction R of the voters are in the \mathcal{R} party and fraction $1 - R$ are in the \mathcal{L} party. Within each party, a fraction A are anti-globalists and $1 - A$ are globalists. This fraction is the same in each party and R and A are independent. Hence the fraction of anti-globalist and globalist \mathcal{R} voters are RA and $R(1 - A)$, respectively. Similarly the fraction of \mathcal{L} anti-globalists and globalists are $(1 - R)A$ and $(1 - R)(1 - A)$, respectively.

We now define the particular probabilities that will be important for the analysis. We define

$$M_R \equiv \Pr(R > 1/2)$$

to be the probability that a majority of the voters are in the \mathcal{R} party. Similarly

$$M_A \equiv \Pr(A > 1/2)$$

is the probability of a majority of anti-globalists in the electorate. Finally we define

$$P_A \equiv \Pr(A > (1 - A) \max\{R, 1 - R\})$$

to be the probability of an anti-globalist plurality. That is, P_A represents the probability that there are enough anti-globalists that, if a candidate were to carry the support of all anti-globalists, she would win the election if the globalist vote were divided between the \mathcal{L} and \mathcal{R} parties. The following assumptions simplify the analysis by avoiding a proliferation of cases.

Assumption 1. *R and A are independently drawn from some atomless distribution such that*

1. $\Pr((1 - R) \max\{A, 1 - A\} < R < 1 - R \max\{A, 1 - A\}) = 1$,
2. $M_R \in (0, 1)$,
3. $0 < M_A < P_A \leq 1$.

The first part of [Assumption 1](#) states that either faction in the \mathcal{L} party (\mathcal{R} party) is smaller than the combined factions in the \mathcal{R} (respectively \mathcal{L}) party. This condition will be satisfied if the division of voters between the parties is not expected to be very imbalanced. The second part states that it is uncertain whether voters in party \mathcal{R} constitute a majority. The third part says that it is uncertain whether there is an anti-globalist majority, and the probability of an anti-globalist plurality is strictly higher than an anti-globalist majority, $P_A > M_A$. This implies that a candidate who has all anti-globalists united behind her has a strictly higher prospect of winning an election if the globalist vote is divided rather than united.⁴

Party nominations and the Outsider. Our initial analysis focuses on the Outsider's decision of how to enter the election—we assume that the Outsider can run either in the primary or in

⁴While $P_A \geq M_A$ by necessity, the strict inequality does not follow from the first and second assumptions. It would follow immediately however if A is drawn from some distribution with strictly positive density in a neighborhood of $1/2$.

the general, but not in both. To simplify the exposition, we initially assume that the \mathcal{L} party is certain to nominate a globalist establishment candidate, i.e., located at $(0, 1)$. This may reflect a context in which \mathcal{L} is the incumbent party and inherits its candidate from the previous electoral cycle. Similarly, we assume that the \mathcal{R} party elite has thrown its support behind a globalist establishment candidate, i.e., located at $(1, 1)$, who will win the primary unless the Outsider enters the contest. Thus, the Outsider's choice is whether to contest the primary on either the globalist or anti-globalist \mathcal{R} position— $(1, 1)$ or $(1, 0)$ —or to run as a third-party candidate on one of those two positions.

Many of these simplifying assumptions will be relaxed later. We study the elite's response to Outsider threats in [Section 5](#). We also give the Outsider the ability to choose from a larger set of policies, and consider the possibility of primaries in *both* parties, in an online Appendix.

Payoffs. If policy $(x', y') \in \{0, 1\}^2$ is implemented, a voter with ideal policy $(x, y) \in \{0, 1\}^2$ derives a spatial payoff

$$u(x', y'; x, y) = -p|x' - x| - g|y' - y|. \quad (1)$$

The parameter $p > 0$ reflects the importance of the traditional cleavage, along which the parties are defined. Thus, p captures the extent of *partisan issue polarization* in the electorate.

By contrast, $g > 0$ captures the relative concern that voters place on the globalization dimension. We assume that politicians are uncertain about the intensity of preferences on this issue: g is a random variable distributed according to an atomless cumulative distribution function $F(\cdot)$ with full support on \mathbb{R}_+ .

Finally, we assume that voters care about the quality of politicians, interpreted loosely as governing skills and experience. Specifically, we assume that all voters believe that establishment candidates hold a quality (i.e., valence) advantage, $v > 0$, over the Outsider candidate. This could be because the Outsider has less experience or because she has not been vetted by the party. Thus, when policy (x', y') is implemented by an establishment politician, a voter

with ideal policy (x, y) derives payoff

$$u(x', y'; x, y) + v,$$

and if the policy is implemented by the Outsider, a voter's payoff is simply $u(x', y'; x, y)$. While our benchmark model assumes $v > 0$, we also consider the possibility that $v < 0$ in online Appendix F, page 21.

We assume throughout that politicians are solely office-motivated: the Outsider maximizes her prospect of winning the election, and she enters the election if and only if this prospect is strictly positive.

Timing. The game proceeds as follows.

1. The distribution of voters, R and A , and the preference parameter, g , are independently realized. Neither realization is observed by the elite or the Outsider.
2. The Outsider decides whether to contest the primary within the \mathcal{R} party at either location $(1, 1)$ or $(1, 0)$, or instead to *stay out*.
3. A primary is held within the \mathcal{R} party if there are two contestants for the nomination, in which case the candidate who receives the larger share of the vote proceeds to the general election as the \mathcal{R} -party nominee.
4. A general election is held in which the \mathcal{R} -party nominee competes against a \mathcal{L} -party establishment candidate located at $(0, 1)$. In addition, if the Outsider previously chose to *stay out*, she decides whether to compete in the general election at location $(1, 1)$ or $(1, 0)$.⁵ The election takes place by plurality rule.

⁵As previously discussed, this means that even if the Outsider runs as a third-party candidate she is constrained to choose the \mathcal{R} position on the traditional issue in the general election. This makes the comparison between a primary and third-party run as simple as possible.

We assume that at all stages voters cast their ballots sincerely. In particular, this means that a primary voter who chooses between two candidates does so on the basis of her *immediate* comparison between the candidates⁶ and, even if there are three candidates, votes for her first choice. We later show that our results do not depend on this assumption.

Equilibrium. Our solution concept is sequential equilibrium. We use sequential equilibrium to account for nature's moves, but since no player has any private information, players' beliefs are determined only by their prior beliefs and (possibly) the outcome of the primary. The equilibrium is generically unique.

Discussion. While elements of our framework can be applied to a range of political contexts, our focus on elections with two established parties under plurality rule, and the choice of Outsiders to either contest the primary or run independently, connects our setting most directly to the United States.

Our model includes uncertainty both about the distribution of voter ideal points, and about g , the intensity of policy preferences on the globalization issue. Uncertainty about g is natural in the context of a nascent issue cleavage on which little is known about preference intensity. In contrast, polarization p on the issue along which the parties are defined, is likely better understood.

In our framework the Outsider can run in the primary or as a third party candidate but she cannot do both. In the United States, "sore loser laws" in many states are designed to impede the ability of candidates who lost a primary to launch a third-party campaign. That said, we could instead allow the Outsider to mount a third-party challenge, even if she is defeated in a primary contest, but assume she incurs a cost, c , to run in the primary or to

However we also consider the case in which a third-party candidate is free to pursue any policy she wishes in the online Appendix G, page 23.

⁶This means that voters do not take into account a candidate's likelihood of winning in the general election when deciding who to support in the primary.

contest the general election as an independent candidate. If c is neither too large or too small the Outsider would either run in the primary or as a third party candidate, but not both, and the Outsider’s tradeoff between a primary and third-party challenge would be unchanged.

Finally, we assume that the Outsider is “office-motivated”, so she chooses her entry strategy solely to maximize her probability of winning.⁷ The prospect of winning need not be large: in fact, as in many real-world examples, it is possible that the Outsider will contest the primary even if her *absolute* probability of winning is small. What is important for the Outsider’s decision is her *relative* prospects from a primary versus third-party entry.⁸

3. Preliminary Results

We begin by deriving the Outsider’s prospects from entering the electoral contest via the \mathcal{R} primary, or alternatively pursuing a third-party campaign.

We first observe that the Outsider *never* chooses to locate at the same policy as an establishment candidate, either in the primary or general election. The reason is that she would be sure to lose: voters would be indifferent between the Outsider and an establishment candidate on policy grounds, but anticipating a valence wedge of $v > 0$ would unanimously prefer the establishment candidate.

Since a primary campaign would pit the Outsider against an establishment \mathcal{R} globalist,

⁷This means, for example, that ours is not a model of policy-motivated third-party runs, such as those by Ralph Nader in 2000 and 2004.

⁸This is reminiscent of [Banks and Kiewiet \(1989\)](#), in which low quality challengers must choose between taking on an incumbent, in which case it is hard to win the general election, and contesting a competitive primary for a chance to be her party’s nominee in an open seat election. As in our model, the tradeoff is between a higher probability of winning the general against a risk of being eliminated in the primary, and it is possible that both paths may have a low probability of success.

and a third-party campaign would have her compete against establishment globalists from both parties, the only way the Outsider can win is by campaigning either in the primary or in the general election on an anti-globalist platform. The Outsider's decision is therefore at which stage to enter with an anti-globalist platform in order to maximize her probability of winning the election.

Outsider Entry in a Primary Campaign

We first consider the conditions under which the Outsider can win the party's primary, and subsequently the general election, on an anti-globalist platform. In the primary, she receives no support from the party's globalist faction; thus, two conditions must be satisfied in order for her to win the nomination.

First, a primary victory requires anti-globalists to be a majority of the party's primary voters, which occurs with probability M_A . *Second*, the party's anti-globalist voters must care enough about the globalization cleavage to overlook the Outsider's valence disadvantage. The Outsider generates a payoff of zero to such a voter. By contrast, the party's establishment globalist generates a policy cost $-g$, but also a valence benefit v . Anti-globalist voters will therefore support the Outsider in their party's primary if and only if:

$$0 > -g + v \iff g > v. \quad (2)$$

When condition (2) holds, we say that parties are moderately factionalized: there is sufficient ideological mis-alignment between factions within parties to afford the Outsider a chance of winning the primary. Note that g is uncertain when the Outsider makes her entry decision.

When $A > 1/2$ and $g > v$ the Outsider wins the party's primary and advances to the general election as its nominee. Who votes for the Outsider in the general election? Anti-globalist voters located at $(1, 0)$ preferred the Outsider to their own party's globalist establishment candidate, and so will also prefer her to the opposing party's globalist nominee. Conversely,

globalists in party \mathcal{L} —located at $(0, 1)$ —are represented by an establishment candidate who champions their most preferred policy, and so they will never support the Outsider.

The \mathcal{R} globalists and \mathcal{L} anti-globalists, on the other hand, face a non-trivial decision of which candidate to support in the general election.

\mathcal{R} globalists. These voters face a choice between party \mathcal{L} 's establishment candidate, located at $(0, 1)$, and their Outsider nominee located at $(1, 0)$. They must therefore decide whether to rally around their party's candidate—despite her anti-globalist platform and inferior governing skills—or instead abandon their own nominee in favor of the \mathcal{L} globalist establishment candidate.

Recalling that the polarization of voters on the globalism versus anti-globalism (factional) issue is $g > 0$, and their polarization on the partisan (inter-party) issue is $p > 0$, we observe that the \mathcal{R} globalists vote for their nominee if and only if

$$-g > -p + v \iff g < p - v. \quad (3)$$

When condition (3) holds, the party's globalist voters are sufficiently polarized on the partisan issue cleavage that they will rally behind the Outsider in the general election, despite opposing her in the primary. When (3) holds we say that the parties are polarized. In that event, an Outsider who wins the primary enters the general election with the unified support of her party.

Notice that the Outsider can simultaneously hope to win the \mathcal{R} primary ($g > v$) and subsequently receive the support of the party's globalist voters in the general election ($g < p - v$) only if $p > 2v$. That is: voters must care significantly more about the policy conflict between the parties than about a candidate's skills and experience. In such a setting, we say that voters are highly partisan.

\mathcal{L} anti-globalists. Members of the anti-globalist faction in party \mathcal{L} must decide whether to rally

around their party's candidate, located at $(0, 1)$ —despite her globalist platform—or instead turn to the \mathcal{R} anti-globalist nominee, accepting her lower governing skills and misalignment on the partisan issue as the price of better alignment on the globalization dimension. \mathcal{L} anti-globalist voters abandon their party's establishment nominee if:

$$-p > -g + v \iff g > p + v. \quad (4)$$

Condition (4) is more stringent than condition (2): an \mathcal{L} anti-globalist must care enough about the globalization cleavage to outweigh both the Outsider's quality disadvantage and ideological misalignment on the partisan issue. When condition (4) holds we say that parties are extremely factionalized. In this case, each party's factions diverge in the general election: globalists from both parties support party L 's globalist nominee, and anti-globalists from both parties support party R 's anti-globalist nominee.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Recall that the Outsider knows whether the environment is highly partisan, but not the extent of factionalism (i.e., the magnitude of g), when she decides whether to enter the primary. Figure 2 identifies the relevant realizations of g that determine the Outsider's prospects. To summarize:

1. When parties are not factionalized, $g < v$, anti-globalist voters prefer the party's establishment candidate to the Outsider, so the Outsider is guaranteed to lose.
2. When parties are both moderately factionalized and polarized, $g \in [v, p - v)$, the Outsider wins the primary with probability M_A , and the party's globalists would subsequently rally behind her in the general election. Similarly, \mathcal{L} voters will support their own globalist nominee, so the general election will be fought entirely along party lines.
3. When parties are moderately factionalized but not polarized, $g \in (p - v, p + v)$, even if \mathcal{R} anti-globalists support the Outsider in the primary, the party's globalists would aban-

don her in the general election. Since \mathcal{L} voters will continue to unite behind their globalist establishment nominee, the Outsider is sure to lose by Assumption 1.

4. Finally, when parties are extremely factionalized, $g > p + v$, an Outsider nominee fails to unite the party's factions. Abandoned by \mathcal{R} party globalists, the Outsider therefore wins the general election if and only if the combined anti-globalist vote constitutes a majority.

Conditional on the Outsider's primary victory, how do her prospects of winning the election compare to those of a globalist establishment candidate? Recalling that M_R is the probability that \mathcal{R} voters are a majority we have the following remark.

Remark 1. Let $\overline{M}_R = \frac{1-F(p+v)}{1-F(p-v)} \in (0, 1)$. If $p > 2v$ the \mathcal{R} nominee is (1) more likely to win the general election if the Outsider wins the primary than if the establishment candidate does when $M_R < \overline{M}_R$ and (2) less likely to win the general election if the Outsider wins the primary than if the establishment candidate does when $M_R > \overline{M}_R$.

When the Outsider wins the primary, her prospect of winning the general election when $p > 2v$ is:

$$\frac{F(p-v) - F(v)}{1 - F(v)} M_R + \frac{1 - F(p+v)}{1 - F(v)}, \quad (5)$$

while the corresponding prospect that the establishment candidate would have won the general election after winning the primary is simply M_R .

Whether an Outsider nominee is more or less electable in the general election therefore depends on the strength of the \mathcal{R} party: when the \mathcal{R} party is sufficiently advantaged an establishment candidate is more likely to win in the general but when \mathcal{R} is sufficiently disadvantaged an Outsider nominee is actually more likely to win the general election, conditional on winning the primary. Note that an extremist primary challenger in a standard one-dimensional model cannot increase the party's general election prospects.

To summarize: If the Outsider contests the primary when voters are not highly partisan ($p < 2v$), she wins the election if and only if anti-globalists are a majority of the electorate

and parties are extremely factionalized. If, instead, the Outsider contests the primary when voters are highly partisan ($p > 2v$), she wins the election if anti-globalists are a majority of the electorate, and *either* parties are moderately factionalized and \mathcal{R} voters are a majority, *or* if parties are extremely factionalized. We therefore have:

Lemma 1. *If the Outsider contests the primary, her prospect of winning is:*

$$M_A M_R \Pr(v < g < p - v) + M_A \Pr(g > p + v). \quad (6)$$

Outsider Entry in a Third-Party Campaign

If the Outsider chooses to run as a third-party candidate, then in the general election both the \mathcal{R} and \mathcal{L} globalists will be represented by an establishment candidate who is perfectly aligned with their preferences. The Outsider thus runs on an anti-globalist platform, $(1, 0)$, in the hopes of uniting both parties' anti-globalist factions.

The Outsider receives the support of \mathcal{R} anti-globalists if there is at least *moderate factionalism* (i.e., (2) holds) and the support of \mathcal{L} anti-globalists if there is *extreme factionalism* (i.e., (4) holds). Absent extreme factionalism, the \mathcal{L} establishment nominee wins the support of the unified \mathcal{L} party; [Assumption 1](#), which guarantees that the unified \mathcal{L} electorate defeats either \mathcal{R} faction, implies that the Outsider loses. Hence:

Remark 2. *The Outsider can win the election as a third-party candidate only if parties are extremely factionalized.*

Extreme factionalism is not sufficient, however, to guarantee the Outsider's victory as a third-party candidate. Since voters favoring globalist policies are divided between the parties, the Outsider wins if the voters who oppose these policies constitute a plurality. Recalling that the probability of an anti-globalist plurality is P_A we obtain the following lemma.

Lemma 2. *If the Outsider did not run in the primary, she contests the election as a third party candidate on an anti-globalist platform. She wins the election if and only if the parties are extremely factionalized and there is an anti-globalist plurality. Thus, her prospect of winning the election is*

$$P_A \Pr(g > p + v). \quad (7)$$

4. A Primary or Third-Party Challenge?

We now consider the Outsider's preferred path to compete in the election. Recall that the intensity of voters' preferences on the inter-party issue conflict, p , is commonly known and so the Outsider understands whether or not she has any prospect of uniting party \mathcal{R} 's globalist and anti-globalist factions after a successful primary challenge. We show that this is a key consideration for the Outsider's entry decision.

Voters not highly partisan (i.e., $p < 2v$): The Outsider knows that she will *not* receive the support of globalists within the \mathcal{R} party, even if she were to win the nomination. [Lemma 1](#) reveals that the Outsider's prospect of winning the election via a primary challenge is:

$$M_A \Pr(g > p + v). \quad (8)$$

The Outsider wins a primary challenge only if anti-globalist voters are a *majority* and parties are at least moderately factionalized ($g > v$), but in the general election she also needs the combined support of anti-globalists across *both* parties, which requires *extreme factionalism* ($g > v + p$).

If, instead, the Outsider enters as a third-party candidate, [Lemma 2](#) states that her probability of winning the election is given by (7),

$$P_A \Pr(g > p + v).$$

While extremely factionalized parties are still necessary for the Outsider to win, she can nonetheless win office as a third-party candidate even if anti-globalists are only a plurality. Comparing this expression with (8) reveals an unambiguous advantage from steering clear of the \mathcal{R} primary when voters are not highly partisan.

Proposition 1. *If voters are not highly partisan (i.e., $p < 2v$) the Outsider never contests the primary. Instead, she enters the contest in the general election as a third party candidate on an anti-globalist platform.*

This result highlights the critical role of inter-party polarization in creating the incentives for an Outsider challenge to take the form of a primary challenge in an established party.

Voters highly partisan (i.e., $p > 2v$): In this context, the Outsider faces a trade-off.

Primary Campaign. Entering the electoral contest through the party affords the Outsider a chance to win the election even if parties are only moderately factionalized. The reason is that, after a primary victory, there is a prospect that all \mathcal{R} voters will rally around the Outsider, who therefore wins if the party has a majority. Even if the party's factions fail to rally after a primary victory, i.e., $g > p - v$, the Outsider can nonetheless win if factionalism is so great as to divide *both* parties, i.e., when $g > p + v$, provided anti-globalists are a majority.

Third-Party Campaign. Bypassing the party and pursuing a third-party challenge allows the Outsider to sometimes win the general election even when anti-globalists are only a plurality of the electorate, since the globalist vote is split along party lines. However she has no possibility of securing the votes of the \mathcal{R} globalists.

By comparing the Outsider's prospect of winning if she competes in the primary, given by (6), to her prospect of winning as a third-party candidate, given by (7), we can identify the conditions under which the Outsider prefers one mode of entry into the election over another.

Proposition 2. *Suppose that voters are highly partisan (i.e. $p > 2v$). Then, the Outsider runs in the*

primary if

$$\frac{1 - F(p + v)}{F(p - v) - F(v)} < \frac{M_R M_A}{P_A - M_A}, \quad (9)$$

and otherwise contests the election as a third party candidate.

Notice that the left-hand side of (9) decreases in partisan polarization, p , is unbounded as p goes to $2v$, and vanishes as p becomes very large. As polarization increases, the globalist faction in party \mathcal{R} increasingly prioritizes defeating the other party even at the expense of electing an anti-globalist of dubious quality, i.e., $F(p - v) - F(v)$ increases. This raises the Outsider's prospect of uniting the party's factions. Similarly, the hurdle for \mathcal{L} anti-globalists to abandon their party's globalist nominee also increases, diminishing the Outsider's prospect of uniting anti-globalists, i.e., $1 - F(p + v)$ decreases. Both consequences render a primary challenge relatively more appealing for the Outsider. We can then restate [Proposition 1](#) and [Proposition 2](#) in terms of partisan polarization: the Outsider will run in the primary if and only if inter-party polarization, p , is sufficiently high.

Corollary 1. *Fixing all other primitives, there exists a threshold $p^* > 2v$ such that the Outsider contests the primary if $p > p^*$ and runs as a third party candidate if $p < p^*$.*

[Corollary 1](#) then establishes that high polarization between the parties is not only necessary, but also sufficient, to guarantee an Outsider primary challenge. This is because increased polarization makes it easier to unite both factions in the party after winning the nomination and more difficult to unite the different anti-globalist factions.

We can also ask how changes in the Outsider's beliefs about voter preferences affect her relative value from pursuing a primary challenge, rather than a third-party challenge.

Corollary 2. *The minimum level of polarization for which the Outsider contests the primary, p^* , is decreasing in M_R and M_A and increasing in P_A .*

While a change in the distribution of preferences could affect all three probabilities at

once, [Corollary 2](#) implies that the more electorally favored the \mathcal{R} party becomes, the more attractive it is for the Outsider to mount a primary, as opposed to a third-party, challenge. Thus, Outsider challenges are most likely to wrest control from elite-backed candidates in a highly polarized environment, and such challenges are more likely to come in the majority party.⁹ Note that, by [Remark 1](#), this means that the Outsider is more likely to contest the primary when her victory would be damaging to the party’s prospects in the general election.

Discussion. We highlight the robustness of our prediction that the Outsider enters via a primary challenge if there is sufficient polarization.

More General Distribution of Voter Preferences. We demonstrate in online Appendix B, page 4, that our results hold if we relax our assumptions that (a) the fraction of anti-globalists in each party is the same, and (b) the fractions of anti-globalist and \mathcal{R} voters are independent. Our analysis further highlights how changes in the distribution of globalists within the \mathcal{L} party that affect *neither* the relative share of globalists within the \mathcal{R} party *nor* the share of voters across parties could nonetheless encourage the Outsider to pursue a primary challenge in the \mathcal{R} party, instead of a third-party challenge.

In the second part of Appendix B, page 6, we also show that allowing for moderate or “swing” voters in the electorate, who are between parties and so more likely to be swayed by the positions on the globalism dimension, does not substantively change our results.

Strategic Voters. We assume that voters cast their ballots sincerely on the basis of their immediate comparison between the candidates in both the primary and the general election. In online Appendix C, page 9, we relax both of these restrictions. First, we suppose that \mathcal{R} primary voters are guided by forward-looking concerns—in particular, their concerns about the electability of the party’s nominee in a subsequent general election. Second, we allow for a

⁹For example, our model would predict that Roy Moore in Alabama in 2017, or David Brat in Virginia’s 7th district in 2014, had a greater incentive to mount a primary challenge than run as third party challenge because the Republican party was strongly advantaged.

fraction of voters to coordinate their choices in the general election. In both cases, subject to caveats about equilibrium selection, our key result remains: the Outsider prefers to mount a primary challenge if and only if there is sufficient inter-party polarization.

More Policy Choices for Outsider. We restrict the Outsider to locate at one of the two policies associated with party \mathcal{R} . While this is natural when considering her policy choice in that party's primary contest, we also show in online Appendix G, page 23, that Proposition 2 extends unamended when the Outsider is allowed to choose *any* policy in $\{0, 1\}^2$ if she enters as a third party candidate.

We also explore in Appendix G the possibility that, as a third-party candidate, the Outsider can locate at any policy in $[0, 1]^2$. This could reflect that, while parties have developed reputations that constrain the policies they can credibly offer, an independent or third-party candidate may not be similarly constrained. In that case, the Outsider locates at $y = 0$ and $x = 1/2$: she maximally differentiates herself from the parties on the issue that unites them but compromises on the issue that divides them. It remains true, however, that if inter-party polarization p is sufficiently large, the Outsider continues to opt for a primary challenge.

Finally, we can also allow the Outsider to choose between contesting the \mathcal{L} party primary or the \mathcal{R} party primary: Corollary 2 implies that she would prefer to enter the primary of whichever party is more likely to constitute a majority in the electorate.

5. How Party Elites (Don't) Respond

Our analysis raises a natural question: under what conditions can party elites head off the prospect of a primary or third-party challenge? And, even if they have the ability to block an Outsider from running in the primary, would party elites be prepared to do so? To address these questions, we extend our benchmark model to allow the \mathcal{R} party elite to respond to the potential Outsider challenge. We show that the same conditions that foster Outsider entry in

a party's primary—large polarization between the parties—also encourage elite inaction.

We assume that the party elite, like the Outsider, is office-motivated. Specifically, the elite receives an office rent normalized to one whenever one of its establishment candidates wins the election, and receives $\delta \in [0, 1]$ if the Outsider wins the general election as the \mathcal{R} party's nominee after successfully contesting the \mathcal{R} primary.

In practice, there is significant real-world variation in the extent to which party elites can control their nomination processes, so we consider a range of alternatives.

Barring the Outsider? We first suppose that party elites have the power to bar the Outsider from participating in the primary contest. This corresponds to a context in which elite control of candidate nominations is near-complete, and in which top-down intra-party hierarchies give party leaders the legal authority to disallow the Outsider from running in the primary. Of course, if the elite does so, the Outsider may respond by running as a third-party candidate.¹⁰

Italy offers a striking example of the potential costs to a party of barring an Outsider from running. Before starting his own political party—the Five Star Movement—Beppe Grillo attempted to enter the Democratic Party (*Partito Democratico*) in 2009, but was blocked by its elite. Pierro Fassino—Democratic Party founder and Mayor of Turin—famously quipped that “if Grillo wants to do politics, he should found his own party. We will see how many votes he gets.” In 2016, Fassino was defeated by the Five Star Movement's candidate Chiara Appendino, and in the 2018 general election the Five Star Movement's national vote stood at 32%, versus the Democratic Party's 19%.

Formally, we extend our benchmark setting to allow the \mathcal{R} elite to bar the Outsider's entry into the party's primary. [Proposition 2](#) identifies conditions under which the Outsider would

¹⁰ We assume that the elite incurs no direct costs, e.g., from legal challenges or fracturing of the party, from barring the Outsider. Adding such costs would further discourage the elite from barring the Outsider.

prefer to mount a primary challenge, if her entry were not barred by the \mathcal{R} elite, and we suppose these conditions hold so that the elite's decision is relevant.

Barring the Outsider from the primary results in a third-party challenge that may divide \mathcal{R} voters into their globalist and anti-globalist factions, against a united \mathcal{L} party. If the \mathcal{R} voters are divided but the \mathcal{L} voters are united behind their globalist nominee—which occurs when there is moderate but not extreme factionalism—the \mathcal{R} nominee loses for sure when the Outsider runs as a third-party candidate. Since extreme factionalism is less likely when p is larger, the cost to the elite of a third party run increases with the extent of inter-party polarization. This yields the following result.

Proposition 3. *If there is sufficiently large inter-party ideological polarization, p , then the \mathcal{R} elite would not block the Outsider from challenging a globalist establishment candidate in the primary.*

Note that this result holds for *all* values of $\delta \in [0, 1]$: even if the \mathcal{R} elite derives *no* direct value from the Outsider winning the election as its nominee, it strictly prefers not to bar the Outsider from entering. The reason is that the establishment candidate is more likely to be elected if she faces the Outsider in the primary than having her potentially split the votes in the general election.

Other Nomination Strategies. In many contexts, including the United States, party elites may not have the power to prevent the Outsider from participating in the party's nomination process. Nonetheless, the Outsider's appeal in a primary contest hinges on her ability to offer policies that would otherwise go unrepresented by establishment candidates. If elites do not have access to establishment candidates that can credibly represent the party's anti-globalist faction—perhaps because establishment candidates are viewed as captured by globalist special interests—there is nothing they can do to respond to the Outsider threat. However, *if* the elite could find an establishment candidate to represent the party's anti-globalist faction in the primary, would the elite choose to advance such a candidate?

To address this question, we extend our benchmark setting to allow the \mathcal{R} elite to choose from one of three nomination strategies: back a globalist establishment candidate, back an anti-globalist establishment candidate, or back establishment candidates to represent each faction's preferred policy in the primary contest.

The Outsider observes the elite's choice before deciding whether to enter the primary, and we assume that the Outsider stays out of the election entirely if she is certain to lose regardless of whether she were to mount a primary or third-party challenge. We continue to assume that the conditions of [Proposition 2](#) are met, so that the Outsider would enter the \mathcal{R} primary if the anti-globalist position were left unrepresented.

The Outsider can never mount a successful primary challenge by locating at a policy occupied by an establishment candidate. Thus, by allowing for establishment candidates to represent these policies, party elites can deter the Outsider's entry into the party. Our next result highlights that when there is sufficient polarization the elite would not choose to do so: the same logic as [Proposition 3](#) implies that the elite would prefer to face the Outsider in the primary than as a third party candidate.

Proposition 4. *For any $\delta > 0$, if p is sufficiently large, the \mathcal{R} elite strictly prefers to back either a globalist or an anti-globalist, but not both—thereby triggering a primary challenge by the Outsider.*

We now provide a simple condition for the elite to favor a globalist establishment candidate, consistent with our baseline model: that globalists are expected to be the majority and inter-party polarization is sufficiently large.

Proposition 5. *If globalists are expected to be in the majority, i.e. $M_A < 1/2$, the \mathcal{R} elite prefers to back only a globalist whenever p is sufficiently large. Conversely if $M_A > 1/2$ the \mathcal{R} elite prefers to back only an anti-globalist whenever p is sufficiently large.*

We close by highlighting how the \mathcal{R} elite's strategy is influenced by the presence of the Outsider. Specifically, we consider an alternative context in which the \mathcal{R} elite does not face

the threat of Outsider entry either in the primary or in the general election.

Proposition 6. *Absent the Outsider threat, the \mathcal{R} elite always strictly prefers an inclusive primary contest in which both factions are represented by establishment candidates.*

A viable Outsider primary challenge hinges on the elite's decision *not* to allow the breadth of factional views to be represented by its establishment candidates. Ironically, office-motivated elites only opt to restrict this policy representation in the presence of an Outsider threat.

6. Discussion

Extensions. In the online Appendix, we pursue additional extensions that we briefly outline.

Primaries in Both Parties. Our benchmark analysis presumes that the \mathcal{L} party is certain to nominate an establishment globalist candidate, and focuses on the prospect of Outsider entry in the \mathcal{R} party. How would the relative value of a primary challenge in one party be affected by the possibility of a similar anti-globalist primary challenge in the other party? In online Appendix E, page 17, we extend our benchmark model so that each party faces a threat of entry from an Outsider candidate, and each Outsider simultaneously decides whether to enter the primary of their party, or instead run as a third-party candidate. We obtain a threshold such that if inter-party ideological polarization is above this threshold, there exists a strict equilibrium in which both Outsiders enter the election via primary challenges. This minimal level of polarization is *lower* than the threshold p^* that we identified in [Corollary 1](#) because the possibility of an anti-globalist winning the \mathcal{L} nomination lowers the electoral prospects for a third-party victory.

Compromise Establishment Candidate. In online Appendix D, page 14, we suppose that the \mathcal{R} elite can back an establishment candidate to locate at a compromise policy $(1, y)$, for $y \in [0, 1]$. Note that allowing the establishment candidate to choose any policy $y \in [0, 1]$ can only increase the elite's payoff from backing a single candidate rather than holding a competitive

primary; and, when p is sufficiently large, the Outsider would prefer to contest the primary rather than run as a third-party candidate. While a general analysis is involved, we identify a set of parameters for which there is a unique interior optimal policy $y^* \in (0, 1)$ and the elite chooses y *not* to block or deter the Outsider's entry but rather to maximize the probability its preferred candidate beats the Outsider in the primary.

Beyond Theory. While an empirical test of our results is beyond the scope of the present paper, we highlight some of the predictions that arise from our model, and their relation to existing scholarship.

Based on our model, primary challenges are more likely to occur (1) in periods of relatively intense inter-party polarization ([Corollary 1](#)), and also (2) in the electorally advantaged party. This is consistent with findings by [Porter and Truel \(2019\)](#), who document a pronounced increase in congressional open seat primary victories by candidates who have not previously held elected office, particularly since 2012 and on the Republican side. If we interpret candidates without prior experience as Outsiders, the increase in Outsiders contesting (and winning) primary elections as polarization between parties has increased in recent years ([McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2008](#)) is consistent with our model.

Also related to our theoretical predictions, [Hall \(2015\)](#) shows that when a party nominates an ideologically extreme candidate, the party's prospect of winning that seat in the general election decreases by 35-54 percentage points, on average. The majority of the primary contests in the author's data are from districts classified as "safe" or "competitive" for the party—which our model predicts are the districts with both the largest propensity for Outsider entry *and* electoral penalties. Of course, our analysis demonstrates that while Outsiders choose policies that differentiate themselves, they need not be more extreme on the inter-party policy issue. It would be interesting to explore the electoral consequences when an Outsider candidate that embraces non-traditional policies in a distinct issue dimension wins the primary. Our framework predicts that: (1) the frequency of Outsider primary challenges in a given

party should increase in the electoral strength of the party (2) an Outsider victory increases a disadvantaged party's chances in the general but lowers the prospects for a strong party.

7. Conclusion

Our paper analyzes electoral competition in a setting with ideological polarization both *between* and *within* parties, and a threat of Outsider entry either via a primary challenge or a third-party campaign. We find there is a threshold level of polarization in the electorate, above which an Outsider contests a party's primary election and below which she runs as a third-party candidate. This threshold decreases as the party becomes more electorally favored. Furthermore, increased polarization also encourages elites not to deter the Outsider's entry into the party's nomination contest.

Paradoxically, this implies that elite control over party nominations diminishes under the same circumstances, and sheds light on the contemporary US paradox of "strong partisanship, weak parties" (Azari 2016). Even if party elites *could* prevent the Outsider's entry into the party nomination process, they may prefer not to use this power in order to head off a third-party challenge that could divide its base.

We believe that there are a number of promising directions for future research—in particular, dynamic elections. For instance, [Proposition 5](#) states that elites prefer to back globalist establishment candidates when they believe that globalists are the majority within the party's rank and file. To the extent that a successful Outsider primary challenge reveals the strength of anti-globalist sentiment in the party, we might expect the elite to back establishment candidates that champion these policies in subsequent elections. A full analysis of these dynamics, and the possibility of cycles of Outsider success, is left for future research.

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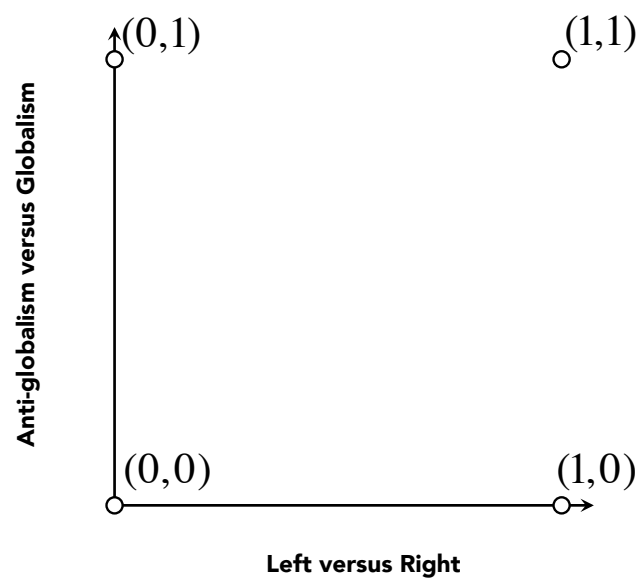


Figure 1 – The set of policy alternatives.

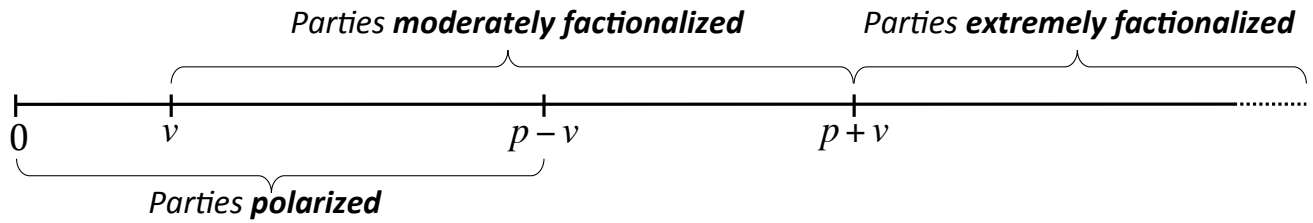


Figure 2 – Possible realizations of g , the intensity of preferences on the second dimension of policy conflict. Parties can be both *polarized* and *moderately factionalized* if and only if voters are *highly partisan* ($p > 2v$).