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## **The United States**

In the United States, our project covered a period that included two Presidential and two midterm elections as well as a number of specific elections and proposition votes notably in California. Our fieldwork spanned from the first Midterm election of the Obama presidency in 2010 to the earthquake victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election.

Major elections take place in the US every two years in November, with Presidential elections every leap year and Midterm elections every other even numbered year. Each vote actually covers many different elections, as every electoral year, regardless of whether it includes a Presidential election or not will include full elections for the House of Representatives, and partial renewal of the Senate (a third renewed every two years), State governors and legislatures, various elected positions such as mayors, sheriffs, and judges, and propositions (referenda). Presidential elections are preceded by a long and fully formalised primary election which campaign starts towards the end of the year preceding the Presidential election and States voting from early February to early June. Other elections also follow less prominent primaries. In some States, like California, proposition voting has become a massive exercise of the years, with 18 state-wide propositions in 2016 in addition to county and city-specific ones. The vast majority of elected positions are allocated through the use of single ballot plurality within single member districts or single member races, with the exception of the Presidency which uses an indirect Convention system. Historically, the US has had one of the lowest turnout levels of the Western world (only Switzerland routinely has even lower participation levels), especially outside of Presidential years.

The 2010 midterm election came a mere two years after the emphatic election of Barack Obama as the first non-Caucasian President of the United States in 2008. His election had benefited from a high turnout (by US standards) of 58%, and the Democrats had won victories

and increased their majorities in both the Senate and the House. 2010 was therefore the election when the Republicans were hoping to recover some of their lost ground. After an exceptional 2008 vintage, the Democrats hoped to limit their losses based on the stable popularity of Barack Obama (46% approval in mid-October up from 41% in mid-August) to resist in both the House and the Senate whilst the Republicans hoped to surf on traditional Midterm effects that typically cost seats to the President's party. The election centred on economic issues and policies, including the continued economic crisis faced by the country and Obama's Keynesian stimulus and his health care reform proposals. Turnout for the Congressional elections was only 37.8%. The result represented the highest swing (17.4%) in Congressional elections since 1948 and the largest loss by a party (63 seats) since 1938. The Republicans achieved their highest House representation since 1946. Democrats also lost 6 seats in the Senate but retained a slender majority with 51 seats, whilst Republicans also made major gains at state level (675 seats were gained in state legislatures in total and 6 additional Governorships were acquired).

Obama ran for re-election in 2012, his Republican opponent after an intense primary campaign being Mitt Romney, who defeated a number of more conservative opponents. This was the first major election covered by our project. The campaign themes changed little since 2010, with an emphasis on the continuing recession, and Obama's social care policy and notably the Affordable Care Act (the so-called 'Obamacare'). This continuity is interesting from the point of view of our claim that the behavioral logic of election cycles may differ from their institutional logic. We already knew from second order elections theory (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) midterm elections do not fully interrupt the four year length of Presidential elections cycles, but looking at the 2012 campaign actually suggests that at times, where an incumbent runs for re-election, what should be a new election cycle may be trumped by the pervasive continuity of an electoral battle that has officially long been settled. In other words, it looks like to an extent, the election cycle that started in 2008 continued almost uninterrupted until 2016.

A number of personal and societal issues also gained ground at various points within the campaign, from Romney's personal fortune and tax bills to the legacy of the Iraq war. For much of the campaign, polls predicted a neck and neck election although Obama seemed to consistently maintain a slight lead. In the end, turnout declined from 2008 (54.9%), but Obama's re-election proved relatively comfortable in terms of overall votes (he ended up 5 million votes and 3.9% ahead of Romney) and delegates (with a majority of 126). Among the many states that had been identified as swing states, only North Carolina and Indiana switched to the Republicans. In the Congressional elections, there were small Democrat gains in both chambers of Congress but the Republicans retained control of the House.

An increased opposition between the President and the House started to deepen in the run up to the 2014 midterm elections. The President and Congress would oppose each other on increasingly frequent issues with recurrent threats of a complete standstill or budgetary failure. The electoral campaign itself seemed to mostly focus on the Obama legacy (including again the Affordable Care Act, which several Republican-led states tried to limit in its implementation, with five states (Texas, Alabama, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Wyoming) refusing to embrace the reform entirely. Immigration also appeared to gain ground in a campaign that resulted in one of the lowest turnouts in US history (36.4%). The result itself proved a large victory for the Republicans who achieved their highest majority in the House since 1928 with 246 seats, and a swing of 18 (net gain of 9) in Senate giving them a comfortable majority of 54 in the Senate for the first time in 8 years. The President would now be opposed by both the House and the Senate. The Republicans also managed significant gains at gubernatorial and state legislature levels, thereby leaving Obama increasingly isolated *vis-a-vis* most sub-federal units.

Finally, the 2016 Presidential election undoubtedly became one of the most heated and dramatic political battles in the history of US democracy. As Obama's second term came to an end, leaving him institutionally out of the race, both parties faced complex primaries. On

the Democrat side, Hillary Clinton emerging as an early favourite – just as she had in 2008 – faced an increasingly tensed battle against independent left wing candidate Bernie Sanders. On the Republican side, property Moghul and multi-millionaire Donald Trump first appeared as a maverick populist candidate that few expected to win against ultra conservative candidates such as Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, and Rick Santorum, the formerly close allies and Floridian popular candidates Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio, and moderate Ohio governor John Kasich. Ultimately, Clinton managed to secure a reasonably comfortable victory and received the unenthusiastic support of her primary opponent whilst Trump became the GOP candidate after numerous rumours of his bid being blocked by Republican grandees despite his apparent victory. Most political scientists will probably consider that the Presidential campaign that ensued was one of the most bizarre in contemporary American history. The violent attacks between the candidates went all the way to Trump threatening to put Clinton in jail, whilst other unconventional campaign realities involved a serving Supreme Court justice and members of virtually every elite group within American society calling the prospect of a possible Trump victory a disaster in all but name. The campaign largely focused on personal issues, including controversies surrounding some emails sent by Clinton from her personal mailbox whilst Secretary of State, Trump's tax liability and accusations of sexual assaults by several women. Politically, candidates opposed on immigration (including Trump's promise to build a wall along the Mexican border and having it paid for by Mexico), minorities (notably Muslims), the Obama legacy, gun control, abortion, foreign policy, and more. Consistently, polls pointed to a largely continuous if narrow lead by Clinton, but on Election Day, with a turnout of 54.5%, Trump won a comfortable majority of the electoral college (306 vs 232) despite Clinton securing a relatively clear majority of the popular vote, with 2.65 million votes more than her predecessor. This apparent mismatch is due to Trump securing key victories in most of the battleground states for the election, including Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Michigan, Arizona, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Clinton secured battleground wins in Colorado, New Hampshire, Minnesota, and Nevada, and very large successes in the West Coast and most large US cities. The Republicans also maintained reduced control over both the House and the Senate, and

further increased their power at state level with two gubernatorial gains (33 governors in total) and a handful of gains in state legislatures.

## **United Kingdom**

Our fieldwork in the United Kingdom spans perhaps an even more exciting and historically critical range of elections. It started with the UK General elections of 2010, the first in 36 years to produce a hung Parliament, and finished in 2016 with the historical referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union (or 'Brexit'), also encompassing two more General Elections (the third of which also resulted in a hung Parliament), two more referenda, a European Parliament election, and several local elections in-between.

For a long time, people thought of British electoral cycles as among the most predictable in Europe despite the historical lack of fixed term elections. Parliament is normally elected for five years although historically, many Prime Ministers have used the lack of fixed term Parliament to precipitate elections a little earlier (typically after about 4 years) hoping to optimise their chances of renewed success. Local council elections take place in a sub-set of councils most years and pan-European European Parliament elections every five years. Historically, referenda have been very rarely used in the United Kingdom, but three were organised between 2011 and 2016: a referendum on a proposed reform of the electoral system in May 2011, as part of the promises made by the Conservatives to the Liberal-Democrats in their 2010 coalition agreement, a referendum on Scottish independence in October 2014 as a result of the SNP's victory in the preceding Scottish Parliament elections, and finally the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union that David Cameron had promised to his own party members and later to the public in June 2016.

Following the election of a hung Parliament in 2010, a new Fixed-Term Parliaments Act was adopted in 2011 which was expected to institutionally firm up the predictability of election

cycles, but instead, it could be argued that UK election cycles have rarely been as unpredictable as in the 2010s with a snap election taking place in 2017 and demands from multiple parties of a further General Election or a further Referendum as of 2019. In fact, when considering General elections and high salience referenda, it could be argued that discussions relating to voting were never as central in the public sphere as in the second half of the 2010s.

Most British elections use single ballot plurality (or 'first past the post') in single member districts, but other electoral systems are also used, including proportional representation (European Parliament elections), Single Transferable Vote (Northern Ireland Assembly elections), mixed system with Additional Member System (Scottish Parliament elections), Supplementary Vote (London mayor elections), etc. Historically, in recent decades, turnout in General Elections has reached approximately 60-65%, and turnout in other elections been much lower. Finally, whilst the voting age is normally 18, all citizens aged 16 and above were allowed to vote in the Referendum on Scotland's independence, although the Government refused to extend the same right to British citizens in the 2016 referendum on EU membership.

The May 2010 General Election came after 13 years of New Labour government of Britain. After winning elections with comfortable margins in 1997, 2001, and 2005, Tony Blair stepped down as Prime Minister following a pact with his Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who replaced him in 10, Downing Street. David Cameron took over from a string of unsuccessful Tory leaders to try and topple the Labour party, and for much of the campaign, it seemed that he would likely succeed with comfortable leads in most polls. Much of the campaign focused on the economy, with the Conservatives promising to bridge a growing budget deficit, but immigration also became a crucial electoral topic with the Tories promising to take migration figures 'down to the tens of thousands'. As the incumbent Prime Minister faced popularity issues, Prime Ministerial debates had a far stronger profile than usual, and resulted in an unexpected surge in popularity for the Liberal Democrats. 'I agree with Nick [Clegg, the Liberal Democrat candidate] became a catch phrase after both Brown and Cameron seemed taken off guard by

the third candidate's strong performance and struggled to find reasons to disagree with him on policy proposals ranging from free university tuition and lower taxes for the poor to more involvement in European integration. Even some of the newspapers historically aligned with Labour switched allegiance to the Lib Dems. Ultimately, the election saw a turnout of 65%, but the real shock it delivered was that the arch-favourite Conservatives failed to win a majority (306 seats) and had to make do with being the largest party in a hung Parliament with a short lead over an incumbent Labour party (258 seats) that resisted far better than polls had predicted. The Liberal Democrats (57 seats) did less well than they hoped but still achieved their best historical result for years and enviably became king makers. They interpreted the result of the election as a revolt of the electorate against Labour and chose to support a Conservative-led coalition on the basis of a painstakingly negotiated coalition agreement whereby the Tories had to grant them a referendum on a change of electoral system and an increase in the taxation threshold, while the Lib-Dems had to support a focus on deficit reduction and a major increase in university tuition fees, diametrically contradicting one of their most iconic campaign promises.

In accordance with the coalition agreement, a referendum was organised on 5 May 2011 on whether or not to replace the UK's traditional plurality electoral system by a less majoritarian Alternative Vote system. The Tories had committed to put the question to the voters in a referendum but refused to make electoral system change a Government-backed proposal. In fact, many Tories and Labour politicians campaigned to keep the First Past the Post system. Many of those who voted for the Liberal Democrats a year before felt badly betrayed by the party's support of austerity and increased tuition fees. The referendum ended with a very poor turnout (42%) and a clear rejection of the Alternative Vote (68%) championed by the coalition's junior partner, and the result may be partly interpreted as a punishing response to their actions in power as many 2010 Lib Dem voters failed to support the amendment.



The next major vote to take place in the country was another referendum organised on 18 September 2014 on Scottish independence. The referendum had been promised by the SNP which won a landslide in the previous Scottish Parliament election in 2011 and won an absolute majority of the seats. The detailed organisation of the referendum proceeded from extremely tense negotiations between the British and Scottish governments, with one of the most contentious measures being lowering the voting age to 16 for the first time in the UK. This significant institutional change is critical given our findings on the importance of citizens' first electoral experience both in terms of its emotional power, its impact on long term electoral memory, and on long term turnout.

Tense debates focused on questions of identity, the economy, austerity, but also the future of European integration as by then, Prime Minister Cameron had promised to run his campaign at the next General Election with a promise of a Referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. While most polls suggested a majority against independence, the difference between the two camps seemed to narrow in the last month of the campaign. The referendum led to an exceptional turnout of 85% and on the day, 55% of voters chose for Scotland to remain in the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that year old 16-18 young voters embraced their new right to vote, participating in large numbers (and favouring independence much more than other generations). As reported earlier, those young voters were also largely positive about their first electoral experience in this Referendum.

In accordance to the Fixed Term Parliament Act, the next UK General Elections took place in May 2015. Pre-election polls suggested that both the senior (Conservative) and junior (Liberal Democrat) coalition partners seemed to suffer from a clear lack of popularity that the Labour opposition led by Ed Miliband seemed unable to capitalise on. On the back of an expected strong showing of nationalist parties in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, most polls seemed to point out another hung Parliament and an unenthusiastic electorate. The Tories campaigned primarily on their economic record and promises bring the budget to a surplus by

2020 whilst reducing immigration and organising a referendum on the UK's continued membership of the EU. Labour campaigned against the Government's austerity policy and increased inequalities, whilst the Liberal Democrats suggested that they had been a moderating force in Government. As the perspective of a hung Parliament seemed to dominate all the opinion polls, much of the campaign moved – most unusually for the UK – on likely coalition partners. As many polls suggested that Labour would likely have the largest party in Parliament despite lagging behind the Conservatives in terms of vote share, the Tories focused their attacks on the likelihood that they would enter an explicit or implicit deal with the highly polarising SNP. Labour retorted that the Conservative-Lib Dem alliance had failed and that an increasingly immigration-focused Conservative Party may end up entering an alliance with the even more highly divisive UKIP. For all those attempts by journalists and pollsters to predict likely coalitions, the actual election returned an absolute majority to the Conservatives with 330 votes against 232 for Labour which had not been predicted by the polls. Turnout was 66%. The Liberal Democrats were decimated, collapsing to 8 MPs (from 57), whilst the SNP realised exceptional results in Scotland where it won 56 seats (50 more than in 2010) to become the third largest party in Parliament.

From the point of view of this book's model, the election seems particularly interesting when it comes to understanding the impact of empathic displacement. Voters went to the polls being constantly told to expect that fellow citizens would be split and that the main question that the election would resolve was whether the country would have a Labour-led or Conservative-led coalition Government, with the additional information that by far the most likely outcome according to the polls was a Labour party that would have fewer votes but more seats than their competitor. In qualitative interviews, several voters referred to how unfair they had thought it would be if such was the case. In this context, having found that most citizens are societally projective, opinion polls can easily switch from being measures of opinion to being a primary source of information used by societally projective citizens with the possibility that it might then end up affective their vote.

With David Cameron pledging to 'renegotiate' the terms of Britain's membership of the EU and put that renegotiated membership to a 'simple in/out' referendum, this was eventually organised on 23 June 2016. The outcome of the Government's discussions was announced in February and consisted of a number of new opt outs and exceptions such as a new 'emergency break' enabling the Government to temporarily exclude newly settled EU citizens from receiving benefit payments for a fixed period of time. In effect, the referendum campaign started almost directly after the terms of the proposed agreement were announced. One of the most striking aspects of the campaign was the pre-eminence of Conservative party high profile politicians on both the Leave and Remain campaigns as UKIP was largely marginalised in the formal 'vote Leave' team, the Liberal Democrats were still largely shaken by their 2015 electoral disaster, and the Labour party under a more radical and more Eurosceptic leadership than had previously been the norm chose to keep a low profile in the campaign. Much of the late winter and early spring thus focused on how the Tories would divide, with Theresa May joining the Remainers whilst Boris Johnson and Michael Gove siding with the Leavers. The campaign between the two sides of the Conservative divide line was arguably more aggressive than most cross-party campaigns of recent years, including fairly personal criticisms such as a prominent Tory politician publically stating in a TV debate that a fellow Tory politician on the other side of the debate "isn't the man you want driving you home at the end of the evening". Quickly, polls confirmed that the public opinion divide in the run up to the referendum was both deeply felt by citizens and largely orthogonal to partisan preferences.

This switch from partisan to partisan fracture lines as early the campaign period echoes our model of electoral hostility which we decoupled from the partisan polarisation model by suggesting that it comes as a further stage to political cynicism rather than a further stage of partisanship, and is therefore not related on partisan identity and even susceptible to affect citizens with relatively low interest in politics.

Prime Minister Cameron took a high profile in the Remain campaign after being a long-lasting EU critic. He focused primarily on the economic risks and uncertainty associated with leaving the EU. However, his popularity was already declining one year after his re-election, and his personal credit was damaged when his family was named in connection with the 'Panama-gate' tax evasion scandal. The Leave camp focused on reducing 'EU migration', and promised that leaving the EU would save the UK money that would be reinjected into the money-losing National Health Service. In turn, the Remain camps and endless numbers of foreign leaders such as Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton, celebrities, stakeholders and experts from a wide range of disciplines commented that the claims were unrealistic, leading 'Leave' champion and former Education Minister Michael Gove to say that people 'had had enough of experts'. While media analysis largely framed the referendum as an opposition between "rational" remainers and "emotional" leavers, analysis of the Referendum panel data in this book demonstrated that instead, both leave and remain supporters were highly emotional in their preference and that those preferences stemmed from competing identities and conceptions of society (chapter 6, also Harrison, Bruter, and Opinium, 2016).

Still related to an extreme aspect of electoral hostility, the campaign took a particularly dramatic turn when prominent Remain supporter and Labour MP Jo Cox was brutally murdered in her constituency during her constituency surgery, shaking British democracy to its core with the country's first political assassination in decades. While this event is wholly and obviously unrelated to the question of electoral behavior, it also illustrates the claim made in this chapter that electoral politics seem to have changed, sometimes profoundly, and often dramatically in the period covered by this book.

With polls that were increasingly uncertain, the early Remain lead was followed by Leave leads in May. By June, there was very little between the predicted scores of the two camps in the polls. The highly tense vote took place on 23 June whilst most of London and the surrounding area was the victim of disastrous weather, rain, and flooding. Nevertheless,

turnout, at 72% was the highest in Britain for 25 years, including amongst young voters (Harrison, 2018). The shock victory of the 'Leave' vote, with 51.8% of the vote is by now well-known and shook much of the world – and 48.1% of Britain, notably the immense majority of young people, inhabitants of large cities (London, Manchester, Glasgow, etc.), Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Gibraltar, all of which overwhelmingly voted in favour of remaining in the European Union. Those fracture lines (for instance, over 70% of young people aged 18-24 voted in favour of remaining in the EU as did the population of many London boroughs) made it intuitive for many voters to characterise the camp opposite to theirs in terms of age, geographical, or social characteristics, a phenomenon which, as discussed earlier in this chapter was also preeminent in some aspects of voters' hostility narrative. Also confirming the analysis of this book, the polls conducted by Lord Ashcroft supported our claim that 20-30% of voters tend to make up or change their minds within a week of a vote half of them on Election Day. In the Ashcroft poll (2016), those figures stood at 24% and 10% respectively. In chapter 7, we also explored electoral tears and the intense emotionality of the voters, many of whom acknowledged crying on Election Night.

Immediately after the result was announced Prime Minister Cameron announced his resignation and following a leadership race, former remain supporter Theresa May took over as Prime Minister. A few months later, as her party enjoyed overwhelming leads in the polls, she announced the dissolution of Parliament and a snap election due to provide a "clear and stable" majority for a given Brexit policy. That election took place on 8 June 2017, and by the end of May, the Conservative lead over Labour in the polls was still as high as 12%. However, those positions betrayed a lack of enthusiasm for the Tories in the same polls, and on Election Night, analysts were largely surprised that the vote resulted in a second hung Parliament in 7 years. Ms May's hopes to strengthen her mandate for Brexit negotiations with the EU were shattered as she lost her majority, despite being able to continue as Prime Minister thanks to a confidence and supply agreement with the Northern Irish DUP.

Part of the narrative behind that apparent electoral upset was the strong mobilisation of young voters across the country, and their overwhelming vote against Tory candidates. As seen above, young people were among the key groups that felt opposed to and marginalised by the outcome of the 2016 Referendum, and Harrison (2018) showed that taking a stance against Brexit was at the forefront of their political message alongside a broader desire for change. This result – and that motivation, also shared by many other voters, reinforces our characterisation of behavioral election cycles as largely separate from institutional ones. By any standards, General Elections are the sole first order election type within the British system, yet, the 2017 General Election only appeared as a check-up point within the longer, deeper, and more fractured election cycle which started with the EU Membership Referendum of 2016. Even years after the 2017 election took place, public sphere references to the political debate still focus on the 2016 Referendum far more than on the General Election that followed it nearly a year later. This goes beyond the notion of realignment elections. It is about voters appropriating election cycles – sometimes despite or against institutional logic.

## **France**

In France, our project covered a period of 5 years from the 2012 to the 2017 Presidential elections and legislative elections, including, in between, some municipal elections, regional elections, the first ever “departmental” elections, and 2014 European Parliament elections. France is an exciting case study for specialists of electoral behavior for a seemingly infinite number of reasons. Firstly, no other country seems to use as great a variety of electoral systems across its various elections. Presidential elections use a two-round majority electoral system, legislative elections a two-round majority-plurality electoral system in single member districts, departmental elections use a similar two-round majority-plurality electoral system but in two-member districts, municipal elections a two-round combination of plurality and proportional representation based on a single list vote, regional elections use a two round system relatively similar to that of municipal elections, and European Parliament elections use

a single round proportional representation system in 8 large constituencies (though this was replaced by a nationwide constituency in 2019). Altogether, France therefore uses both single and two round elections, proportional, majority, and plurality systems, single member, dual member, and list systems. Another specificity of French elections is their historical tendency to produce a strong 'incumbency disadvantage' at the national level. No other major Western country has produced changing national majorities with such metronomic regularity for the past 40 years: the right won in 1978, the left in 1981, the right in 1986, the left in 1988, the right again in 1993, and unusually enough in 1995, then the left in 1997, the right in 2002, the right again in 2007 but the left in 2012 and finally an entirely new party in the centre in 2017.

The 2007 Presidential elections had been largely seen as the start of a new political era in France. After the trauma of 2002, where Jean-Marie Le Pen managed to qualify for the second round of the Presidential election, booting the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin out of the competition and forcing most left voters to support right wing Jacques Chirac into re-election, 2007 had seen a seemingly rejuvenated political fight between the 'new' right embodied by Nicolas Sarkozy, the left's first female presidential candidate, Ségolène Royal, and an unprecedentedly strong centre embodied by François Bayrou. Sarkozy won, but his strong early popularity ratings quickly collapsed for him to be largely perceived as divisive by a significant portion of the French electorate. As he set out to seek re-election, former Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn, one of the most respected economists in France and the President of the International Monetary Fund, long marginalised within the Socialist party for being too centrist looked set to challenge him and enjoyed a very significant poll lead over both internal and external competitors. A year before the election, his popularity ratings seemed so high that it seemed hard to imagine what could prevent him from becoming France's next President, but images of him being arrested and paraded in handcuffs by the New York Police Department after he was accused of raping Sofitel New York's maid Nafissatou Diallo changed the course of the election. While Strauss-Kahn was cleared of the criminal charges a few weeks later, that May 2011 episode ended his chances of making it to

the forefront of French politics with an unexpectedly open internal race opening for the left. An unprecedented primary election was won by François Hollande who challenged Sarkozy and the Front National's new candidate, Marine Le Pen. The campaign largely focused on Sarkozy's personality as he became the main target of most other candidates over his record, policies, and style. Hollande's key promise was to replace Sarkozy's flashy and hyperactive style by what he described as a 'Normal President'. In return, Sarkozy promised a greater focus on immigration, tax, and making citizens 'proud to be French'. Most polls predicted a neck and neck race between Hollande and Sarkozy in the first round (with Sarkozy leading in most polls till mid-March, then Hollande afterwards), and a clear victory for Hollande in the second round. The first round took place on 22 April with a high turnout of 79% (albeit well under the 83% of 2007). Hollande (28.6%) came first followed by Sarkozy (27.2%) as both qualified for the second round. Behind them, Le Pen achieved 17.9% of the vote, far left Mélenchon 11.1%, and centrist Bayrou 9.1%. Le Pen's result was the highest ever for a FN Presidential candidate, and higher than polls had predicted (14-16%) whilst Mélenchon did less well than expected (about 13-15%). The second round was tighter than predicted by most polls, but Hollande was confirmed as the winner with 51.6% of the vote and a turnout of over 80% (84% in 2007).

Since 2007, Presidential and Legislative elections have followed the same cycles (as the Presidential term was reduced from 7 to 5 years, just like the legislative term), and in June, the legislative elections took place to confirm whether Hollande would benefit from a congruent Parliamentary majority. In the first round, the new presidential majority did a little better than suggested by the polls, the centre right and the Greens as expected, and the far right and far left a little bit less well. A week later, the second round confirmed the victory of the centre left which obtained an absolute majority of the seats (331 including the Greens), against 229 for the Centre Right, 10 for the far left, 2 for the centrist Modem, and 3 for the Far right, their best result under majoritarian electoral system for legislative elections (two in the Provençal area of Vaucluse and one in the Languedoc area of the Gard).



The next elections were consistently disaster for Hollande's Socialists however. The French municipal elections of March 2014 were very poor for the party. Before the election, the left controlled most of the largest French cities, with the exception of the second (Marseille) and fifth (Nice) largest ones. With turnout of 64% in the first round and 62% in the second, the right was the clear winner (about 46% of the vote vs 38% for the centre left) and gained key cities such as Toulouse, Tours, Angers, Reims, St Etienne, and Caen, but failed to win Lyon and the highly symbolic Paris. The Greens won their largest ever city, Grenoble, from the Socialists, and the Front National obtained some key successes in a number of medium-sized towns (Henin-Beaumont, Beziers, Frejus, Beaucaire, Mantes, and Villers-Coteret).

Two months later, the European Parliament elections confirmed the poor state of the French Socialists, but also the inability of the French right to benefit from it. With turnout of 42.4% (+2 points compared to 2009), France was shocked to see the Front National take the first place in the election with 24.9% of the vote, well ahead of the UMP (20.8%), the socialist (under 14%, their worst historical result), the centre (10%), the Greens (9%), and the Front de Gauche (6.6%). In effect, the result was a major improvement for the FN and a minor one for the pro-European centre, but a clear loss for everyone else.

The departmental elections of March 2015, and the regional elections that followed in December of the same year confirmed the same pattern again. The socialists and their allies lost 27 of the 57 departments that they controlled (keeping only 30 out of 98), with 26 being won by the right (67) and one to an independent candidate supported by the right. The FN received over 25% of the vote. As for the Regional elections, it came as a major administrative reform reduced their number from 22 to 13. While the left controlled 20 of the old 22, on the evening of the first round on 6 December, with a turnout of just under 50%, the FN managed to get an unprecedented 27.8% of the vote, more than doubling their 2010 score. In fact, they came top in 6 of the 13 new metropolitan regions, and in three of them, North (Marine Le Pen,

40.6%), Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Marion Maréchal Le Pen, 40.5%), and the new Alsace-Lorraine-Champagne (Florian Philippot, 36.1%), and looked like it might be in a position to win some in the second round. While the poor score of the left had been expected, the weakness of the centre right opposition surprised many and the prospect of the FN potentially being in the position to lead some of the powerful regions for the first time in its history was nothing short of a political earthquake, with the left and the right split on what to do where an extreme right candidate might be in a position to win and notably on whether to withdraw or not if they had no chance. The second round, on 13 December, saw an increase in turnout (58.4%), which clearly profited to the moderate parties against the FN. Both left wing and right wing voters clearly chose to switch allegiances to bar the FN from the road to power, including in the two regions where a left wing and a right wing list respectively had refused to withdraw despite arriving third. Both the Le Pen aunt and the Le Pen niece failed in their attempts to win North and South regions by very clear margins. Ultimately, the centre right won 7 regions, the centre left 5, and Corsica was to be governed by Separatist parties for the first time. As of 2015, France was thus one of the obvious contenders to illustrate the rise of populism analysed in this chapter.

This increase in populism – and the context of the victories of Brexit in the UK and Trump in the US in 2016 (as well as a strong showing of the extreme right FPÖ in the Austrian Presidential election, and a defeat of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi in the referendum of December) – made many wonder whether the French Presidential Elections of 2017 could lead to the first major victory for an extreme right candidate in her quest to preside the world's 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy. The election thus came in a context of major political crisis for much of the French political scene. President Hollande had reached records of unpopularity with approval ratings as low as 4%, and confirmed in December 2016 that he would not seek re-election, opening a great fight for his replacement within the Socialist party that was ultimately won by radical candidate Benoît Hamon, a former opponent to the EU Constitution. On the UMP opposition side, a primary was also organised. Nicolas Sarkozy hoped to get another

shot at the Presidential election but polls seemed to favour former Chirac's Prime Minister Alain Juppé. Yet, when the primary election came in November, both Sarkozy and Juppé ended up being sharply defeated by another former Prime Minister, François Fillon. Meanwhile, former Finance Minister Emmanuel Macron decided to run for the Presidential election as an independent, without party support and without competing in the centre left primary in January, whilst most polls continued giving Front National's Marine Le Pen a clear path to the second round of the election, with Fillon, Macron, and Hamon seemingly fighting for the right to face her in the second round, though Melenchon on the far left gained momentum in polls. As the campaign progressed, Fillon found himself embroiled in a corruption and nepotism scandal involving hiring his wife as an Assistant without clear evidence that she completed the work associated with the task and declined in the polls.

The situation was rather unprecedented with five candidates that seemed able to fight for two places, each of which suffered some competition from both sides. To the far left Melenchon competed on a platform that largely overlapped that of Benoit Hamon to his right, but similarly, much of his hopes to capture an anti-system and disappointed electorate put him in direct competition with Marine Le Pen to the extreme right. While Hamon had to worry about Melenchon's competition on his left, he also suffered from the presence of Emmanuel Macron to his right, as the former Hollande Finance minister risked tempting moderate left wing voters worried about Hamon's more radical ideas. Macron himself was thus in competition with Hamon on his left, but also with François Fillon on his right, whom, whilst far more conservative socially tried to compete for the economically liberal electorate. Conversely, Fillon himself whilst risking to see socially progressive right wing voters support Macron instead of him was also worried about the threat of Le Pen to his right on issues such as immigration, whilst Le Pen herself had to avoid the risk of protest voters opting for the more socially acceptable Melenchon on the opposite side of the protest electoral spectrum. Ultimately, in this contest, it is Emmanuel Macron who surprised commentators by managing to win the election with relative ease on a discourse that was economically and socially liberal and progressive but

also extremely pro-European at a time this seemed to go against the European grain. Macron topped the first round with 24% of the vote in front of Le Pen, who also qualified for the second round (21.3%), Fillon third on 20% and Melenchon fourth on 19.6%. Socialist Hamon trailed well behind with 6.4%.

Breaking the tradition of coalition against the extreme right, Melenchon refused to ask his supporters to support Macron and early polls suggested that Macron may only win by about 53-55% of the vote against 45-47% for Le Pen, but instead, on Election Day, his victory was overwhelming with 66.1% of the vote. He chose to mark it by visiting the Invalides with the European anthem playing in the background. Turnout was 77.8% in the First round and 74.6% in the second round. The result of the 2017 election illustrates, perhaps better than any other, the underlying claim of electoral change over the decade that is made in this chapter. Macron won an overwhelming victory with a party that did not even exist a mere few weeks before the election, whilst by contrast, neither of the candidate of the two parties that arch-dominated French political life since the start of the fifth Republic in 1958 even made it to the second round, the Socialist one even getting the worst ever result in the party's history. The level of hostility between citizens was also clearly increased and partly illustrated by the unusually low turnout in the second round as a number of left and right wing voters refused to side by centrist Macron against his extreme right competitor.

Whilst Presidential elections are largely personalised, the French media were unanimous in predicting that without a pre-existing party or incumbent candidates, Macron would have to seek an alliance with either the left or the right who would – in their view certainly – win the legislative elections of May. Macron's La Republique En Marche attempted an apparently impossible bet, fielding almost no incumbent among their 526 candidates, while over 50% of them did not have any political experience and were coming from civil society instead. Yet, allied with another small centrist party, Modem, won an extraordinary 350 seats out of 577. The Republicans who had been expected to march to an unprecedentedly easy Presidential

and Legislative victory on the back of Hollande's unpopularity actually lost seats and was reduced to 112, whilst the socialists almost entirely collapsed to win only 30. This represented the lowest ever result for both the main centre left and the main centre right parties. Melenchon's France Insoumise won 17 seats and the Front National 8 seats. Turnout was very low at 48.7% in the first round and 42.6% in the second. On the whole, this entire 2017 episode illustrates the tension – and sometimes parallel existence – of hope and hopelessness, resolution and hostility in electoral politics. The very same situation that led some voters to hope for a new beginning in France's political direction was met by some others with disbelief and a decision to abstain in some major elections. Conversely, the very same situation that led some voters to feel closer to fellow citizens – our definition of electoral resolution – led others to develop feelings of profound hostility towards opposite voters. The ability of elections to bring closure is here demonstrated to have an individual dimension rather than being homogeneously societal.

## **Germany**

By contrast to France, post war Germany has historically been held as a model of stable and pacified politics. Where we showed that historically, incumbency has possibly been the best predictor of electoral loss in France since the 1970s, German electoral history has been marked by sustainable majorities, durable Chancellors, and moderate party systems. The period covered by this book started and finished with the same Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who has ruled over her country since 2005 and remains in power at the time this book was finished. The period includes two Federal elections which took place in the autumns of 2013 and 2017, as well as European elections in 2014 and of course numerous state elections as those are held at different times across the various German lander.

Germany is famous for its mixed electoral system, which includes a first vote for individual candidates using plurality in single member districts, and a second vote based on proportional

representation for party lists at the land level. Despite this duality, the make-up of the Bundestag is effectively determined by the second votes (while the first vote simply determines the specific personnel filling in the party's mandates except where a candidate is elected under the first vote without a party reaching the 5% electoral threshold). In European Parliament elections, also discussed here, the system is more straightforwardly proportional, though again organised at the land level.

The 2013 elections occurred on the back of the Greek crisis which saw Germany condition the help offered to Greece to some very strict austerity policy. This was partly in response to the mood of German public opinion which saw Greece has having reached its disastrous economic situation as a result of insufficient economic and budgetary rigour. The election took place on 22 September and was largely seen as a plebiscite on Merkel's handling of the Greek bailout which was largely criticised by the Social Democrats and notably Peer Steinbrueck. In the election, Merkel's CDU and CSU partners ended up achieving the parties' best result since the unification election of 1990, with 41.5% of the vote and within 5 seats of an absolute majority in Parliament. The SPD lagged well behind with 25.7%. Despite that resounding victory, Merkel's situation was complicated by the fact that with only 4.8% of the vote, the CDU's perennial coalition partner, the FDP, did not make the electoral threshold, forcing the Chancellor to seek a grand coalition with the SPD instead. The radical left wing party Die Linke received 8.6% of the vote, the Greens 8.5%, and a new populist right wing party, the AfD made a storming entrance into German politics with 4.7% of the vote, very close to the threshold. Despite heavy debates within the SPD, as a majority of members did not feel it would be possible to work with Die Linke, and because the Greens opted to discuss the possibility of a coalition with the CDU, the Social Democratic main opposition accepted to enter the Grand Coalition after weeks of tense negotiations and against the approval of a number of iconic measures such as a national minimum wage of €8.50/hour and no new taxes. The deal was ultimately validated by three quarters of the SPD membership in December, and Merkel sworn in again on 17 December that year, six months before the European Elections.

Indeed, in May 2014, the whole of the European Union was invited to elect its representatives to the European Parliament in the institution's 8<sup>th</sup> direct elections. That election included a number of important institutional innovations, chief among which was the selection by each of the European Parliament's party group of a lead candidate (or 'Spitzenkandidat'), which would be the party group's choice for the Presidency of the European Commission should it do best in the election. Those candidates debated live on TV across the EU regarding their vision for the European Union, but the UK was one of only two Member States to choose not to broadcast those debates on TV, preferring instead an idiosyncratic British debate between those in favour and against European Union membership. Importantly from the point of view of German electoral politics, the European Socialists (PES), the second largest group in the European Parliament chose a German, Martin Schulz as their Spitzenkandidat.

EU-wide, for the first time since 1979, turnout in the European Parliament Elections progressed over the 2009 all-time low, and in Germany, the turnout figure was 48.1%, up five points from 2009. Martin Schulz's SPD was unable to win even the German vote, with only 27.3% of the vote against the CDU-CSU with 35.4%. The most important results of the election, however, pertained to the increased support for the AfD which obtained 7% of the vote in their first running, though on the populist left, Die Linke was stable. The FDP continued their poor series and the Greens also lost some ground.

Soon after the election, however, the focus of German electoral politics had also started changing. The focus on the Greek crisis, which most Germans thought had been dealt with well by Merkel, was fading significantly as the country became worried about two new sets of events. The first was the influx of refugees from the Middle East (notably Iraq and Syria), more of whom settled in Germany than in any other EU country. The question of asylum became particularly politically sensitive after a string of terrifying sexual attacks on the night of the New Year 2015-16, notably in Cologne, with many of the perpetrators of "North African and Arab

appearance” according to the city’s police chief. The events led a number of politicians to question the Government’s asylum policy, and the Chancellor to reassert Germany’s unique duty to protect the oppressed and those whose life is in danger given the country’s history. The second dramatic context included a number of Islamist terror attacks, notably in a Christmas market in Berlin on 19 December 2016 leaving 12 people dead (and others in Ansbach in July of the same year, and in Hamburg in July of 2017). Again, some of Merkel’s opponents – not only in other parties but to an extent from within her own – tried to explicitly relate those attacks to the country’s openness to both asylum seekers and migrants. These dramatic events became crucial debates in the run up to the 2017 Federal election.

Those elections took place on 24 September. In March, the SPD selected Martin Schulz, the party’s recent Spitzenkandidat in the European Parliament elections to head its campaign whilst Merkel seek re-election for the CDU. In a rather poisonous campaign atmosphere, both parties in fact lost a lot of ground. The CDU-CSU lost more than 8% and only won 32.9% of the vote, but this did not profit their junior grand coalition partners from the SPD which also lost ground on its already poor 2013 result with 20.5%, a historical low. Instead, those losses profited a reinvigorated FDP which made its come back to Parliament with 10.7% of the vote, but even more so the populist right wing AfD which obtained 12.6%, a historical score for a far right party in the country since the Second World War. With regards to the themes of this book, a lot of comments were made on the unique atmosphere of the 2017 Election, but also, on the increasing hostility between voters themselves. The election also illustrated how even Germany as possibly the last fortress of stable and centrist politics in Europe was giving way to hard to govern Parliaments with no clear majorities (see UK section) and the emergence of populist politics (see France section).

Coalition discussions were even more difficult than four years before and took 6 months. Merkel’s attempts to come up with a “Jamaica” coalition with the FDP and the Greens failed, and instead, the SPD which had promised not to re-enter a grand coalition with the CDG



changed its mind after weeks of discussion and did. The new grand coalition was sworn in in March. Nevertheless, despite retaining her position as Chancellor, Merkel was seen as highly diminished by the result of the 2017 election, openly questioned by members of her own party, and ultimately obliged to announce that this would be her last term in office, and allow a new leadership context which was won by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer in October 2018. At the same time, on the SPD side, Schulz's own career was left in tatters and he was also obliged to give way to competitors to lead the SPD. At the end of our period of study, Germany, despite still having the same Chancellor as in 2005 was thus a country which had started to experience major electoral change, and promised more challenges and renewal in months to come.

### **South Africa**

From 1948 to 1991, South Africa lived through the tragic regime of Apartheid, which formalised segregation at every residential, professional, political, and social level between four supposed ethnic groups: Whites, Blacks, Indians, and Coloured (in effect people of mixed ethnicity or not falling into the three previous groups). Apartheid ruled every possible aspect of life from imposing designated single 'race' residential areas, to people of different 'races' not being allowed to have sex together (nor of course marry), study in the same universities, or even Black, Indian, and Coloured citizens not being allowed to use changing rooms in shops as those were exclusively reserved for white people. Apartheid was officially ended in 1991, and the first non-segregated General elections took place on 27 April 1994, with Nelson Mandela's National African Congress winning a massive 62.7% of the vote. Mandela decided to step down in 1999 and was succeeded that year by Thabo Mbeki and in 2009 by Jacob Zuma. The elections covered by this study include the General Elections of 2014, and the municipal elections of 2016.

South African General elections are held every five years using proportional representation with half of the seats allocated to a nationwide constituency and the other half to lists in each

of the country's nine provinces. Municipal elections are also organised every five years. Half of the seats are allocated through single ballot plurality in single member districts, whilst the other half is used to re-establish proportionality within the municipal council.

The first elections that took place during the period of our project, the 2011 Municipal elections were not covered by our fieldwork. Instead, we started focusing on the South African political scene in the run up to the 2014 General Elections, where Jacob Zuma seek a renewal of his mandate. Corruption and nepotism accusations led to increasingly opened defiance towards President Zuma including from within the ANC, with some people openly accusing the president of morally betraying the political heritage of Mandela. The campaign was tense. The main opposition Democratic Alliance, and notably her leader Helen Zille, focused on corruption accusing Zuma of condoning it and organising a march on the ANC headquarters as a protest. Much of their campaign also pointed to the message that the ANC had lost touch with the people, with one electoral ad featuring a photograph of a policeman firing rubber bullets at Bekkersdal protesters during an ANC campaign event (the DA was ordered to withdraw the posters). Meanwhile, former ANC member Julius Malema, who was expelled from the party for being too extreme founded the new radical 'Economic Freedom Fighters', which predominantly courted young disillusioned voters which, it claims, were left out of economic prosperity by the ANC and needed to reclaim their share of the country's wealth whilst highlighting accusations of police brutality. Perhaps a sign of the growing tension in the 2014 election was the increasing number of challenges made by the various parties to the Independent Electoral Commission throughout the campaign.

Turnout for the election was 73.5%, nearly 4 points below the previous election in 2009, and while the ANC obtained a clear majority, it lost nearly 4 points with 65.9% of the vote, whilst the DA progressed to 16.7% (+4.3) and the new EFF achieved 6.4% of the vote nationally, including over 10% in three of the nine provinces, including the most populated one, Gauteng (which comprises of Johannesburg and Pretoria).

This apparent weakening of the ANC's arch-dominance over the South African politics was echoed by increasing signs of the unpopularity of Zuma and the party's leadership between the General Election and the following Municipal Elections in 2016, which consequently appeared as an unexpected critical national test rather than a merely local one. The election was unusually tense for a local vote, not only because of the apparent frustration of many citizens with the government, but also because a long time was taken to announce the election date. This was partly due to a legal case that questioned the electoral registration of hundreds of thousands of citizens whose address was difficult to verify due to their living in precarious or unusual residence in the country's many townships. The legal case threatened to put the whole national electoral registry – and beyond it, the entire election – in question. After a while, however, the registration issue was temporarily sorted and the date of the election confirmed as 3 August. The campaign proved tense on both national and local issues. The main opposition party, the DA focused on dissatisfaction with corruption and Zuma's leadership, but also tried to operate its own transition from being perceived as a primarily 'white' party. Leader Zillie stepped down and was replaced by Mmusi Maimane, a Black South African leader for the first time, while the party picked a more ethnically diverse leadership in general. Locally, the DA used its track record in major municipalities and dissatisfaction with local government in many ANC municipalities to invite citizens to try something different. By contrast, the EFF continued to focus primarily on dissatisfied and alienated young voters and claimed that the ANC and DA were two sides of the same coin that worked for the system and the rich and not for the poor and the unemployed.

The ANC sensing a risk of local losses due to Zuma's unpopularity warned voters to remember the inheritance of Mandela and implicitly portrayed the DA as a white party despite its leadership changes. On Election Day, voters proved unconvinced. With the highest ever turnout for municipal elections (58%), the ANC saw a sharp decline of its vote share down from 62.9% in 2011 to 53.9%. Critically, however, beyond the national vote shares, for the first

time, the DA went well beyond its historical stronghold of Cape Town and surrounding areas to take several key large cities away from ANC control, winning the highly symbolic Tshwane (Pretoria) and Nelson Mandela Bay (i.e. Port Elizabeth), Ekurhulei (a large city in Gauteng close to Johannesburg and Pretoria) several of the largest cities in the country. Ultimately, the DA also managed to build a minority coalition in Johannesburg, the country's largest metropolis, meaning that after the August elections, the ANC controlled none of the main South African metropolitan cities. The electoral tension outlived the announcement of the results. Several outcomes were challenged in court and many by elections organised. Some ANC leaders violently criticised the Independent Electoral Commission, praised worldwide for its professionalism and neutrality, following the vote.

At the end of the period covered by this book, Zuma was forced to resign and was replaced by Cyril Ramaphosa who became president on 15 February 2018. At the end of the period, South Africa is getting ready to organise its next General elections on 8 May 2019. A record 48 parties registered candidates, 19 more than 5 years previously. The campaign focuses on economic issues such as electricity cuts as well as land reform and youth unemployment, the historical theme of Mulema's Economic Freedom Fighters. At the same time, however, the campaign has also been marred by xenophobic attacks on migrants, notably in the Durban area, leading to the death of three people.

## **Georgia**

The final country covered by this book is Georgia in the Caucasus region. The birth state of Stalin was slower than many former Soviet republics to democratize, and at the time the Soviet Union split in 1991, it was still headed by former Gorbachev's Foreign Secretary Eduard Shevardnadze until the Rose Revolution of November 2003, which forced his resignation and peaceful replacement by Mikhail Saakashvili. However, whilst late compared to some other ex-Soviet republics, the democratic revolution of the 2000s in Georgia is undoubtedly the one

that gave the rest of the world the truest hopes of positive change bar the Baltic countries. Indeed, after Saakashvili was put in office in the country's first free Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the country embarked on a path of strengthening ties with Western democracies, notably the European Union and the US. At the same time, Georgia has had tense relationships with its Russian neighbour throughout its independent era, with notable conflicts in Abkhazia in 1992 and South Ossetia in 2008, with both regions declaring a Russian supported independence from Georgia which does not recognise those secessions and sees them as Russian invasions of its territory.

Our Georgian fieldwork was disassociated from any election but during the period covered by the book, two Parliamentary elections – in 2012 and 2016 – and two Presidential elections – in 2013 and 2018 – took place. Throughout the period, the main division in the country was between two broad coalitions, the United National Movement (UNM) founded by Saakashvili, and the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition founded by businessman Bidzina Ivanishvili in 2012. The country uses a mixed system of party list and majoritarian districts for Parliamentary elections, and a two round system for Presidential elections.

From the very beginning, Georgian electoral politics have been heavily personalised and the two main coalitions dominated by wealthy businessmen. As such, the founding of the GD coalition was largely seen as a challenge to President Saakashvili's power by another businessman, whose campaign was successful as GD easily won the election on a turnout of nearly 60% and governed, with Ivanishvili as Prime Minister, under a form of Georgian "cohabitation" with President Saakashvili for one year. GD and their allies won every election in the period covered by this book. The following year, in 2013, GD confirmed its new supremacy over Georgian politics when Giorgi Margvelashvili won the Presidential elections in the first round (constitutionally, Saakashvili was subject to a two term limit). The election had a low turnout of 46.1%, over 7% less than in 2008, but the GD candidate's victory was overwhelming across every electoral district.

In 2016, new Parliamentary elections were organised. Turnout went down by 10 points on 2012 to 50.2% and whilst GD won easily again, the party system significantly fragmented in those four years. Indeed, whilst GD and the main opposition UNM represented 94% of the party lists vote in 2012, that figure went down to 75% in 2006, with both parties losing significant votes to smaller rivals. Indeed, both main parties also started to suffer from increased cynicism from voters and democratic dissatisfaction which partly led to a revision of the Constitution in 2017 and the Parliamentarization of the political system.

As such, the Presidential elections that took place on 28 October 2018, with a second round on 16 December of the same year are due to be the last direct Presidential elections in the country before future Presidents are elected by an Electoral College in the future. Independent candidate Salome Zurbishvili, a former French diplomat who became Foreign Secretary of Saakashvili in 2004-5, then fell out with him to become close to GD won the election in the second round with 60% of the vote on a 56.4% turnout. In the first round, she qualified alongside Grigol Vashadze, another Foreign Secretary of Saakashvili years later, but who remained affiliated with the UNM, with a turnout of 46.8%. The two candidates had only been 1.1% apart in the first round. Since that time, both GD and the UNM continued losing ground in election polls ahead of the 2020 Parliamentary elections, with both coalitions due to lose over half of their 2016 support.

Georgia highlights how our model of electoral psychology applies to newly democratizing nations. From that view, the country is a prime case study of the extent to which elections can bring closure and resolution. Despite the continuity of the main two parties, the data we collected in Georgia notably showed that respondents expressed a particularly high willingness to use radical voting or direct action and protest when they are unhappy with specific policy outcomes rather than resort to elections to signify their discontent and achieve

change. In particular, we noted that 39.1% of respondents claimed their willingness to vote for radical parties whilst 23.5% would be willing to take part in a new Revolution.

However, in the arbitration between hope and hopelessness discussed in this chapter, we note that despite this openness to radicalism, 79.6% of Georgian citizens claimed to feel optimistic when they vote. In that sense, Georgia seems to challenge our model of opposition between hope and hopelessness, resolution and hostility, with citizens who seem to feel concurrently optimistic and ready for the worst, unable to obtain closure or resolution from elections whilst significantly less hostile towards fellow voters than in many more advanced democratic contexts.