

Charismatic Leaders and Democratic Backsliding*

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Abstract

In recent years, democratic nations have frequently elected charismatic leaders. Political parties tend to benefit electorally from charismatic politicians' popularity. However, we demonstrate theoretically that parties may also pay a cost. When they become reliant on a leader's charisma, parties grow less able to sanction their behavior in office and more prone to catering to their will—they become personalized. We show that this is particularly likely in contexts of high ideological polarization and strong institutional foundations of democracy. This inversion of the power dynamic between parties and politicians provides room for charismatic leaders to enact anti-democratic policies. The likelihood of party illiberalization, democratic backsliding, and autocratic reversion are thus higher under charismatic leaders. In a panel of democracies between 1950 and 2020, we find that the associations between leaders' charisma and patterns of democratic breakdown, democratic quality, party illiberalism, and party personalization are consistent with our theoretical expectations.

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Supplementary Appendix for “Charismatic Leaders and Democratic Backsliding”

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A Proofs of Theoretical Propositions

A.1 Characterization of the Subgame Perfect Equilibrium

The following will characterize the unique subgame perfect equilibrium (SPE) to the model. In the process, we will derive the thresholds defined in Definitions 1 and 2. This will also constitute the proof for Lemma 1.

As noted in the main text, a SPE will consist of: (1) in the second period of play, a mapping from ideal points into policies, $\{x_2\} : \{\hat{x}_I, \hat{x}_O\} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$; and (2) in the first period of play, a mapping from the realization of γ into policy $\{a, x_1\} : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \{0, 1\} \times \mathbb{R}$. A strategy for I is a choice of $r \in \{0, 1\}$, which is a mapping from the first period levels of authoritarianism and the realization of κ , $r : \{0, 1\} \times \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

Proceeding via backward induction, in the final period of play, the sitting leader implements a policy $x_2 = \hat{x}_L$, where $\hat{x}_L = \hat{x}_I$ if the incumbent party remains in power and $\hat{x}_L = \hat{x}_O$ if the opposition is in power. This constitutes a dominant strategy.

We now move to I 's decision in period 2, the penultimate strategic action in the model. If, in the first round of play, $a = 0$, I has a dominant strategy of retaining the incumbent leader (setting $r = 1$). Removing the incumbent simply guarantees a lower probability of being retained in period 3, while bringing no policy benefit. However, if $a = 1$, removing the incumbent forestalls a potential autocratic reversion, sparing I the expected cost $(1 - \sigma)\kappa$. But, such an action also ensures that I goes into the next election with a worsened chance of retaining office $\rho(0, \nu)$ as opposed to $\rho(1, \nu)$. The expected cost of an autocratic reversion outweighs the benefit of increased electability iff:

$$\kappa \geq D[(1 - \sigma) + \sigma\rho(1, \nu) - \rho(0, \nu)]$$

which defines $\underline{\kappa}$ from Definition 1. Notice further that, for $D > 0$, $\sigma \in (0, 1)$ and given the restrictions on $\rho(\cdot, \cdot)$, $\underline{\kappa} \in \mathbb{R}_+$. Hence, for $\kappa < \underline{\kappa}$, I has a dominant strategy of setting $r = 1$; whereas, if $\kappa \geq \underline{\kappa}$ I has a strategy of setting $r = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } a = 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$.

We can now proceed to consider L 's decision regarding policy in the first period of play. Clearly, $x_1 = \hat{x}_L$, this is a dominant strategy. Here, by construction, $\hat{x}_L = \hat{x}_I$. It remains, therefore, to characterize L 's decision with respect to $a \in \{0, 1\}$. In any circumstance in which I responds to $a = 1$ by setting $r = 0$, L 's attempt at backsliding is bound to fail, and she is removed from power. Hence, L sets $a = 1$ only if $\kappa < \underline{\kappa}$. Under these circumstances, L receives an expected utility of $(1 - \sigma)\alpha$ from setting $a = 1$, but suffers a cost γ from the attempt at backsliding. This expected utility calculus then defines $\bar{\gamma} = (1 - \sigma)\alpha$ in Definition 2. We are thus left with the following strategy: $a = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \kappa < \underline{\kappa} \ \& \ \gamma < \bar{\gamma} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$.

We have defined democratic backsliding as an instance in which $a = 1$ in equilibrium. Given L 's equilibrium strategy, this occurs whenever both $\kappa < \underline{\kappa}$ and $\gamma < \bar{\gamma}$; which takes place with probability $F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})$. Following the assumptions of the game form, such an attempt succeeds at sparking an autocratic reversion with probability $1 - \sigma$. This then constitutes a proof of the content of Lemma 1. \square

A.2 Proof of Proposition 1

Claim: *The probability of democratic backsliding $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is rising in ν . So too is the probability of autocratic reversion $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$. This is because $\underline{\kappa}$, the threshold below which the party is personalized, rises in ν ; hence, the probability the incumbent party becomes personalized rises in ν .*

Proof: $\frac{\partial \underline{\kappa}}{\partial \nu} = D\sigma\rho'(1, \nu) > 0$ given the assumption that $\rho(1, \cdot)$ is increasing in ν . No other term in this

expression is a function of ν .¹ Given this, and given that $F_{\kappa}(\cdot)$ is monotonically increasing, the expression $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is rising in ν . And, since $1 - \sigma > 0$, this must also be true of $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$. \square

A.3 Proof of Proposition 2

Claim: *The probability of democratic backsliding $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is rising in D . So too is the probability of autocratic reversion $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$. This is because $\underline{\kappa}$, the threshold below which the party is personalized, rises in D ; hence, the probability the incumbent party becomes personalized rises in D .*

Proof: $\frac{\partial \underline{\kappa}}{\partial D} = (1 - \sigma) + \sigma\rho(1, \nu) - \rho(0, \nu)$. Given $\{\sigma, \rho(1, \nu), \rho(0, \nu)\} \in (0, 1)$, and $\rho(1, \nu) > \rho(0, \nu) \forall \nu$, this expression is strictly positive. Given this, and given that $F_{\kappa}(\cdot)$ is monotonically increasing, the expression $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is rising in D . And, since $1 - \sigma > 0$, this must also be true of $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$. \square

A.4 Proof of Proposition 3

Claim: *The threshold value $\underline{\kappa}$ is more sensitive to movements in ν when D is high than when it is low, and vice versa. $\frac{\partial^2 \underline{\kappa}}{\partial \nu \partial D} > 0$.*

Proof: $\frac{\partial^2 \underline{\kappa}}{\partial D \partial \nu} = \sigma\rho'(1, \nu) > 0$ given $\sigma \in (0, 1)$ and $\rho(1, \cdot)$ increasing in ν . \square

A.5 Proof of Proposition 4

Claim: *(a) The thresholds $\underline{\kappa}$ and $\bar{\gamma}$ are both falling in the institutional stability of democracy. Hence, the probability of democratic backsliding $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is falling in σ . So, too, is the probability of autocratic reversion $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ and party personalization ($\underline{\kappa}$). (b) The extent of party personalization is more sensitive to leader charisma and to polarization in stable, as opposed to unstable, democracies $\frac{\partial^2 \underline{\kappa}}{\partial \sigma \partial \nu} > 0$.*

Proof: Trivially, $\bar{\gamma} = (1 - \sigma)\alpha$ is falling in σ . Analogously $\underline{\kappa} = D[(1 - \sigma) + \sigma\rho(1, \nu) - \rho(0, \nu)]$ is falling in σ given $\rho(1, \nu) \in (0, 1)$ and $D > 0$. Since both $F_{\gamma}(\cdot)$ and $F_{\kappa}(\cdot)$ are monotonically increasing, $F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is falling in σ . Given this, $(1 - \sigma)F_{\gamma}(\bar{\gamma})F_{\kappa}(\underline{\kappa})$ is also falling in σ . This then constitutes part (a) of the proposition.

$\frac{\partial^2 \underline{\kappa}}{\partial \nu \partial \sigma} = D\rho'(1, \nu)$. Given $\rho(1, \nu)$ is assumed to be increasing in ν and $D > 0$, this expression is positive. \square

B Empirical Analysis: Background Details

Table B1 gives the details for the variables used in the analyses.

Construction of the Elite polarization measure. Our elite polarization measure was constructed as follows. Using variables in V-Party (Lindberg et al., 2022) capturing ideological positions on the economic left-right (`v2parifleft`), immigration (`v2paimmig`), religious principles (`v2parelig`), minority rights (`v2paminor`), and cultural issues (nationalism, `v2paculsup`; and LGBT rights, `v2palgbt`), we calculate the absolute distance between the incumbent party (or coalition) and the opposition. We then take the average across the issue-specific distances.

¹Recall that $\rho(0, \nu)$ is invariant in ν . The probability of electoral success for the party is not a function of the leader's charisma if that leader has been removed from the party's ranks.

Table B1: Description of Variables

Variable	Source	Comments
Outcome variables		
Democratic breakdown	Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013); Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza (2009) and other sources	Autogolpe and non-autogolpe breakdowns
Liberal Democracy Index	Coppedge et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2x_libdem</code>
Freedom House Democracy Index	Freedom House (2021)	Average of variables Civil liberties and Political rights, scale reversed
Party Anti-Pluralism Index	Lindberg et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2xpa_antiplural</code>
Party Personalization	Lindberg et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2paind</code>
Key predictors		
Outsider leader	Gerring et al. (2019); Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza (2009); Li, Xi and Yao (2020); Nyrup and Bramwell (2020); Shi, Xi and Yao (2022)	Binary
Person of the leader	Coppedge et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2ex1_legitlead</code>
Elite polarization	Lindberg et al. (2022)	Construction detailed below this table
Societal polarization	Coppedge et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2cacamps</code>
Democracy duration	Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013)	Variable <code>democracy_duration</code> ; in years/10
Covariates		
GDP per capita	Feenstra, Inklaar and Timmer (2015)	Variable <code>rgdpo</code> divided by population (variable <code>pop</code>); ¹ logged
Leader's military background	Gerring et al. (2019); Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza (2009); Li, Xi and Yao (2020); Nyrup and Bramwell (2020); Shi, Xi and Yao (2022) and other sources	Binary
Leader's technocratic background	Flores, Lloyd and Nooruddin (2022) and other sources (see military background)	Construction detailed below this table; binary
Leader's irregular entry	Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza (2009) and other sources	Binary
Family ties to previous leader	Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza (2009) and other sources	Binary
Any previous breakdowns	Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013)	Binary
Number of previous breakdowns	Boix, Miller and Rosato (2013)	Count
Party seat share	Lindberg et al. (2022)	Variable <code>v2paseatshare</code> ; percent

¹ Where missing, imputed with growth rates of corresponding variables in World Bank (2022).

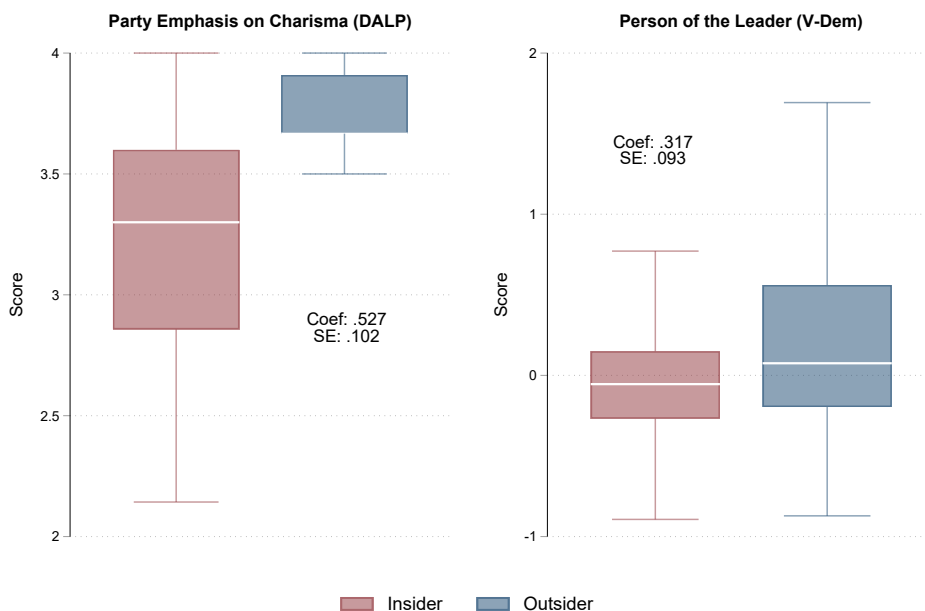
Outsider status and leader charisma. Figure B1 correlates our outsider variable with two other plausible proxies for charisma. The first is a measure of parties' campaign emphasis on their leader's charisma from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (DALP Kitschelt, 2013), an expert survey on parties' campaign platforms in more than 80 countries in the mid-2000s. The variable is `e1`: "To what extent do parties seek to mobilize electoral support by featuring a party leader's charismatic personality," ranging from "very little/not at all" (1) to "very strongly" (4). As the left panel of Figure B1 shows, there is a strong positive association: parties with outsider chief-executives tend to score noticeably higher on their perceived emphasis of their leader's charisma than parties with non-outsider chief executives. The coefficient and standard error shown in the plot are from a regression of outsider on this measure, and the coefficient is precisely estimated. We do not use the DALP measure in our analysis because of limited time and country coverage.

The second alternative proxy for charisma is the variable 'Person of the Leader' (`v2ex1_legitlead`) from the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al., 2022): "To what extent is the Chief Executive portrayed as being endowed with extraordinary personal characteristics and/or leadership skills (e.g. as father or mother of the nation, exceptionally heroic, moral, pious, or wise, or any other extraordinary attribute valued by the society)?" This variable is a continuous score (converted from a 5-point ordinal scale). The right panel of Figure B1 shows that our outsider variable is also positively correlated with this measure. The coefficient

and standard error shown in the plot are from a regression of outsider on this measure after partialling out the country and year fixed effects. The coefficient is once again precisely estimated.

The 'Person of the Leader' variable may plausibly capture charisma; however, as mentioned in the text, charisma may also be drawn from contextual rather than (just) a leader's personal characteristics. We therefore find our outsider measure, which is agnostic about the source of charisma, preferable. Nonetheless, we show that our key results are similar when using the 'Person of the Leader' measure—see Section C below.

Figure B1: Outsider Status as Proxy for Charisma



Leader's technocratic background. We define as technocrat a leader with a senior role prior to becoming a chief executive in either an international organization (such as the IMF, the World Bank, UN, WTO, regional development banks, the OECD), major consulting firm or international bank (for example Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase, KPMG or McKinsey), central bank, or domestic professional associations (like chambers of commerce and bar associations). Examples of technocratic leaders are India's Manmohan Singh, Peru's Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, and Italy's Giuseppe Conte. For the data sources, see Table B1.

Summary statistics. Tables B2-B4 show the summary statistics for the key variables in the democracy breakdown analysis (at the democracy-spell level), quality of democracy analysis (at the leader-spell level), and party democratic commitment and personalization analyses (at the party-election-year level), respectively.

C Empirical Analysis: Additional Results

Proportional-hazards assumption tests. Figure C1 shows the p -values from the tests of the proportional-hazards assumption in the Cox models in columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 in the text.

Alternative ways of accounting for prior regime transition in survival analysis. To deal with the

Table B2: Summary Statistics for the Democracy Breakdown Analysis

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Autogolpe breakdown	0.005	0.07	0	1	3975
Non-autogolpe breakdown	0.012	0.11	0	1	3975
Outsider leader	0.07	0.25	0	1	3975
Elite polarization	0.99	0.56	0.02	3.07	2921
Societal polarization	-0.65	1.29	-3.82	4.08	3975
GDP per capita	9.24	1.06	5.91	11.59	3974
Leader's military background	0.18	0.39	0	1	3975
Leader's irregular entry	0.03	0.17	0	1	3975
Family ties to previous leader	0.07	0.25	0	1	3975
Any previous breakdowns	0.35	0.48	0	1	3975
Number of previous breakdowns	0.52	0.84	0	4	3975

Table B3: Summary Statistics for the Quality of Democracy Analysis

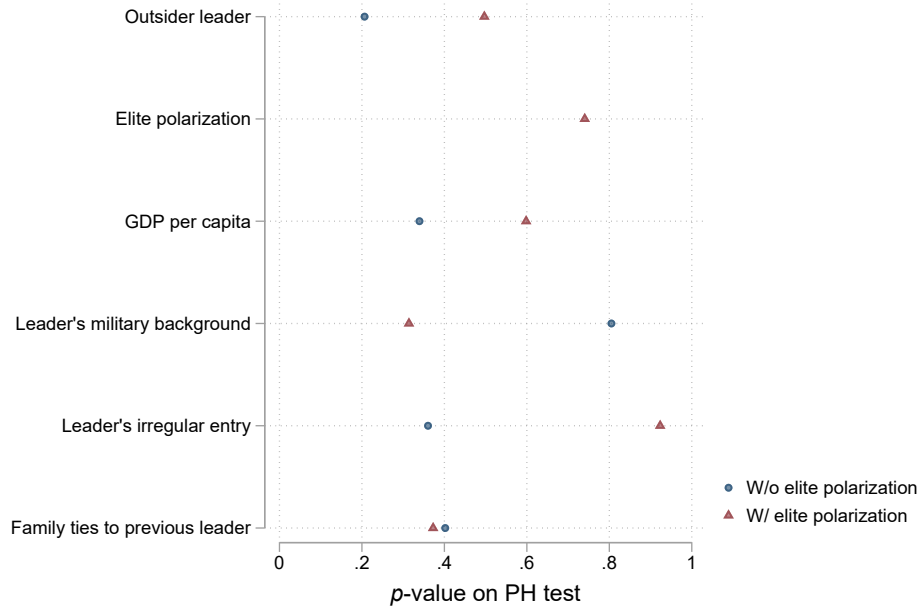
	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Liberal Democracy Index (V-Dem)	0.58	0.22	0.04	0.89	936
Freedom House Democracy Index	5.89	1.05	2	7	765
Outsider leader	0.08	0.28	0	1	936
Elite polarization	1.00	0.51	0.06	2.80	697
Societal polarization	-0.52	1.30	-3.82	3.72	936
GDP per capita	9.27	1.01	5.93	11.59	936
Leader's technocratic background	0.09	0.28	0	1	936
Leader's military background	0.17	0.38	0	1	936
Leader's irregular entry	0.04	0.20	0	1	936
Family ties to previous leader	0.06	0.24	0	1	936
Current democracy spell duration	3.28	3.74	0	22	936

Table B4: Summary Statistics for the Party Democratic Commitment Analysis

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Anti-pluralism	0.27	0.28	0.01	1.00	1771
Party personalization	-0.37	1.38	-2.91	3.93	1749
Outsider leader	0.05	0.22	0	1	1549
Elite polarization	1.02	0.59	0.02	3.07	1698
Societal polarization	-0.64	1.32	-3.82	3.19	1752
GDP per capita	9.55	0.98	6.56	11.42	1505
Seat share	0.29	0.20	0.01	1	1749
Technocratic background	0.11	0.31	0	1	1549
Leader's military background	0.16	0.37	0	1	1549
Family ties to previous leader	0.06	0.23	0	1	1549
Leader's irregular entry	0.01	0.12	0	1	1549
Current democracy spell duration	4.24	4.37	0	22	1774

influence of prior democratic breakdowns on the probability of the end of the current democracy spell, we report in the text the results of Cox models stratified by the number of previous breakdowns. Table C1 shows the results from additional Cox models that deal with prior transitions in three alternative ways. In column 1, we stratify the Cox model by a simpler, binary variable capturing whether there was any previous breakdown, rather than the number of breakdowns. This approach may be preferable as there is only a handful of countries with more than one previous breakdown which may disproportionately affect

Figure C1: The Proportional-Hazards Assumption Tests for Models in Table 1



the Cox estimates. The results in column 1 are nonetheless very similar to those reported in the text. In columns 2 and 3, rather than estimating separate baseline hazards, we simply control for the number of previous breakdowns (column 2) or any prior breakdown (column 3). The results from both specifications are qualitatively unchanged compared to those reported in the text.

Survival analysis results for non-autogolpe democratic breakdowns. As mentioned in the text, our theory speaks to autogolpe breakdowns—democratic collapses clearly engineered by incumbent leaders. Our model does not produce unambiguous expectations with respect to non-autogolpe breakdowns. We therefore conduct a placebo test of sorts in Table C2, where we examine the association between a leader’s charisma (as proxied by their outsider status) and non-autogolpe democratic collapses in our data. Combined with the empirical associations between charismatic leaders and autogolpe breakdowns, we interpret the lack of correlation in Table C2 as potentially supportive of the empirical plausibility of our theoretical expectations.

Alternative measure of the quality of democracy. In the text (Table 2), the results of the analyses for quality of democracy use the V-Dem’s Liberal Democracy Index as the outcome variable. Table C3 reports the same analyses, but with the measure of democracy by Freedom House (Freedom House, 2021). The variable, reverse-coded from the original, ranges from 1 (low quality democracy) to 7 (high quality democracy). The results are qualitatively unchanged, and somewhat more precisely estimated.

Alternative clustering of standard errors in the leader-spell-level analyses. The standard errors in Table 2 in the text are clustered by leader. Since close to 20% of leaders have multiple spells in office, and the outsider ‘treatment’ is determined at the leader level (Abadie et al., 2017), we deem it justified to cluster the errors in this way. Nevertheless, inferences are substantively unchanged if the errors are clustered by country, as shown in Table C4.

Results with country fixed effects in the party-level analyses. The results with our party-level outcomes (anti-pluralism and personalization) in Table 3 in the text are from specifications that omit country fixed

Table C1: Outsider Leaders and Democratic Breakdown—Alternative Ways of Accounting for Past Breakdowns

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Outsider leader	2.007* (0.802)	1.622* (0.715)	1.691* (0.711)
Elite polarization	1.178* (0.483)	0.602 (0.569)	0.553 (0.505)
GDP per capita	-1.297** (0.350)	-0.819* (0.324)	-0.839* (0.328)
Leader's military background	0.701 (0.558)	0.919 (0.583)	0.935 (0.571)
Leader's irregular entry	0.587 (0.983)	0.757 (1.079)	0.849 (1.063)
Family ties to previous leader	-0.871 (0.750)	-0.188 (0.686)	-0.143 (0.721)
Number of previous breakdowns		0.309 (0.352)	
Any previous breakdowns			0.787 (0.717)
Observations	2921	2921	2921

Note: +p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table C2: Outsider Leaders and Non-Autogolpe Democratic Breakdowns

	(1)	(2)
Outsider leader	-0.187 (0.503)	0.009 (0.867)
Elite polarization		0.552 (0.488)
GDP per capita	-1.072** (0.173)	-1.112** (0.244)
Leader's military background	-0.389 (0.334)	-0.104 (0.519)
Leader's irregular entry	0.806* (0.346)	1.006** (0.375)
Family ties to previous leader	0.061 (0.363)	0.136 (0.504)
Observations	3974	2921

Note: +p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table C3: Outsider Leaders and the Quality of Democracy—Alternative Outcome Variable

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Outsider leader	-0.329** (0.076)	-0.336** (0.082)	-0.292** (0.073)
Elite polarization		-0.023 (0.043)	
Societal polarization			-0.239** (0.045)
GDP per capita	0.283* (0.132)	0.381** (0.119)	0.198 (0.130)
Leader's technocratic background	0.110 ⁺ (0.062)	0.056 (0.057)	0.096 ⁺ (0.056)
Leader's military background	-0.028 (0.064)	-0.037 (0.061)	-0.035 (0.059)
Family ties to previous leader	-0.105 (0.096)	-0.180* (0.087)	-0.114 (0.083)
Leader's irregular entry	-0.267 ⁺ (0.149)	-0.243 (0.163)	-0.198 (0.150)
Current democracy spell duration	0.155 (0.107)	0.236* (0.100)	0.167 ⁺ (0.087)
Current democracy spell duration ²	-0.021** (0.006)	-0.014* (0.006)	-0.022** (0.006)
Current democracy spell duration ³	0.001** (0.000)	0.000 ⁺ (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)
Constant	3.348 ⁺ (2.011)	0.656 (1.724)	3.488 ⁺ (1.819)
Observations	765	686	765

Note: ⁺p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table C4: Outsider Leaders and the Quality of Democracy—SEs Clustered by Country

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Outsider leader	-0.030* (0.013)	-0.028 ⁺ (0.015)	-0.020 ⁺ (0.011)
Elite polarization		-0.019 ⁺ (0.011)	
Societal polarization			-0.054** (0.008)
GDP per capita	0.062* (0.027)	0.013 (0.030)	0.039 (0.025)
Leader's technocratic background	0.018 ⁺ (0.009)	0.006 (0.008)	0.016* (0.008)
Leader's military background	-0.020* (0.009)	-0.022* (0.010)	-0.023** (0.007)
Family ties to previous leader	-0.010 (0.019)	-0.025 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.018)
Leader's irregular entry	-0.055** (0.019)	-0.068** (0.019)	-0.046** (0.016)
Current democracy spell duration	0.001 (0.016)	0.016 (0.017)	0.007 (0.014)
Current democracy spell duration ²	-0.005** (0.001)	-0.006** (0.001)	-0.005** (0.001)
Current democracy spell duration ³	0.000** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)
Constant	0.500 ⁺ (0.300)	1.069** (0.369)	0.566* (0.276)
Observations	936	697	936

Note: ⁺p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

effects. This is because almost two-thirds of countries in our party-level dataset do not have an outsider leader, and thus including country in addition to year dummies limits the amount of variation in the outsider variable off of which to estimate its effect. (Because of longer coverage, the share of countries without any outsiders in our leader-spell dataset is much lower—less than half). The results with country dummies are qualitatively similar, but noisier, as shown in Table C5.

Table C5: Outsider Leaders, Party Backsliding and Party Personalization—Including Country Dummies

	Anti-plusalism		Personalization	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Outsider leader	0.074*	0.052	0.121	0.099
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.152)	(0.157)
Elite polarization		0.056**		0.079
		(0.013)		(0.076)
Societal polarization				
GDP per capita	-0.041	-0.051	-0.064	-0.121
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.179)	(0.185)
Seat share	0.149**	0.146**	1.150**	1.242**
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.235)	(0.241)
Technocratic background	-0.019	-0.018	-0.219 ⁺	-0.213 ⁺
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.119)	(0.119)
Leader's military background	0.060**	0.058**	0.243**	0.234**
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.080)	(0.083)
Family ties to previous leader	0.022	0.027	0.000	0.011
	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.126)	(0.129)
Leader's irregular entry	-0.007	-0.076	-0.187	-0.127
	(0.093)	(0.113)	(0.365)	(0.450)
Current democracy spell duration	0.012	0.011	0.154 ⁺	0.152 ⁺
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.086)	(0.085)
Current democracy spell duration ²	-0.000	-0.001	-0.017*	-0.017*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Current democracy spell duration ³	0.000	0.000	0.000 ⁺	0.000 ⁺
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	0.743*	0.758*	-0.337	0.055
	(0.353)	(0.363)	(1.628)	(1.684)
Observations	1483	1450	1484	1451

Note: ⁺p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Alternative proxy for charisma. As discussed in Section B above, a plausible alternative proxy for charisma is the variable 'Person of the Leader' from V-Dem (Coppedge et al., 2022). Table C6 (testing hypothesis 1) and Figure C2 (testing hypotheses 2 and 3) show the key results. All the analyses employ the same specifications as the analyses in the text. Except for the results regarding hypothesis 3 (the right panel of Figure C2), all the results are substantively similar to those reported in the main text with our outsider measure.

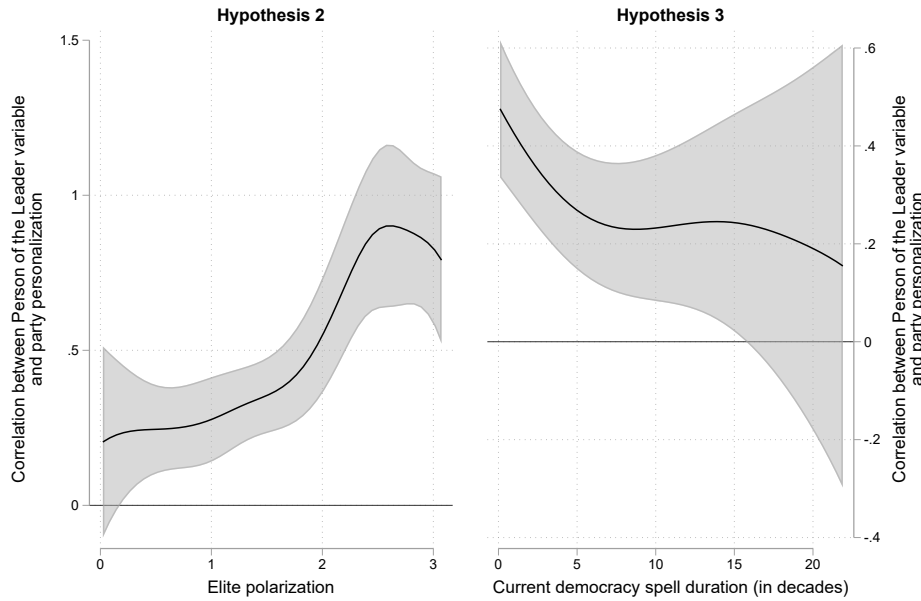
Alternative measure of ideological polarization. Tables C7 and C8 show the main results at the polity-

Table C6: Testing Hypothesis 1 with an Alternative Charisma Proxy

	Democratic Breakdown	Quality of Democracy	Party Backsliding	Party Personalization
Person of the Leader	0.500* (0.214)	-0.056** (0.006)	0.064** (0.010)	0.328** (0.058)
Observations	2921	697	1450	1451

Note: †p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Figure C2: Testing Hypotheses 2 and 3 with an Alternative Charisma Proxy



level with the alternative measure of ideological polarization. Because our preferred measure of elite polarization is available for a shorter period of time (mostly from mid-1970s to 2020) than our country-level outcome measures (democratic breakdown and the quality of democracy), we run additional country-level analyses with an alternative measure available for the entire period of observation. (We do so only for the country-level analyses because the party-level analyses cover the same time-span as our party ideology measure.) This measure is drawn from V-Dem (Coppedge et al., 2022) and measures *Societal Polarization*: the degree to which “society is polarized into antagonistic, political camps.” (Variable `v2cacamps`, measuring the extent to which “supporters of opposing political camps are reluctant to engage in friendly interactions, for example, in family functions, civic associations, their free time activities and workplaces.”) The variable is continuous, with higher values indicating greater polarization. We deem it plausible that the opposing political camps correspond to the political blocks led by the incumbent party (or coalition) and the largest opposition party (or coalition), as conceptualized in our theoretical model. That said, the focus on societal polarization is closer to capturing affective polarization in the populace than ideological polarization between parties, concepts that are distinct (Iyengar et al., 2019). Thus, our preferred measure is the party ideological polarization (the two measures are nonetheless positively correlated). The key results on charisma in Tables C7 and C8 are substantively unchanged.

Table C7: Outsider Leaders and Democratic Breakdown—Alternative Polarization Measure

	Autogolpe	Non-autogolpe
Outsider leader	1.679** (0.575)	-0.600 (0.503)
Societal polarization	0.565* (0.242)	0.695** (0.125)
GDP per capita	-0.583* (0.272)	-0.948** (0.181)
Leader's military background	1.332** (0.488)	-0.302 (0.324)
Leader's irregular entry	0.582 (1.082)	1.050** (0.369)
Family ties to previous leader	-0.145 (0.771)	-0.091 (0.356)
Observations	3974	3974

Note: +p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

Table C8: Outsider Leaders and the Quality of Democracy—Alternative Polarization Measure

	(1)
Outsider leader	-0.020+ (0.011)
Societal polarization	-0.054** (0.006)
GDP per capita	0.039** (0.014)
Leader's technocratic background	0.016+ (0.008)
Leader's military background	-0.023** (0.008)
Family ties to previous leader	-0.015 (0.016)
Leader's irregular entry	-0.046** (0.017)
Current democracy spell duration	0.007 (0.007)
Current democracy spell duration ²	-0.005** (0.001)
Current democracy spell duration ³	0.000** (0.000)
Constant	0.566** (0.145)
Observations	936

Note: +p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

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