

SUMMARY

of a

DISSERTATION PAPER

on the subject:

**“U.S. and Canadian Political Parties in the Context of
the Confrontation between Liberals and Conservatives”
(2016-2019)”**

**Presented for PhD degree in the professional field 3.3. Political Science
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Characteristics of the dissertation paper

The dissertation paper is divided into four main chapters, preceded by a table of contents and an introduction. The first chapter is a theoretical overview of the topic. It is divided into three parts, followed by a summary. The phenomenon of ideological confrontation and political polarization observed in the United States is examined at the beginning. Canadian political parties and their failed flirtation with populism come next into focus. Finally, Bulgarian scientists' statements on the subject are briefly reviewed. Chapter Two and Chapter Three look at the structure of political power in the US and Canada, with the major parties examined in detail in terms of history and positions in the liberal-conservative axis dispute. Smaller players are also highlighted, tracing their effect on elections falling in and around the period covered by the dissertation paper. In the fourth chapter, a comparison is made between the two systems and the various reasons for the differences observed between the neighboring states - cultural, institutional, demographic, social policies, and party systems, with the main burden falling on media. The bibliography is divided according to the type of cited sources – scientific and popular science literature, news articles, official and popular sources, and literature in Bulgarian.

Relevance of the research topic

It is accepted that, although incorrectly when the word "America" is mentioned in everyday speech, it most often refers to the United States of America. Somewhat paradoxically, Canada, the second-largest country in the world, seems almost forgotten. The fact that its official language is English (although French is the second official) and its past as a colony subject to Great Britain, as was the United States, helps to merge the two countries in the collective mind. However in reality, the US and Canada are two different countries, and while there are many similarities, there are generally specific differences that should be addressed. In a political science context, this can be done by comparing the party systems of the two countries, even more so given the increased confrontation between liberals and conservatives observed in recent years and especially since 2016, when Donald Trump was the US President. In the eyes of many political observers, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, has emerged as his natural antithesis. The topic is relevant because it illustrates the global political situation observed in recent years. After the collapse of the USSR at the end of the last century, analysts and ordinary citizens expected that the whole world would

take the direction of liberal democracy and that the world would become a "global village" with shared values. Unfortunately, just a few years after the end of the Cold War, the attacks of September 11th took place, which marked the emergence of a new actor antagonistic to this project, namely Islamic fundamentalism. Globalism in the economy has lifted millions of people worldwide out of poverty, but it has also caused many citizens in developed countries to lose their jobs. At the same time, the progress of industrialization has created a problem of which humanity has been aware for decades but is becoming more painful with time - it is about climate change. As a result of all this, new cleavages were formed in society - for and against the free movement of people, for and against border protection, for serious measures against global warming and other natural processes related to climate change on the one hand and accepting them as part of a natural process of warming and cooling on the other. The United States and Canada show two ways of receiving the new world. There is a clear expression of conflict in America, as the population is divided sharply by gender, age, ethnicity, and religion, causing intense polarization. Canada is looking for a more centrist and consensual approach to dealing with the new century's challenges. The two countries were chosen for the study, as it is appropriate to observe them given their history as neighbors that emerged side by side because of their different attitudes towards the British Empire. This almost common origin helps us in accentuating the distinctions. One hypothesis explaining their dissimilarity is the different cultures of the two countries, primarily political, are predetermined by how they emerged. (Lipset, 1989). A second hypothesis suggests that their distinct form of government, a presidential republic in the US and a constitutional monarchy in the Canadian case, predispose to a different development of party systems, which is observed in the two countries (McGinnis, Rappaport, 2021). In the US, Duverger's law, according to which a majoritarian system produces two major political parties, is demonstrated, while in Canada, that is not. The third hypothesis assumes that the social policy of the USA, compared to the one of Canada, which is more similar to what we see in Western Europe, also implies a different type of voters' thinking (Adams, 2017). Also, although the political landscape of the USA is relatively well known in Bulgaria, Canada remains less researched, and through this comparison, the dissertation could introduce readers to some of its specifics.

Motivation for the choice of topic and development of the dissertation

My interest in the subject of the confrontation between liberals and conservatives exists as a result of my observations of what has been happening in world politics in the last decade. I have followed the politics of the United States of America since I was young, which was one of my motivations to enroll in a PhD program. As for Canada, I have relatives living there. I also find it curious that this country seems somewhat removed from cataclysmic events like Brexit and Trump's election victory, which have happened in other countries.

Previous research and scientific traditions

The topic of what has been happening in recent years in the United States has been discussed in detail in hundreds of books and thousands of articles, with scholars such as Francis Fukuyama, Madeline Albright, Ivan Krastev, and others speaking on the subject. Relatively absent from mainstream interest are events in Canada, possibly because they seem less dramatic. However, scholars such as Michael Adams, Conrad Black, Patrick Malcolmson, and Richard Myers share their country's experience, believing that it can serve as a positive example. Guided by the same conviction, I decided to tackle this topic to include the Canadian experience in the conversation about the ideological opposition between liberals and conservatives in the Bulgarian language.

Object and subject of the study

The political parties in the USA and Canada serve the role of the object of the study. The main political forces and how they have come to their modern opposition are examined. This is particularly interesting in the United States, where in the past, the Democrats played the role of the white populist party, and Lincoln's Republicans liberated the country's Black population. But after the "Southern strategy" of Richard Nixon, the picture changed, and the Republicans became the party that protected the descendants of white settlers, after the turbulent decade of the 60s and the emergence of the hippie movement, the Democrats began to defend the interests of various ethnic minorities - African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and US citizens of Asian descent. In Canada, on the other hand, we observe a Liberal Party that has produced a Prime Minister, a descendant of a legendary leader from the past, such as Pierre Trudeau, and Conservatives that have gone through a series of splits and mergers. The programs of the parties, their stated public positions, what they offer to the voters, and to what extent they are looking for it are examined. In the United States, what is provided is aimed at segments of radically oriented voters who, due to the specifics of social networks and commercially oriented media, dominate

political discourse. In Canada, there is a general consensus between the agendas of the main political players and voters seem confident in what it is offered to them, with limited attempts to seek out-of-system solutions, which is also a result of the country's significantly calmer media climate.

The opposition between the parties in the two political systems plays the role of the subject of the study. For the inexperienced political observer, untried by the details, it will be expected to say that the Republicans in the USA and the Conservatives in Canada are typical representatives of the right, while Democrats and Liberals defend the causes of the left. This is true, at least to a point, but it ignores individual political systems' differences. I hypothesize that the Canadian system is positioned further to the left than the one in the USA and closer to those in the European Union countries.

Thesis

The central thesis of the dissertation paper is that Canadian voters reject extreme currents in contemporary politics, while Americans are heavily influenced by the country's media climate and more ready to vote for extreme candidates, especially on the right. The results of the last parliamentary elections in Canada testify to the first. They show the maintenance of broad support for mainstream political forces and the failure of attempts for a populist breakthrough. This results from a consensus of shared values for human rights and the search for social justice in Canadian society. In the US, on the other hand, candidates like Donald Trump enjoy relative success. This results from societal polarization, where one extreme point of view prevails over the others. To prove this point, an analysis of the election results in the two countries in recent years and a review of mainstream media sources is done to illustrate the different climates in the two countries – fierce opposition in the US and more consensus in Canada.

Purpose and Tasks of the Study

The primary purpose of the dissertation paper is to compare the party systems of the United States and Canada. In fulfillment of the set goal, this dissertation project sets itself the following research tasks:

- To make a theoretical overview of the academic debate on the topic.

Thus, the research project can explain the main concepts it examines - what is a party system, what is the role of parties, what is the effect of the electoral system, who are the liberals and conservatives, what are the reasons for the confrontation between them - institutional, constitutional, economic, cultural-political, as well as to follow the academic debate on the topic, as far as the volume expected in a PhD dissertation allows. The phenomenon of polarization is considered.

- To analyze the structure of the main political forces in the USA.

The dissertation paper examines the behavior of parties in the US and the reasons for the increasingly bitter ideological opposition of recent years. According to the median voter theorem, we should expect two close, strongly centrist parties in the US. In recent years, however, there has been a growing polarization and the presence of alternative visions of the world - globalist and nationalist. The Republican Party has changed from the party of Reagan to the party of Trump, and the Democrats have a contrasting project, expressed in Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign slogan: "Stronger Together." The task of the dissertation paper is to look for the reasons for this. For a more complete picture, the so-called "third parties" that have no direct participation in power, are also considered. It is checked whether they still do not have an impact on the political system because of their very existence.

- To analyze the structure of the main political forces in Canada

Canada is a different country from the US, and despite a majoritarian electoral system, it has a multi-party parliament. The country uses British constitutionalism based on unwritten conventions (customs). It must build on a fairly broad consensus among the major parties to be effective. There are tendencies towards some polarization, but far less strong. Why this is so is a central question of the research work.

The individual political parties in Canada are examined, emphasizing the lack of ideological opposition between the forces represented in the parliament and its relatively weak presence in the program of the radical right-wing faction that was left without MPs - Max Bernier's People's Party.

- To bring out the common and different aspects of the two political systems

In the United States, there should be a serious monopoly of the two major parties - Democrats and Republicans, and the rest should be assigned the role of "Don Quixote"-sheep, as Larry King successfully defined them during a debate between the individual candidates of small parties, made before the 2012 elections. In Canada, as we said, there is a multi-party parliament, in which sometimes the party that won the election has to form a coalition with a "junior" partner. The task of the research work is to show the contrast between the two countries' political cultures and how voters react to the new political situation. The reasons for the differences are sought, cultural, institutional, social, and the very nature of their party systems. The conclusion is reached that the main difference stems from the different media climate in the country - in the USA there is a boom of media creating their own bubbles, in which the emotions of citizens are stimulated, who under their influence make final decisions. In Canada, there is a far calmer atmosphere, the result of having a public media that enjoys a high level of trust.

Limitations of the study

The thesis also has one weakness, conditioned by the scope set in its title. By looking at the role of party systems in the US and Canada, it fails to account well for Russia's role in the global liberal-conservative standoff and its influence on the election of Trump in 2016 and the anti-Trudeau truck protests in early 2022. The reason for this is that such a task requires an extremely deep and separate study, such as this, for example, done by Associate Professor Iskren Ivanov in his book "Orthodox Geopolitics of Russia".

Methodology

For this purpose, a qualitative methodology should be used. It consists of an analysis of the electoral results of the USA and Canada in recent years, and in the case of the United States we focus not only on those for the presidency but also on the Senate, Congress, the mid-term elections and, what is particularly important, the primaries of the two major parties, which show the strength of the individual currents in them and distance them from the average voter. In Canada, the primary analysis is on the parliamentary elections and the progress or regression of individual parties compared to their previous results. An overview is made of the statements made by the individual political leaders, the program of the parties in power and of the opposition, and the pre-election intentions of the individual candidates. For this, the official channels of the parties on the Internet and social networks, which are accessible to everyone, provide help. Publications in various online

publications defending the entire spectrum of political positions will also be used informatively. The comparative method is used due to the proximity of the USA and Canada, which is observed not only in geographical terms but also in relation to their historical common origin as state entities that appeared after the colonization of Great Britain in North America. However, differences in political culture predetermine different types of party systems.

Dissertation structure

Chapter One: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

This chapter reviews some of the highly abundant scholarly literature on the subject, particularly as it relates to the United States of America, the focus of many leading political scientists. The chapter is divided into several points, the first of which deals precisely with ideological opposition and political polarization in the United States. Concepts of governing the country have been cited as a government of limited powers (Vile, 2007:1), as a government strong enough to preserve order but not so strong that it would threaten liberty (Wilson, Dilulio, 2008:25), even as a struggle for supremacy between elites and ordinary people (Krutz, 2015:15-19). Attention is paid to some specifics of the electoral system, such as the presence of the Electoral College, which led to the existence of two major parties, as well as to the primary elections, due to which the electoral system in the USA can be defined as complex (Vile, 2007:75-102).

The phenomenon of increasing polarization in recent years is examined. Definitions of the phenomenon are used as "the divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes" (ECPS, n.d.) and a political tool used to divide societies into "us" and "them" groups. The reasons for the phenomenon are many, including the transition of conservative southerners from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, the emergence of neoconservatism, which created an ideological dispute not seen since the time of Franklin Roosevelt, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Vile, 2007:271-273), the increasing interest about national politics and not just state-level politics, the phenomenon of gerrymandering - manipulation of constituencies to favor one party or the other, which makes politicians to consider only the position of their constituents, ignoring the moderates, the effect of technology on politics and specifically the advent of television increasing the flow of information for both parties across the country (Krutz, 2015: 356-358). The role of the media is mentioned, as it is essential. It has changed the ways of conducting politics (Wilson, Dilulio, 2008:13). Social media in particular, is known for creating a toxic environment in which

people massively share opinions of political opponents, meeting them with anger and ridicule (Packer, Van Bavel, 2021).

It should be borne in mind that, according to many researchers, society is not divided into two equal groups with heightened intolerance towards the other despite polarization. In their report *Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape*, Stephen Hawkins, Daniel Yudkin, Miriam Juan-Torres, and Tim Dixon (Hawkins et al., 2018:40) go beyond the traditional divide between liberals and conservatives argue that the seven groups divided more by fundamental convictions and beliefs than by race, class, gender or political positions. Moreover, they believe that, in these people's view, what they have in common is more than what divides them, and compromise is necessary in politics.

Their report is based on a large-scale survey that found significant evidence of deep polarization, yet for 77% of respondents the differences are not insurmountable. According to the authors, the American identity, although often used to divide society, has the potential to unite individuals, but many media outlets have chosen a business model in which events are biased and the dynamics of social networks increase polarization.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (Norris, Inglehart, 2018) write that the current political climate is due to a sharp response to the cultural changes occurring in the world in recent years, but Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (Eatwell, Goodwin, 2018) disagree and believe that voters want the will of the people to be respected, more to be heard about the concerns of ordinary people, and the replacement of elites they see as corrupt and distant. According to Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 2018), liberal democracies have faced two problems - thymos, or the desire to have one's dignity recognized as equal to or greater than that of others, and megalothymia, or the search for a goal greater than that to seek consumer satisfaction. The most significant problem, according to Fukuyama, is that the identity politics practiced by the left have spawned those of the right, as a response and protest against political correctness. He cites as an example that the left legitimizes only certain identities while neglecting or insulting others - whites, Christian believers, rural citizens. This also finds expression in Hollywood, where films are made about strong women, people of color, and gay characters, while Trump-supporting working-class people are only the characters of parodies like *Talladega Nights*. Fukuyama also sees a problem in social media, where conservatives exaggerate the advantages of marginalized groups, while in real life Blacks are more

often victims of police violence and women are more likely to be assaulted. Here again, the problem of the difference between reality itself and its reception is highlighted, which depends on the media and social networks. For users, what they see in the media/social network is what happens, and whether it matches reality is not entirely certain.

However, how dangerous is the current state of ideological opposition? In their book "How Democracies Die", Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (Levitsky, Ziblatt, 2018:9) question whether democracy itself is under threat in the United States, comparing the situation surrounding the 2016 election with other moments in history, when individual countries have lost the freedom of their citizens. They write that the end of democracy is traditionally thought of through the prism of military coups. However, they warn that there is another way a democracy can be destroyed and that is by the elected leaders of. A similar conclusion is reached by British political scientist David Runciman (Runciman, 2018), who believes that military coups are now almost impossible in conditions of established democracy and have been replaced by slow, gradual replacement coups when democracy is eroded by the measures of authoritarian leaders who they claim to protect her. Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (Albright, 2018). describes dark scenarios for the country's future and the rise of a regime it describes as fascist, examples of which include reactionary billionaires keeping voters in conservative echo chambers and imposing highly restrictive laws on Muslims, women and voting rights, and one in which rich liberals from New York and Hollywood use their power to impose strict standards of political correctness on all institutions of society.

The second point of the chapter dwells on politics in Canada, where opposition exists but is far less pronounced. The definition of Patrick Malcolmson and Richard Myers (Malcolmson, Myers, 2012) is cited. It describes the Canadian regime as a democratic mode of government that is designed to reduce the risk of tyranny by the majority. This is achieved thanks to the two principles on which the Canadian regime rests - equality and freedom. According to the sociologist Michael Adams (Adams 2017), Canada gives the impression of a "calm" country, especially against the background of Great Britain and the United States, which shocked the world audience with the referendum to leave the EU and the election of Trump as president, respectively. He believes the country is cementing an image of being positive towards migrants and hostile to xenophobia despite having a number of voters worried about whether newcomers embrace "Canadian values"

and the threat of terrorism. Here, of course, comes the question of what "Canadian values" are. According to Michael Adams those are good governance, decent health care, multiculturalism and diversity, personal safety and civic engagement. Canadians can also be said to strongly approve of a more progressive vision of society, are highly supportive of gender equality, quickly accepted same-sex marriage, and respect different religions, including socially conservative ones, as long as they obey the law. 90% of Canadians support a welfare policy that helps people in financial difficulty due to poverty or bad luck. Less than half see lowering taxes as a key issue, and migrants express values very similar to those of the native-born.

Of course, not all views of the situation in Canada are enthusiastic, and not all observers approve of the policies of Justin Trudeau, Harper's Liberal successor. Conrad Black (Black, 2019), a Canadian-born British citizen, is highly critical of the current government in Canada and their society in general. He believes that Canadians themselves are seriously underestimating their history, although in his opinion the situation in Canada is healthier than in any other developed country. According to him, the Trudeau government is imposing political correctness in all spheres of life. Black rejects the hypothesis of a "cultural genocide" against the country's indigenous population and denies that slavery ever existed in Canada, despite Trudeau's admission that it is not unknown to the country. Black, however, proposes a further major increase in the acceptance of migrants, which drastically breaks him from the framework of what Adams calls "xenophobic populism".

Overall, a sense of optimism has been preserved in Canada, resulting from different social policies that mitigate feelings of growing inequality. However, as Michael Adams points out, it is the result of different and diverging values. The root can, therefore be found in Seymour Lipset's *Continental Divide* thesis (Lipset, 1989), in which the primary differences between the two societies were considered as the result of the difference between the founding of the states. According to him, the United States was a country founded by rebels who categorically rejected the authority of the British king and therefore had a deep distrust of the state and the power of government rooted in. Canada, on the other hand, is a country that lost the struggle for its independence and remained within the Commonwealth, which dictates a more European (roughly speaking) view of the role of the state - it is accepted as part of the community and a legitimate instrument for maintaining social justice .

In the third point of the chapter, the positions of Bulgarian authors quoted by popular media are examined. Among them, Ivan Krastev, associate professor Ognyan Minchev, associate professor Daniel Smilov, professor Romyana Kolarova, and associate professor Valentin Vacev. Prof. Iskren Ivanov says about what is happening in the USA:

"The processes happening now in the USA can be explained by the "crisis of representation," which is also noticeable in Europe. Voters believe that the political elites are not worthy successors of those who ruled at the end of the 20th century, leading to society's polarization." (Ivanov, 2020).

Chapter Two – THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE USA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

The dissertation's second chapter is an attempt to analyze the structure of political forces in the USA by looking at their behavior in recent years. According to the theorem of the median voter in the US, we should expect two close, firmly centrist parties. (Black, 1948, Downs, 1957). This may have been the case in the past, but not today. The chapter examines the two major political parties—Democrats and Republicans—by reviewing their general characteristics, their historical development, and their performance in recent presidential and midterm elections. Finally, attention is paid to small political players and how they might influence outcomes.

The first point of the chapter focuses on the Democratic Party. It is the oldest active political party in the country (Wagner, 2020:16), and it is considered that it has different wings, but this makes it stronger and more effective in finding voters (Herndon, 2021). The majority of women, representatives of ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, younger people, as well as representatives of the urban population most often sympathize with the Democrats. (Pew Research, 2018). These voters get informed about politics from a variety of media sources, with CNN being a preferred station (Jurkowitz, 2020). Because of this, many media outlets are said to be biased toward liberal causes and the Democratic Party, and some sites such as BuzzFeed, Salon, and HuffPo , who are also popular on social networks, do not even hide their allegiance.

The dissertation briefly examines the history of the Democratic Party from its inception to the present, highlighting key moments such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, the Kennedy assassination, and the historic election of Obama in 2008. The conclusion is that the Democrats are an opportunistic political force whose beliefs and voters change over time. This makes the idea

of party polarization and ideological opposition difficult at a first glance, given the fact that the party is flexible and changes accordingly, not just its public relations, but its electoral strategy as well. The most striking example of this is the attraction of African Americans as Democratic voters. However, there is a precondition for polarization between its elite and that of the Republican Party. It is rooted in the turbulent past of the two political forces, which went through a Civil war, "exchange" of large groups of voters in the southern parts of the country, disputes about economic development along the left and right axis, the "trauma" that the party carries from the fact that it was considered disliked by most Americans after the landslide victories of Nixon and Reagan.

This point also describes the Democrats' positions in the debate between liberals and conservatives, noting that they support women's rights, fight racial inequality, see themselves as an ally of the LGBT community, support immigration to the country, accept the scientific consensus on climate change.

Looking at the results of the Democrats in the elections, the review begins with Hillary Clinton's heavy loss in the 2016 presidential election, goes through the reconquest of lost positions during the 2019 midterm elections and ends the story with the elections of 2020, the year Joe Biden won.

The second point of the chapter is dedicated to the Republican Party. The role of a right-wing party in the country is also taken into account, and the fact that it is significantly more to the right compared to similar parties in Western Europe (Chinoy, 2019). Although it relied on African-American support in the past because of its role during the Civil War, today the Republican Party is the party of choice among white, male, and older Americans. It is mentioned that the Republicans have historically been the most successful party in the United States. The claim that its best years are behind it is challenged, and it is concluded that such a prediction is premature.

Evidence of this is the party's brief history, which was founded as an anti-slavery political force, but changed its voter profile with Richard Nixon's Southern Strategy, which attracted the white population of the former Confederate states and guaranteed Republican successes with candidates like Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush and Trump.

Republican history shows that they are also an opportunistic political force whose beliefs and voters change over time. This makes the idea of party polarization and ideological opposition

difficult at first glance, given the fact that the party is flexible and changes accordingly not just its public relations, but also its electoral strategy, the most striking example of which is the integration of white southerners as Republican voters. However, there is a precondition for polarization between its elite and that of the Democratic Party. It is rooted in the very creation of the Republicans as an alternative party to the Democrats, the "swapping" of white and black voters in the southern parts of the country, and more recently, the "trauma" the party carries from having difficulty to win the popular vote in elections, even if it successfully elevates presidents like George W. Bush or Donald Trump.

The positions of Republicans in the dispute between liberals and conservatives are examined. They are positioned as defenders of traditional values, which puts them against movements such as Black Lives Matter (Panetta, 2020) or Me Too (Bacon, 2018). Their election performance is tracked from Trump's surprise 2016 success through 2018 congressional losses and Trump's failed 2020 re-election campaign. However, the conclusion is that it is too early to write off the Republicans.

The third point focuses on smaller political players - Libertarians, Greens, Constitution Party, Prohibition Party and others, while the fourth point examines the effect of their participation in the 2016 and 2020 elections. While there have been serious allegations against candidates like Gary Johnson and Jill Stein that they cost Clinton the victory, most observers are skeptical of these conclusions. (Chalabi, 2010).

Chapter Three - THE POLITICAL PARTIES OF CANADA IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

Canada's party system seems more difficult to define than the US, which is a pure two-party model despite the presence of alternative political players. It is safe to say that Canada is a well-established democracy, but determining the exact pattern it falls into is more challenging. At first glance, it is also a two-party system, as governments have been formed around only two political parties – the Liberal and the Conservative. At the same time, the Liberal Party was in power 70% of the time in the 20th century, dominating to the point that it was perceived as "Canada's natural governing party". But the one-party model also doesn't seem to account for the volatility of Canadian politics, where both Liberals and Conservatives have faced the real threat of losing all their parliament seats. This, in turn, leads us to the model of many parties vying for governance,

even though the country's electoral system is majoritarian, which is generally assumed to facilitate the formation of a two-major-party system. It is this model that ultimately seems closest to what is seen as a party system in Canada, but with the caveat that leading political forces often have to form majorities with smaller players. This predetermines the different structure of the chapter, which is divided into several points dedicated to the individual parties in the country.

At the beginning of the third chapter, the focus falls on the Liberal Party of Canada. In the 20th century alone, it was in power for about 70 years, a performance that could characterize it as the dominant party in its political system. (James, Kassoff, 2008:70). Although it espouses liberal values, as its name suggests, it is defined by its long-time leader Pierre Trudeau as a radical center (Clarkson, 2005:3-14) and, like the Democrats in the US, covers a "big tent" of voters. Among the main achievements of the Liberal Party of Canada, we can distinguish universal health care, the pension plan, student loans, the legalization of same-sex marriage, the use of cannabis, and gun control. If we compare this party with the Democrats, it is striking that it not only defends similar positions but has managed to turn them into laws, which allows us to call it more successful. (Baker, 1997). It could be argued that these laws have reduced the possibility that the topics in question will create cleavages in society.

After a detailed review of the history of the Liberals, looking at their electoral performance, which has been successful under current leader Justin Trudeau, the chapter continues with the history of the Conservative Party of Canada. It describes itself as based on the "principles of peace and freedom on the world stage; responsible management of taxpayers' money; a welcoming land of refuge for the world's persecuted and afflicted; the defence of clean Canadian technologies; and a clear understanding of responsibilities between levels of government." (Conservative. ca, ND). It is interesting that the history of this political force is quite volatile, as in its current form, it exists relatively recently. It was founded in 2003 after the merger of two smaller parties. It reviews the history of the conservative movement, which has often gone through splits and mergers, reaching its peak in more recent times under the administration of Stephen Harper between 2006 and 2015. His administration has been marked by tax cuts, budget balancing, the introduction of minimum sentences for violent crimes, the construction of various oil pipelines, Canada's withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocols (Reid Institute, 2015). However, as the record of recent years' elections shows,

the Tories lost power to Trudeau's Liberals and to date have not managed to regain it, despite their good performance in terms of the absolute number of votes - a feature of the majoritarian system.

The next party the chapter examines is the New Democrats, a social democratic party in Canada that lies to the left of the Democrats. (Olive, 2015:55). Most often, however, the New Democrats appear in third or even fourth place in terms of the number of people's representatives, and their strength is manifested in those cases when the Liberal Party does not have a majority and is forced to look for coalition partners (Canada Guide, ND).

The separatist Bloc Québécois, a political party in Canada that aims to create conditions suitable for the secession of the Quebec region into a separate state, is also reviewed. It was founded by MPs during the Mulroney cabinet, coming from both the Liberal Party and the then-existing Progressive Conservatives (The Canadian Press 2021). The peak of this party's power, as shown by the historical reference and the review of its results during elections, seems to have passed.

The last parties to be considered in the list are the small Green Party, which won a national representative for the first time in 2011 (Meet Elizabeth May, ND) and Max Bernier's People's Party, which is the closest to what in Europe we would call a far-right populist party (Budd, 2018). Each of the political forces mentioned is examined as positions in the debate between liberals and conservatives, and it is concluded that on the issue of the rights of women and LGBT minorities in Canada, there is a consensus that no party, not even that of Bernier, who is opposed to migrants, disputes. However, Bernier's party never managed to get people's representatives into the Parliament, so it is difficult to perceive that his position is of particular importance. The end of the chapter examines its impact on the Conservative Party result, although, like the similar exercise on third parties in the US, it cannot be argued definitively that it played a decisive role.

Chapter Four - CANADA AND THE USA - A COMPARISON OF THE TWO SYSTEMS

The previous chapters looked at the political parties in the United States and Canada and how they responded to the liberal-conservative standoff during the year. From the foregoing, it is clear that there is deep polarization in the US, while in Canada it appears that, although there are distinct symptoms of rising tensions, society has remained calm and there is consensus among the main political players on the divisive topics in the neighboring country. The fourth chapter of the

dissertation examines the reasons and prerequisites for these two so close countries to react in such a different way.

The first point of the chapter is devoted to cultural prerequisites. The hypothesis of historical predetermination is examined, according to which one of the main reasons for the difference between the societies of the United States and Canada is due to their history. Seymour Lipset believes that the United States has historically been a country of rebels, and Canadians are people who remained loyal to the British crown and refused to fight against it (Lipset, 1989). According to this logic, Americans are distrustful of authority and value rugged individualism, while Canadians trust the government and tend to accept its help in achieving social justice. This argument cannot be rejected as a premise for the observed divide, but it suffers from a serious flaw. Carried to its logical conclusion, it would lead to the idea that the United States, from the very beginning of its history, was destined to collapse, drowned by the polarization of its rebellious populace, while Canada, on the contrary, was created as a political Shangri-La in which the peace and prosperity of loyalty to the crown reign. Such an argument in itself could be dismissed as a *reductio ad absurdum* even if one did not go into detail that for long periods of American history in which the confrontation between individual citizens was not nearly as fierce as it is today, and there were even times when which the mean voter theorem was more than likely to be satisfied.

At the same point, the difference in the political culture of the two countries is also observed, as well as the bubbles formed by popular culture. It is noted that the mass culture in the USA of people who graduated from prestigious colleges and universities, and then found work in show business or Silicon Valley, goes more in support of liberal values (Cieply, 2002), while religious conservatives have their own alternative culture. But observations about popular culture and its conservative response beg the question—what is the reason that Canada's population isn't as divided into "bubbles" as it is in the United States? At this point we have looked at the substantive differences, but the technology that allows them to be formed must also be seen. If we can use medical jargon, the different reception of reality seems more like a symptom than a cause of the disease.

It should be borne in mind that the difference in the structure of the two countries seems likely to play a role in the polarization. Although both the US and Canada are federations, Canada is a constitutional monarchy in which the cabinet rules, and the role of the prime minister is not as

emphasized as that of the head of state in the US, a presidential republic. According to professors John McGinnis and Michael Rappaport (McGinnis, Rappaport, 2021), the governing structure of the United States is deformed because it once required consensus between the two leading parties, and now the president can change important policies unilaterally. The president, they say, represents the median of his party, not the entire nation. Because of this, his decisions are more extreme than what might result from votes in Congress, especially when it is divided. This creates polarization and frustrates the search for political consensus.

The thesis rejects the idea that the difference between the US and Canada is due to the changing demographics of the country, since the Canadian population is more ethnically diverse than the American one. (Adams, 2017). It examines the argument that Canada's social policies such as health insurance, less strict crime prevention and the pension system reduce the tensions seen in the US. (ibid). Here we are talking about a premise with a significant effect, which, however, cannot be completely comprehensive, since there are countries with good social security where there is a high degree of opposition, for example France (Andrew-Gee, 2022). This means that the absence of a good social system is undoubtedly a prerequisite for more polarization, but its presence unfortunately cannot serve as a vaccination against division in society.

The party systems of both countries are also examined, observing that the USA is a pure two-party model, which implies a higher opposition, while in Canada coalitions are usually sought and the ruling party in these is often that of the Liberals, positioning themselves in the center, which reduces antagonism. However, it is necessary to note that the USA has not always had an ideological confrontation, despite the fact that the same two parties have been dominant almost throughout its history. The existence of a competitive two-party system is undoubtedly a prerequisite for polarization, but in order to achieve the activation it needs the fulfillment of certain conditions.

According to the dissertation paper, these conditions are fulfilled by the media, which can be seen as a cause rather than a symptom of the observed polarization. The radicalization of the Republican Party coincides almost entirely with the rise of the conservative media bloc around Fox News and radio shows like the late Rush Limbaugh's, which aim to unnerve the consumer of the media product, resulting in emotional decisions. (Robertson et al, 2021). The emergence of these media outlets was preceded by a ruling by the Federal Communications Commission that eliminated the

doctrine of fair coverage, which required radio stations to present contrasting viewpoints. As a result, individual stations are given the option to become all-liberal or all-conservative (Berry, Sobieraj, 2011). Shortly after the appearance of these radios, Fox News TV was launched, which, according to experts, seriously damaged the media climate in the country with its biased coverage (Collings, 2010), a situation that is worsened by the fact that the competing channels have a slight liberal bias. This is a result of the fact that in the US the media is commercial, not public. Lester Thurow writes that for the first time, human culture and human values are shaped by profit-maximizing electronic media and never before have societies left it entirely to the commercial market to determine their values and role models. (Draganov, 2012).

Canada instead sees a combination of public and private sectors regulated by a commission requiring broadcasts to enhance social cohesion – the CRTC (Shade, 2014). Also, the country is indeed lucky not to have a media, part of Rupert Murdoch's bloc like Fox News. Murdoch is considered responsible for right-wing radicalization not only in the US, but also in Britain and Australia (Serafini, 2009).

As for the promotion of far-left theses, social networks seem to play a role here, spreading radical viewpoints and sorting people by belief, dividing them into opposing camps (Thornberg, 2020). In the US, social networks enjoy high trust, especially among young people (Liedke, Gottfried, 2022), where the trust rate exceeds 50, while in Canada they are used but not perceived as a source of reliable information (StatCan 2023).

The summary of chapter four is that the media climate has played a crucial role in the fact that in the US, there is an increased polarization and in Canada a weaker one, the reason for this being that in one country the media is completely following its commercial interest, while in the other a combination of public and private media with a high degree of public responsibility is observed.

Main conclusions of the study

Several tasks were set at the beginning of the dissertation work. First, it was an overview of existing theories of party systems in Canada and the United States. As a starting point for the examination of the United States was used the concept of government with limited powers by M.J.C. Vile, who said that for a long time ideology did not play a particular role in the political life of the country, but this changed in the 20th century, which gives us allows us to reach today's

division along the axis of liberals and conservatives. I then used the research of a number of scientists who show that there is a sharp response in the country to the coming cultural changes, which leads to a rebellion against liberal democracy itself, and in turn, some authors such as Madeleine Albright see a threat of rising fascism. At the same time, a report on the electoral attitudes of the population showed something, which at first sounds puzzling - a large majority of American voters are tired of the opposing extremes presented by small, but noisy groups mainly in the media. This leads us to the logical question - why, since extreme views on the left and right do not reach large constituencies, do they seem so dominant? The conclusion is that the media plays the main role. Its influence is indicated as negative because of the sought-after commercial interest. It is encouraging the confrontation, which is also influenced by the institutional specifics of the electoral system in the country, where the most devoted voters have the first say through the system of the so-called primary elections.

In reviewing Canada, we have witnessed another principle - of responsible government and federalism, which Patrick Malcolmson and Richard Myers present as one in which the two terms of the phrase liberal democracy limit each other, and so the rights of the individual act as a brake against the possible tyranny of the majority. Further examination by authors such as Michael Adams shows that the country has flirted with populism, but it has not not been truly tempted, and as a result the rift between Canada's Liberals and Conservatives is less pronounced. This is clearly seen from the observations of Conrad Black, who, although critical of the current government of Canada, believes that the country should strive for recognition of its position as a world leader in effective governance and even greater acceptance of migrants.

The second task of the dissertation was to make a comparative analysis of the party cleavages in the United States and Canada, done in the second and third chapters. Studies have shown that the US has an entrenched two-party system between Democrats and Republicans, with the attempts of smaller players to influence their policies limited in scope. What a review of the history of the two parties has given us, however, is that since the establishment of the Republicans as an anti-slavery party, there has been a strong charge of confrontation in the country between the two main political parties along the lines of the populations of the northern and southern states originally divided on the question of slavery, and later on the rights of Blacks and other minorities in general. And while the poles of American politics have been reversing since the secession of southern Democrats in

the 1960s, it remains a potential clash, albeit for a time masked by Reagan's electoral success in the 1980s. The difficult elections involving Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020 are a confirmation of this.

On the other hand, an overview of the Canadian political system shows a different picture. First of all, it appears to be a party system in constant metamorphosis, for although only two parties - the Liberals and the Conservatives - have been granted the right to form a cabinet, at various stages in the country's history each has seemed on the verge of dropping out of the national parliament, overshadowed by other players, from the New Democrats to the separatist Bloc Quebecois. However, there has been no clash of values for a long time, with Canadian parties more or less defending the same principles of equality and inclusion. A look back in history shows a possible answer for this with the dominance of the Liberal Party, which ruled the country about 70% of the time, during which time it more or less managed to impose its agenda and defuse many electoral "bombs" that had the potential to create Cleavage. A disruption to this almost idyllic picture is the emergence of the new populist formation of Max Bernier, but its rise seems to be situational and the fruit of dissatisfaction with the measures against the coronavirus pandemic. It remains questionable how long-term success it will be able to achieve.

The third task was to make a comparative analysis of the mechanisms and tools through which the parties influence the electorate. But as early as the first chapter, it became clear that the electorate largely influences parties in the US thanks to the primary election system identified by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt as a way in which the barriers to potential authoritarian rule fall. On the other hand, Michael Adams demonstrated to us that in Canada people have a high level of trust in experts and do not give in to extreme suggestions, and because of the difference in the electoral system, the extremes have a harder time getting representation - ultimately precisely because of the impossibility of establishing himself among the Conservatives, the populist Max Bernier created his political force.

For me, the main achievement of the dissertation is the comparison of political forces in the USA and Canada along the liberal and conservative axis. The results obtained after analyzing the party programs indicate a serious cleavage in the States, where the Democrats and some smaller players such as the Green and Socialist parties take positions that we associate with liberalism, while forces such as the Republicans and the Constitution Party, for example, are on the side of conservatism.

On the other hand, in Canada, all the forces represented in parliament, even the Conservatives and the Quebec Bloc, have positions that would be considered liberal in the US. And from there, however, follows the biggest question of the entire dissertation - why is this so?

The comparison between the two political systems rested on some of the most popular explanations for the differences between the two North American neighbors - cultural, historical, racial, a matter of social policies, the differences in the nature of the party systems. Barry Axford's classification helps us to come to the conclusion that the two-party system of the USA implies a stronger antagonism in the fight for voters, and the historically dominant role of the Liberals in Canada has allowed them to achieve most of the goals that, for example, for colleagues in the Democratic Party are yet to be fulfilled. Even more important are the institutional factors - the form of government of the United States, namely a presidential republic, which adds an additional polarization, especially considering the primary elections introduced, giving disproportionate weight to the most committed voters. However, for the time period covered by the dissertation, it seems that the leading catalyst for the observed opposition is media such as Fox News, which with biased coverage distorts the reception of reality of its viewers, as well as social networks, facilitating an increasingly violent confrontation due to the principle of sorting, according to which the same people are constantly on opposite sides of disputes on most issues. With this conclusion, the main goal of the dissertation is achieved, namely to find an answer to the question why there is such a strong opposition in one side, and not in the other.

As a researcher concerned about what kind of world we will live in, I find the answer to my research concerning - the stated problem of the influence of media and social networks will not diminish in our information age, but the transition from a dispute of logical arguments to one of emotional illustrates the Goya's point that „fantasy, abandoned by reason, produces impossible monsters“.

Contributing moments:

First, a systematization and overview of existing theories on the subject of the opposition between liberals and conservatives in the United States and Canada. It examines the idea of increased polarization in the US, drawing on the concepts of cultural response, aggrieved identity, and even hypotheses of the end or death of democracy. The topic is innovative with the inclusion of Canada in the study, since the topic of this country, its principles of responsible governance and the

considered hypotheses of an unsuccessful "flirtation" with populism are little known in our country.

Second, a comparative analysis of party cleavages in the US and Canada. More specifically, the dissertation work focuses on the rivalry between Democrats and Republicans through the prism of their historical role as opportunistic parties, today they find themselves on the two opposite ends of the dispute between liberals and conservatives. Against this background, the contrast with Canada and the success the Liberal Party has achieved in building a consensus on a set of issues that does not imply the development of polarization is highlighted again.

Thirdly, a comparative analysis of the mechanisms and instruments influencing the electorate. The emphasis is on the role of the media and social networks. There is a correlation between the rise of the conservative media bubble in the United States and the radicalization of voters to the right, as well as the boom in social networks among young people and the increase in the appeal of certain far-left ideas.

Fourth, a comparison of the political forces in the US and Canada along the "liberal-conservative" line. It examines the positions political players big and small are taking in controversies on the topics we associate as the dividing lines between liberals and conservatives today.

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2. Summer school of "Project Eurasia" together with the University of Foreign Studies in Guangdong, China, author of the report Chinese investment in agriculture - the promise of a rich land against the dangers of corruption (together with Anton Nachev and Tanya Glukhcheva)
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