
17. Bicameralism

Sean Mueller

INTRODUCTION

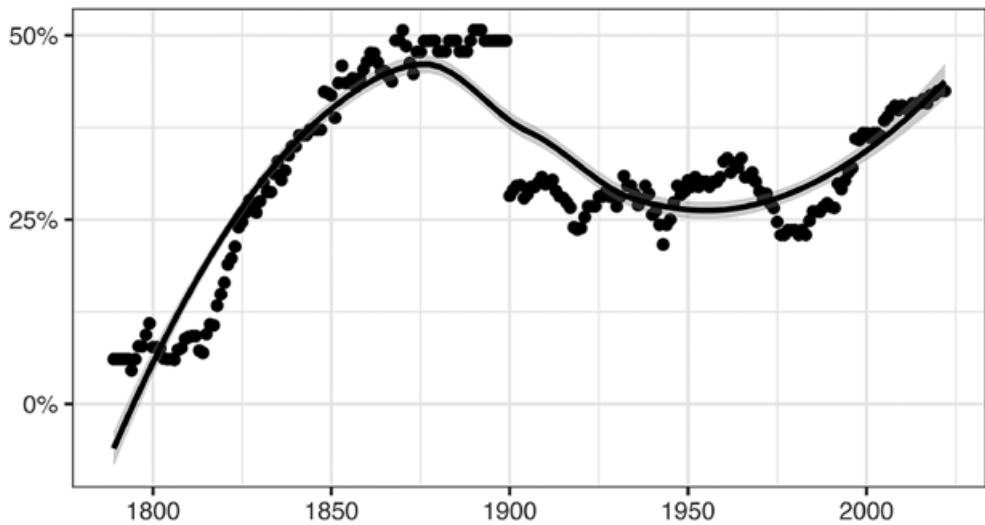
A parliament is bicameral if divided into two separate chambers (Bulmer, 2017; Norton, 2023). The study of bicameralism has been undertaken using one of two prisms. The first essentially understands second (or upper) chambers as potential *obstacles* to simple majority rule (Riker, 1992a, 1992b). Accordingly, the focus lies with the impact of their existence on the lower chamber, the government, or on emanating public policies more generally; and with variation in their power and composition. The second prism regards upper chambers as *enablers* of the representation of a different kind of interests and values (Coakley, 2014, pp. 546–7; see also Russell, 2001). This strand of research focuses primarily on the emergence and functions of second chambers as such, particularly regarding federal states (e.g., Gamper, 2018; Mueller, 2024) but also for wider democracy (e.g., Norton, 2023). Before discussing these two respective research traditions in greater detail, the next section provides a brief overview of the spread of bicameralism and the main dimensions along which variation occurs empirically.

SPREAD, FORMS AND TENSIONS

Figure 17.1 shows how the worldwide share of bicameral parliaments rose steeply in the nineteenth century to cross 50 per cent shortly before 1900, subsequently fell and hovered between a quarter and a third during the twentieth century and reached a new high by the early 2020s (Coppedge et al., 2023; see also Coakley, 2014). By 2022, there were 95 unicameral and 76 bicameral parliaments, with eight countries having no parliament for at least some time.¹ Drawing on information from the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), six further bicameral systems come to light, bringing their total number to 82 (IPU, 2023).² Because the IPU database also contains more unicameral countries, the share of bicameral parliaments for 2022 is virtually identical across these two sources (IPU's 42.8 per cent versus V-Dem's 42.5 per cent).

The number of seats in upper houses ranges from 11 in the Senate of Saint Lucia to 784 in the United Kingdom (UK) House of Lords. The latter is also the only second chamber worldwide to consist of *more* members than the lower house.³ On average, the size of upper chambers amounts to 43 per cent of the size of lower chambers, ranging from 8 per cent in the Philippines and 9 per cent in Germany to the mentioned 121 per cent the UK (IPU, 2023, with own updates).

That research on bicameralism and second chambers is still comparatively underdeveloped in relation to unicameralism and lower chambers has a lot to do with the political relevance of upper houses. Fifty-three per cent of second chambers have 'rather' or even 'much less' power than their corresponding first chamber, while 33 per cent are at least 'co-equal'. Only the upper houses of Bahrain, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Haiti,



Note: LOESS line with 95 per cent confidence intervals.

Source: Data from Coppedge et al. (2023).

Figure 17.1 *Share of countries with two chambers of parliament (1789–2022)*

Jordan, Nigeria, Paraguay, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Turkmenistan and the United States (US) are ‘somewhat’ or ‘clearly dominant’ (Coppedge et al., 2023).

The question on the relative power of second chambers brings to the fore a core paradox: to really matter, they should be both endowed with real authority and different in composition. Lijphart (2012) called the first aspect ‘symmetry’ and the second ‘incongruence’, both in relation to the first or lower chamber. Yet, if second chambers then impinge too much on the law-making activities of the first, they risk accusations of being undemocratic. In turn, if they are either powerful in principle but identically composed as the first chamber, or composed differently but without real authority, they become redundant at best and a drag on the public budget at worst. Hence, the *bon mot* by Abbé Sieyès (1748–1836), the chief political theorist of the French Revolution: ‘If a second chamber dissents from the first, it is mischievous; if it agrees, it is superfluous’ (cited in Russell, 2013, p. 62). Note, however, that this very same paradox is put forth by Riker (1992a, 1992b) as a key to both limit majority *tyranny* whilst enabling majority *rule* by allowing the second chamber to alternatively delay decisions in the absence of society-wide consensus but permit it when given. The real paradox might thus be that second chambers are both essential and superfluous, at the same time.

Looking more closely at the various patterns characterizing second chambers, the following dimensions of analyses and differentiation have been put forth conceptually and investigated empirically (see Lijphart, 2012; Russell, 2013; Sartori, 1994; Tsebelis, 2002; Uhr, 2006):

1. *Composition*: Unlike members of first and single chambers, who are generally elected directly, there is wide variation as to how senators are chosen. By one systematic assessment (Russell, 2013, p. 51), 28 per cent of bicameral countries undertook *popular elections* for all their upper-chamber members, e.g., in Argentina, Australia, Switzerland and the US

(see also Mueller et al., 2023, pp. 7–12; Russell, 2023). The second most prevalent form (20 per cent) is to *indirectly elect* all members, as is done for the Austrian, French and Moroccan second chambers.⁴ Yet another large group of countries (19 per cent) wholly *appoints* its members, e.g., in Canada, Grenada and Madagascar. The remaining third *mixes* direct and indirect elections with or without appointments; however, only the upper chambers of Belgium, Lesotho, the UK and Zimbabwe contain *hereditary* peers (i.e., 5 per cent of Russell's bicameral countries).

2. *Powers*: Still as per Russell (2013, pp. 52–7), the power of second chambers is first of all *electoral*, including making or breaking the government (e.g., the Italian Senate in parallel to the Chamber of Deputies or the Swiss Council of States in joint session with the National Council) and other appointments (e.g., the US Senate alone regarding federal judges, cabinet members and ambassadors; see Sinclair, 1999). A second category contains *legislative* powers, including questions such as whether the second chamber can initiate its own bills (and, if so, their status), whether it can only delay or also halt law-making, how a suspensive veto can be over-ridden by the first chamber (Heller & Branduse, 2014), whether these powers depend on the type of bill (e.g., a veto for the German Bundesrat only on proposals affecting the Länder) and how intercameral conflict is resolved, e.g., using the *navette* procedure, joint committees, joint sessions or, ultimately, dissolution and new elections. Then come powers related to *financial* and *constitutional* matters, with second chambers usually having less say on the former but needing to consent with a higher threshold than for ordinary laws for the latter. Finally, there may exist other *special* powers, such as ratifying international treaties and removing the president (e.g., the US and Brazilian Senates) or suspending regional autonomy (e.g., the Spanish Senate). The overall tendency is for wholly or predominantly elected chambers to be more powerful than wholly or predominantly unelected ones (Russell, 2013, p. 53).
3. *Congruence*: A related⁵ but conceptually different aspect concerns the political congruence of second chambers with both the first chamber and the cabinet. Druckman and Thies (2002) were the first to propose and calculate an actual measure of the extent to which the same parties that dominate the lower also do so in the upper chamber. Their index, which captures the average difference in seat shares across the two houses for all parties, was later extended in time by Ezrow et al. (2024).⁶ However, beyond two-party systems, the index does not always consider actual majority/minority relations. For instance, in both 2015 and 2019 the index yields 5 per cent incongruence for the two Swiss houses of parliament (data from BFS, 2023). Yet, both election years resulted in a senate dominated by the centre-left but a lower house dominated by the right, which also dominates the federal executive.⁷ Whether a government has a majority in only the lower or also the upper house matters for its longevity (Druckman & Thies, 2002, p. 768; see Albala, 2017). Another shortcoming of the index in this form is that it is unable to factor in cases of block voting, as is the legal requirement in the German Bundesrat: representatives of the same Land must agree on how to vote for their opinions to be counted as valid (Palermo & Kössler, 2017, p. 165; see Vatter et al., 2017).⁸ This is why it is possible for neither the federal government nor the opposition to possess a majority in the German second chamber (e.g., Hohendorf et al., 2021).
4. *Legitimacy*: Next to powers and composition, both Lijphart (2012) and Russell (2013) postulated the existence of a further dimension along which second chambers could vary, namely, their degree of wider socio-political acceptance. Short of valid and fine

grained-enough survey data, Mueller et al. (2023, pp. 4–6) subsequently devised an index to account for three ways in which the legitimacy of a second chamber can be boosted – through composition and inclusion (input), through the deliberative quality of their debates (throughput) and through their actual behaviour and decisions (output). Applied to 14 bicameral Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the upper houses of Switzerland, Germany and the US result as having the greatest legitimacy, with those of Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium lying at the other end of that scale (Mueller et al., 2023, p. 7). Legitimacy matters because it potentially acts as a multiplier or nullifier for legal authority. Since different countries foresee different roles for their second chambers, context sensitivity is important, too.

5. *Professionalism*: A final dimension to be taken into account, though perhaps more at the subnational than at the national level and more between states than within, relates to the resources provided to members of either or both houses of parliament. Brown and Garlick (2024) assess the degree of legislative professionalism across US states in pursuing the hypothesis that only ‘In professionalized legislatures, bicameralism can operate as Lijphart and others have imagined – we call it “balancing bicameralism”, since each chamber checks and balances the other’. By contrast, ‘poorly resourced legislators lack the capacity to fully scrutinize bills originating in the other chamber, trusting instead that their colleagues in the bill’s chamber of origin will do the hard work of vetting their own proposals ... Instead of balancing each other, these legislatures may operate in “parallel bicameralism”’ (Brown & Garlick, 2024, p. 162). Professionalism, like legitimacy, thus acts as an enabler of formal rights.

All in all, Russell (2013, p. 59) is certainly correct in pointing out the great diversity: ‘while many second chambers may be sleepier, more mature and more polite institutions when compared to first chambers, some are nonetheless noisy, combative and highly partisan’. The challenge is of course to adequately discriminate across countries and time. For if the good news is that ‘bicameralism is easy to observe and fairly widespread’ (Heller & Branduse, 2014, p. 334), the bad news is that there are so many differences hiding beneath their apparently simple existence that it is not always clear what it is about bicameralism that is supposed to matter.

THE IMPACT OF BICAMERALISM

Research on the impact of bicameralism can be divided into those looking at strictly political consequences and those concerned with wider socio-economic factors. Let us briefly look at insights from each field in turn.

To begin with, what difference does the existence of a second chamber make to political systems and governance dynamics at aggregate level? Ezrow et al. (2024) found that overall political responsiveness to changing citizen preferences is lower when a second chamber exists than when it does not. This is in line with Rasmussen et al. (2019, p. 427), who report lower congruence between policies and public opinion for bicameral countries. Neither finding definitely falsifies the postulated *positive* effects of bicameralism, which are to offer ‘more pathways for popular influence on agents’, provided the members of second chambers are elected by or otherwise tied to the electorate; to give voice to otherwise unrepresented

citizens, notably by allocating seats based on a different principle than a simple ‘one person, one vote’; and to limit potentially ‘negative populist tendencies of majority rule’ (Ezrow et al., 2024, p. 1092) expressed through the first chamber or an overly dominant executive.

Yet, the evidence provided indicates that even if these effects were present, they are either outweighed by the negative impact or work *against* greater congruence and responsiveness to the electorate as such. For instance, Stadelmann et al. (2020, pp. 554–6) show that majority-elected members of parliament in the Swiss upper chamber more intensely represent their districts (the cantons) than those chosen via proportional rule in the Swiss lower chamber, at least on issues subsequently put to a popular vote. However, precisely this territorial responsiveness makes the upper chamber less responsive to nationwide preferences, because each canton gets two seats in the senate which over-represents small, conservative, more rural areas (Mueller & Vatter, 2020).

More generally, the main *negative* effect of second chambers is as veto players delaying, obstructing and/or watering down the policy proposals of democratically elected governments and their support base in the first chamber, in parliamentary systems (e.g., Tsebelis, 2002, 2022; Tsebelis & Money, 1997). In short, by increasing the number of players (i.e., members of parliament and chambers) and interactions (between two chambers and within each, not only within one; and between either chamber and the government), two main consequences arise: (1) ‘policy decisions produced through multistage processes are ill suited for efficient and responsive decision making’; and (2) a status quo bias (Ezrow et al., 2024, p. 1092). In line with this thinking, Ezrow et al. (2024, pp. 1098–9) report that policy responsiveness diminishes especially under symmetric bicameralism, i.e., when both houses are at least equally important (which is the case in about half the bicameral countries, as seen above). Differences in selection mode and partisan congruence across the two chambers do not reveal significant impacts on either more or less responsiveness, nor does the number of *navettes* permitted between chambers.

Still within the realm of political consequences, the existence of second chambers has also been shown to affect political parties directly. For instance, VanDusky-Allen and Heller (2014) find that candidate selection is more centralized in bicameral than in unicameral systems, the reason for this being the need to make sure the party line is upheld across the entire legislature. Just as for Ezrow et al. (2024), the effect is again stronger the more powerful the second chamber (VanDusky-Allen & Heller, 2014, pp. 732–4). Bäck et al. (2016, pp. 412–13) additionally show that strong representation in Germany’s second chamber allows a particular Land branch to better influence the nationwide manifesto, while the number of seats controlled in the lower chamber – where party discipline dominates – does not affect ideological proximity. Hence, at least in the German case, ‘political representation ... is biased in favor of supporters of subnational parties that play an important role in the second parliamentary chamber’ (Bäck et al., 2016, p. 414). This is yet another way in which the supposed positive effect of second chambers (to amplify the voice of *some* groups and their interests) can negatively impact overall responsiveness and congruence.

Other work on the political effects of bicameralism has alternatively looked at either the relationship with the *executive*, finding that governments with majorities in both houses last longer (Albala, 2017; Druckman & Thies, 2002), cabinet portfolios are allocated differently (Kubo, 2016), cooperative relations (Hohendorf et al., 2021) and thus also coalitions grow (Thürk et al., 2021; but see Diermeier et al., 2007), legislation is alternatively delayed or sped up (Garwe et al., 2022) and that with increasing incongruence governments form faster

(Giannetti et al., 2020); or at the organization and operation of *legislatures* themselves (e.g., Ansolabehere et al., 2003; Diermeier & Myerson, 1999; Gailmard & Hammond, 2011; for a review, see Heller, 2007). Often, the sheer existence of yet another chamber of parliament with its own members, schedules and powers suffices to induce different dynamics into legislative-executive, intra-legislative, inter- and intra-party relations.

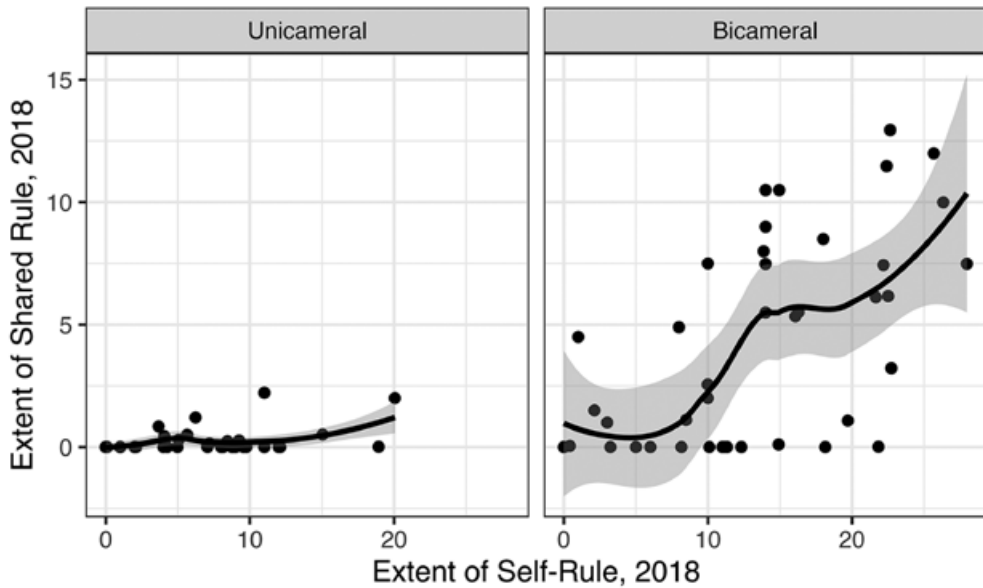
A second set of studies has looked at the wider impact of bicameralism. Building on Heller (1997), Mueller et al. (2023, p. 13) summarize those postulated effects as follows: bicameralism, especially in its strong form, lessens state intervention in the economy (a ‘laissez faire effect’), weakens progressive actors and forces (a ‘conservative effect’) and empowers regional governments (a ‘decentralizing effect’; see also Vatter, 2005). Their cross-sectional analyses on 29 OECD countries reveal that ‘a strong second chamber dampens the size of the state, keeps both taxes and the share of public employees low, hampers revenue and expenditure centralisation, and boosts regional self-rule’ (Mueller et al., 2023, p. 15). However, no statistically significant association with liberalization reforms emerges, so the verdict on the status quo or conservative effect of second chambers remains an open question.

While it would seem plausible – and tempting – to relate these wider socio-economic effects to the impact of bicameralism on political mechanisms (e.g., the presence of second chambers empowering conservative parties or wings and through that tilting national party manifestos towards greater hesitancy regarding centralization), such a full causal chain has yet to be evidenced empirically. A key problem for such analyses is that ‘for every rule of bicameral relationships, there are important qualifications ... There is no one model of bicameralism in political practice and so there is unlikely to be one political theory of bicameralism’ (Uhr, 2006, p. 475; see Cutrone & McCarty, 2006; Heller & Branduse, 2014).

TERRITORIAL CHAMBERS?

What does instead amount to such a rule is the overstated – or at least misunderstood – role of bicameralism for federal states. In short, bicameralism is said to be a key element of the latter, to the extent even of making it their defining characteristic (e.g., Swenden, 2004, pp. 18, 25; see also King, 1982; Watts, 2008). The *theoretical* reason for postulating that link is to – correctly – regard federal political systems as combining territorial autonomy (self-rule) with regional inclusion in central decision-making (shared rule) and to – incorrectly – infer that only or at least mainly a second chamber can fulfil the task of sharing rule (Benz, 2018; Hooghe et al., 2016; Mueller, 2014). The *empirical* reason for postulating the link between federalism and bicameralism is that hardly any federation is unicameral (Coakley, 2014; Coppedge et al., 2023; Russell, 2001). As shown in Figure 17.2, unicameral countries have at best moderate levels of regional self-rule (i.e., autonomy over own affairs) but barely perceptible degrees of shared rule (i.e., influence in the country as a whole). It is no wonder then that this empirical association is habitually turned around into a prescription for federal systems to have two chambers. The fact of the US having adopted a second chamber to ease political compromise whilst moving from confederation to federation has certainly played its own role, too (Dehousse, 1989; Stepan, 1999).

Yet, already, Figure 17.2 should make us doubt as to the veracity of the causal association of federalism with bicameralism. To begin with, many countries are bicameral even in the absence of federalism, i.e., with low degrees of both self- and shared rule (bottom left of



Note: LOESS line with 95 per cent confidence intervals.

Source: Data from Shair-Rosenfield et al. (2021).

Figure 17.2 Self-rule and shared rule across 92 unicameral and bicameral systems

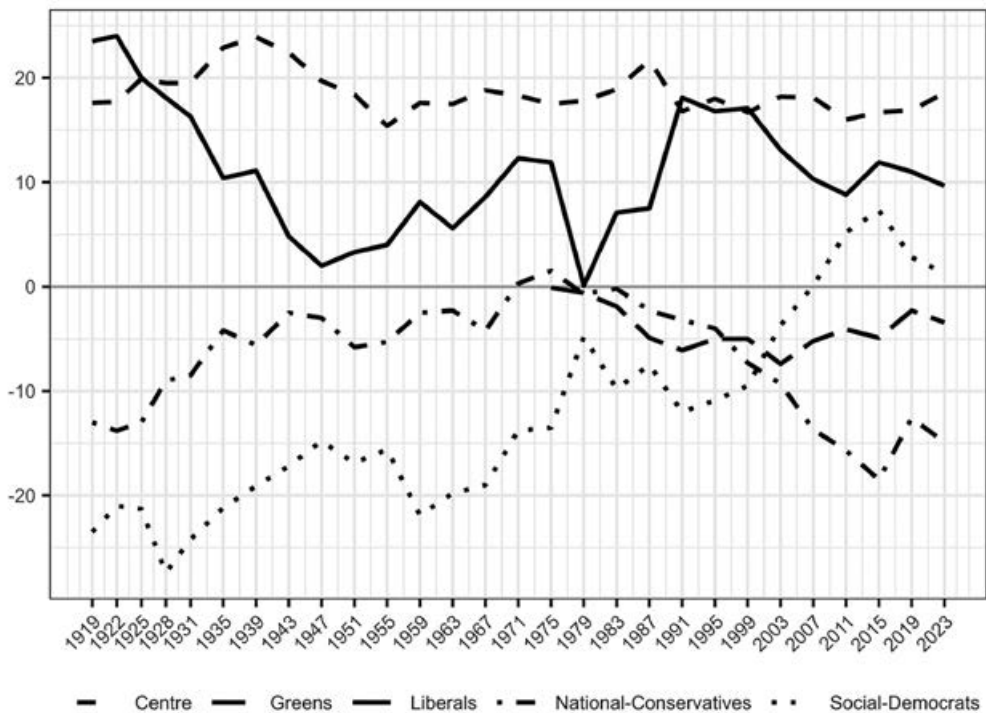
right-hand panel). At the same time, there is wide variation among federal countries – say those with shared rule scores of five and more – in regional authority despite all being bicameral (top right of right-hand panel). Finally, even the second chambers of for instance Belgium, Germany and Spain could not be further apart from each other on basically all the indicators listed in the first section, notably regarding composition, powers and legitimacy (Lijphart, 2012; Mueller et al., 2023; Russell, 2013). And yet, all three countries are, by this measure at least, equally federal. It thus results that bicameralism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for federalism.

Theoretically, too, the case is often oversimplified. While federalism does indeed contain shared rule as a defining element, this dimension *can* but does not *have to* be expressed via bicameralism. All that shared rule requires is that regions be provided with a say in statewide affairs that thereby continue to be *their* decisions, too (Mueller, 2024). In other words, statewide rule making must somehow be ‘shared’ by the federal and regional entities. The representation of regions *qua* regions can in theory facilitate that task; in practice, however, it often does not (see Chapter 19).

The reason for this insufficiency is that, with the exception of the German Bundesrat and the Canadian Senate, all federal second chambers are – wholly or partially – directly or indirectly elected (Russell, 2013, p. 51; see also Russell, 2023, p. 9). By consequence, their members retain close ties to their political party and corresponding ideology, which limits the full expression of strictly regional allegiance and territorial interest promotion. Matters in the Canadian Senate are even worse, as members are wholly appointed by the federal prime minister. Only the members of the German Bundesrat, who are not strictly speaking elected as

such but obtain office in their personal capacity as regional government ministers (or their delegates), can and do act as the true defenders of their territory – although even here the shadow of party ties and federal government/opposition dynamics frequently disrupt the ‘ambassadorial’ or ‘council’ model (Behnke & Hegele, 2024; Palermo, 2018, p. 53; Vatter et al., 2017).

To be sure, second chambers in federal states are usually heavily national ‘demos-constraining’ (Stepan, 1999): by representing territories equally, they uphold the fiction of horizontal parity, privilege smaller (often rural) regions and distort the statewide application of the ‘one person, one vote’ principle. But this plays out less in favour of these regions as such than to the benefit of those parties that dominate them. And since smaller and/or less densely populated regions tend to be more conservative in outlook, territorial parity often ends up favouring right-of-centre parties. In the Swiss *Ständerat*, for instance, the Christian Democrats (renamed The Centre in 2021) continue to be heavily over-represented compared to both the lower chamber and the electorate as such (Figure 17.3; Mueller & Vatter, 2020). In short, so-called territorial chambers are ‘demos-constraining’ only from the point of view of political parties without sufficiently strong and/or numerous regional strongholds. For others and their



Note: Shown are the differences in percentage points between the vote share in the state-wide electorate and the seat share in the Swiss Senate, the Council of States (*Ständerat*). Positive values correspond to institutional over-representation.

Source: Data from BFS (2023).

Figure 17.3 Over- and under-representation in the Swiss upper house (1919–2023)

respective *demoi*, they are a welcome additional resource providing ‘leverage they would not otherwise have’ (Heller & Branduse, 2014, p. 337).

Of course, looking at the partisan composition of the Swiss Senate – whose two members per full canton are directly elected every four years – one is tempted to conclude that it does indeed act as a ‘federal safeguard’ after all (see also Dehousse, 1989, pp. 1384–5), for both the Centre Party and the Liberals are generally sceptical of greater centralization. The same would be true if the US Senate returned a (Republican) majority in favour of ‘States’ rights’, just as has occurred in the US Supreme Court as of late. Yet, political parties are at best a partial remedy to safeguarding federalism for if they defend regional autonomy in some domains, they just as passionately advocate for centralization in others. The demand for (strong) second chambers in federal systems is thus neither justified theoretically nor proven empirically to help maintain non-centralization. More effective systems for maintaining federal balance are direct, i.e., intergovernmental channels (Belser, 2018; Mueller, 2024; Palermo, 2018). In fact, somewhat paradoxically, the federal character of second chambers is all the more undermined the *stronger* they are at the national level, for only then do they become worthwhile objects of statewide partisan conquest (Dehousse, 1989).

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Bicameral structures, although with a presence of 43 per cent making them quite a common feature of political systems worldwide, have not yet been the object of a structured, coherent research tradition. In parliamentary studies, the existence of second chambers is most often treated as an afterthought, although their existence and especially political composition have been shown to matter for both government and legislative dynamics. Research on political parties and comparative politics more generally has equally unearthed interesting connections between electoral success and crucial democratic attributes such as responsiveness and congruence regarding voters’ preferences. But no such field as ‘bicameral studies’ has yet formed, which is probably also due to wide variation of actual second chambers regarding their powers, composition, congruence, legitimacy and even degree of professionalism.

Where bicameral structures do instead constitute a core element of theoretical and empirical analyses is in comparative federalism – but for the wrong reason. While the existence of an upper house is often equated with the necessity of having a territorial chamber, the only one to actually live up to that idea is the German Bundesrat, where Land governments are directly represented and must vote en bloc in speaking on behalf of constituent units. But even here the temptation of party-political strategies and ideologies to trump territorial interests – both those of individual L ander and of the subnational level of government as such – is ever present. The fact that even in Germany effective bargaining between the two main levels of government takes place informally, in meetings uniting the respective ministers and heads of government, proves the wider point that territorial representation, regional participation and federal co-determination are anything but congruent.

What all this means for further research on bicameralism is that at least three main areas are deserving of further scrutiny. First, the *internal operation of second chambers*, in isolation or compared to first chambers, should be studied more systematically. Behnke and Hegele (2024), for instance, show how the intricate structure of the German Bundesrat with its Land delegations, sectoral committees and cross-cutting partisan-territorial affiliations produces

exactly the kind of ‘loosely coupled coordination’ necessary to tackle wicked problems. Mueller et al. (2020), in turn, trace the de facto superiority of the Swiss Senate vis-à-vis the National Council to the former’s smaller size, greater homogeneity and resulting greater efficiency and cohesion. With the same number of legislative committees but only a quarter the size of the National Council (46 versus 200 members), Swiss senators wield more individual power despite institutional symmetry.

Second, the *relations between first and second chambers* could be studied in greater depth by taking into consideration differences in powers, composition, congruence, legitimacy and professionalism as well as how these various attributes interact. For instance, a more professional upper chamber could avail itself of the same formal powers differently than a less professional one, with different consequences for its practical weight vis-à-vis the lower chamber. Congruence between the two chambers and/or as regards the executive equally seems like a key enabling factor for activating or even reinterpreting a chamber’s powers. This is shown by both the Australian constitutional crisis of 1975, when an opposition-dominated senate refused to even vote on the government’s budget, leading to its dismissal by the Governor-General (Hocking, 2017), and the Republican-dominated senate refusing to invite President Obama’s designated Supreme Court candidate in 2016 (Elving, 2018).

The third and final aspect to be studied in greater detail relates to the *normative and positive role of second chambers* for democracy by widening the range of their functions to more than ‘just’ legislation. For instance, Norton (2023, p. 12) forcefully argues for a ‘complementary’ role of second chambers ‘beyond the legislative sphere, fulfilling tasks that the elected chamber is either unwilling or unable to undertake’. Two such tasks would be to move ‘from the principle to the practical’, meaning to study the details of legislation once the overall purpose has been established and to undertake ‘post-legislative scrutiny’, i.e., evaluating whether past legislation has been implemented as intended (Norton, 2023, p. 13). Such functions could be particularly worthwhile in moments of great change and/or for constitution-making. For Norton, then, only if a second chamber ‘has a persuasive capacity, and exercises it, to carry out tasks shunned by or falling outside the scope of the first, it can be value adding, complementing the first in a way that benefits both Houses as well as citizens’ (Norton, 2023, p. 15). Whether and in what way this is true, and in how far citizens are aware of and appreciate such a role, remains to be investigated further.

NOTES

1. The V-Dem dataset codes the lowest value in any given year; the eight units with zero chambers were Afghanistan, Chad, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Palestine/Gaza, Palestine/West Bank, Sudan and Tunisia. While the first two are still formally bicameral, their parliaments or second chambers were suspended in 2019 and 2021, respectively (IPU, 2023). The dramatic fall in the share of bicameral countries by the year 1900 is due to expanded coverage: from 69 countries in 1899 to 122 in 1990, most of which have no chamber.
2. Not contained in the V-Dem dataset are the following bicameral countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Palau and Saint Lucia (IPU, 2023).
3. For a recent reform proposal regarding the UK House of Lords, see Brown (2022, pp. 134–43) and the reactions by Russell (2023) and Norton (2023).

4. Russell (2013) also regards the German case as one of indirect elections. However, represented in the Bundesrat are regional governments which, even if the result of regional parliamentary elections, are something altogether different than in the French or Austrian cases.
5. 'Related' because particularly for nominated second chambers, the chances for actual political congruence with both the government and the first chamber are greater, while they are lower for those elected directly or indirectly using a completely different logic compared to the first chamber (e.g., in terms of constituency boundaries, district magnitude and/or electoral rules). However, as illustrated by the Swiss example, congruence can also happen in those cases.
6. Mathematically expressed as follows: $(\sum_{i=1}^n |Upper_i - Lower_i|) / n$, where $Upper_i$ is the seat share of party i in the upper house, $Lower_i$ the seat share of party i in the lower house, and n the number of parties with at least one seat in either chamber (Druckman & Thies, 2002, p. 767; Ezrow et al., 2024, p. 1099). Tsebelis (2022, p. 288) relies on the 'Euclidian' or 'compositional distance', calculated as $[(x_1 - x'_1)^2 + (x_2 - x'_2)^2 + (x_3 - x'_3)^2 + \dots + (x_n - x'_n)^2] / 2$, where x_1 is the proportion of seat of party 1 in the lower chamber and x'_1 the corresponding proportion for the upper chamber.
7. At least on questions on which these respective blocs can agree and impose party discipline, neither of which is self-evident given the peculiar Swiss system of government (e.g., Linder & Mueller, 2021). Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, the radical left and Greens held 57 per cent of seats in the upper chamber in 2015 versus 59 per cent in 2019; Liberals, National Conservatives and regionalist parties held 58 per cent of seats in the lower chamber in 2015 versus 52 per cent in 2019 (see more generally Mueller & Vatter, 2020).
8. When an absolute or qualified majority is needed, Land-internal disagreements de facto count as no votes (Bäck et al., 2016, p. 410).

REFERENCES

- Albala, A. (2017). Bicameralism and Coalition Cabinets in Presidential Polities: A Configurational Analysis of the Coalition Formation and Duration Processes. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(4), 735–54.
- Ansolabehere, S., Snyder, J. M., & Ting, M. M. (2003). Bargaining in Bicameral Legislatures: When and Why Does Malapportionment Matter? *American Political Science Review*, 97(3), 471–81.
- Bäck, H., Debus, M., & Klüver, H. (2016). Bicameralism, Intra-Party Bargaining, and the Formation of Party Policy Positions: Evidence from the German Federal System. *Party Politics*, 22(3), 405–17.
- Behnke, N., & Hegele, Y. (2024). Achieving Cross-Sectoral Policy Integration in Multilevel Structures: Loosely Coupled Coordination of 'Energy Transition' in the German 'Bundesrat'. *Review of Policy Research*, 41(1), 160–83.
- Belser, E. M. (2018). The Swiss Ständerat: A Model of Perfect Bicameralism. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 10(2), 152–81.
- Benz, A. (2018). Shared Rule vs. Self-Rule? Bicameralism, Power-Sharing and the 'Joint Decision Trap'. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 10(2), 30–48.
- BFS (Bundesamt für Statistik) (2023, April). *Wahlen*. Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern. www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/politik/wahlen.html
- Brown, A. R., & Garlick, A. (2024). Bicameralism Hinges on Legislative Professionalism. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 49(1), 161–85.
- Brown, G. (2022). A New Britain: Renewing Our Democracy and Rebuilding Our Economy. Report of the Commission on the UK's Future. Labour. <https://labour.org.uk/page/a-new-britain/>
- Bulmer, E. (2017). *Bicameralism: International IDEA Constitution-Building Primer*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/bicameralism
- Coakley, J. (2014). The Strange Revival of Bicameralism. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 20(4), 542–72.
- Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., ... Ziblatt, D. (2023). *Dataset v13 (Country-Year/Country-Date)*. Data set, V-Dem. <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds23>

- Cutrone, M., & McCarty, N. (2006). Does Bicameralism Matter? In B. R. Weingast & D. A. Wittman (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy* (pp. 180–95). Oxford University Press.
- Dehousse, R. (1989). Il paradosso di Madison: Riflessioni sul ruolo delle camere alte nei sistemi federali. *Le Regioni*, 17(5), 1365–400.
- Diermeier, D., Eraslan, H., & Merlo, A. (2007). Bicameralism and Government Formation. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2(3), 227–52.
- Diermeier, D., & Myerson, R. B. (1999). Bicameralism and Its Consequences for the Internal Organization of Legislatures. *American Economic Review*, 89(5), 1182–96.
- Druckman, J. N., & Thies, M. F. (2002). The Importance of Concurrence: The Impact of Bicameralism on Government Formation and Duration. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(4), 760–71.
- Elving, R. (2018, 29 June). What Happened with Merrick Garland in 2016 and Why It Matters Now. NPR. www.npr.org/2018/06/29/624467256/what-happened-with-merrick-garland-in-2016-and-why-it-matters-now
- Ezrow, L., Fenzl, M., & Hellwig, T. (2024). Bicameralism and Policy Responsiveness to Public Opinion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 68(3), 1089–105.
- Gailmard, S., & Hammond, T. (2011). Intercameral Bargaining and Intracameral Organization in Legislatures. *Journal of Politics*, 73(2), 535–46.
- Gamper, A. (2018). Representing Regions, Challenging Bicameralism. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 10(2), 1–9.
- Garwe, C., Engst, B., Stawicki, Y., & Hönnige, C. (2022). Temporal Strategies: Governments Alter the Pace of Legislation in Bicameralism Depending on Electoral Expectations. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 47(1), 127–56.
- Giannetti, D., Pedrazzani, A., & Pinto, L. (2020). Bicameralism and Government Formation: Does Bicameral Incongruence Affect Bargaining Delays? *European Political Science Review*, 12(4), 469–84.
- Heller, W. B. (1997). Bicameralism and Budget Deficits: The Effect of Parliamentary Structure on Government Spending. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 22(4), 485–516.
- Heller, W. B. (2007). Divided Politics: Bicameralism, Parties, and Policy in Democratic Legislatures. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10, 245–69.
- Heller, W. B., & Branduse, D. M. (2014). The Politics of Bicameralism. In S. Martin, T. Saalfeld, & K. Strøm (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies* (pp. 332–51). Oxford University Press.
- Hocking, J. (2017). *The Dismissal Dossier: Everything You Were Never Meant to Know about November 1975*. Melbourne University Press.
- Hohendorf, L., Saalfeld, T., & Sieberer, U. (2021). Veto Power Fosters Cooperative Behaviour: Institutional Incentives and Government-Opposition Voting in the German Bundestag. *West European Politics*, 44(4), 921–45.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Schakel, A. H., Chapman Osterkat, S., Niedzwiecki, S., & Shair-Rosenfield, S. (2016). *Measuring Regional Authority*. Oxford University Press.
- IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) (2023). *Database*. Data set, IPU. www.ipu.org
- King, P. (1982). *Federalism and Federation*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kubo, H. (2016). The Impact of Bicameralism on the Disproportionality of Cabinet Portfolio Allocation. *Japanese Political Science Review*, 3(3), 127–45.
- Lijphart, A. (2012). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale University Press.
- Linder, W., & Mueller, S. (2021). *Swiss Democracy: Possible Solutions to Conflict in Multicultural Societies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mueller, S. (2014). Shared Rule in Federal Political Systems: Conceptual Lessons from Subnational Switzerland. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 44(1), 82–108.
- Mueller, S. (2024). *Shared Rule in Federal Political Systems*. Oxford University Press.
- Mueller, S., Dick, S., & Freiburghaus, R. (2020). Ständerat, stärkerer Rat? Die Gesetzgebungsmacht der Zweiten Kammer im Vergleich zu National- und Bundesrat. In S. Mueller & A. Vatter (Eds.), *Der Ständerat: Zweite Kammer der Schweiz* (pp. 119–45). NZZ Libro.
- Mueller, S., & Vatter, A. (Eds.). (2020). *Der Ständerat: Zweite Kammer der Schweiz*. NZZ Libro.
- Mueller, S., Vatter, A., & Dick, S. (2023). A New Index of Bicameralism: Taking Legitimacy Seriously. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 29(2), 312–36.

- Norton, P. (2023). What's the Point? Resolving the Conundrum of Second Chambers. *Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 10(1), 1–18.
- Palermo, F. (2018). Beyond Second Chambers: Alternative Representation of Territorial Interests and Their Reasons. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 10(2), 49–70.
- Palermo, F., & Kössler, K. (2017). *Comparative Federalism: Constitutional Arrangements and Case Law*. Hart Publishing.
- Rasmussen, A., Reher, S., & Toshkov, D. (2019). The Opinion–Policy Nexus in Europe and the Role of Political Institutions. *European Journal of Political Research*, 58(2), 412–34.
- Riker, W. H. (1992a). The Justification of Bicameralism. *International Political Science Review*, 13(1), 101–16.
- Riker, W. H. (1992b). The Merits of Bicameralism. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 12(2), 166–8.
- Russell, M. (2001). The Territorial Role of Second Chambers. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 7(1), 105–18.
- Russell, M. (2013). *The Contemporary House of Lords: Westminster Bicameralism Revisited*. Oxford University Press.
- Russell, M. (2023). *House of Lords Reform: Navigating the Obstacles*. Institute for Government and Bennett Institute for Public. www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/House-of-Lords-reform-guest-paper.pdf
- Sartori, G. (1994). *Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*. Macmillan.
- Shair-Rosenfield, S., Schakel, A. H., Niedzwiecki, S., Marks, G., Hooghe, L., & Chapman-Osterkat, S. (2021). Language Difference and Regional Authority. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 31(1), 73–97.
- Sinclair, B. (1999). Coequal Partner: The US Senate. In S. C. Patterson & A. Mughan (Eds.), *Senates: Bicameralism in the Contemporary World* (pp. 32–58). Ohio State University Press.
- Stadelmann, D., Torrens, G., & Portmann, M. (2020). Mapping the Theory of Political Representation to the Empirics: An Investigation for Proportional and Majoritarian Rules. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 48(3), 548–60.
- Stepan, A. (1999). Federalism and Democracy: Beyond the US Model. *Journal of Democracy*, 10(4), 19–34.
- Swenden, W. (2004). *Federalism and Second Chambers: Regional Representation in Parliamentary Federations: The Australian Senate and German Bundesrat Compared*. Peter Lang.
- Thürk, M., Hellström, J., & Döring, H. (2021). Institutional Constraints on Cabinet Formation: Veto Points and Party System Dynamics. *European Journal of Political Research*, 60(2), 295–316.
- Tsebelis, G. (2002). *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton University Press.
- Tsebelis, G. (2022). Constitutional Rigidity Matters: A Veto Players Approach. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 280–99.
- Tsebelis, G., & Money, J. (1997). *Bicameralism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Uhr, J. (2006). Bicameralism. In S. A. Binder, R. A. W. Rhodes, & B. A. Rockman (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (pp. 474–94). Oxford University Press.
- VanDusky-Allen, J., & Heller, W. B. (2014). Bicameralism and the Logic of Party Organization. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47(5), 715–42.
- Vatter, A. (2005). Bicameralism and Policy Performance: The Effects of Cameral Structure in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 11(2), 194–215.
- Vatter, A., Freiburghaus, R., & Triaca, L. (2017). Deutsches Bundesrats- vs. Schweizer Senatsmodell im Lichte sich wandelnder Parteiensysteme: Repräsentation und Legitimität zweiter Kammern im Vergleich. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 48(4), 741–63.
- Watts, R. L. (2008). *Comparing Federal Systems*. McGill-Queen's University Press.