

The Best of All Worlds? Mixed-Member Proportionality and Domestic Terrorism

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ABSTRACT

Several works linking democratic electoral systems to domestic unrest debate the relationship between representative proportionality and the likelihood of domestic terrorism. However, none develop specific expectations about the likelihood of terrorism in mixed democracies (those which utilize both majoritarian [SMD] and proportional [PR] rules in legislative elections), and none consider variations in the likelihood of terrorism across mixed democracies. Conducting fixed-effects analyses of all democracies from 1975 to 2005, this paper finds that domestic terrorism does not decrease as proportionality in electoral rules increases. Rather, not only are PR systems more likely to experience terrorism than other system types, mixed-member proportional (MMP) systems (those in which PR electoral tiers are meant to “correct” for disproportionality caused in SMD tiers) are the least likely of all to experience domestic terrorism. This finding bolsters the argument, made by several comparativists, that MMP systems offer the widest range of benefits to governments and citizens.