

Party Systems

Political Science 225
North Dakota State University

Political Parties

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Parties:

- Organize voters' choices
- Mobilize electorate
- Link citizen preferences and policy
- Recruit, select, and train leaders
- Structure government, legislating

Party Roles

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- Representation - voter choice
 - How many options?
 - How different are the options?

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 - Identify responsibility
 - Punish and reward
 - Party label, discipline

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 - Party label, discipline
- Decisiveness
 - Bottlenecks/gridlock
 - Cycling

Party Families

Western European parties belong to a series of families:

Party Families

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- Communist
- Green
- New Left
- Social Democratic
- Christian Democratic
- Agrarian or Center Right
- Conservative
- Liberal
- New Right

Christian Democrats



Conservatives



Greens



The New Right



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We often focus on the number:

- Non-partisan
- One-party
- Dominant-party
- Two-party
- Multi-party

The Effective Number of Parties

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- Ignores parties that don't get into legislature
- Weights parties by strength

Example: U.S. House Elections 2006

| Party | Vote % | Seat % |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Democrats | 52.0 | 53.6 |
| Republicans | 45.6 | 46.4 |
| Independents | 0.7 | 0.0 |
| Others | 1.7 | 0.0 |
| Effective number of parties = 1.99 | | |

- 435 SMDs
- Plurality rule

Example: Canadian Legislative Elections 2006

| Party | Vote % | Seat % |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Conservatives | 36.3 | 40.3 |
| Liberals | 30.2 | 33.4 |
| New Democrats | 17.5 | 9.4 |
| Quebec Bloc | 10.5 | 16.6 |
| Other | 5.5 | 0.3 |
| Effective number of parties = 3.21 | | |

- 308 SMDs
- Plurality rule

Example: Dutch Legislative Elections 2006

| Party | Vote % | Seat % |
|--------|--------|--------|
| CDA | 26.5 | 27.3 |
| CU | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| D66 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| GL | 4.6 | 4.7 |
| LPF | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| PvdA | 21.2 | 22 |
| PvdD | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| PVV | 5.9 | 6.0 |
| SGP | 1.6 | 1.3 |
| SP | 16.6 | 16.7 |
| VVD | 14.7 | 14.7 |
| Others | 1.0 | 0.0 |

Effective number of parties =
5.54

- 1 MMD (150 seats)
- List PR

Explaining the Number of Parties

We have two theories of the number of parties:

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- Institutional theory

I.V.

D.V.

Electoral system → # parties

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| | | |
|------------------|---|-----------|
| I.V. | | D.V. |
| Electoral system | → | # parties |

- Sociological theory

| | | |
|------------------|---|-----------|
| I.V. | | D.V. |
| Social cleavages | → | # parties |

Explaining the Number of Parties

I.V. D.V.
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- MMD PR allows multiparty competition

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Explaining the Number of Parties

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Electoral system → # parties

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What's the causal mechanism?

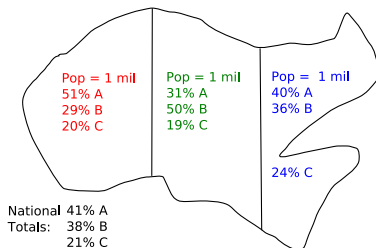
Under majoritarian SMD:

- Voters are strategic and don't want to waste votes on a loser
- Politicians are strategic and coalesce into two parties

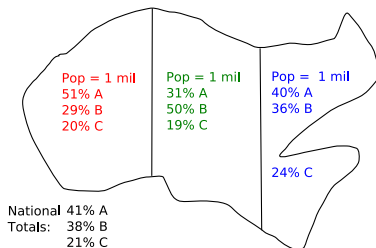
Mechanical Effects

- Votes don't produce seats for small parties in majoritarian systems
- Small parties don't thrive in these systems, die off

Votes and Seats



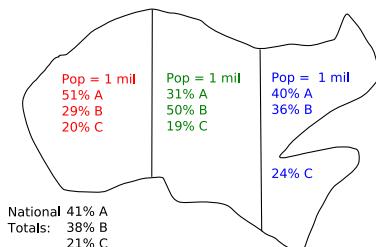
Votes and Seats



Proportional Representation

- A: 122 seats (41%)
- B: 115 seats (38%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)

Votes and Seats



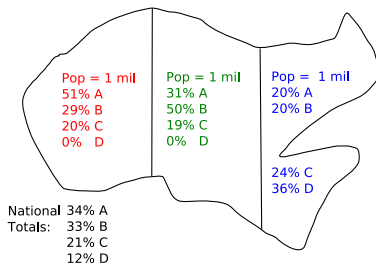
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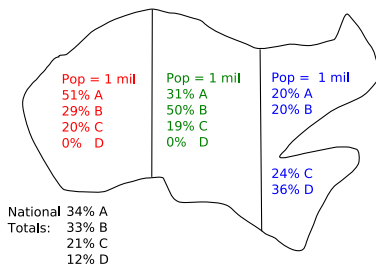
Single Member Districts

- A: 200 seats (66%)
- B: 100 seats (33%)
- C: 0 seats (0%)

Votes and Seats



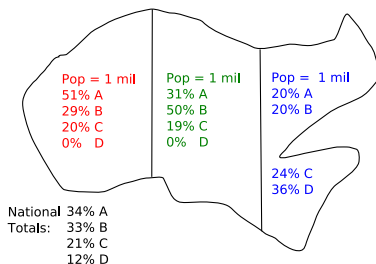
Votes and Seats



Proportional Representation

- A: 102 seats (34%)
- B: 99 seats (33%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)
- D: 36 seats (12%)

Votes and Seats



Proportional Representation

- A: 102 seats (34%)
- B: 99 seats (33%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)
- D: 36 seats (12%)

Single Member Districts

- A: 100 seats (33%)
- B: 100 seats (33%)
- C: 0 seats (0%)
- D: 100 seats (33%)

Strategic Effects

SMDP and disproportional systems

- Strategic Voting
- Voters vote for realistic parties, not sincere
- Strategic Entry
- Strong candidates will not form or enter new parties

Where Do Parties Come From?

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Divisions or “cleavages” in society

- Depends how we view cleavages
 - Primordial—Bottom up explanations
 - Instrumental—Top down explanations
- Many potential, but what parties do end up forming?

Social Cleavages

We think of parties fundamentally forming from groups with different attributes and therefore shared interests

- Key distinction between attributes and identity categories
- Attributes (religion, class, etc)
 - Hard to change; sticky
 - Not necessarily politicized
- Identity categories
 - Evolves from attribute
 - A politically activated attribute

Common Cleavages

Common Cleavages

- Urban-Rural
- Confessional (Religious)
- Secular-Clerical
- Class
- Post-materialist
- Ethnic/Linguistic

Attributes to Identities

What are some theories? Causal mechanisms?

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What are some theories? Causal mechanisms?

- Political entrepreneurs over time determine which attributes become politicized identities
- Cross cutting attributes (uncorrelated) make many parties equally likely
- Reinforcing attributes (correlated) make those fewer correlated attributes very likely to be activated
- We expect that more cross cutting cleavages lead to more parties, otherwise attributes combine to form an identity

Types of Attributes

- Cross-cutting

| | French speaker | Dutch speaker |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Northerner | 0.25 | 0.25 |
| Southerner | 0.25 | 0.25 |

- Reinforcing

| | French speaker | Dutch speaker |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Northerner | 0.03 | 0.57 |
| Southerner | 0.36 | 0.04 |

Cleavages and Institutions

Duverger's theory

- More cross-cutting cleavages lead to more parties–heterogenous societies
- Disproportional systems restrict party formation even with those cleavages
- Duverger's Law: SMDP systems encourage 2 party systems
- Duverger's Hypothesis: Proportional representation rules favor multiparty systems

