

Parties & Democracy

Political Science 225
North Dakota State University

Party Families in Europe

Last class we talked about European political party families. Today, to help you better understand these party families, we'll play around with some data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey that describes European parties' ideological positions.

- Navigate to https://www.foundationsofeuropeanpolitics.com/project/chapter8_shiny/
- Answer questions 1 and 3
- You can learn more about the data at <https://www.foundationsofeuropeanpolitics.com/project/chapter8/>

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 - Super Tuesday
 - Popular referenda
 - US Presidential convention changes
 - Candidate selection decentralization in the UK
- Causal mechanisms?

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- Causal mechanisms?
 - Party fragmentation
 - Representation subverted/complicated
 - Empower intense minorities
 - Encourage corruption/favor-trading
 - Short-term vs long-term thinking

The Case for “Big Strong Parties”

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- What does this all have to do with support for democracy?

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- Why might PR (generally considered a system that provides representation to minorities) counter-intuitively harm their interests?
- Why might two large, but strong, parties (generally considered a majoritarian institution) counter-intuitively benefit minorities?

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- 5 benefits of the Westminster model?

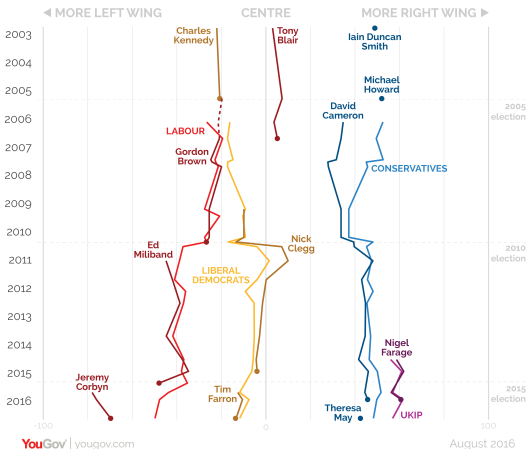
Big Strong Parties

- What's the story of the “efficient secret” in British politics?
- Why do R&S suggest big single member districts are desirable?
- 5 benefits of the Westminster model?
 - ① Broad coalitions reduce single-interest logrolls, emphasize efficient compromise positions.
 - ② SMD enhances discipline by reducing outside options for rebel politicians (but contrast US example...).
 - ③ Easy to understand economic policy competition.
 - ④ Campaigns are cheap when party brand is everything.
 - ⑤ Coherent, disciplined, “loyal” opposition.

Big Strong Parties: Democratizing Leadership Selection

Parties and leaders on the left/right spectrum

Respondents were asked to place themselves, parties and party leaders on a scale from "very left wing" to "very right wing". Average placements are shown



Big Strong Parties: Westminster's Demise?

- Small districts
- Devolution
- Democratizing candidate selection
- Referenda

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- Have US parties become stronger with polarization?
- Why are special interests so powerful when parties are weak?
- How could we reform the US system to strengthen parties, realistically?

Small Strong Parties

- If we want strong parties, why not PR?

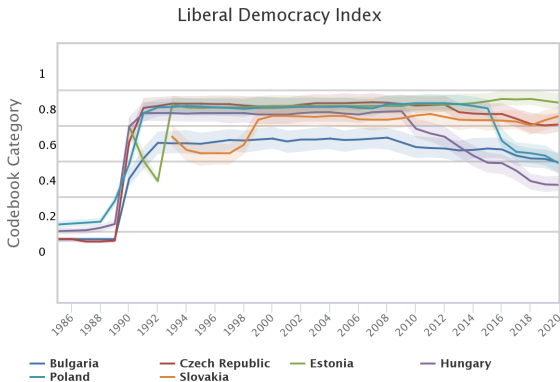
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- Why have Western European party systems become more fractionalized?
- Why are open lists becoming more common in Europe?

Backsliding in Eastern Europe



- Open lists and/or mixed systems
- Some semi-presidentialism
- Communist legacy undermines left legitimacy

Review: Why Big Strong Parties?

- Parties must present widely appealing policies to compete
- SMD enhances party discipline because they make party entry difficult
- Competition on easily understood economic interests
- Cheaper to compete on program instead of clientelism
- SMD (w/parl govt) creates unified parties that can hold each other to account at election time