12 Political parties

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Chapter contents

Reader's guide

Political parties are among the central—some might even say the defining—institutions of modern democracy. But what is a political party? And what functions do parties perform that make them so central to democracy, and how are they organized to perform those functions? This chapter considers the definition, origins, and functions of parties. What role do parties play in the working of democracy? And what benefits do parties provide for those who organize them? The chapter then considers the ways in which parties are organized, regulated, and financed. Following this, the chapter discusses the relationships between parties and social cleavages, on the one hand, and political ideologies, on the other. It concludes with brief discussions of the role of parties in the stabilization of democracy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and of challenges confronting parties in the new millennium.

Introduction

Throughout most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, organizations that identified themselves as 'political parties' have been among the central actors in politics. Whether in power as the result of victory in regularly contested free and fair elections or as a result of *coups d'état* or revolutions, the governments of most countries effectively were in the hands of party leaders: Winston Churchill as leader of the British Conservative Party; Indira Gandhi as leader of the Indian National Congress; Adolf Hitler as the leader of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (German Nazi Party); Mikhail Gorbachev as leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; Ahmed Sékou Touré as leader of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain.

When governments have not been in the hands of party leaders, most often because party government has been interrupted by a military takeover, the resulting juntas (see Chapter 6) have almost always immediately announced that their rule will be only temporary—until a regime of legitimate or honest or effective parties can be restored. And if, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is occasionally talk that the era of the political party is past, and that in a fundamental reconceptualization of democracy social movements and governance networks will supplant parties as the leading institutions channelling political participation and structuring government, experience to date offers little reason to suspect (or hope, depending on one's viewpoint) that this will happen any time soon.

> **KEY POINTS**
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> ❏ Political parties are the central actors in democratic politics, as well as in many authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.
> ❏ It is unlikely that social movements or governance networks will replace the parties' many roles.

Definitions of party

Given their ubiquity, one might think that the definition of political party would be straightforward, but quite the reverse is true. Parties like the American Democrats, the Italian Fascists, or the Kenyan African National Union (KANU)—not to mention the myriad smaller parties like the Canadian Greens or the Polish Beer Lovers or the British Official Monster Raving Loony Party—are so different in motivation, organization, behaviour, and relevance as to raise the question of whether a single umbrella category can encompass them all. Indeed there are many scholars who would argue that some of the 'parties' cited above should not be included.

Taking Robert Huckshorn's (1984: 10) definition that 'a political party is an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government' as an example, one might legitimately ask whether the 'party' in a single-party state qualifies.

While it may use the form of elections in an attempt to bolster its legitimacy, it does not contest elections precisely because it does not allow any other contestants. On the other side, only by assuming that they are delusional could one attribute the hope of gaining even a single office, let alone significant governmental power, to the myriad minor parties that appear on the ballots of many British, American, or Canadian constituencies.

The definition of party is significant both scientifically and normatively. Scientifically, a definition of party specifies the range of organizations or groups to which generalizations are expected to apply and from which data to test those generalizations should be drawn. Normatively, in the process of specifying what a party is, definitions of party often also specify what a party is expected to do (and hence can be criticized for not doing). This has been especially true of definitions that refer to parties in democratic systems, particularly when they define democracy in terms of inter-party competition; in these cases, democratic

BOX 12.1 Definitions of party

Bolingbroke (1841)	Parties, even before they degenerate into absolute factions, are still numbers of men associated together for certain purposes, and certain interests, which are not, or which are not allowed to be those of the community by others. A more private or personal interest comes but too soon ... but such a party is then become a faction.
David Hume (1742)	Factions may be divided into personal and real; that is, into factions, founded on personal friendship or animosity among such as compose the contending parties, and into those founded on some real difference of sentiment or interest ... though ... parties are seldom found pure and unmixed, either of one kind or the other.
Edmund Burke (1770)	[A] party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.
Walter Bagehot (1889)	The moment, indeed, that we distinctly conceive that the House of Commons is mainly and above all things an elective assembly, we at once perceive that party is of its essence: there never was an election without a party.
Max Weber (1922)	'[P]arties' live in a house of 'power'. Their action is oriented toward the acquisition of social 'power,' that is to say toward influencing communal action no matter what its content may be.
Robert Michels (1911)	The modern party is a fighting organization in the political sense of the term, and must as such conform to the laws of tactics.
Joseph Schumpeter (1950)	A party is not ... a group of men who intend to promote the public welfare 'upon some particular principle on which they are all agreed'. A party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power.
Anthony Downs (1957)	In the broadest sense, a political party is a coalition of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by legal means. By coalition, we mean a group of individuals who have certain ends in common and cooperate with each other to achieve them. By governing apparatus, we mean the physical, legal, and institutional equipment which the government uses to carry out its specialized role in the division of labor. By legal means, we mean either duly constituted or legitimate influence.
V. O. Key, Jr. (1964)	A political party, at least on the American scene, tends to be a 'group' of a peculiar sort. ... Within the body of voters as a whole, groups are formed of persons who regard themselves as party members. ... In another sense the term 'party' may refer to the group of more or less professional workers. ... At times party denotes groups within the government. ... Often it refers to an entity which rolls into one the party-in-the-electorate, the professional political group, the party-in-the-legislature, and the party-in-the-government. ... In truth, this all-encompassing usage has its legitimate application, for all the types of groups called party interact more or less closely and at times may be as one. Yet both analytically and operationally the term 'party' most of the time must refer to several types of group; and it is useful to keep relatively clear the meaning in which the term is used.

BOX 12.1 (continued)

Leon D. Epstein (1967)	Almost everything that is called a party in any Western democratic nation can be so regarded for the present purpose. This means any group, however loosely organized, seeking to elect governmental office-holders under a given label.
William Nisbet Chambers (1967)	[A] political party in the modern sense may be thought of as a relatively durable social formation which seeks offices or power in government, exhibits a structure or organization which links leaders at the centers of government to a significant popular following in the political arena and its local enclaves, and generates in-group perspectives or at least symbols of identification or loyalty.
Ronald Reagan (1984)	A political party isn't a fraternity. It isn't something like the old school tie you wear. You band together in a political party because of certain beliefs of what government should be. (Quoted in *Time Magazine*, 3 Sept.)
Joseph Schlesinger (1991)	A political party is a group organized to gain control of government in the name of the group by winning election to public office.
John Aldrich (1995)	Political parties can be seen as coalitions of elites to capture and use political office. [But] a political party is more than a coalition. A political party is an institutionalized coalition, one that has adopted rules, norms, and procedures.

values such as popular participation sometimes are incorporated into the definition of party in ways that imply particular organizational forms.

Although it is only one among an almost endless list of proposed definitions of party (see Box 12.1 for more examples), it is instructive to unpack Huckshorn's definition in order to highlight the issues involved in defining party. Huckshorn explicitly combines four elements, common to many definitions, and implicitly adds another.

The first explicit element concerns the objective of parties: 'gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government'. There has been, however, considerable disagreement concerning the underlying motivation for this pursuit of power. For some (Lasswell 1960), the pursuit of power reflects psychopathology; others (Downs 1957; Schumpeter 1962; Schlesinger 1991) emphasize the pursuit of office essentially as an employment opportunity. From a more public regarding perspective, one finds Edmund Burke's (1770) classic definition of party as 'a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours, the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed'.

2) The second explicit element concerns the methods by which parties strive to achieve control of, or influence over, government: 'making nominations and contesting elections ... and the organization of the government'. This points to two separable arenas in which parties operate, the electoral and the governmental, and as will be noted below, one significant question in the understanding of parties in general, and any single party in particular, is which came first.

3) The third explicit element of Huckshorn's definition is competition, expressed in the 'contesting' of elections and the 'hope [as opposed to the certainty] of gaining control'. But does the contesting of elections require free and fair competition among independent competitors or merely that the form of elections be observed? This is related to the fourth element, that the group of citizens be autonomous. At the extreme, these criteria appear to disqualify the parties of 'one-party' states, although on the other side these parties may claim to be facing real, if clandestine and illegal, opposition from 'counter-revolutionary forces'. Moreover, these parties' structures also may play a significant role in the organization and control

of the government, more conventionally understood.

The implicit element of Huckshorn's definition is that the group of citizens has some level of coherence that allows them to coordinate their actions and to maintain an identity over time. While this does not require a formal organization, it certainly is facilitated by one, so that both some minimal level of organization and some minimal level of unity have become part of the definition of party.

The remaining question is whether 'party' should be regarded as a category, into which each specific instance either does or does not fit, or as an ideal type, to which each specific instance can more or less closely approximate. It is more common to take the first position, and to relegate the marginal cases like the American Prohibition Party or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union respectively either to a category of 'hard to classify but ultimately not very important parties' or to a separate category of 'non-democratic parties'. For some purposes, however, it is useful to recognize that all, or nearly all, of the elements of many definitions are matters of degree, and so to

recognize variation in the level of 'partyness' even of organizations that clearly would be encompassed by a simple category of 'party'.

Thinking specifically about the meaning of party within the model of democratic party government, one can suggest a 'continuous concept of "partyness"' of an organization or group, defined by three characteristics: (1) Exhibiting team-like behavior; (2) in attempting to win control over all political power; and (3) basing claims of legitimacy on electoral success' (Katz 1987: 8).

KEY POINTS

- Parties are ubiquitous in modern political systems.
- The definition of 'party' is contentious because it specifies which cases provide appropriate evidence for confirming or disconfirming empirical theories.
- Definitions centring on the objectives and methods of party, and emphasizing their role in political competition, reflect value-laden assumptions about the proper functioning of politics.

Origins of parties

Although there are references to groups that might today be recognized as parties in the histories of Athenian democracy, the Roman Republic and many of the city-states of medieval Italy—among other venues—the origins of modern parties lie first in the representative assemblies of the sixteenth–nineteenth centuries, and secondly in the efforts of those who were excluded from those assemblies to gain a voice in them. In both cases, parties arose in response to the fact that coordinated action is likely to be more effective than action taken by isolated individuals, even if they are in perfect agreement.

The earlier parties were parties of intra-parliamentary origin, evident for example in the British parliament in the seventeenth century—and even then the novelty was not the existence of factions but rather acceptance of the ideas that disagreement was not synonymous with disloyalty and that organization was not synonymous with conspiracy. Over time, these parties developed recognizable leadership

cadres and became active in electoral campaigns. Their most significant contribution to the development of modern politics, as well as the greatest re-enforcement of their own strength, was to wrest control of the executive from the hands of the monarch and replace that control with responsibility to parliament, which ultimately meant that ministers would in fact be chosen by, and be responsible to, the parties (and especially their leaders) that controlled a majority of the parliamentary seats.

The rise of parliamentary government was far from equivalent to democratization, because well into the nineteenth, and generally into the twentieth, century, the right to participate in political life, including the right to vote, was highly restricted by a variety of economic, religious, and gender restrictions. The need to mobilize and organize large numbers of those excluded from legitimate participation to support leaders advocating for reforms—generally including the extension of political rights—gave rise to development of parties of extra-parliamentary

origin. The ultimate success of these parties in inducing the parties of the *régimes censitaires* to broaden the suffrage then was instrumental in converting the liberal regimes of the nineteenth century into the liberal democracies of the twenty-first century. Indeed, as Schattschneider (1942: 1) famously remarked, 'the political parties created democracy, and . . . modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties'.

The distinction between parties of intra- and extra-parliamentary origin (Duverger 1954) is not only a matter of timing, with parties of internal origin generally coming earlier—in the new democracies of East and Central Europe in the late twentieth century as well as in Western Europe and the Americas in the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries. As will be discussed below, especially at their origins they often differ quite substantially in their organizations as well, and these 'genetic' differences tend to persist for many decades after parties of external origin win parliamentary representation, or parties of internal origin build membership organizations 'on the ground' (see Panebianco 1988).

Parties of internal and external origin have also tended to differ with respect to their social bases, with those originating in parliament representing the 'establishment' of upper and upper middle classes (or earlier, the nobility and gentry, and more recently, particularly in 'pacted' transitions to democracy in the former Soviet bloc, the clientele of the old regime), while those of external origin represent the middle, lower middle, and working classes, sometimes the adherents of dissenting religions, speakers of marginalized languages, the opponents of the old regime, etc.

In the late twentieth century, a new type of externally originating party has appeared in a number of countries—most notably and successfully in Italy. In these cases, a rich entrepreneur used his wealth and business empire in effect to create (or 'buy') a party in much the same way as he might create a chain of retail stores (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999). Although created outside of parliament, these parties tend to look more like older parties of internal origin, both in their balance of power between the central party organization (dominated by the entrepreneur through party officials who are in reality his employees) and ordinary members (if any), and in their conservative, or at least pro-business, policy profile. In particular, they are created to be 'cheerleaders' and supporters of an already established (albeit in the economy rather than in government) leader, who has little interest in or need for input of ideas or resources from below. Like the earlier parties of internal origin, and unlike most leader-centred parties of external origin, they depend on the material resources that the leader can mobilize, rather than on his or her personal charisma.

KEY POINTS

□ Some parties originated within parliaments, while others originated outside of parliaments with the objective of getting in.

□ The subsequent power relations of a party generally favours leaders whose positions in public office, or in an external party organization, are analogous to the positions of the leaders who originally built the party.

The functions of parties

Political parties perform a number of functions (see Box 12.2) that are central to the operation of modern states, and particularly of modern democracies. Indeed, as observed above, parties often are defined at least in part by the performance of these functions. At the same time, however, it should be recognized that these are not the only things that parties do (for example, parties may serve as social outlets for their members), nor do all parties effectively perform (or even attempt to perform) all of these functions—and that the fact that a function is

essential to the maintenance of a political regime does not mean it will be performed adequately; instead, its non-performance may be the reason for regime collapse.

Coordination

Historically the first function of political parties, and still one of the most important, is that of coordination, within government, within society, and between government and society at large.

BOX 12.2 Functions of Parties

Coordination	Maintaining discipline and communication within the parliamentary caucus.
	Coordinating action of the parliamentary caucus in support of, or opposition to, the cabinet.
	Organizing the political activity of like-minded citizens.
	Patterning linkage between representatives in public office and organized supporters among the citizenry.
Conducting electoral campaigns and structuring competition	Providing candidates, and linking individual candidates to recognizable symbols, histories, and expectations of team-like behaviour.
	Developing policy programmes.
	Recruiting and coordinating campaign workers.
Selection and recruitment of personnel	Selection of candidates for elections.
	Recruitment and/or selection of candidates for appointed office.
	Recruitment and socialization of political activists and potential office-holders.
	Integration of new citizens into the existing political system.
Representation	Speaking for their members and supporters within or in front of government agencies.
	Being the organizational embodiment in the political sphere of demographically or ideologically defined categories of citizens.

Coordination within government

Coordination within government (the 'party in public office') takes place in many venues. Most obviously, the coordination function is manifested in party caucuses (or groups, clubs, or *Fraktionen*) in parliaments, with their leaders, whips (party officials in charge of maintaining discipline and communication within the party's parliamentary membership, and 'newsletters' informing members of the expectations of their leaders), policy committees, etc. Parliamentary party groups also structure the selection of committee members and the organization of the parliamentary agenda. Whether in a system of formal separation of powers, like the US, or more pure parliamentary government, like New Zealand, parties provide the bridge between the legislative and executive branches. They also structure coordination between different levels (national, regional, etc.) of government. To the extent that parties perform this function comprehensively and effectively, it becomes reasonable to regard parties as organizations, rather than the individual politicians who hold office in their name, as central political actors.

Coordination within society

In addition to structuring coordination among like-minded public officials, political parties are one of the kinds of institutions (along with interest groups, NGOs, and the like) that organize and channel the political activity of citizens. Even in the absence of a formally organized 'party on the ground', party names and histories serve as points of reference and identification for citizens whose knowledge of and involvement in politics is often both sporadic and shallow. Where there are more formal organizations, these provide venues for political education, discussion, and the coordination of collective action.

Coordination between government and society

The third coordination problem addressed by political parties is the linking of the party on the ground

as a group of active citizens supporting a particular political tendency (whether based on a coherent ideology, a common social grouping, a vague orientation, etc.) and the party in public office as a group of officials claiming to represent the same tendency. Within party organizations (see below), this function often is performed by a party central office. Whether this linkage takes, or is supposed to take, the form of control over the party in public office on behalf of the party on the ground, or direction of the party on the ground as an organization of supporters of the party in public office, varies among parties, as indeed does the effectiveness of the linkage whichever way it runs, as well as the level of coordination and discipline within either the party on the ground or the party in public office.

Contesting elections

A second major defining function of political parties is the conduct of electoral campaigns, and of political competition more generally. Parties provide most of the candidates in elections, and an even larger share of those with any real chance of being elected. In many political systems, parties are the formal contestants of elections—the ballot clearly identifies parties as the things among which the citizen is asked to choose—but even when the object of choice formally is individual candidates, the most relevant characteristic of those candidates usually is their political party affiliation. Ordinarily (the US, in which the organization and funding of campaigns is based primarily on individual candidates, being a notable exception), most of the funds required for a political campaign are raised and spent by parties, whether nationally or at the constituency level; campaign workers are recruited and directed by parties. The policy positions advocated in a campaign are generally those that were formulated and agreed to within parties. Between elections as well, parties generally act as the primary protagonists in political debates.

Recruitment

A third major function of parties is the recruitment and selection of personnel, with the balance between recruitment (finding someone willing to do the job) and selection (choosing among multiple aspirants) depending both on the party and the nature of the

position to be filled. The selection function is most significant with regard to candidacies for important offices, like the presidency, membership in the national parliament, or a regional governorship, and within parties whose candidates have a high probability of success. For minor offices (especially those that are unpaid), hopeless constituencies, or positions at the bottom of a party list of candidates, the primary function often is recruitment—avoiding the embarrassment of not being able to fill the position, or of filling it with someone who obviously is not up to the job (Sundberg 1987).

Taken together, these three functions of coordination (especially within the party in public office), conducting electoral campaigns (especially the formulation and presentation of policy programmes, platforms, or manifestoes), and recruitment of candidates for both elective and appointive office, to the extent that they are performed in a coordinated way (see the definition of party as an ideal type above), and to the extent that party elected officials effectively control the state, make the parties the effective governors, and give rise to the idea of 'democratic party government' (Rose 1974; Castles and Wildenmann 1986). Of course, not all democratic governments are democratic in this way. In the US, for example, the coherence of parties is much lower than in most other democracies, making individual politicians rather than their parties the real governors. In Switzerland, the referendum makes the citizens, and the variety of groups (including but by no means limited to parties) that can organize petitions demanding a referendum, the ultimate deciders of individual questions at the expense of party government.[1]

Parties have also been active in integrating new citizens into the political system. While this function was (and still is) particularly prominent in systems with rapidly expanding electorates, either because of suffrage expansion or significant immigration, the natural process of maturation means that there are always new citizens coming to political consciousness. Party youth movements often play a significant role in integrating the most politically interested and active members of each new generation into the existing party system. More generally, if frequently also (in the developed world) to a lesser degree than in the past, parties contribute to the connection of citizens to the established political order through the provision of services, ranging from ombudsman-like

intervention with the bureaucracy to jobs and social services.

Representation

Finally, parties perform a variety of functions that may be classified as representation. First, parties speak and act for their supporters, in electoral campaigns, in the corridors of power, in the media and other public fora of discussion. Direct democracy being impossible in any but the smallest communities, parties serve as agents of the people, doing things that the people do not have the time, the training and ability, or the inclination to do for themselves. Parties also represent citizens in the sense of being the organizational embodiment in the political sphere of categories of citizens, as with a labour party, a Catholic party, the party of a language group or region, or even possibly a women's party.[2] Parties may, by analogy, represent the organizational embodiment of ideologies.

KEY POINTS

❑ Political parties play a central role in coordinating among public officials, among citizens with common political preferences, and between citizens and officials.

❑ Political parties are generally the central participants in elections, responsible for both the candidates and the issues among which voters will choose.

❑ Political parties are central participants in the recruitment of political personnel, both for the elective and appointive office.

❑ Political parties serve as representatives, both of social groupings and of ideological positions.

Models of party organization

Types of parties
Cadre or elite parties

The earliest (modern) parties were the cadre (or elite or caucus) parties that developed in European parliaments. Because, particularly in an era of highly restricted suffrage, each of the MPs who made up these parties generally owed his election to the mobilization of his own, personal, clientele or the clientele of his own patron, there was little need for a party on the ground, and certainly not one organized beyond the boundaries of individual constituencies. Hence there was also no need for a party central office. Within parliament, however, the advantages of working in concert both to pursue policy objectives and to secure access to ministerial office led to the evolution of parliamentary party organizations, frequently cemented by the exchange of patronage (either personally for the MP or in the form of benefits for his personal supporters, patron, or constituency for which the MP could take credit to maintain his own local standing).

As electorates expanded, elite parties in some places developed more elaborate local organizations— most famously the 'Birmingham caucus' of Joseph Chamberlain—and some greater coordination (frequently taking the form of centrally prepared 'talking points' and centrally organized campaign tours by nationally known personalities) by a central office, but the heart of the organization remained, and to the extent that caucus parties continue to be significant remains, the individual MP and his or her personal campaign and support organization. At the level of the electorate, the concept of 'party membership' remained ill-defined. In the twenty-first century, parties that approximate the caucus format remain significant in the US and to a certain extent in Japan (the Liberal Democratic Party) and on the right in France.

Mass parties

The mass party developed from the second half of the nineteenth century (although some argue that the Jacobins of the French Revolution really were the first mass party, for example, Mavrogordatos 1996). In contrast to the intra-parliamentary origins of the caucus party, the 'genetic myth' of the mass party identifies it as a party of extra-parliamentary origin.[3] In the initial absence of either elected officials (a party in public office) or a network of local organizations

Table 12.1 Models of party

	Elite, caucus, or cadre party	Mass party	Catch-all party	Cartel party	Business firm party
Period of dominance	Rise of parliamentary government to mass suffrage.	Drive for mass suffrage to 1950s.	1950s to present.	1970s to present.	1990s to present.
Locus of origination	Parliamentary origin.	Extra-parliamentary origin.	Evolution of pre-existing parties.	Evolution of existing parties.	Extra-parliamentary initiative of political entrepreneurs.
Organizational structure	Minimal and local. Party central office subordinate to party in public office.	Members organized in local branches. Central office responsible to an elected party congress.	Members organized in branches, but marginalized in decision-making. Central office subordinate to party in public office.	Central office dominated by party in public office, and largely replaced by hired consultants. Decisions ratified by plebiscite of members and supporters.	Minimal formal organization, with hierarchical control by the autonomous entrepreneur and his/her employees.
Nature and role of membership	Elites are the only 'members'.	Large and homogeneous membership. Leadership formally accountable to members.	Heterogeneous membership organized primarily as cheerleaders for elites.	Distinction between member and supporter blurred. Members seen as individuals rather than as an organized body.	Membership minimal and irrelevant.
Primary resource base	Personal wealth and connections.	Fees from members and ancillary organizations.	Contributions from interest groups and individuals.	State subsidies.	Corporate resources.

Source: Adapted in part from Katz and Mair (1995) and Krouwel (2006).

(a party on the ground), the mass party begins with a core of leaders who organize a party central office with the aim of developing a party so as to be able to win elections and ultimately gain public office.

In contrast to the cadre party, which generally claimed to be speaking for the 'national interest' (although often based on a highly truncated view of who constituted 'the nation'), mass parties claimed to represent the interest only of a particular group (most often a social class),[4] and frequently built on the pre-existing organizations of that group (e.g. trade unions). Their primary political resource was numbers, with many small contributions of labour and money substituting for the few, but large, contributions available to elite parties. Both as a reflection of their subcultural roots and as a way of mobilizing their supporters, mass parties often pursued a strategy of 'encapsulation', providing a range of ancillary organizations (women's groups, after-work clubs, trade unions) and services (a party press, party-sponsored insurance schemes) that both helped isolate supporters from countervailing influences and made party support a part of the citizen's enduring personal identity rather than a choice to be made at each election.

Naturally, all of this required extensive organization. The archetypal mass party is organized on the ground in branches that, like other types of voluntary organizations of citizens, have a formally defined membership, made up of people who have applied for membership, been accepted (and potentially are liable to expulsion), and have certain obligations to the organization (most commonly including the payment of a subscription or fee) in exchange for which they acquire rights to participate in the organization's governance. In this regard, branches will elect their own officers, as well as delegates to higher levels of the party organization, including at the top the party's national congress (or convention or conference).

The national congress in principle is the highest decision-making body of a mass party, but as a practical matter can only meet for a few days every year (if that often), and therefore elects a party executive committee and/or chairman or president or secretary which is effectively at the top of the party hierarchy. The executive also manages the staff of the party central office. Again in principle, the representatives elected to public office under the party's banner are agents of the party, on the presumption that voters were choosing among parties and not individual candidates, and so are subject to the direction of the party congress and executive, which are also responsible for formulating the party's political programme or manifesto.

In reality, of course, things are often rather different with, as indicated by Michels' (1962) 'iron law of oligarchy', the very structures of internal party democracy leading to the domination of the party by its elite—a result that is less surprising when one remembers that the extra-parliamentary elite initially were the creators of the party. Moreover, in many parties that approximate the ideal type of the mass party, ancillary organizations as well as the parliamentary party and the central office staff are guaranteed representation in the national congress and/or the national executive, increasingly making the question of whether authority in the mass party flows from the bottom-up, or from the top-down, an open one.

Catch-all parties

The mass party originated primarily as the vehicle of those groups that were excluded from power under the *régimes censitaires*. It proved highly effective, however, first in securing broader rights of participation for its clientele groups and then in winning elections under conditions of broadly expanded suffrage, and in many cases this forced the cadre parties of the right to adapt or risk electoral annihilation.[5] Simply to become mass parties was not appealing, however. In general the social groups that they would represent were not large enough to be competitive on their own under mass suffrage and thus they had to be able to appeal across group boundaries. Moreover, the party in public office did not find the idea of ceding ultimate authority to a party congress and executive, even if in name only, attractive. The result was to create a new party model, with much of the form of the mass party (members, branches, congress, executive), but organized as the supporters of the party in public office rather than as its masters.

At the same time, many mass parties were forced to change, both by pressure from a party in public office anxious to free itself from the constraints of the mass party model and increasingly able to claim responsibilities and legitimacy based on a direct relationship with the electorate rather than one mediated by the external party organization, and by changes in society (e.g. breakdown of social divisions, spread of mass media) that made the

strategy of encapsulation less effective and the re-
sources provided by the parties' *classes gardées* less
reliable and less adequate.

The result was (1) a reduction in the role of
members relative to professionals, (2) a shedding
of ideological baggage, (3) a loosening and ultimate
abandonment of the interconnection of party and a
privileged set of interest organizations (again, partic-
ularly unions), and (4) a strategy that reached across
group boundaries for votes and resources. Particu-
larly looking at these changes in mass parties of the
left, Kirchheimer (1966) identified this new type as
the 'catch-all party'. In fact, however, in both strategy
and organization, Kirchheimer's catch-all party looks
very much like that just described as the adaptation of
the old cadre parties. As the catch-all party developed,
it was accompanied by greater attention to the func-
tion of contesting elections, to the detriment of other
party functions such as integrating or representing
groups or opinions in politics or formulating and de-
bating policy. It was also accompanied by increased
reliance on political professionals—pollsters, media
consultants, etc. (see Chapter 19)—leading to the
idea of the electoral-professional party as an altern-
ative to, or simply a variant of, the catch-all model
(Panebianco 1988). Although most parties identified
as being electoral-professional in fact have formal
membership organizations, the emphasis has shifted
so much toward the party in public office and the
central office (or hired consultants who are not regu-
lar members of the party staff) that the membership
is effectively superfluous, or maintained primarily
for cosmetic reasons (i.e. the belief that having a
membership organization will make the party look
less elitist or oligarchic).

Cartel parties

By the last quarter of the twentieth century, even
the catch-all model was under considerable pressure.
Increasing public debts confronted ruling parties
with a choice between dramatic increases in taxes
and dramatic cuts in welfare spending. Globalization
reduced the ability of governments to control their
economies. Cognitive mobilization and the growth
of interest groups, NGOs, etc., gave citizens both
the abilities and opportunities to bring pressure to
bear on the parties themselves, and on the state
without requiring the intermediation of the parties.
Party loyalties, and memberships, began obviously to

erode. Shifts in campaign technology increased the
cost of electoral competitiveness beyond the willing-
ness of members and other private contributors to
provide—at least without the appearance, and often
the reality, of corruption that, when revealed, made
parties even less popular.

These developments have inspired a number of
adaptations and other initiatives. Katz and Mair
(1995) have suggested that in many countries catch-
all parties have been moving in the direction of what
they call the 'cartel party'. This involves at least four
major changes in the relationships among the parties,
the citizenry, and the state, and between parties and
their members.

1. The mainstream parties, that is, those that are in
   power, or are generally perceived to have a high
   probability of coming to power in the medium
   term, in effect form a cartel to protect themselves
   both from electoral risks (e.g. by erecting barriers
   to entry, by tacitly agreeing to keep divisive issues
   off the political agenda, by shifting responsibility
   away from politically accountable agencies so that
   they will not be held to account for them, by
   minimizing the difference in rewards to electoral
   winners and electoral losers) and to supplement
   their decreasingly adequate resources with sub-
   ventions from the state (justified in terms of
   the parties' centrality to democratic government
   or of insulating parties from corrupt economic
   pressure).

2. The parties reduce the relevance of their role of
   bringing pressure to bear on the state on behalf of
   civil society (i.e. their role of representation), in
   favour of a part of their role as governors, defend-
   ing policies of the state (including those made by
   bureaucrats, 'non-political' agencies like central
   banks, and even previous governments made up
   of other parties), in effect becoming agencies of
   the state rather than of society. This status tends
   to be particularly manifested in the proliferation
   of 'party laws' (see below) that regulate the in-
   ternal practices of parties in ways that are more
   akin to state and quasi-state agencies than they
   are to private associations.

3. Cartel parties tend to increase the formal powers
   of party members, and indeed in some cases to
   allow increased participation by supporters who
   are not formal members. They do this, however,

not to increase the internal democracy of the parties, except perhaps in a plebiscitarian sense, but rather as a way of preserving the form of internal democracy while disempowering party activists—who are perceived to be more doctrinaire and policy-oriented, and hence less willing to accept the limitations implicit in a cartel. For example, leadership selection might be moved from the party congress, which allows a forum for internal opposition to be organized and expressed, to a direct mail ballot of the full membership.

4. In part simply extending the trends evident in the catch-all party, cartel parties also tend to replace the staff of the party central office with hired consultants, both further privileging professional expertise over political experience and activism, and removing another possible source of challenge to the leaders of the party in public office.

Anti-cartel parties

Although both Duverger (the principal elaborator of the idea of the mass party) and Kirchheimer (the elaborator of the idea of the catch-all party) presented their models as somehow representing an end-state of party development, each of the models has generated its own challenger. In the case of the cartel party, Katz and Mair (attributing the idea to Lars Bille), identify what they call the anti-party-system party as the cartel party's challenger. Parties of this type have also been identified as 'left-libertarian' or 'new right' parties, or as 'movement parties'. They tend to expect a much deeper commitment from their members than either catch-all or cartel parties, and in this way are similar to the mass party, but they are organized around an idea rather than a social grouping (although the idea may be differentially attractive/popular among different groups). Two of their primary appeals, however, are simply to a sense of frustration that substantive outcomes appear to change little, if at all, regardless of which of the mainstream parties wins an election, and to a sense that all of the mainstream parties are more interested in protecting their own privileges (for example, by voting themselves generous subventions) than in advancing the interests of ordinary citizens.

Particularly in their early days (before they faced the temptations of joining the cartel and enjoying public office), both Green Parties on the left and Scandinavian Progress Parties on the right exemplified anti-cartel parties.

Business-firm parties

An alternative form of challenger to established parties is represented by what Hopkin and Paolucci (1999) have called the 'business-firm party'. The prototypical example is Forza Italia, a 'party' created by Silvio Berlusconi—a businessman who became prime minister in Italy—essentially as a wholly owned subsidiary of his corporate empire, and staffed largely by its employees. While there may be an organization on the ground to mobilize supporters to cheer on the leader, it is only 'a lightweight organisation with the sole basic function of mobilising short-term support at election time' (1999: 315), and indeed in the case of Forza Italia the members of these organizations originally were not members of the party. Although Forza Italia developed from a previously existing firm, Hopkin and Paolucci argue that essentially the same model will typify 'purpose-built' parties in the future.

Parties in the US

Parties in the US present yet another model. From a European perspective, they appear to have much in common with the nineteenth-century cadre party, and Duverger famously identified them as a historical throwback or case of 'arrested development'. What they have in common with the cadre party is (1) a weak central organization, (2) a focus on individual candidates rather than enduring institutions, and (3) the absence of a formal membership organization. Where they differ profoundly, however, is in being extensively regulated by law, to the extent that Epstein (1986) reasonably could characterize them as 'public utilities', and in allowing the mass 'membership' (see below for an explanation of the quotation marks) to make the most important decision, that of candidate selection.

Reflecting the federal nature of the country, the basic unit of party organization is the state party. The national committees of the two parties, which control the national party central offices and elect the national chairmen, are made up of representatives of the state parties. The national conventions are not policymakers, even in form; they are called for the purpose of selecting—and effectively since the 1950s merely

confirming the selection of—presidential candidates. Moreover, reflecting the separation of powers in the American constitution, both the parties have separate organizations in each House of the Congress, which not only serve as the equivalent of parliamentary party caucuses but also maintain their own, independent, fundraising, and campaign-mounting capacity, almost as if they were separate parties.

The three key features of the American legal system of party regulation are (1) the use of primary elections, (2) the vacuous definition of party membership, and (3) the candidate-centred nature of party regulation. In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, reformers intent on breaking what they saw as the corrupt and excessive power of party bosses, 'democratized' the parties by putting power into the hands of ordinary party members (who they identified as party voters) through the use of primary elections. Today, each of the state parties is run (to the extent that they are run at all) by a party central committee, generally chosen in that party's primary election.

Virtually all of the party's candidates for public office, as well as the vast majority of delegates to its national nominating convention, are also chosen in primary elections, or in party caucuses which are essentially the same in terms of rights of participation. Unlike so-called primaries in other countries, these are public elections, run by the state and structured by public law rather than party rules. The second element of these reforms was to deny the parties the right to define or control their own memberships. Rather than having formal members (who make an application to join, pay a membership fee, and in theory could be rejected or expelled), American parties only have 'registrants', that is voters who have chosen to affiliate with one of the parties in the process of registering to vote—if, indeed, there is even that much of a formal attachment between 'members' and party, given that not all states have partisan registration of voters.

American law generally treats registrants as if they were members in a more substantive sense, but the party has no control over who registers as a 'member', and the member takes on no obligation by enrolling. Moreover, some states do not have partisan registration, and even in some states that do have partisan registration any voter can claim the right to participate in a party's primary elections (open primary)

without even the pretence of prior registration in it. Generally, the choice between open and closed (only party registrants may participate) primaries is determined by state law, although the parties have won (in court) the right for each party to determine for itself whether to allow voters who are not registered as 'members' of any party to participate in its own primary. Finally, even when ostensibly dealing with parties, American legal regulations focus on candidates as individuals. The overwhelming majority of the money spent in American campaigns is controlled by the candidates' own committees, and in general the parties are regarded merely as a privileged class of 'contributor'.

Even though eligibility for the public support given to finance presidential campaigns is based on the vote shares of their parties' candidates in the previous election, the money itself is given to the campaign committees of the candidates, not to the party organizations. The right to call oneself the candidate of a party is won in its primary election, with the party organization unable to bar any qualified voter who presents the requisite number of petition signatures and/or fee from competing and often is barred even from expressing a preference among the primary candidates (although party 'clubs', which are formal membership organizations but are not formally part of the party, may do so).

The result of all of this is to make it unclear whether the United States should be described as having a two party (Democrats and Republicans), six party (Presidential Democrats, House Democrats, Senate Democrats, and the same for the Republicans), or hundred party (Democrats and Republicans in each state) system—or alternatively whether it might not to some extent be appropriate to characterize the United States as having no political parties at all.

Membership

Although the original parties of intra-parliamentary origin had no members other than the MPs who aligned themselves with a party caucus, virtually all modern parties claim to have a membership organization. The modes of acquiring membership, the role played by members both in rhetoric and in practice, the size of the membership organization (and indeed the degree to which it is an organization at all), however, vary widely among parties.

BOX 12.3 Types of American primaries

Closed primary	Only those who have registered in advance as 'members' of the party may participate.
Modified primary	Those who have registered as 'members' of the party, and—at the party's discretion—those who are registered as 'Independent' or 'non-affiliated' voters may participate.
Open primary	All registered voters may participate in the primary election of the one party of their choice.
Blanket primary	All registered voters may participate, choosing if they wish among the candidates of a different party for each office. The candidates of each party with the most votes become the nominees.
Louisiana 'primary'	All registered voters may participate, choosing among all of the candidates for each office. If a candidate receives an absolute majority of the votes, that person is elected, and the 'primary' in effect becomes the election for that office. Otherwise, the two candidates with the most votes, regardless of party, become the candidates for the (run-off) general election.

As suggested above, the prototypical membership-based party is the mass party. In its simplest form, the members of a mass party are individuals who have applied and been accepted as members of local branches or sections (based either on local government boundaries or electoral districts—which generally are the same except in cases where an obsession with population equality forces subdivision boundaries to be crossed in the construction of constituencies). In some parties, this form of direct individual membership is or was supplemented by indirect membership acquired as part of membership in an affiliated organization. Most commonly these were trade unions affiliated with social democratic parties, such as the British Labour Party.

Affiliated membership might come automatically and inescapably as part of union (or other group) membership, or it might require an explicit choice by the potential member either to acquire party membership ('contracting in') or to decline party membership ('contracting out'); membership rights such as voting for members of the party executive might be exercised by the individual, or indirectly through representatives of the affiliated organization. With the development of the catch-all party model and the weakening of social class as the basis of party politics, affiliated memberships have been dropped by some parties, for example the Swedish Social Democrats, leaving only individual membership.

As elite parties transformed into, or were replaced by, membership-based parties of the centre and right, they too adopted the local branch model, although the relationship of the branches to the party itself might differ. For example, the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations in the UK remained organizationally separate from (although housed in the same building as) the Conservative Party *per se*. Similarly, the 'clubs' of Forza Italia are distinct from the party itself, as are the Democratic and Republican clubs found in the United States. In each case, the membership organization may more properly be described as an organization of party supporters than as the base of the party itself.

Particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, Communist and Fascist parties developed their own forms of membership organization. For the Communists, the dominant form was the cell, based on the workplace rather than on residence; for the Fascists, it was the militia.

Membership remains important to the self-understanding of many parties, and the idea that party leaders should be responsible to a membership organization has been widely embraced as a necessary element of democratic governance, although there are prominent dissenters from this view (e.g. Sartori 1965). Traditionally, membership has been measured in three ways.

United States of America

State formation

American colonies were founded by Spanish, French, and English settlers since the 16th century. The US was founded by 13 colonies declaring their independence from Great Britain in 1776. It expanded to the western coast of the continent and has since been receiving more immigrants than the rest of the world combined.
Constitution: 1787, effective 1789; amended 27 times.

Form of government

Federal republic.
Head of state President and Vice President elected on the same ticket by a college of representatives who are elected directly from each state; term of 4 years (renewable once).
Head of government The President.
Cabinet Appointed by the President with approval of the Senate.
Administrative subdivisions 50 states and 1 district.

Legal system

Based on English common law; each state has its own legal system; judicial review of legislative acts.

Legislature

Bicameral Congress.
Lower house House of Representatives: 435 seats; term of 2 years.
Upper house Senate: 100 seats (2 members from each state); staggered elections (one-third renewed every two years); term of 6 years.

Electoral system (lower house)

Simple majority vote in one round (absolute majority in the states of Georgia and Louisiana).
Constituencies 435 single-member constituencies. Each representative represents roughly the same number of citizens, provided that each state has at least one representative.
Barrier clause Not applicable.
Suffrage Universal, 18 years.

Direct democracy

Referendums at state level.

Party system Results of the 2004 legislative elections (*House of Representatives*):

Electorate:	221,285,099	100.0%
Voters:	123,535,883	55.8%

Party	Valid votes	%	Seats
Republican Party	55,713,412	49.2	232
Democratic Party	52,745,121	46.6	202
Independent	674,202	0.6	1
Others	4,059,551	3.6	0
Total	113,192,286	100.0	435

Notes: Category 'Others' includes parties with less than 1% nation-wide and no seats.
Sources: US House of Representatives; US Elections Project, George Mason University (for electorate and turnout).

1. The most obvious is simply a raw **count of members**. This is useful for organizational purposes: is membership growing or shrinking? How much income should be expected from membership fees? Are representative institutions necessary, or can all members attend a party congress and speak for themselves?

2. In comparative terms, however, this measure suffers from its dependence on the scale of the system.

If every citizen of Luxembourg were a party member, the absolute number of members would still be less than 25 per cent of German party membership, which represents less than 3 per cent of the German electorate. More generally comparable across space and time is the **ratio of party membership to the size of the electorate.**

3. Finally, comparisons between parties may be based on their **organizational density** (the ratio of

members to voters), the problem here being that an increase in this ratio can be the result either of an increase in membership (an indicator of party strength) or of a decline in vote (an indicator of party weakness).

Regardless of how membership is measured, however, and despite its perceived importance, party membership has generally been declining, often in absolute terms but almost always in relative terms (for examples, see Table 12.2). Although some scholars (e.g. Katz 1990) argue that members may cost a party more than they are worth—and that the value to a citizen of being a party member may also exceed its cost—this has commonly been regarded as a problem, for which however no real solution has yet been found.

Regulation

Whether or not they reflect the merging of parties with the state, an increasing number of countries have enacted special 'party laws', either supplementing or replacing legal regimes that treated parties as simply one more category of private association. In some cases, these party laws are embedded in the national constitution, while in others they are ordinary statutes or bodies of regulations.

A number of specific justifications have been offered in favour of special party laws. These can, however, generally be categorized into three groups. The first is the **centrality of parties to democracy**. In several cases (Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy), this is specifically acknowledged in the national constitution, while in others it has been acknowledged either in the law or in the parliamentary debates when the law was enacted. In general, the importance of parties to democracy has been a justification for giving the parties special rights, protections, or privileges beyond those that would normally be granted to an 'ordinary' private association.

The second, albeit closely related, justification is the **power of parties**. Because of their central position in democratic government, a party that is anti-democratic or corrupt may pose a particularly serious threat to democracy. Hence if their importance justifies special privileges, the dangers they pose justify special oversight and restrictions.

Third, a party law may be justified as a matter of administrative convenience or necessity. Most commonly, this justification has revolved around the twin problems of ballot access (the right to place candidates on the ballot) and control over the party's name or symbols (particularly on the ballot), although the related question of the right to form a parliamentary group may also be involved. (Alternatively, this may be regulated by the parliament's own Rules of Procedure—see Chapter 7.)

Where there is a party law, one of the first issues to be dealt with is the definition of party—to determine whether a group is entitled to the privileges and subject to the regulations of the law. Unlike the definitions discussed above, legal definitions generally are procedural and organizational, and may indeed distinguish between parties in general and parties that are entitled to special treatment. For example, while the Canada Elections Act defines a party simply as 'an organization one of whose fundamental purposes is to participate in public affairs by endorsing one or more of its members as candidates and supporting their election', the 'real' definition is that of a 'registered party'. To be a registered party, an organization must file an application declaring that it meets the definition of party just quoted, but also declaring its full name, a short-form name or abbreviation (that will appear on the ballot), its logo (if any), plus the names, addresses, and signed consent of the party's leader, officers, auditor, chief agent, and 250 electors. Finally, it must endorse at least one candidate.[6] In other countries, official recognition may require that the party 'offer sufficient guarantee of the sincerity of their aims' (German Law on Political Parties of 1967, § 2(1)), and/or adhere to prescribed norms of internal democracy.

Continuing with the Canadian example, once a party is registered it acquires a number of privileges, including: (1) contributions to the party become eligible for tax credits; (2) the party's name appears on the ballot (but only if the nomination is confirmed by the party leader, giving the central party organization control over the use of its name); (3) if it has received at least 2 per cent of the valid votes nationally or 5 per cent of the valid votes in the districts in which it had candidates, half of its election expenses can be reimbursed by the federal treasury and the party can receive a quarterly subvention based on its vote at the previous election. The requirements for ballot access in Canada are the same for party and non-party candidates (except that a candidate

Table 12.2 Party membership

Country	Membership/electorate %			
	Time 1	%	*Time 2*	%
Austria	1980	28.48	1999	17.66
Belgium	1980	8.97	1999	6.55
Czech Republic	1993	7.04	1999	3.94
Denmark	1980	7.30	1998	5.14
Finland	1980	15.74	1998	9.65
France	1978	5.05	1999	1.57
Germany	1980 (West only)	4.52	1999 (whole)	2.93
Greece	1980	3.19	1998	6.77
Hungary	1990	2.11	1999	2.15
Ireland	1980	5.00	1998	3.14
Italy	1980	9.66	1998	4.05
Netherlands	1980	4.29	2000	2.51
Norway	1980	15.35	1997	7.31
Portugal	1980	4.28	2000	3.99
Slovakia	1994	3.29	2000	4.11
Spain	1980	1.20	2000	3.42
Switzerland	1977	10.66	1997	6.38
United Kingdom	1980	4.12	1998	1.92

Source: Mair and van Biezen (2001).

wishing to have a party designation on the ballot must submit a letter of endorsement from the party leader in addition to the required signatures and deposit), but in some countries the candidates of a registered party, or a party that already has some level of representation in parliament, may be given a place on the ballot without having to satisfy the requirements imposed on non-party or new-party or very-minor-party candidates.

On the other hand, acquiring official status often also subjects a party to a number of obligations. Canadian registered parties, for example, are required to submit frequent, and audited, financial reports. German law requires membership participation in the selection of party leaders and that candidates be selected by secret ballot, requirements that are not imposed in equivalent detail on other private associations.

Finance

As is implicit in the preceding section, one field in which state involvement in the affairs of parties

has been particularly prominent is that of finance. Traditionally, this has taken the form of regulation, and most specifically of prohibitions—against taking money from certain sources, or using it for certain purposes. Although they were directed at candidates rather than parties *per se* (which the law did not explicitly recognize), the British Corrupt Practice Prevention Act of 1854 and the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act of 1883 were early examples. Often these were supplemented by requirements of public disclosure of sources of income, objects of expenditure, or both. In recent decades, these regulatory regimes have in many countries been supplemented by programmes of state support for parties. Some of these take the form of 'tax expenditures' (by making contributions to parties eligible for tax deductions or credit, some of the cost of those contributions is effectively transferred to the state in the form of revenue that is foregone), while in other cases parties receive either partial reimbursement of expenses or subventions directly from the state, frequently accompanied by even more invasive regulations justified as monitoring the use of public money.

Regulation of spending

Regulation of party spending has been more-or-less synonymous with regulation of campaign spending—although, of course, parties spend money on many things that are at best indirectly related to campaigns (for example, social events that help cement member commitment but have no overt connection to a campaign). These regulations take three general forms: bans on particular forms of spending; limitations on total spending; required disclosure of spending.

Aside from bans on such obviously corrupt practices as vote buying or bribery, the most significant prohibition of a specific form of expenditure (more recently in some countries, this has been a limitation rather than a total ban) concerns the buying of advertising time on the broadcast media. Limitations on total spending generally are based on the size of the electorate and the type of office involved. Expenditure reports are frequently required, and provide some element of transparency, but differ widely among countries with regard to the categories of expenditure that are reported, the degree of detail (e.g. specific recipients or only category totals), the frequency and currency of reports, and the degree

to which reports are audited or otherwise subject to independent verification.

Beyond these questions of reporting, all forms of regulation of party spending confront a number of inter-related problems concerning exactly whose spending is to be controlled. Is it parties as organizations, or candidates as individuals, or everyone, including those without formal ties to either candidates or party organizations? To exclude parties (or to include national party organizations but not their local affiliates) is likely to make regulation nugatory, but to include them requires a level of official recognition that until recently was rare in countries with single-member district electoral systems. To include everyone may be seen as an unacceptable limitation on the political speech rights of citizens, but to include only formal party organizations and their candidates risks the explosion of spending by organizations (such as the American 527s in the 2004 presidential election)[7] that are simply the party in another, but now un- or less regulated guise.

Once party and campaign spending are equated, a further problem becomes the definition of the campaign. This involves two questions. First, when does the campaign begin? If the regulated campaign period is too short, its regulation may be of little consequence. Japan, for example, has a very short formal campaign period during which virtually everything is prohibited, but it is preceded by a real campaign subject to very little regulation. Second, what activity is campaign activity? As with the question of regulating non-party spending, an excessively broad definition of campaigning may subject all political speech to burdensome regulation, but an excessively narrow definition, such as the American 'magic words' doctrine (only messages containing words or phrases like 'vote for', 'elect', 'Smith for Congress', 'vote against', 'defeat', and referring to a specific candidate, count as campaigning) may defeat the purpose of the regulations.

Regulation of fundraising

Contribution limits are designed to prevent wealthy individuals or groups from exercising undue influence over parties (although, of course, the meaning of 'undue' often is in the eye of the beholder). In various places, foreigners, corporations (sometimes only public corporations or only firms in

heavily regulated industries; in other cases all businesses), or trade unions are barred from making, and parties from accepting, political contributions. Anonymous contributions also are generally barred, perhaps from fear that the anonymity will be in name only.

Regardless of who is allowed to make contributions, there may also be limits on the size of contributions from an individual donor, either to an individual recipient, in aggregate, or both. Both kinds of limits are, however, relatively easy to evade: rather than making a corporate contribution, a corporation can 'bundle' (collect centrally and then deliver together) what appear to be individual donations from its officers or employees; an individual can give many times the individual legal limit by 'arranging' to have donations made in the name of his or her spouse, children, and other close relatives. Moreover, the definition of 'contribution' itself is problematic. Money is obvious, but should in-kind contributions be included (and how should they be valued)? What about the donation of services? And perhaps most vexing of all, if a person or group independently advocates the election of a party or candidate (what in the United States are called 'independent expenditures'), does that count as a contribution subject to limitation, or free speech that must be protected? Finally, whether or not contributions are restricted, their subversive (of democracy) effect may be limited by requirements of public disclosure.

Public subventions

A growing number of countries provide support for parties, through their tax systems, through the direct provision of goods and services, or through direct financial subventions. In some cases, these supports are specifically tied to election campaigns (or alternatively limited to non-campaign related research institutes) while in others they are unrestricted grants for general party activities (see Chapter 7).

The earliest and most common public subventions are the provision of staff to parliamentary parties or their members, ostensibly to support their official functions but often convertible to more general political purposes. Particularly in countries in

which broadcasting was a public monopoly, parties generally are given an allocation of free air time; other examples of free provision of services include the mailing of candidates' election addresses (e.g. UK), free space for billboards (e.g. Spain, Israel, and Germany), free use of halls in public buildings for rallies (e.g. UK, Spain, Japan), and reduced rates for office space (e.g. Italy). Although these raise some problems, the more contentious question was the direct provision of money, which is nonetheless becoming nearly universal.

Public support for parties raises two questions (beyond the somewhat specious question of whether people should be compelled through their taxes to subsidize causes with which they do not agree). First, is the primary effect of state subventions to allow parties better to perform their functions of policy formulation, public education, and linkage between society and the government? Or is it to further the separation between parties and those they are supposed to represent by making the parties less dependent on voluntary support? Second, do systems of public support (in which the levels of support are almost always tied to electoral support at the previous election),[8] as well as rules limiting individual contributions, further fairness and equality, or do they unfairly privilege those parties that already are dominant ('to those that have, more shall be given')?

KEY POINTS

- ❑ Party organizational types have evolved over time as suffrage was expanded and societies changed.
- ❑ Rather than reaching an end-point, organizations continue to evolve, and new types continue to develop.
- ❑ Party membership, and involvement of citizens in party politics more generally, appears to be declining virtually throughout the democratic world.
- ❑ Parties are increasingly the subject of legal regulation, which while justified in the name of fairness may also contribute to the entrenchment of the parties that currently are strong.

Parties and the stabilization of democracy

Parties were central to the transition from traditional monarchy to electoral democracy in the first wave of democratization (primarily in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), but they have also been central actors in the third wave (see Chapter 5). In the older democracies, where the liberal rights of contestation were established before suffrage was expanded to the majority of citizens, parties helped to integrate newly enfranchised citizens into the established patterns of competition. While enfranchisement generally led to the rapid growth of parties (most often socialist) appealing specifically to the new voters, even what are now identified as 'bourgeois parties' found it in their interest to appeal to the new voters—for example as citizens, or Christians, or members of a peripheral culture rather than as workers.

In immigrant societies such as the US, Canada, Australia, or in South America, the parties also contributed to the integration of arrivals into their new country. The degree to which parties (and other institutions) could perform this function successfully was strongly influenced by the magnitude of the load placed upon them by the rapidity of suffrage expansion. Where the franchise was broadened in several steps spaced over decades, as in the United Kingdom, the existing parties generally were able to adapt, with the result that would-be demagogues or revolutionaries found a very limited market. When franchise expansion was more abrupt, as in France in 1848 or Italy in 1913, the twin dangers that masses of new voters would be mobilized by radicals and that this possibility would be perceived by others to be a threat requiring drastic measures often led to the collapse of democracy.

This function of integration and stabilization is also potentially important in the new democracies of the late twentieth century. Particularly in the formerly communist bloc (but not only there), the process of democratization has differed from that in the earlier waves in that political mobilization of the citizenry preceded the development of public contestation (Enyedi 2006: 228). Moreover, the levels of literacy, general education, access to mass media, and international involvement far exceed those of earlier waves. Coupled with this has been a deep distrust

of the whole idea of political parties, rooted in the unhappy experience of the communist party state. Among the results have been extremely low rates of party membership (giving rise to the idea of a 'couch party'—one whose membership is so small that they could all sit on a single couch) and quite high electoral volatility.

Not only has the attachment of voters to particular parties been problematic, so too has the attachment of elected politicians, with parliamentary party groups (tellingly usually identified in Eastern and Central Europe as 'clubs') showing such low levels of stability that in some cases parliamentary rules have been changed specifically to discourage party splits or defections. Whether integration into the system of European Union party groups will bring some stability to this situation, and whether this weakness and fluidity of party systems will be detrimental to the performance or continuity of democracy in the region, remain to be seen.

A second major area in which the role of parties in stabilizing democracy is in doubt is the Islamic world, where the question is whether the electoral success of Islamist parties helps to integrate their followers into democratic politics, or alternatively threatens to undermine democracy altogether (Tepe 2006). The underlying conflict of values—the will of God as articulated by clerics versus the will of the people as articulated at the ballot box—is hardly unique to the Islamic world (and indeed was important throughout the nineteenth century in Europe), but now appears particularly pressing there.

One of the features of the late twentieth century has been the proliferation of international, national, and non-governmental democracy assistance agencies (e.g. the UN Electoral Assistance Division; the Center for Democracy and Governance of the USAID; the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance; see Chapter 25). Given the recognized centrality of parties to the stabilization of democratic regimes, not to mention the tendency simply to identify democracy with inter-party electoral competition, these agencies have seen the promotion and support of parties as part of their mandate.

While these agencies unsurprisingly only want to support 'democratic' parties, beyond an obvious

distaste for parties that show disdain for civil liberties or threaten to suppress/oppress their opponents, there is some uncertainty regarding what a 'democratic' party is. Most particularly, however, this disagreement focuses on the question of internal party democracy: whether it is important that the party's members somehow elect the party's leaders and decide on, or at least ratify, its policy positions. Ironically, many of these agencies appear wedded to the mass party model of organization and democracy, even though they recognize that the social conditions that gave rise to that model in Europe are not found in the emerging democracies (and those same agencies would oppose those conditions if they were) and even though the standard of internal democracy they would like to apply in emerging democracies was not satisfied by many of the parties of the now-established democracies at the time that their democracies were emerging.

KEY POINTS

❑ Parties have played, and continue to play, a vital role in stabilizing democracy by integrating new citizens (whether new because they have come of age, immigrated, or benefited from expansion of the rights of citizenship) into the existing political system.

❑ Whether the electoral success of anti-democratic parties helps to moderate them and to integrate their followers into democracy, or instead serves to undermine democracy, is an unresolved but pressing issue.

❑ Whether a party can be internally oligarchic and yet also be an asset for system-level democracy remains a contentious issue, particularly for democracy-promoting agencies deciding which groups merit their support.

Conclusion

Political parties remain central to democratic government in the twenty-first century. It is still parties that contest elections and identify most of the candidates. It is still parties that structure the coalitions required to enact legislation and support governments. Nonetheless, parties face a number of potentially serious challenges.

As already suggested, party membership is declining almost everywhere (Mair and van Biezen 2001). One result has been to force parties to become more dependent on financial contributions and other forms of support (e.g. the 'loan' of labour or 'independent' campaign advertising) from corporations and organizations of special interests, and more recently to 'feed at the public trough' through direct public subventions. This decline in party involvement has not been limited to formal members, however, but is also reflected in declining party identification, and perhaps most significantly in the growth of hostility not just to the particular parties that happen to exist in a given country at a given time, but to the whole idea of parties and of partisanship. One manifestation of this is the growth of anti-party-system parties; another is the number of new parties that eschew the use of that word in their names and even of existing parties that try to 'rebrand' themselves

without the party denomination (e.g. 'New Labour' instead of 'Labour Party').

The growing popularity of such ideas as 'consensus democracy' (Lijphart 1999) and 'deliberative democracy' (e.g. Guttmann and Thompson 2004; Budge 2000), like the complaint of former President Carter that the 2004 US presidential election campaign was 'too partisan', are reflective of a desire for amicable agreement that denies the existence of real conflicts of interest and opinion. But if one accepts Finer's (1970: 8) definition of politics as what happens when 'a given set of persons . . . require a *common* policy; and . . . its members advocate, for this common status, policies that are *mutually exclusive*', this is in effect to want to take the politics out of democracy.

Although rarely put overtly in these terms, the alternative to contentious and partisan politics is generally some form of government by experts or technocrats. Often these 'reforms' have been advocated and enacted by the parties themselves as a way of avoiding responsibility for unpopular but unavoidable decisions or for outcomes that are beyond their control. Even when the parties remain centrally involved in policy, increasingly their role (and the basis upon which they compete) is defined in terms of management rather than direction. By reducing

the policy stakes of elections, however, the parties have also decreased the incentives for citizens to become active in the parties (Katz 2003) and given ammunition to those who ask why the state should provide subsidies and other special privileges (Mair 1995).

The role of parties as representatives of the people, or as links between the people and the state, has been challenged as well by the increasing range of interest organizations that compete with them as 'articulators of interest'. Rather than being forced to choose among a limited number of packages of policy stances across a range of issues—some of which may be of little interest, and others of which he or she may actually oppose—the modern citizen can mix-and-match among any number of groups, each of which will reflect his or her preferences more accurately on a single issue than any party could hope to do. With improved communications skills, and especially with the rise of the internet, citizens may feel less need for intermediaries at all; they can communicate directly with those in power themselves.

Many parties have themselves tried to adapt to more sophisticated electorates and to new technologies, giving rise to the possibility of 'cyber parties' (Margetts 2006; see also Chapter 19). In its initial stages, this may be little more than the use of mass e-mailings to 'members' (now of mailing lists rather than of real organizations) and the use of the mechanisms of e-commerce to facilitate fundraising from individuals. In a more developed form, it is likely to include chat-rooms and discussion list-servers. In theory, the technology might allow what would amount to a party meeting that is always in session. To date, however, there has been more evidence of people at the grass roots using the internet to send messages to those in positions of authority than there has been evidence of those in authority actually listening. And as with the party congresses of the last century, even if the internet (or simply the regular mail) is used to allow party members or supporters to make decisions, real power will continue to rest with those who frame the questions. It remains unlikely that the internet will somehow lead to the repeal of the Iron Law of Oligarchy.

Overall, then, there are two challenges facing parties at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One is the increasing complexity of problems, the increasing speed of social and economic developments, increasing globalization—all making the problems facing parties as governors less tractable. The other is the increasing political capacity of citizens (cognitive mobilization) running into the ineluctable limitations of individual influence in societies of the size of modern states—expectations of effective individual involvement, even if restricted to the minority who are politically interested, often are unrealistic. Both challenge widely held views of how democratic party government should work. How parties adapt to these changing circumstances, whether by redefining their roles or by altering public expectations, will shape the future of democracy.

? Questions

1. Is a group that nominates candidates in order to put pressure on other parties, but not with a real hope of winning an election itself, properly called a political party?
2. Is 'political party' better understood as a category, into which each case either does or does not fit, or as an ideal type, which each case can more or less closely approximate?
3. Is democracy conceivable without political parties?
4. What is the 'iron law of oligarchy'?
5. How do cartel parties differ from catch-all parties?
6. Does the United States have 'real' political parties?
7. Is the regulation of political parties' finance compatible with political freedom?
8. What is the meaning of 'left' in political terms?
9. Do political parties play the same role in new democracies as in the established democracies?
10. Must a democratic political party be internally democratic?

» Further reading

Katz, Richard S., and Crotty, William (eds.) (2006) *Handbook of Party Politics* (London: Sage). Extensive discussions of many of the topics raised.

——and Mair, Peter (1992) *Party Organizations: A Data Handbook on Party Organizations in Western Democracies, 1960–90* (London: Sage). Extensive, but somewhat dated, data concerning party organizations.

Classics on political parties

Duverger, Maurice (1954) *Political Parties* (New York: John Wiley).

Hershey, Majorie R. (2006) *Party Politics in America* (New York: Longman, 12th edn).

LaPalombara, Joseph, and Weiner, Myron (eds.) (1966) *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Panebianco, Angelo (1988) *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Sartori, Giovanni (1976) *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Annual reports (from 1991) on party politics in most established democracies are available in the *Political Data Yearbook*, published as the last issue each year of the *European Journal of Political Research*. In addition, the *European Journal of Political Research*, *West European Politics*, and *Party Politics* focus heavily on issues concerning political parties.

ⓦ Web links

www.electionresources.org
   Manuel Álvarez-Rivera's Election Resources in the Internet.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk
   Richard Kimber's website on Political Science Resources (University of Keele).

www.parties-and-elections.de
   Database of Parties and Elections about parliamentary elections, parties, and political leaders in Europe.

www.electionworld.org
   Website includes information on political parties around the world with up-to-date election results and other information on the party system and the main institutions.

www.gksoft.com/govt/en/parties.html
   Webpage of Government on the WWW devoted to political parties and party systems around the world. The main page includes additional information on heads of state, parliaments, executives, courts, and other institutions.

www.epicproject.org
   Website of the EPIC Project on election process information collection which includes also information on parties and party systems.

www.georgetown.edu/pdba
   Website of the Political Database of the Americas including information on parties and party systems.

http://dodgson.ucsd.edu/lij
   Website of the Lijphart Election Archive with information on party systems, electoral systems, and recent election results around the world.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
   Website of CIA's the World Factbook with information on institutions, social structures, economic data, and party systems for most countries of the world.

www.idea.int
Website of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/aboutProject.asp
Website of the project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe (University of Essex).

www.eiu.com
Country Reports and Country Profiles published by the Economist Intelligence Unit are very useful for an overview and recent data.

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for more information:
www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani/

13 Party systems

Daniele Caramani

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

This chapter looks at the interactions between parties and how party competition leads to different types of party systems. First, the chapter looks at the *origins* of party systems. Historical cleavages between left and right, the liberal state and religious values or ethno-regional identities, agrarian and industrial sectors of the economy, led to socialist, liberal, religious, regionalist, and other party families. Why are these old party families still the main actors in our time? Second, the chapter looks at the *format* of party systems, some of which include two large parties (two-party systems) while others are more fragmented (multi-party systems). What is the influence of the electoral system, and what are the consequences for governmental stability? Third, the chapter analyses the *dynamics* of party systems. To maximize votes parties tailor their programmes to voters' preferences and converge towards the centre of the left–right axis. Is this why parties propose increasingly similar policies and programmes?

Introduction

This chapter views parties in their connections and relationships within a system. As in planet systems the focus is not on single planets but on the constellations they form: their number, the balance of size between them, and the distance that separates them. Parties can be ideologically near or distant, there are systems with many small parties or few large ones or even—to pursue the analogy further—one large party with 'satellites' (as in some authoritarian systems). Over time some systems change while others remain stable. The variety of party 'constellations' is thus very large.

Whereas the dynamic principle of planets is gravity, the motor of political interactions is competition for power. In liberal democracies this competition is based on popular votes. The shape and dynamics of party systems are determined by the electoral game in which parties are the main actors. A party system is therefore first and foremost the result of competitive interactions between parties. As in all games there is a goal: the maximization of votes to control government. In this sense, party systems are much more dynamic (changeable) than star systems. The set of interactions between parties, however, is not exclusively composed of competition, but also of cooperation. Parties, for example, cooperate when they build a coalition to support a government.

Three main elements of party systems are important:

1. **Which parties exist?** Why do some parties exist in all party systems (e.g. socialists) whereas others only in some (e.g. regionalists, agrarians, or confessional parties)? This relates to the origin, or genealogy, of party systems.

2. **How many parties exist and how big are they?** Why are some systems composed of two large parties and others of many small ones? This relates to the format, or morphology, of party systems.

3. **How do parties behave?** Why in some systems do parties converge towards the centre whereas in others they diverge to the extremes of the ideological 'space'? This relates to the dynamics of party system.

An obvious but important point is that party systems must be composed of several parties. There is no 'system' with one unit only. The competitive interaction between parties requires pluralism. If the goal is to get the most votes, there must be free elections, some degree of enfranchisement, and pluralism without which competition cannot exist. This chapter therefore focuses on democratic systems and excludes totalitarian or authoritarian regimes with single parties (such as China or Syria).

KEY POINTS

❑ Party systems are sets of parties that compete and cooperate with the aim of increasing their power in controlling government.

❑ What determines interactions is (1) which parties exist, (2) how many parties compose a system and how

large they are, and (3) the way in which they maximize votes.

❑ It is appropriate to speak of a party system only in democratic contexts in which several parties compete for votes in open and plural elections.

The genealogy of party systems

The 'national' and 'industrial' revolutions

Most contemporary parties and party families originated from the radical socio-economic and political changes between the mid-nineteenth century and the

first two decades of the twentieth. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) distinguish two aspects of this transformation: (1) the Industrial Revolution refers to changes produced by industrialization (a radical change of the economy) and urbanization (cities and new family structures); (2) the National Revolution refers to the

formation of nation-states (culturally homogeneous and centralized political units), and liberal democracy (parliamentarism, individual civil and voting rights, equality, and secular institutions). These two sets of transformations caused unprecedented levels of social and political mobilization.

The Industrial and National Revolutions created socio-economic and cultural divisions opposing different social groups, elites, sets of values, and interests. Lipset and Rokkan name these conflicts cleavages (see Box: What is a cleavage?, in the Online Resource Centre). With the birth of modern parliaments and free elections, and with the progressive extension of franchise, political parties developed and reflected the socio-economic and cultural divisions created by the two 'revolutions'. Modern party families appeared as the 'political translation' of social divisions in systems in which conflict is increasingly settled through vote. Cleavages in modern states can be classified according to two dimensions:

- **territorial**: at one end are territorialized conflicts that oppose peripheral regions to the centre of the state (its elites and bureaucracy); at the opposite end are non-territorial conflicts between groups within the very centre of the state;

- **functional**: at one end are conflicts about resources and their (re)distribution between social groups (e.g. economic interests); at the opposite end are conflicts on moral principles (e.g. religious values).

Cleavages and their political translation

Lipset and Rokkan distinguish four main cleavages created by the two 'revolutions' (see Table 13.1). These revolutions have each produced two main cleavages. Subsequent transformations have produced additional cleavages, namely the 'International Revolution' triggered by the Soviet Revolution of 1917, and the 'Post-Industrial Revolution' in the 1960s–1970s, which led to a value cleavage between generations and globalization since the late 1990s.

In the transformation of the nineteenth century socio-economic and cultural conflicts emerged simultaneously with democratic reforms: the creation of modern parliaments, free competitive elections, and the extension of civil and political rights. Conflicts

of that time were expressed in organizations that were typical of this new regime. Political parties are the product of the parliamentary and electoral game, and party systems reflect the social oppositions that characterize society when parties first appear. The fundamental features of today's party systems were set during the early phases of mobilization of, at first, restricted electorates (only very few people had the right to vote when liberals and conservative dominated in the nineteenth century) and, later, of 'massifying' electorates when socialist parties mobilized the vast working class that emerged from the Industrial Revolution.

The National Revolution produced two cleavages.

Centre–periphery cleavage

This conflict emerged when nation-states formed and integrated in the nineteenth century, and political power, administrative structures, and taxation systems were centralized. It also brought about—sometimes artificially—national languages and the adoption of a national religion. Italy in 1860–70, Germany in 1870, Switzerland in 1848 unified as nation-states. Others formed through independence (Ireland in 1922 from the United Kingdom, Norway in 1906 from Sweden, Finland in 1907/17 from the Russian Empire). The new national territories were heterogeneous with different ethnicities and languages, and administration was fragmented. Nationalist and liberal elites carried out state formation and nation-building, facing resistance from subject populations in peripheral territories in two aspects.

1. Administrative: peripheries were increasingly incorporated in the bureaucratic and fiscal system of the new state (for example, with the creation of provinces or departments through which the central state controlled the territory of and extracted taxes), implying a loss of autonomy for regions.

2. Cultural: religious, ethnic, and linguistic identities in peripheral regions were replaced by the allegiance to the new nation-state fostered through compulsory schooling, military conscription, and other means of national socialization. As the first Italian prime minister said in 1870 after Italy unified, 'we have made Italy, let us make Italians'. Nation-building took place also in old established states. In France in 1863, according to official

Table 13.1 Stein Rokkan's cleavages and their partisan expression

Revolution	Timing	Cleavage	Divisive issue(s)	Party families	Examples
National	Early 19th century (restricted electorates)	Centre–periphery	Liberals and conservatives face resistance to state/administrative centralization and cultural standardization (language/religion).	Regionalists, ethnic parties, linguistic parties, minorities.	Scottish National Party, Bloc Québécois, Partido Nacionalista Vasco.
		State–church	Conflict between liberal and secularized state against clerical and aristocratic privilege, and over religious education, over influence of church in politics, democratic institutions.	Conservative and religious parties (Catholic mainly), Christian democracy.	Austrian People's Party, Christian-Democratic Union, Swiss Catholic Party, Partido Popular.
Industrial	Late 19th century (suffrage extension)	Rural–urban	Conflict between industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy on trade policies: agrarian protectionism vs. industrial liberalism (free trade vs. tariffs).	Agrarian and peasant parties.	Finnish Centre Party, Australian Country Party, Polish Peasant People's Party.
		Workers–employers	Employers vs. the rising working class on job security, pensions, social protection, degree of state intervention in economy.	Workers' parties, socialists and social democrats, labour parties.	British Labour Party, Argentinian Socialist Party, Swedish Social-Democratic Workers' Party, Spanish PSOE.

(continued)

Table 13.1 (continued)

Revolution	Timing	Cleavage	Divisive issue(s)	Party familes	Examples
International	Early 20th century (mass electorates)	Communists–socialists	Division within the 'left' (workers' movement) over centrality of the Soviet Union Communist Party and its international leadership, and over reformism vs. revolution.	Communists.	Partito Comunista Italiano, Izquierda Unida, Parti Communiste Français, Japan's Communist Party.
Post-industrial	Late 20th century (demobilized electorates)	Materialist–post-materialist values	Generational cleavage over policy priorities: new values of civic rights, pacifism, feminism, environment.	Green and ecologist parties.	Die Grünen, Austrian Grünen/Grüne Alternative, Democrats '66, Women's Party.
		Open–closed societies	Globalization of the economy, opening up of labour markets, competition from cheap Asian labour, fiscal and monetary integration in Europe, and anti-Americanization of culture.	Protest parties, nationalist parties, extreme right-wing parties, neo-populist parties.	FPÖ, Front National, Danish Progress Party, Fifth Republic Movement (Hugo Chávez), Movement for Socialism (Evo Morales).

figures, only 22 per cent of the communes spoke French, all located around the Paris region (Weber 1976: 67).

Resistance to administrative centralization and cultural standardization was expressed in regionalist parties such as the Scottish National Party, the Swedish Party in Finland, the various Basque and Catalan parties in Spain, the parties of the German- and French-speaking minorities in Italy, the Bloc Québéquois in Canada, and so on, opposing nationalist/liberal parties.

State–church cleavage

Nation-states in the nineteenth century were not only centralized and homogeneous, but also based on the liberal ideology promoting secular institutions (no church influence), individualism, and democracy (sometimes republicanism). Liberal reforms and the abolition of estates (clergy, aristocracy, bourgeoisie, peasantry) of pre-modern parliaments, as well as individual vote and free elections, put an end to clerical and aristocratic privilege. Liberals were opposed by conservatives who refused democracy and defended the monarchy. To a large extent, this was a conflict between the rising industrial bourgeoisie and the corporate privilege of clergy and aristocracy.

The new liberal secular state fought against the long-established role of the church in education. Compulsory education by the state was used to 'forge' citizens with new (non-religious) values. Especially in Catholic countries this led to strong conflicts, whereas in Protestant countries—where churches belong to the state—the cleavage focused on moral principles. The church was also expropriated of land and buildings and, in Italy, it lost its temporal power and state (about a fourth of the Italian peninsula) when Italy unified from the previous state mosaic in 1860–70.

The conflict characterized the opposition to liberals against the conservatives, who believed in a return to the old pre-democratic regime. In some countries, Catholics took the place of conservatives, as in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany. In other countries, Catholics were banned through papal decree from participating in the political life of the liberal nation-state (by being candidates, voting, or creating a party). For this reason Catholic parties did not appear in Italy and France until the early 1920s. In fact,

it was not until after the breakdown of democracy and the inter-war fascist period that the Catholic Church fully accepted democracy. 'Christian democracy'—in Italy, France, Germany, Austria—is the family that appears from this evolution after the Second World War.

An interesting case is that of countries with mixed religious structures. In the Netherlands there was one unified Catholic party and a number of Reformed and Calvinist parties reflecting the fragmentation of Protestantism. Religious parties merged in 1972 into the Christian Democratic Appeal. In Germany, too, an inter-confessional party developed (the Christian Democratic Union). In Switzerland a major Catholic party emerged from the opposition to the Protestant Radicals/Liberals.

The Industrial Revolution produced two additional cleavages.

Rural–urban cleavage

The first was the contrast between landed rural interests (agriculture) and the rising class of industrial and trading entrepreneurs. This cleavage focused on trade policies, with agrarians favouring trade barriers for the protection of agricultural products (protectionism) and industrialists favouring free market and trade liberalization with low tariffs (liberalism). This cleavage was reinforced by cultural differences between countryside and urban centres where industries concentrated. Cultural openness/closure added to the division between primary and secondary sections of the economy.

As a general rule, weak sectors of the economy tend to be protectionist because of the threat of imports, whereas strong sectors favour the opening up of economic borders which favour exports (Rogowski 1989). Agriculture was threatened by technological progress and acceleration of productivity. The defence of agrarian interests—when peasant populations received the right to vote—was expressed from the end of the nineteenth century through agrarian parties (also called peasants' or farmers' parties). Large or small agrarian parties existed everywhere in Europe but were particularly strong in Eastern Europe and in Scandinavia. They were also common in Latin America.

The period after the Second World War witnessed both the decline and transformation of these parties. On the one hand, in most countries peasants' parties

disappeared. On the other, the large agrarian parties of the north and east abandoned the agrarian platform and changed into centre parties. The recent reawakening of this cleavage is most notable in Latin America where opposition to multi-national companies, defence of raw materials and resources, and the threat of globalization has led to protectionist policies (e.g. gas and oil nationalization in Bolivia and Venezuela). In the 1990s a number of upheavals of peasants took place in the Chapas region in Mexico. This cleavage is also present in the European Union where farmers' pressure groups lobby for protectionist trade agreements and for state subsidies.

Workers–employers cleavage

This is the cleavage between the industrial entrepreneurial bourgeoisie who started the Industrial Revolution and the working class that resulted from it. It is the opposition between 'capital' and 'labour' which, up to the present, characterizes the left–right alignment. In so far as this split is present in all countries, it is the most important one. Left–right is the most common ideological dimension along which parties are placed (even in the US where a socialist party never developed: see Box 13.1).

Industrialization had a very deep impact on Western societies. It radically changed the production mode, it caused unprecedented levels of geographical mobility through urbanization (the dislocation of people from countryside to urban industrial centres), it transformed family structures from extended to nuclear. Workers moved to new industrial centres where living conditions were extremely poor. They were therefore easy to mobilize through trade unions, with socialism providing a unifying ideology. With the extension of voting rights social democratic and labour parties gained parliamentary representation.

Socialist parties campaigned for labour protection against the capitalist economy. They promoted *social rights* and *welfare state* provisions on top of civil and political rights, and a substantial equalization of living conditions besides formal legal equality (Marshall 1950; Kitschelt 1994). These claims concerned under-age and female labour, wages, working hours, contract security, protection in the workplace and during periods of unemployment or illness, progressive taxation, abolition of heritage, accident insurance, pension schemes. Socialists favoured economic policies with a strong intervention of the state in steering the economy and public investments (later Keynesianism) against the liberal free-market ideology. They looked for state ownership of infrastructure (railways, energy), industries, and sometimes financial institutions.

Many socialist and labour parties originate from previously existing trade unions, the main organizations of the working class before universal suffrage. With restricted franchise most workers did not have the right to vote. The state was therefore controlled for most of the nineteenth century by liberals and conservatives who were able to impose their policies. Unions responded to a number of needs of the working class, increased solidarity and cooperation within it, and provided a wide range of 'services'. With enfranchisement, workers' parties developed as an 'electoral branch' of trade unions.

The Soviet Revolution of 1917 produced a cleavage within the workers' movement.

Communism–socialism cleavage

In the aftermath of the First World War and the Russian Revolution that led to the Soviet Union and the single-party regime controlled by the Communist Party, in all countries communist parties formed as splinters from the socialists. The main issue was the acceptance of the lead of the Soviet Communist Party in the international revolutionary movement and also ideological differences, namely whether a revolution would be necessary to take the proletariat to power, or if this goal would be achieved through electoral means.

As a reaction against the radicalization of the working class and its powerful action through a new type of mass party organization, fascist parties emerged in a number of European countries and, more or less directly, dominated government during the 1930s. These parties favoured the nation over class and 'internationalism', and private property against communism. Fascist parties were the product of the radicalization of the industrial upper bourgeoisie threatened by socialist policies, and of the aristocracy threatened by the redistribution of land and agrarian reforms.

BOX 13.1 Why is there no socialism in the US?

A number of classical studies have addressed this question. The main factors explaining the absence of a socialist ideology and workers' party in the the most advanced capitalist country are:

- *Open frontier*: geographical and social mobility gave American workers the possibility to move on in search of better conditions.

- *Party machines*: dominance of Democrats and Republicans in the nineteenth century made the rise of third parties difficult.

- *The free gift of the vote*: working-class white men all had the right to vote, were integrated in the political system, and had a say in government's actions.

- *Roast beef and apple pie*: the American working class was more affluent than the European and all socialist utopias come to grief with a satisfied working class.

- *No feudalism*: the absence of aristocracy in America made the working class very similar to the European bourgeoisie.

Read:

Lipset, S. M. (1977) 'Why No Socialism in the United States?', in S. Bialer and S. Sluzar (eds.), Sources of Contemporary Radicalism (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press), 131–49.

——and Marks, G. (2000) It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States (New York: Norton).

Sombart, W. (1976) Why is there No Socialism in the United States? (London: Macmillan), translated from the German 1906 text.

Finally, the 'Post-Industrial Revolution' (Bell 1973) created two more recent cleavages.

Materialism–post-materialism cleavage

A cleavage between generations over sets of socio-political values emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a consequence of the protracted period of international peace, economic wealth, and domestic security since the end of the Second World War (Inglehart 1977). The younger cohort developed 'post-materialist values' focused on tolerance, equality, participation, freedom of expression, respect for the environment, fair international trade, peace, Third World aid, as opposed to the 'materialist' values of the war generation centred around themes of national security, law and order, full employment, protection of private property, tradition, and authority (within the family and the state).

These new values were primarily expressed in a number of new social movements (see Chapter 16): the civil rights movement in the US in the 1950s, pacifism from the Vietnam War in the 1960s, feminism in the 1970s claiming equality in the labour market and family, environmentalism in the 1980s. In the 1990s, new anti-globalization movements developed against the globalization of the economy and the Americanization of culture (Della Porta *et al.* 1999). From a party politics perspective, however, there are only a few examples of a significant impact of these

'new left' movements, the main being green parties (Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 2002). A more pervasive impact of the Post-Industrial Revolution is on the 'new right'.

The globalization cleavage

Economic globalization has created a further post-industrial cleavage between sectors of the economy that profit from the blurring of economic boundaries, and sectors that are negatively affected by the competition from new markets and cheap labour from the East and Asia. 'Losers' in globalization and—in the European Union—integration (Betz 1994) have reinforced support for neo-populist protest parties who favour trade barriers to protect local manufacture and 'locals-first' policies in the labour market. These groups are the small and medium enterprises, unskilled workers, craftsmen, and agricultural producers.

The economic defensive attitude of these groups is reinforced by cultural, anti-immigration, and xenophobic prejudice stressing religious and national values against multi-ethnic society and cosmopolitanism. Many of these parties rely upon an extreme right-wing heritage, such as the Austrian Liberal Party, the French and Belgian National Fronts, the Italian National Alliance (Kitschelt 1995). Others are more sporadic parties, such as the One-Nation Party in Australia. In Latin America neo-populist

tendencies have a left-wing 'Bolivarian' character as the movements led by Morales in Paraguay and Chavez in Venezuela (Burgess and Levitsky 2003). Neo-populism is also a reaction to changing security conditions which—since the terrorist attacks in the early 2000s—have created a resurgence of materialist values, the need for internal police and external control.

Variations in cleavage constellations

Cleavage constellations change through space (from country to country) and over time.

Space

Not all cleavages exist in all countries. There is a variety of constellations, and thus of party systems. Why do some cleavages exist in specific countries while not in others? It is difficult to summarize the explicative part of the Lipset–Rokkan's model here. Whereas the left–right cleavage exists everywhere and is a source of similarity, the state–church cleavage developed especially in Catholic countries in Europe and Latin America. The rural–urban cleavage was strong in regions with small farming and independent units, where farmers were not under the control of landlords. The centre–periphery cleavage appears where there are ethno-linguistic minorities.

Country-specific cleavage constellations are therefore determined by:

- differences in objective factors such as diverse social structures: multiple ethnicities or religious groups, structure of the peasantry, class relations;

- the extent to which socio-economic and cultural divisions have been politicized by parties, that is, by the action of elites (Rose 1974; Lijphart 1968*b*);

- the relationship between cleavages: their existence and strength can prevent the development of new ones (agrarian claims have been incorporated by Catholic parties or by conservative parties where, like in England, agriculture had been commercialized early).

Generally, two types of constellations are distinguished: (1) **homogeneous constellations** where there is one predominant cleavage, namely the left–right cleavage on the distribution of resources between classes (for example, Britain), and

(2) **heterogeneous constellations** in which various cleavages—economic, ethno-linguistic, religious, territorial—overlap or cut across one other in plural democracies such as Belgium, Canada, India, the Netherlands, Switzerland (Lijphart 1984).

Time

Lipset and Rokkan do not take into account developments that took place after the 1920s as, over time, cleavage constellations and party systems have remained extraordinarily stable. Up to the present even party labels have not changed (liberal, socialist, conservative), as a sort of political *imprint* that crystallized. Lipset and Rokkan have formulated the so-called freezing hypothesis:

> [T]he party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s … [T]he party alternatives, and in remarkably many cases, the party organizations, are older than the majorities of the national electorates. (1967: 50; italics omitted)

Today's party systems reflect the original conflicts from which they emerged (see Box: Party families, in the Online Resource Centre) in spite of a decline in cleavage politics with the blurring of social divisions (Franklin 1992). In the 1920s the full mobilization of the electoral market through universal suffrage and PR caused its saturation. With the extension of suffrage citizens were incorporated in the political system. Voters acquired strong political identities through partisan identification and socialization processes that proved stable over time. As in all markets, in the electoral market too there are entry barriers. Little room was left for new parties. Existing parties were thus able to maintain their control over electorates through the generations.

Empirical research has confirmed the basic stability of electoral patterns over time, rejecting the thesis of increasing *dealignment and realignment* of Western electorates (Dalton *et al.* 1985). Rose and Urwin (1970) and, in a long-term perspective, Bartolini and Mair (1990) have analysed trends of electoral volatility (the change of votes from one election to the next) from 1885 to 1985. First, they found that general levels of volatility are stable supporting the freezing hypothesis. Second, they found that volatility between left and right declines, confirming the stabilizing of ideological identities. Third, however, they found that volatility within the left

and within the right increases which means that, whereas left and right identities persist, the identification with a specific party declines (see also Kriesi 1998). Therefore, in spite of secularization and post-industrial economies—and in spite of some degree of change within Western electorates—a dramatic realignment along new cleavages does not seem to have taken place, maintaining the validity of the freezing hypothesis.

The morphology of party systems

An important element of the competitive interaction between parties is the shape of party systems (sometimes called format). The two main elements of the morphology of party systems are: (1) the *number* of competing units, that is, parties, and (2) the *size* of these units. How many are the players and how strong are they? The number and strength of actors can be observed at two levels: the **votes** parties get in elections and the **seats** in parliament. A 'variable' that must be considered is therefore the electoral system through which votes are translated into parliamentary seats.

It is important to distinguish *types* of party systems. Two types of party systems are not considered in this section because they do not fulfil the democratic conditions that allow competition:

1. Single-party systems in which one party only is legal: these are the totalitarian and authoritarian experiences of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, the Nationalist-Socialist Party in Germany in the 1930s, or the Baathist Party in Iraq until 1993 and in Syria.

2. Hegemonic-party systems in which other parties are legal but are 'satellites', under the strict control of the hegemonic party with whom they cannot compete to control government: these are also totalitarian or authoritarian systems existing in Egypt or Algeria today, and in many former communist regimes before 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe.

The other four types are: (1) dominant-party system, (2) two-party system, (3) multi-party system, and (4) bipolar system.

Dominant-party systems

Dominant-party systems are characterized by one very large party that dominates all others with a *large majority* (well above the absolute majority of 50 per cent of parliamentary seats) over *protracted periods of time* (several decades). In these systems all parties are legal and allowed to compete in free elections with universal suffrage to challenge the dominant party. However, no other party receives enough votes to come close to 50 per cent. Electors vote massively for the dominant party. There is therefore no alternation in power and the dominant party does not need to build coalitions to form a government. In

dominant-party systems it is in fact irrelevant how many other parties exist.

An example of a dominant-party system is India between 1947 and 1975. After Independence and the end of colonial rule the Congress Party received electoral support above 50 per cent and was able to rule unchallenged until 1975–77 when the 'state of emergency' was declared. Over the long period of uncontested rule forms of patronage developed and in 1977 the Congress Party was eventually defeated. A more recent example of a dominant-party system is South Africa since the end of apartheid in the early 1990s. The African National Congress, initially led by Nelson Mandela, has been able to secure the absolute majority of the votes because of the role it had in enfranchising the black population. In Europe a case of a dominant-party system is Sweden. The Social Democratic Workers' Party formed almost all governments from 1945 until 1998, with around 45 per cent of the votes on average. Only in a few cases did it have to form a minority government or rely on small coalition partners such as the formerly communist Left Party. In Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party was in power from the revolution of 1917 until the 2000 election when it was defeated for the first time.

Between 1946 and 1994 the Italian Christian Democracy was uninterrupted in power. However, only until 1953 did this party receive an absolute majority of the seats and was able to form a single-party government. After 1953 it relied on small coalition partners. A similar case is the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan between 1953 and 1993. Factions developed within both parties and, because of the lack of alternation, they became less responsive to the demands from the electorate with forms of patronage (Shiratori 2004: 105).

Two-party systems

A two-party system is one in which two fairly equally balanced large parties dominate the party system and alternate in power. The two parties have comparable sizes and equal chances of winning elections. Even a small amount of votes changing from one party to the other (electoral swing) can cause a change of majority. Alternation in power is therefore frequent. These are very competitive systems. Because both parties are large, the winning party is likely to receive

the absolute majority of seats and form single-party governments without the need for partners.

The features of two-party systems are those listed in Table 13.2. The two large parties have similar sizes around 35–45 per cent of the votes each, that plurality electoral systems transform in absolute majorities of seats for the largest party. This does not mean that these are the only parties. A number of other smaller parties compete in the elections. However, they are marginal as they are not necessary to form a government. In the United Kingdom, the Liberal Democratic Party, Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru (the Welsh national party), and various parties in Ulster compete but do not have a strong impact on the party system.

In two-party systems single-party governments tend to alternate from one legislature to the next. This is, to a large extent, an effect of plurality electoral systems. Because the threshold in first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems is very high, the two main parties have a majoritarian vocation. Parties propose policies and programmes that are acceptable to a large part of society. Plurality leads to ideological moderation and similarity of programmes. In turn, this similarity makes it easier for voters to switch from one party to the other and creates alternation.

There are not many cases of two-party systems. These systems are typical of the Anglo-Saxon world where—unlike continental Europe where around the First World War all countries changed from majoritarian to PR electoral systems—plurality in single-member districts has been maintained. In addition, the trend seems to be declining. Only the US provides today a 'perfect' example of a two-party system where Republicans and Democrats have dominated since 1860.[1] Australia maintains a strong two-party system with the Australian Labour Party and the Liberals. In Great Britain the Conservatives and the Labour Party have been increasingly challenged by 'third' parties like the Liberal Democratic Party. Other examples include Costa Rica (National Liberation Party and Citizens' Action Party) and Malta (where the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party receive together close to 100 per cent of the votes). In Canada Conservatives and Liberals dominated until 1993 (with a strong New Democratic Party), since when the Bloc Québécois and the Reform Party have been increasing their support.

Table 13.2 Types of party systems in democracies

Type of party system	Features	Cases
Dominant-party	One large party with more than absolute majority of votes and seats. No other party approaching 50%. No alternation. One-party government.	India until 1975, Japan between 1955 and 1993, Mexico until 2000, South Africa since 1994.
Two-party	Two large parties sharing together around 80% of votes and seats. Balanced (35–45% each) with one of the two reaching 50% of seats. Alternation between parties. One-party government.	Austria, Britain, Costa Rica, Malta, New Zealand until 1998, Spain, South Africa until 1989, US.
Multi-party	Several or many parties, no one approaching 50% of votes and seats. Parties of different sizes. Parties run for elections individually and form coalitions after elections. Alternation through coalition changes. Coalition government.	Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany until 1989, Hungary, Italy before 1994, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey.
Bipolar	Two large coalitions composed of several parties sharing together around 80% of votes and seats. Coalitions are balanced (40–50% each). Coalitions are stable over time and run elections as electoral alliances. Alternation between coalitions. Coalition government.	France in the Fifth Republic, Germany since 1990, Italy since 1994, Portugal.

Two-party systems can be found also in countries with PR electoral systems. Austria since the Second World War has been dominated by two parties—the Austrian People's Party and Austrian Socialist Party—receiving around 40 per cent of the votes and seats each, and able to form single-party governments in many legislatures. In addition, alternation has taken place frequently. After the transition from Franco's regime to democracy in 1977, the party system of Spain moved towards a two-party system. In spite of many (but small) regionalist parties, the party system in Spain presents two large parties of a similar size: the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and the People's Party.

For years Germany came close to a two-party system and was named a 'two-and-a-half party system' with two large parties collecting together more than 80 per cent of the votes (the Christian-Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party) and a smaller Liberal Party party (around 5 per cent) with a pivotal position and able to decide—through alliance—which of the larger parties would be in charge of government. With the rise of the Greens the system turned towards a bipolar system. Israel has used a

PR electoral system since the creation of the state in 1948. Yet until the end of the 1990s the system was structured around two main parties: the Likud and the Labour Party.

Multi-party systems

Multi-party systems are the most frequent type of party system. In the majority of countries multi-party systems exist. This is also the most complex type of party system. In a multi-party system the number of parties ranges from three to double-digit figures. Three to five parties exist in Canada, Ireland, Japan, and Norway. Party systems in which the number of parties approaches ten (or even more) are Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. None of the parties in a multi-party system is majoritarian (with 50 per cent of the votes or seats). Furthermore, the parties that compose a multi-party system are of different sizes: some are large (say, 30 per cent of the votes) some small (less than 5 per cent).

Because in multi-party systems no single party has an overall majority the result is that parties must form coalitions in order to support a government. In parliamentary systems (see Chapters 5 and 7) the vote of confidence requires a 50 per cent majority of seats. Parties run individually in elections (contrary to bipolar systems) and governmental coalitions are negotiated after the results are in.

Unlike plurality in single-member constituencies, PR does not hinder small parties from addressing small segments of the electorate, sometimes through extreme ideologies and programmes. PR therefore does not lead to ideological moderation which, in turn, makes it more difficult for voters to switch from one party to the other and cause a government change. In addition, PR does not provide the 'amplification' effect of electoral swings as does plurality. As a consequence, government change rarely takes place through electoral change but rather by swaps of coalition partners.

While multi-party systems are considered to represent better socio-political pluralism in countries with religious, regional, and ethno-linguistic cleavages, their negative aspects have been at the forefront

since the Second World War. Multi-party systems were held responsible for instability, frequent coalition 'crises', and poor responsiveness, with no single party clearly accountable. Classical political scientists such as Finer (1932), Hermens (1941), Duverger (1954), and Almond (1956) blamed PR and multi-party systems for the lack of ideological moderation in the 1920s and 1930s which eventually led to the breakdown of democracy in most continental European countries.

Positive aspects of PR and multi-party systems have been stressed since analysis in the 1960s and 1970s including small countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries. Studies on 'consensus democracies' showed that multi-party systems are stable, functioning, and peaceful. In plural societies PR and multi-party systems are the only viable ways to involve minorities in decision-making processes and reach consensus.[2] As Chapter 5 shows, consociational or consensus democracies represent a different model of democracy from the majoritarian or 'Westminster' model. Both have advantages and disadvantages (see Box 13.2).

The way in which multi-party systems function largely depends on the degree to which parties are ideologically polarized. Sartori (1976) has distinguished two main types of multi-party systems.

Moderate multi-party systems

The logic is similar to that of two-party systems. First, the number of parties is limited (below five) and, second, the direction of the competition is centripetal, that is, the main parties tend to converge toward the centre of the left–right scale to attract the support of the moderate electorate. At the centre are one or more small parties with whom the two big ones on either side may form a coalition. The role of these small parties is 'pivotal' in that they can decide whether the coalition is going to be centre-left or centre-right. The ideological distance between parties is limited so that all coalitions are possible. This type of party system is named 'moderate' because of the absence of extreme parties.[3]

BOX 13.2 A normative debate: advantages and disadvantages of party systems

Two-party systems	Multi-party systems
Historically positive connotation	*Historically negative connotation*
Two-party systems are the main cases that resisted the breakdown of democracy between First and Second World Wars: Britain and US.	After the First World War in Italy, Weimar Germany, Spanish Second Republic, and in the French Fourth Republic (1946–56) instability led to crisis of democracy.
Effective	*Ineffective*
Produces governments immediately after elections. Governments are stable because they are formed by a single party.	Governments take long to form after elections because of negotiations between parties. Coalitions lead to unstable governments.
Accountable	*Non-accountable*
Because there is only one party in government responsibility is clearly identifiable by the electorate.	Because governments are formed by many parties responsibility is obfuscated.
Alternation	*No alternation*
Two main parties alternate in power. Voters influence directly the formation of goverment: a small shift can cause government change.	Coalition negotiations are out of the reach of voters' influence and shift of votes are not necessarily followed by changes of government.
Non-representative	*Representative*
FPTP under-represents minorities and over-represents large mainstream parties of left–right.	PR fairly represents minorities in societies with ethno-linguistic and religious minorities.
Moderate politics	*Extreme politics*
All main parties have a chance to govern and thus avoid extreme claims. Need to gather votes from large moderate segments of the electorate.	Multi-party systems allow representation of extreme (anti-system) parties. Some do not have any government prospect and do not hesitate to radicalize their claims.
Discontinuity	*Continuity*
Decisions are made by majority with a clear strategy but there can be discontinuity between subsequent goverments. Legislation is often reversed.	Decisions are made by consensus through consultation. More difficult to find a clear strategy but more continuity in legislation.

Polarized multi-party systems

There are three main features in polarized systems.

1. **Polarization.** There is a large ideological distance between parties with a strong dose of dogmatic radicalism. Extreme *anti-system parties* aim not only to change government but also the *system of* government (the regime). These parties do not

share the principles of the political system and aim to change its institutions (Capoccia 2002). Given the ideological distance between parties not all coalitions are viable. Some parties are continuously excluded. Such parties know they are in constant opposition, become irresponsible, and radicalize their discourse with promises they cannot maintain (and know that they will never be called to put into practice).

2. **An occupied centre.** There is one main party placed at the centre of the left–right axis which represents the 'system' against which extreme anti-system parties are opposed. The centre party is always in power and becomes also irresponsible and unaccountable. This party is not punished electorally because of the absence of viable alternatives.

3. **Centrifugal competition.** The occupation of the centre discourages a centripetal move on the part of other parties because, ideologically, the centre is already occupied. As a consequence, there is divergence. The competition is centrifugal and accentuated by a bilateral opposition on both sides of the centre.

Examples of polarized multi-party systems are the Weimar Republic in Germany, from 1919 until 1933, and Italy between 1946 and 1992. Italy in particular has often been taken as an ideal type. A strong centre party, Christian Democracy, was opposed on both sides by unreformed anti-system parties: the Italian Communist Party and Italian Social Movement (a post-fascist party). Coalitions between Christian Democracy and either anti-system parties were not viable and Christian Democracy ruled uninterrupted until 1992, although the Communists had a large share of votes (35 per cent).

Bipolar systems

Bipolar party systems combine elements of both multi- and two-party systems. As in multi-party systems there are many parties, none of which has a majority. And, again, coalition governments are the rule. However, coalitions—rather than single parties—are the important players. These form before elections and run as electoral alliances. They remain stable over time. There are usually two large ones of evenly balanced size alternating in power. Competition therefore resembles that of two-party systems.

In France left and right have alternated in power since 1958.[4] The left includes Socialists, Radicals, Communists, and Greens, whereas the right includes Gaullists and Liberals (they merged in 2003 as the Union for a Popular Movement). In Italy since 1994

the centre-left coalition is composed of Social Democrats, Communists, Greens, and Catholics, whereas the centre-right coalition is of Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the Northern League, a Catholic and the post-fascist party. The coalitions have alternated in power in 1996, 2001, and 2006. In Germany, finally, two coalitions oppose each other: Social Democrats and Greens on the one hand, Christian-Democratic Union, Christian-Social Union, and Liberals on the other.

The number of parties

So the number of parties is important, but how, exactly, should parties be *counted*? If all parties that run in an election are counted (or even only those that get some votes) their number would be extremely large and useless in building a typology. In every election there are dozens of parties and candidates that do not get any votes or very few. It is therefore necessary to have reasonable rules to decide whether a party is 'relevant' or not, and counted or not. There are two ways to count parties: (1) *numerical* with indices based on the *size* of parties; (2) *qualitative* with rules based on the *role* of parties in the system.

Numerical rules

These rules represent quantitative attempts to classify party systems on the basis of the number and size of parties that compose them. Various indices have been devised to summarize this basic information: are there many small parties (a *fragmented* party system) or few large parties (a *concentrated* party system)?

The most straightforward way of counting is obviously done by deciding to include all parties above a given threshold (say, 1 per cent). This method, however, has many problems, namely parties with 2 and 49 per cent are counted one-to-one. Similar methods include Rokkan's method (1968) to classify party systems through an index based on the distance of the largest party from the 50 per cent absolute majority, the distance of the second party from the first, and so on. Lijphart (1968b) devised an index based on the sum of parties' percentages in decreasing order until 50 per cent is reached: the larger the number of parties needed to reach the absolute majority, the more fragmented the party system.

COUNTRY PROFILE Italy

Italian Republic (*Repubblica Italiana*)

State formation

The Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861; Italy was finally unified in 1870. The monarchy was abolished by a popular referendum in 1946.
Constitution 1947, effective 1 January 1948; amended many times.

Form of government

Parliamentary republic.
Head of state President elected by an electoral college consisting of both houses of Parliament and 58 regional representatives, term of 7 years (no term limit).
Head of government President of the Council of Ministers, appointed by the President and confirmed by Parliament.
Cabinet Council of Ministers, nominated by the Prime Minister and approved by the President.
Administrative subdivisions 15 regions and 5 autonomous regions.

Legal system

Civil law system; judicial review under certain conditions in Constitutional Court.

Legislature

Bicameral Parliament.
Lower house Chamber of Deputies (*Camera dei Deputati*): 630 seats, the winning national coalition receiving 54 per cent of them; term of 5 years.

Upper house Senate (*Senato*): 315 seats, the winning coalition in each region receiving 55 per cent of that region's seats.

Electoral system (lower house)

Proportional representation.
Formula If the political coalition or party with the highest number of votes fails to win 340 seats, it is given 'bonus' seats to meet the 340-seat requirement. The 277 remaining seats are distributed among the other coalitions or lists using the whole number quotient and highest remainders method.
Constituencies 26 multi-member constituencies for 617 seats, 1 single-member constituency and 1 multi-member constituency for Italians abroad.
Barrier clause 10 per cent nation-wide for a coalition, 2 per cent for a party within a coalition, 4 per cent for an independent party; for language minority lists, 20 per cent of the votes cast in their constituency. A list obtaining the highest number of votes among all lists and which fails to win 2 per cent of the votes cast is also entitled to a seat.
Suffrage Universal, 18 years (25 in senatorial elections).

Direct democracy

A consultative referendum can be called by Parliament, and an abrogative referendum (with a quorum of participation of 50 per cent) can be called by 500,000 citizens or 5 Regional Councils. An optional constitutional referendum has never been practised.

Party system Results of the 2006 legislative elections (Chamber of Deputies):

Electorate:	47,160,264	100.0%
Voters:	39,425,981	83.6%

Party		Valid votes	%	Seats
	Olive Tree	11,928,362	31.2	220
	Communist Refoundation	2,229,604	5.8	41
	Rose in the Feast	991,049	2.6	18
The Union	Italy of Values	877,159	2.3	16
	Party of Italian Communists	884,912	2.3	16
	Federation of the Greens	783,944	2.1	15
	Populars (UDEUR)	534,553	1.4	10
	South Tyrolean People's Party	182,703	0.5	4
	Autonomy (Vallée d'Aoste)	34,167	0.1	1
	Others	590,533	1.5	0
	Total 'The Union'	19,036,986	49.8	348

Party		Valid votes	%	Seats
House of Freedom	Go Italy	9,045,384	23.7	137
	National Alliance	4,706,654	12.3	71
	Union of Christian and Centre Democrats	2,582,233	6.8	39
	Northern League	1,749,632	4.6	26
	Christian Democracy-New Socialists	285,744	0.7	4
	Others	626,050	1.6	0
	Total 'House of Freedom'	18,995,697	49.7	281
Others		197,381	0.5	1
Total		38,230,064	100.0	630

Source: Ministry of Interior.

The most used indices are Rae's fractionalization index (Rae 1971) and the effective number of parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). The fractionalization index (F) varies from 0 (full concentration of seats or votes in one party) to 1 (total fragmentation with each seat or vote going to a different party). The effective number of parties (E) indicates the number of parties in a system and does not have an upper limit.

The two formulas are the following:

$$F = 1 - \Sigma p_i^2 \qquad E = 1/\Sigma p_i^2$$

where p is the percentage of votes or seats for party i and Σ represents the sum for all parties. The percentages for all parties are squared to weight parties through their size. If there are two parties A and B, receiving each 50 per cent of the seats, one calculates first the square for party A $(.50 \times .50 = .25)$ and for party B $(.50 \times .50 = .25)$ and then adds them together $(.25 + .25 = .50)$. Thus:

$$F = 1 - .50 = .50 \qquad E = 1/.50 = 2$$

In this example, F is exactly between 0 and 1 (.50) and E counts perfectly that there are two parties only. In the real world, the distribution of power among parties is obviously more complex.

Table 13.3 lists the effective number of parties (based on seat distributions) in a number of countries for recent elections.[5] As one can see there is a great variation between countries. The less fragmented countries are those using plurality/majoritarian or transferable vote systems in single-member districts (Australia, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Malta, the US), whereas the most fragmented countries are those with PR and many religious and ethno-linguistic parties (such as Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland).

Table 13.3 Rae's parliamentary fractionalization index (F), effective number of parliamentary parties (E), and Gallagher's index of disproportionality (LSq)

Country	Election	F	E	LSq
Australia	2004	.60	2.4	8.7
Austria	2002	.65	2.9	1.6
Argentina	2005	.81	5.3	13.5
Belgium	2003	.86	7.0	5.9
Brazil	2002	.88	8.5	3.7
Canada	2006	.69	3.2	8.7
Chile	2005	.82	5.6	6.8
Czech Republic	2006	.68	3.1	6.3
Finland	2003	.80	4.9	3.5
France	2002	.55	2.2	22.2

(continued)

Table 13.3 (continued)

Country	Election	F	E	LSq
Germany	2005	.75	4.1	3.3
Greece	2004	.54	2.2	7.4
Hungary	2006	.58	2.4	4.4
India	2004	.86	7.1	3.9
Ireland	2002	.70	3.3	6.6
Israel	2006	.87	7.8	3.2
Italy	2006	.81	5.1	3.5
Japan	2005	.56	2.3	19.0
Malta	2003	.50	2.0	1.8
Mexico	2006	.67	3.0	6.4
Netherlands	2003	.79	4.8	1.4
New Zealand	2005	.66	3.0	1.4
Norway	2005	.78	4.6	2.9
Poland	2005	.77	4.3	9.8
Portugal	2005	.61	2.6	5.9
Russia	2003	.70	3.4	10.7
Spain	2004	.58	2.4	7.3
Sweden	2002	.76	4.2	2.5
Switzerland	2003	.80	5.0	2.4
Turkey	2002	.46	1.9	27.4
United Kingdom	2005	.59	2.5	16.8
United States	2004	.50	2.0	3.9
Mean		.69	3.9	7.3

Notes: For calculations parties rather than alliances have been considered (France, Chile, Italy). Seat figures always based on final allocation. For mixed electoral systems, PR votes have been taken (Japan, Mexico, Hungary). For Germany *Zweitstimmen* have been used and in France first-ballot figures for votes. As a general rule for including parties in the calculation, all parties polling at least 1%, or securing at least one seat, have been taken into account. *Source:* Author's calculations based on results in 'Country Profiles' (see also the Online Resource Centre).

Qualitative rules

In many cases it is not appropriate to consider numerical criteria only to decide whether or not a party is relevant. Often small parties—that quantitative rules would not count—have far-reaching consequences for coalitions, influencing important decisions, mobilizing people in demonstrations, and so on. In many cases, small parties are much more important than their sheer size would suggest. Sartori (1976) has developed two criteria—or rules—to decide which parties really 'count' and should be 'counted':

1. **Coalition potential:** a small party is irrelevant if over a period of time it is not necessary for any type of governmental coalition. On the contrary, a party must be counted if, disregarding its size, it is pivotal and determines whether or not a coalition is going to exist and which.

2. **Blackmail potential:** a small party must be considered relevant when it is able to exercise pressure on governmental decisions through threats or veto power and by doing so alter the direction of competition.

The influence of electoral laws on the format of party systems

Given the impact of party system fragmentation on government stability, accountability, and responsiveness, as well as on the type of consensus vs. majoritarian decision-making, a large amount of comparative politics has been concerned with establishing the causes for varying numbers of parties and their size. Two sets of causes have been identified: (1) the electoral system and (2) the number of cleavages in the society.

Electoral systems

Electoral systems are mechanisms for the translation of votes into parliamentary seats. Chapter 10 shows that there are two main 'families' of electoral systems: (1) majoritarian systems in single-member constituencies; (2) PR systems in multi-member constituencies. The first and best-known formulation of the causal relationship between electoral and party systems is Duverger's Laws from his classic book *Les Partis Politiques* (1951, translated in 1954). As can

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BOX 13.3 The influence of electoral systems on party systems

Duverger's 'laws' (1954)

First Law

'The majority [plurality] single-ballot system tends to party dualism'.

Second Law

'The second ballot [majority] system or proportional representation tend to multipartyism'.

Mechanical effects

Electoral systems with high thresholds of representation (first-past-the-post) exclude small parties from parliament whereas PR allows small parties to win seats.

Psychological effects

Under plurality systems voters vote strategically avoiding small parties; parties have an incentive to merge to pass high thresholds of representation; under PR voters vote sincerely for small parties which are not penalized and have no incentive to merge.

Rae/Riker's 'proposition' (1971, 1982)

'Plurality formulae are always associated with two-party competition exept where strong local minority parties exist'.

Sartori's 'tendency laws' (1986)

Law 1

'Given systemic structuring and cross-constituency dispersion (as joint necessary conditions), plurality systems cause (are a sufficient condition of) a two-party format'.

Law 2

'PR formulas facilitate multipartyism and are, conversely, hardly conducive to two-partyism'.

Cox's 'coordination argument' (1997)

'Why... would the same two parties necessarily compete in all districts [cross-constituency dispersion or nationalization]?' Local candidates link together because of the need to coordinate in order to compete more effectively for (1) seats to implement policies, (2) support presidential candidates, (3) elect the prime minister, (4) obtain more upper-tier seats, and (5) obtain more campain finances.

'If a system (1) elects legislators by plurality rule in single-member districts; (2) elects its chief executive by something like nationwide plurality rule; and (3) hold executive and legislative elections concurrently, then it will tend to... have a national two-party or one-party-dominant system'.

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be seen in Box 13.3, the two laws are simple: plurality or majoritarian electoral systems favour two-party systems whereas PR leads to multi-party systems. This causal relationship between electoral and party systems is due to both mechanical and psychological effects.

Mechanical effects refer to the formula used to translate votes into seats. In single-member constituencies to win the one seat is difficult. One party with the most votes gets the single seat. The second, third, fourth, and so on, do not get any seat (first-past-the-post). If in a constituency Party A receives 29.4 per cent of votes, Party B 29.3 per cent, and all other parties even less, only Party A is represented (winner-takes-all). This means that the threshold is high and all parties but the first one are eliminated. With PR, on the contrary, in each multi-member constituency many seats are allocated in proportion to the votes. If Party A receives 32.4 per cent of votes, it has a right—more or less—to a third of the seats allocated in that constituency. Small parties are not

excluded (a party with 5 per cent of votes gets roughly 5 per cent of seats) and the overall number of parties that end up in parliament is much higher than under single-member plurality systems.

Psychological effects refer to the awareness of voters and parties of mechanical effects:

1. On the demand side (voters), in electoral systems in which only large parties have a chance to win seats, voters tend to vote strategically (not necessarily their first party preference) to avoid wasting votes on small parties with no chance of getting seats. Converging votes on large parties reduces their overall number. On the contrary, with PR in which small parties can win seats, voters vote sincerely (their first preference) because their vote is not wasted. This increases the vote for small parties and thus their overall number.

2. On the supply side (parties), with plurality small parties have an incentive to merge with others to increase their chances to pass the threshold,

reducing the number of parties. On the contrary, with PR parties have no incentive to merge: they can survive on their own and small splinter parties are not penalized. This increases the overall number of parties.

Rae (1971), Riker (1982), and Sartori (1986) have questioned these laws by asking whether the reductive effect of majoritarian electoral systems works at *the constituency level or at the national level*. At the constituency level the high threshold reduces the number of parties. But does this always translate into a reduction at the national level?

Suppose a parliament has 100 seats from 100 single-member constituencies. If in each constituency a different party wins the seat, we would end up with a fragmented parliament. The question thus is: under which conditions does the reductive effect of FPTP at the constituency level, also reduce the number of parties at the national level? The answer is: majoritarian systems produce two-party systems at the national level only if parties are 'nationalized', i.e. receive homogeneous support in all constituencies (see Cox in Box 13.3). If there are parties with territorially concentrated support, this leads to fragmentation in the national party system. Under plurality, a nationally small party can be strong in specific regions and thus win seats and create fragmentation in the national parliament. If many parties are territorially concentrated the national fragmentation is larger.

An example is Italy. In 1994 a new, mostly plurality, electoral law in single-member districts was introduced with the aim of reducing party-system fragmentation. Yet this did not happen. Many of the parties have regional strongholds such as the Northern League in the north, the Catholics in the north-east, the Left Democrats in the centre, and the post-fascist party National Alliance in the south. In addition, many small parties base their support on local clienteles.

In most countries party systems nationalized with the beginning of competitive elections in the mid-nineteenth century, so the support parties receive is increasingly homogeneous across regions and territorialized support has declined. This can be observed in Europe, North America, but also in India and

Latin America (Caramani 2004; Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Jones and Mainwaring 2003) due to the development of national party organizations and increasing candidate coordination (Cox 1997). Where plurality systems exist, therefore, the reduction of the number of parties did take place. Plurality systems *distort* party votes when they translate them into seats:

- they *over*-represent large parties (the share of seats for big parties is larger than their share of votes);
- they *under*-represent small parties.

How can we measure the empirical level of (dis)proportionality between votes and seats? Various indices have been devised: the most used one is the Least Square index of disproportionality or LSq (Gallagher 1991; Gallagher and Mitchell 2005: appendix B):

$$LSq = \sqrt{1/2\Sigma(v_i - s_i)^2}$$

where v is the percentage of votes for party i, s is the percentage of seats for party I, and Σ represents the sum for all parties. This index varies between 0 (full proportionality) and 100 (total disproportionality). Take, as an example, the results of the 2005 New Zealand election in Table 13.4. If the total of the squared differences is halved (3.9/2 = 1.9) and then the square root is taken, the result is 1.4, that is, an almost perfect proportionality between votes and seats.

In the last column of Table 13.3 values of the LSq index are given. In countries with plurality systems (Canada, Great Britain, India) there is a stronger distortion of the popular vote. The same applies for other systems based on single-member constituencies such as France with a two-ballot majoritarian system. On the contrary, disproportionality is lower for countries with PR systems.

The number of parties in parliament is always smaller than the number of parties that run for elections. All electoral systems—also PR systems—have a reductive effect on the number of parties. Differences among PR systems are large. Spain's system is more disproportional than others. This is because in Spain the **magnitude of constituencies** is small. The magnitude refers to the number

Table 13.4 Results of the 2005 New Zealand election and Gallagher's LSq index of disproportionality

Party	Votes (%)	Seats (N)	Seats (%)	Difference (% seats– % votes)	Squared
Labour Party	41.1	50	41.3	0.2	0.0
National Party	39.1	48	39.7	0.6	0.3
New Zealand First	5.7	7	5.8	0.1	0.0
Green Party	5.3	6	5.0	−0.3	0.1
Māori Party	2.1	4	3.3	1.2	1.4
United Future	2.7	3	2.5	−0.2	0.1
ACT New Zealand	1.5	2	1.7	0.2	0.0
J A's Progressive	1.2	1	0.8	−0.4	0.1
Others	1.3	0	0.0	−1.3	1.7
Total	100.0	121	100.0		3.9

Note: Votes refer to party lists votes whereas seats include both party list seats and electorate seats.

of seats allocated in a given constituency. The larger the magnitude, the higher the proportionality between votes and seats. If the magnitude is small, the few seats go to few parties and are harder for small parties to win. Some PR systems artificially increase the number of seats (those using the Droop quota or the Imperiali quota) in order to make it easier for small parties to get represented. In these systems the correspondence between votes and seats is greater.[6]

Cleavages

Large numbers of parties are also the result of social and cultural pluralism. The presence of numerous cleavages leads to more parties than in culturally homogeneous countries. PR electoral systems were introduced in plural societies to incorporate minorities in the representation circuit and in decision-making processes. Plurality systems would have excluded large segments of the society which then—dangerously—may have looked for other (non-institutional) channels of action. As a recent article by Colomer (2005) argues, PR electoral systems are the result of an already existing political fragmentation, and not the other way round.

Finally, radical changes in the morphology of party systems due to new electoral systems are rare. Examples are the change from majoritarian to proportional as in New Zealand in 1998 (leading to an increase in the number of parties), or the other way round in France with the 1958 new constitution (leading to a bipolar structure). When in 1986 PR was reintroduced for one election only, small parties such as the National Front received many more seats than under the majoritarian system and thus caused a greater party fragmentation.

The dynamics of party systems

In the wake of Joseph Schumpeter's (1943) definition of democracy—a set or rules for selecting political leaders and making decisions by means of competition for votes—authors have developed analogies between electoral competition and market competition. In the electoral market, parties and candidates compete for 'shares' of the electorate as happens in the economic world where firms compete for shares of the market. Parties are organizations whose main motive is the *maximization of votes*, and the exchange between represented and representatives is similar to that between demand and supply in the economy (see Table 13.5).

The market analogy

Anthony Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) is a pioneering book in which the basic elements of these models were spelled out for the first time. It is one of the most influential works in the comparative party systems literature (see Further reading). In this model, actors (parties and voters) are rational. Parties calculate their strategies by formulating platforms with the goal of maximizing votes and being elected or re-elected, disregarding policy priorities. Parties are coalitions of individuals seeking to control institutions rather than the implementation of programmes. Parties act self-interestedly to gain office. Like firms in the economic market, they are indifferent to the 'product' they offer but interested in making profit (monetary in the economic

market and votes in the electoral one). To maximize votes parties offer programmes that appeal to a large part of the electorate.

Voters, like consumers, face alternatives which they order from most to least preferred and choose the alternative that ranks highest. Voters make a rational choice by voting for parties whose programmes are closest to their policy preferences, because they are close to their interests or to their values and moral orientations. Voters vote on the basis of the *proximity* between parties' positions and their preferences

Table 13.5 The analogy between economic and electoral competition

Dimensions	Economy	Elections
Market	Economic	Electoral
Actors {	Firms	Parties
	Consumers	Voters
Profit	Money	Votes
Supply	Goods, services	Programmes, policies
Demand	Product preferences	Policy preferences
Communication	Advertising	Campaigns

and so they know what the alternative proposals by different parties are, that is, they are *informed* about their possible choices.

Rational citizens vote on the basis of a self-interested calculation, like consumers who calculate the benefit between 'packages'. On the other hand, parties are like businesses competing for customers. They establish what people 'like' so they can sell more. Following a logic of *supply and demand*, parties offer policies that voters can either choose to 'buy' or not. Once elected, parties seek re-election through policies appealing to large segments of the electorate. The parties' goal is to make a 'profit' in terms of votes; the voters' goal is to maximize *utility* by buying a product that increases their satisfaction. As in economic theory, the search for individual advantages produces *common goods*, namely responsiveness and accountability.

Rational choice competition models were first devised for two-party systems—mainly the US. However, vote-maximizing strategies have been observed in multi-party systems, too. To maximize votes is the main motive also in systems in which governments are coalitions. The more votes, the better the chances to enter a coalition, control governmental institutions, and place individuals in key official positions.

The spatial analogy

The idea of proximity/distance between individual preferences and parties' policies indicates that players move in a space of competition. The second element that Downs 'imported' from economic models of competition is their spatial representation. In particular, Downs adapted models of the dynamics of competition between firms, that is, where firms locate premises according to the physical distribution of the population.

Let us take the simple case of a village in which there is only one street (the example is from Hotteling 1929). On each side of the street there are evenly spaced houses (the square dots in Figure 13.1). What are the dynamics between two competitors, say two bakeries A and B? Assuming that both bakers offer

the same quality of bread for the same price and that consumers will rationally try to reduce their 'costs' by buying bread in the nearest shop (proximity), if A and B are located as they are in the figure, B will have a larger share of the market. The share of B's market goes from the right-side end of the street to the M-point which is the middle between the locations of A and B. Residents on the right of the M-point will buy bread in bakery B and residents on the left of the M-point will buy bread in bakery A. The dynamic element in this model consists of A's move to increase its share of the market. By relocating the bakery in AA, the baker is able to gain the share of the market indicated by the dashed area. Obviously, B too can move toward the centre (BB) and win back part of the lost share of the market. Both bakers seek to *optimize their location*.

An additional element introduced by Smithies (1941) concerns the elasticity of the demand. The further away from the grocery, the higher the 'costs' for buyers. To what extent is a relocation towards the centre tolerated by residents of the extremes? Incentives for a new bakery at the edges of the village increase as people feel that AA and BB are too distant. The risk of strategies of relocations toward the centre is that a new bakery C appears taking away part of B's share of the market (the dark shaded area). In these models there are therefore two dynamic elements: (1) the movement caused by the search for the optimal location and (2) the appearance of new competitors in spaces left uncovered. Equilibrium is reached when no competitor has an interest in changing its position along the axis.

Downs's model

Through the spatial analogy between physical and ideological space, Downs imports these analyses into electoral studies. Most elements are maintained: (1) the one-dimensionality of the space, (2) the principle according to which costs are reduced by choosing the nearest option (proximity), (3) competitors' search for the optimal location through a convergence toward the centre.
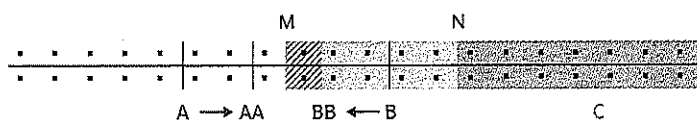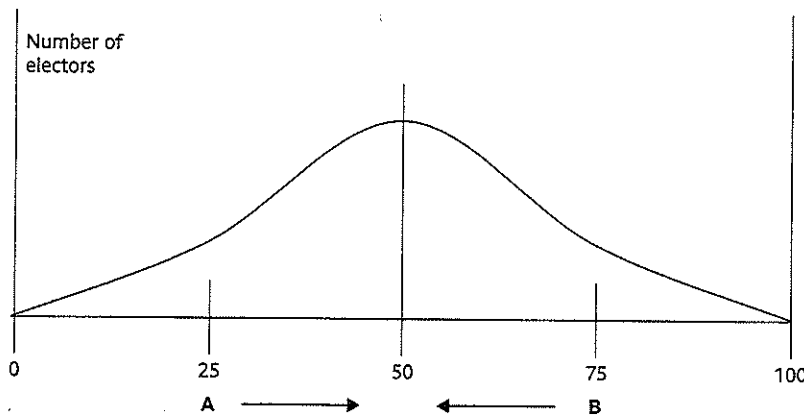

Fig. 13.1 Hotteling's model (1929)

Downs represented the ideological space through a 0 to 100 scale ranging from left to right. As will be seen, one-dimensionality is maintained, even if it is not always a realistic assumption, because it summarizes other dimensions and is the most important one (in terms of size of parties that define themselves according to this dimension), and because it is present in all party systems (thus allowing comparisons).

Both Hotteling and Smithies had previously applied spatial models to politics through analogies with the ideological space and were able to predict that parties tend to converge towards one another in the effort to win the middle-of-the-road voters, and to present increasingly similar programmes and policies. Downs adds one crucial element to the models: the **variable distribution of voters** along the left–right continuum. Voters are not distributed regularly along the scale but concentrate in particular ideological positions, namely around the centre. For Downs this is the crucial explanatory and predictive element of

party systems' dynamics: 'if we know something about the distribution of voters' preferences, we can make specific predictions about how ideologies change in content as parties maneuver to gain power' (1957: 114). If one assumes a normal (or 'bell-shaped') distribution of the electorate with many voters at the centre of the scale and fewer at the extremes (see type A in Figure 13.2), the prediction of the model is again that parties will converge toward the centre.[7]

The first dynamic element of these models is that they predict the convergence toward the centre and the increasing similarity of platforms and policy actions. This centripetal competition (Sartori 1976) is determined by the parties' aim to win the *median voter* (see Box 13.4). Examples are the progressive convergence of previously radical left-wing workers' parties toward the centre to attract moderate voters (the German Social Democrats in 1959, the French Socialists in the 1970s, the New Labour Party under Tony Blair, or the US Democrats under Bill Clinton).

Type A: Downs's basic model (1957): the bell-shape (or normal) distribution of the electorate: centripetal competition

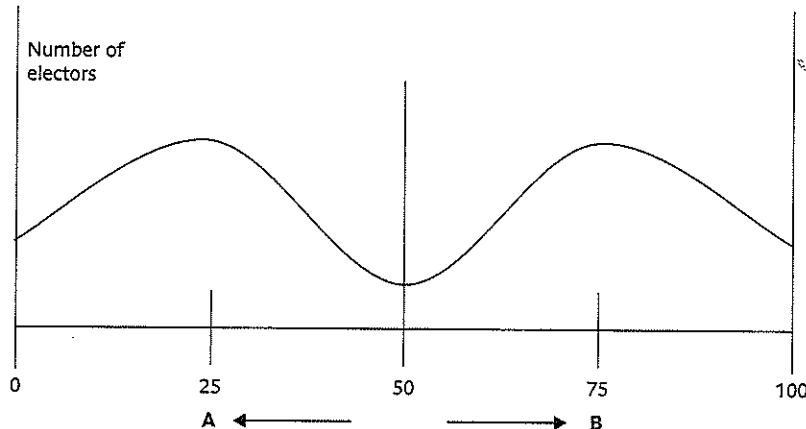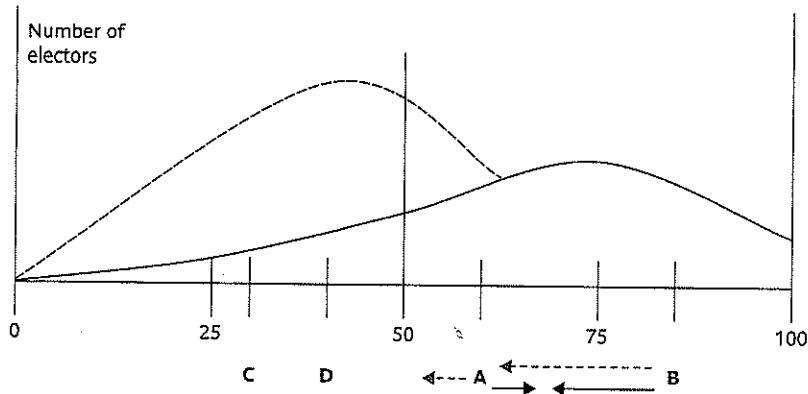Type B: A two-modal distribution of electors: centrifugal competition

Fig. 13.2 Types of voter distributions (*continued*)

Type C: A skewed distribution of electors: enfranchisement in the nineteenth century and new parties

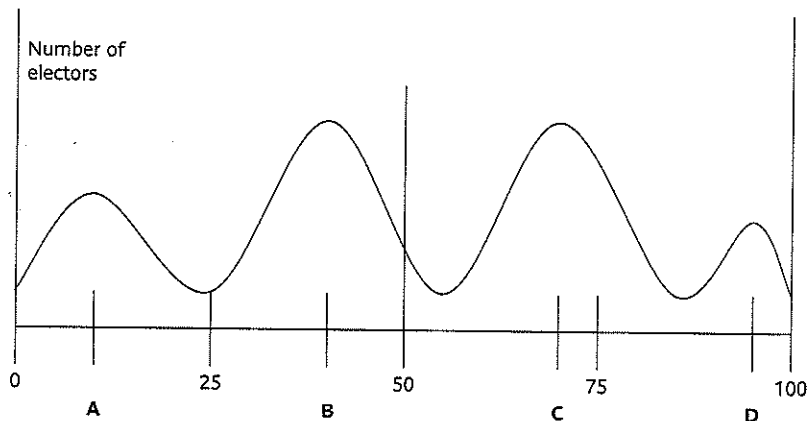Type D: Polymodal distribution in multi-party systems

Fig. 13.2 (continued)

The second dynamic element consists of centripetal competition arising not only because of the proximity principle, but also because there are more voters in the centre. Parties' strategy does not only depend on the logic of the model (the assumption of proximity voting) but also on the empirical **distribution of the electorate**. The potential loss of voters at the extremes does not deter parties from converging because there are few voters at the extremes. This is not the case if the distribution of the electorate is different, a two-model distribution as depicted in type

B. This is a case of ideological polarization within a political system (for example, the Weimar Republic and Italy during the 'first republic'). The distribution of the electorate therefore determines the *direction* of competition (centrifugal or centripetal).

The third element of the dynamics of party systems is that in the middle of the left–right axis voters are more *flexible* than at the extremes where they are firmly encapsulated in strict ideologies and/or party organizations. 'Available' voters (Bartolini and Mair 1990), located in the middle, are less ideologized

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BOX 13.4 The median voter

The median voter is the voter who divides a distribution of voters placed on a left–right scale into two equal halves. In a distribution from 0 to 100 in which for each point there is a voter (including position 0), the median voter is on position 50 (with 50 voters on each side). Suppose, however, that there are 50 voters on position 100, and the remaining voters distribute regularly between positions 49 and 99 (one voter on each position). In this case the median voter is on position 99.

and have weak party identifications. These voters are ready to change their minds and, therefore, are very appealing to parties seeking to 'seduce' them.

The wider application of rational choice models

What are the links of these models with other aspects of parties and party systems? Four are particularly important as they show the range of their potential application.

Party organization

Rational choice models help to interpret the transformation of parties from mass parties to 'catch-all parties' (see Chapter 12). This transformation can be seen as the organizational and ideological adaptation to competition.

Dealignment

These models also help to interpret patterns of dealignment, that is, the loosening of the relationship between parties and specific segments of the society (workers for social democrats, peasants for agrarians, middle classes for conservatives and liberals). Centripetal competition and the maximization of votes lead parties to make their programmes and ideologies more vague to attract support from other groups. This blurs the connection between groups and parties and causes a higher propensity to change vote from one election to the next.

Enfranchisement and democratization

In both types A and B the distributions are symmetrical. In type C, on the contrary, we have a **skewed distribution**. The solid curve represents an electorate that is skewed toward the right of the axis. Here the median voter is around position 65 rather than 50, and parties A and B would accordingly converge toward this point. This is a situation typical of restricted electorates in the nineteenth century when lower classes were excluded from the franchise. A and B would therefore be the typical parties of the periods of restricted electorates, namely Liberals and Conservatives as the parties of 'internal origin' (Duverger 1954) of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Enfranchisement and democratization processes in the second half of the nineteenth century and first

two decades of the twentieth radically changed the shape of the distribution of electors as represented by the dashed curve, making it more similar to a normal curve. This new distribution explains the emergence of new parties C and/or D of 'external origin' (such as social democrats and agrarians).[8]

The dream of reformists (as against revolutionary socialists) was that socialism and the proletariat could come to power through votes ('paper stones') and the extension of the franchise rather than through revolution (real stones!). For analytical Marxists the development of the industrial society would naturally lead workers to power through sheer numbers. Since, however, numbers of industrial workers did not grow—in fact, they declined—socialist parties faced a dilemma between moving toward the centre to maximize their appeal to the middle classes—thus relaxing their programme—and giving up their ideology and losing voters from workers (Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

PR and multi-party systems

Under FPTP convergence is likely because the threat of other parties appearing at the extremes is low, given the high threshold required to win a seat. Rather than new parties, under these systems, the model predicts *high abstention levels* as is the case in the US. Is it different in PR electoral systems?

First, multi-party systems occur when PR electoral systems allow a lower threshold of representation. Second, multi-party systems develop when the distribution of the electorate is polymodal, with more than one or two peaks (type D). With electors' distributions of this type the dynamics of the competition is not centripetal. PR is no hindrance to new parties. Existing parties have no incentive to converge toward the centre since they would lose part of their support to 'neighbouring' parties and because the position they would be moving to is already busy. It is therefore less likely than in two-party systems that parties will look like each other ideologically.

Downs assumed that the ideological space was fixed and not elastic, that is, ranged from 0 to 100. Observing multi-party systems, Sartori (1976) was on the contrary able to establish that ideological spaces are elastic, that is, they can stretch, with extremes becoming more extreme and an increasing ideological distance between parties. Parties may adopt the strategy of becoming more extreme to distinguish

themselves from moderate parties. This leads to the radicalization of parties wishing to maintain a distinctive character.

In Italy between 1989 and 1992 the two main 'anti-system parties' underwent processes of ideological deradicalization, with the Italian Communist Party dropping the communist ideology and label, and transforming into a modern social democratic party (as the German SPD did in 1959 at the famous Bad Godesberg congress), and the Italian Social Movement abandoning its former neo-fascist ideology. For both parties the centripetal move led to splinter parties which maintained radical ideologies (the Party of Communist Refoundation and the fascist Tricolor Flame). Both are small but PR did not prevent them from existing and stretching the ideological space.

In conclusion, the crucial determinant is the distribution of the electorate. If we know the shape of the curve we can predict the behaviour of parties. However, to know what the voters' distribution looks like is a matter of empirical investigation—not of deductive models—namely through surveys asking respondents to place themselves on a left–right scale (Budge and Farlie 1977; Laver 2001).

In spite of critiques (see Box 13.5) these models remain useful. In all electorates a number of less ideological voters are ready to change their vote. This is an available electorate around which competition turns and on which these models focus. This electorate

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BOX 13.5 Critiques to rational choice models

Assumption	Critique
Rationality	The relationship between parties and voters is determined by a number of 'non-rational' or 'irrational' factors: socio-economic conditions, party identification, political socialization, influence of the media. Empirical research shows that most voters vote according to these factors rather than rational ones (Budge *et al.* 1976).
Full information	Voters are not fully informed about the proposal parties present in their platforms and programmes, and are unable to evaluate the extent to which they correspond to their own preferences. Also, do voters know what their preferences are? With technical issues this often proves unlikely.
Vote maximization	Parties are not vote maximizers: • Parties as office seekers do not require to maximise votes but to get just enough. There is the need to win but the magnitude of the victory is not important. Parties 'seek to maximize only up to the point of subjective certainty of winning' (Riker 1962: 33). • Parties may just seek to influence public policy rather than aim for office. As de Swann notes, '[c]onsiderations of policy are foremost in the minds of the actors ... [T]he parliamentary game is, in fact, about the determination of major government policy' (1973: 88). • Vote maximization faces resistances within parties to keep a less 'cynical' attitude and a more coherent ideology. The influence of militants, activists, and 'rank and files' should not be underestimated. Müller and Strøm (1999) find that only half of the parties they examine follow a strategy of vote maximization.
One-dimensionality	It is not realistic that all parties compete along the left–right dimension. This may be true in two-party systems in which the electoral system reduces the variety of parties. In multi-party systems, however, the number of dimensions is larger. Several empirical analyses show that the space of competition is in most cases pluri-dimensional, as genetic models show.

is composed of **opinion voters** or 'pocket-book voting', that is, based on private interests, values, and opinions, rather than **identity voters** or 'socio-tropic voting' based on socio-economic and identification factors. The models described in this section apply less to segments that are encapsulated in strong identifications. For this reason these models apply to the left–right dimension along which voters are available rather than other dimensions (ethnic, linguistic, religious) along which identities are stronger and voters less available (Sartori 1976). Even if these models apply to parts of the electorate only, they are crucial as they determine the direction of competition.[9]

A more fundamental question, however, is how to interpret the convergence of parties and the increasing similarity of their programmes. From a methodological point of view it is difficult to separate the impact of competition from other factors such as (1) the development of a large and homogeneous middle class and the disappearance of other classes, namely the working class; (2) the reduction of social inequalities and the secularization of society with the disappearance of religious conflicts; (3) the integration of societies and the disappearance of ethnic and linguistic particularities through nationalization and globalization. In this respect the elasticity of the space is central. The space of competition seems to have become smaller with extremes falling away. Is the convergence of parties a result of this evolution rather than a product of competition?

KEY POINTS

❑ In the electoral market parties (the supply side) present programmes and platforms to appeal to a large number of voters whose vote is determined by the proximity of their preferences (the demand side) with the parties' offer. Voters are assumed to be rational, that is, informed about alternative party proposals and able to chose the alternative closest to their top preferences.

❑ The dynamics of party systems is determined by parties' search for the optimal location on the left–right axis. Depending on the distribution of the electorate along the scale, parties move to a position where the support in votes is largest.

❑ The prediction of competition models is that parties converge toward the centre of the left–right axis as the optimal location, as the point where most votes concentrate, and as the point where voters are less rigidly ideologized.

Conclusion

Understanding party systems requires the combination of the various perspectives presented in this chapter.

1. The **macro-sociological** approach must be combined with **institutional** and **actor-oriented** models. They complement each other and are not mutually exclusive. We cannot understand party systems without reference to the social cleavages from which parties have emerged. However, we must also take into account parties' capacity to act independently from social conditions—in fact, to shape them—through ideology and policy. The motivations of parties are not entirely determined by their origins. Parties' strategies, in turn, must take into account the rules of the game—electoral laws being the most important ones—influencing the number and size of players.

2. Both **descriptive** and **explanatory** research are needed. The ultimate goal of research is to account for the shape and dynamic of party systems. However, before searching for causes, party systems should be described carefully. As seen with counting parties, this is often more complicated than appears at first sight.

3. Finally, we cannot understand party systems in isolation. We need **comparison** to assess whether or not they are fragmented or unstable, as well as a **long-term** perspective rather than a myopic focus on just the most recent elections. This is the only way of assessing how exceptional a given party system or a given change really is.

❓ Questions

1. What are the National and the Industrial Revolutions?
2. What are Stein Rokkan's four main social cleavages and which party families emerged from them?
3. How should the number of parties in a system be counted?
4. What are the characteristic features of a two-party system?
5. What does 'effective number of parties' mean?
6. What is the effect of electoral systems on the shape of party systems?
7. What does it mean that parties are 'vote-maximizers'?
8. Describe centripetal and centrifugal party competition in Downs's model.
9. Are voters really rational?
10. Can the space of competition be reduced to one left–right dimension?

≫ Further reading

Classical texts on party systems

Downs, Anthony (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper Collins).

Duverger, Maurice (1954) *Political Parties* (New York: Wiley).

Lipset, Seymour M., and Rokkan, Stein (1967) 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction', in Lipset and Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press), 1–64.

Sartori, Giovanni (1976) *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

For a more extended bibliography see the works cited throughout in this chapter.

In addition, up-to-date reports on party systems can be found in journals. Detailed country-by-country developments from 1991 onwards are reported in the *Political Data Yearbook*, an annual supplement of the *European Journal of Political Research*. Students may also find useful material in journals such as the *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Electoral Studies*, *Party Politics*, and *West European Politics*.

ⓦ Web links

www.electionresources.org
   Manuel Álvarez-Rivera's Election Resources in the Internet.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk
   Richard Kimber's website on Political Science Resources (University of Keele).

www.parties-and-elections.de
   Database of Parties and Elections about parliamentary elections, parties, and political leaders in Europe.

www.electionworld.org
   Website includes information on political parties around the world with up-to-date election results and other information on the party system and the main institutions.

www.gksoft.com/govt/en/parties.html
  Webpage of Government on the WWW devoted to political parties and party systems around the world. The main page includes additional information on heads of state, parliaments, executives, courts, and other institutions.

www.epicproject.org
  Website of the EPIC Project on election process information collection which includes also information on parties and party systems.

www.georgetown.edu/pdba
  Website of the Political Database of the Americas including information on parties and party systems.

http://dodgson.ucsd.edu/lij
  Website of the Lijphart Election Archive with information on party systems, electoral systems, and recent election results around the world.

www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook
  Website of CIA's the World Factbook with information on institutions, social structures, economic data, and party systems for most countries of the world.

www.idea.int
  Website of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/aboutProject.asp
  Website of the project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe (University of Essex).

www.eiu.com
  Country Reports and Country Profiles published by the Economist Intelligence Unit are very useful for an overview and recent data.

Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for more information: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani/