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Parties

Development, competition and party systems

Introduction

What is the role of political parties?

- Education and mobilization.
 - Inform and enlighten voters.
 - Form and structure coherent and pluralist preferences.
 - Mobilize to political participation.
- Govern.
 - Form governments.
 - Aggregate interests and balances trade-offs into policy.
 - Legitimize opposition and commit to peaceful rotation.
- Representation.
 - Parties may act for, or stand for, certain interests.
 - Such representation is mobilizing.
 - May also clarify lines of conflict.

Introduction

Yes, politicians do these things, but why parties?

- Structure politics and reduce transaction costs (cp. firms).
 - Coordinate legislators and bargain with other parties.
 - Simplify the multitude of topics and attitudes.
 - Control the individual politicians.
- Provide a pool of candidates and politicians
 - Recruit, educate and select candidates.
 - Facilitate communication between citizens and legislators.
- Joining forces is necessary to be competitive (cp. Tilly!).

Introduction

Unfortunately, parties can also be:

- Gatekeepers, disavouring both candidates and parties.
- Opportunists with no respect for what is sound or what was promised.
- Polarizing both legislators and the electorate.
- A disconnected class of their own.
- A tool for lobbyists and special interests.

My goal today: provide a terminology and a mental map (a conceptualization!) you can use to understand party behaviour.

Introduction

The structure of today's lecture

- Typology 1: How parties work (party types).
- Typology 2: What they stand for (party families).
- Party competition.
- Party systems.
- Interest groups (if time allows).

Party development



Party development

Common typology for how parties work (and developed)

- Elite/cadre party
- Mass party.
- Catch-all party.
- Cartel party.

Party development

Most old parties were founded as

- Elite/cadre parties.
 - Formed within legislatures.
 - Example: Conservative parties.
 - Tend to have a strong 'follow the leader' culture.
- Mass parties.
 - Originate in, often class-based, interest groups.
 - Many members organized in local branches with tight control over their representatives.
 - The education and mobilization of their base was central.
 - Example: labour parties, agrarian parties.

Party development

Cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967)

Two cleavages related to the *national* revolution.

- Centre–periphery
 - Resistance against the nation-state.
 - Separatists and other regional parties.
- Church–state.
 - State-building and secularization as a threat.
 - Christian Democratic parties.

Party development

Cleavage theory of Lipset and Rokkan (1967)

Two cleavages related to the *industrial* revolution.

- Rural–urban.
 - Farmers' interests, but also associated with the 'cultural' left–right dimension (GAL–TAN).
 - Agrarian parties.
- Capital owners–workers.
 - By far the most important cleavage (economic left–right).
 - Worker parties versus liberal and conservatives.

Party development

Catch-all parties

- Kirschheimer (1966) saw a tendency for parties to broaden their base and weaker connections to political cleavages.
 - More dependent on mass media for their communication.
 - Speak for national interest; do not represent a specific group.
 - Less ideological and more professional in their appeal.
- Often used synonymically with big-tent parties.
- Kirschheimer also described a worrying collusion of political parties and the state, but that has become associated with later scholars (concepts and theories often get a life of their own, quite different from the original work!).

Party development



JAG RÖSTAR PÅ SOCIALDEMOKRATERNA



för jag vill ha ordning på
Sveriges ekonomi!



Party development

The cartelization of parties

- Cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995) is a later concept that partly describes the same process.
- Emphasizes the collusion of political parties and the state.
 - Parties focus on managing the state.
 - Weakening links between society and parties.
 - Fewer party members and parties dependent on state.
 - Loss of separation of powers between parties and state.
 - Professionalization of politics.
- The term is chosen because parties, like a cartel, collude in order to use state resources to protect their position.

Party development

I think of these concepts as ideal types

- An ideal type is a theoretical construct that highlights characteristics and elements of a given phenomena.
- As such, they do not exist, but reasonable approximations can be manifested empirically.
- 'Ideal' refers to the idea world, not normative ideals.
- Categorizations are more suitable for grouping parties.

Party families

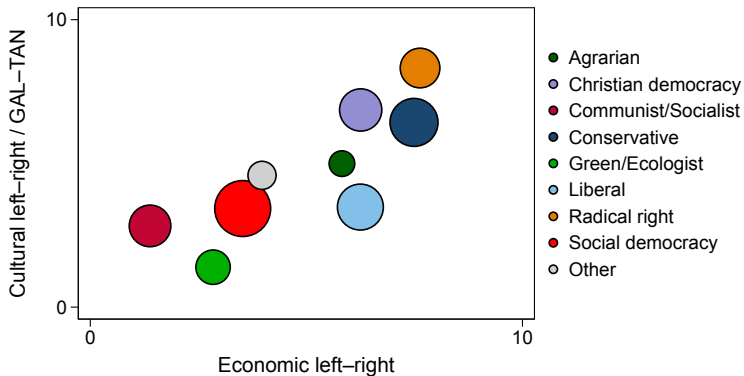


Party families

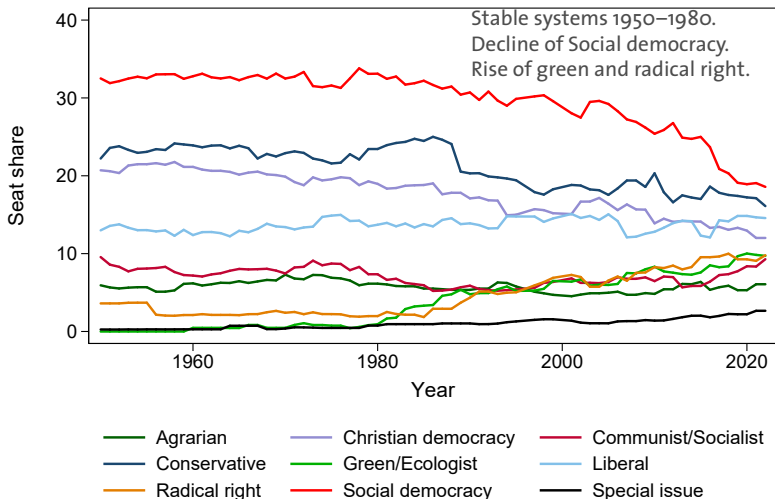
Party families

- Lipset and Rokkan (1967): cleavages not only formed parties, but also shaped stable party systems (*freezing hypothesis*).
- The connection to the original cleavages has weakened, but it is not gone, and it is difficult to replace the old parties.
- This makes party families meaningful.
- Party families are categorizations based on historic cleavages, policy stances and the parties themselves.

Party families



Party families



Party competition



Party competition

How can parties attract voters?

- Spatial models.
- Issue competition/ownership.
- Valence/Competence.
- Populist and myopic appeals.

Party competition

Spatial models

- Spatial voting is the tendency of citizens to vote for ideologically proximate parties.
- A spatial model of party behaviour assumes that parties adopt positions that increase their, or their bloc's, seat share.
- The median voter theorem is a very specific example.
- A spatial model of a multi-dimensional, multi-party system may also have parties trying to attract voters along other dimensions or at the tails of the distribution.

Party competition

Issue competition/ownership

- Voters rank parties very differently depending on the issue.
- We think of this as issue ownership and it reflects a mix of perceived competence and policy position.
- To win votes, parties compete about setting the agenda and shaping what issues that determine party choice.
- It is therefore parties campaign on issues they own?
- Moving closer to the opponent (spatial thinking again) is a common strategy to decrease an issue's salience.

Party competition

Valence/Competence

- While political scientists tend to emphasize ideological differences, voters may also choose parties with the most competent candidates, who they think will 'deliver'.
- If the economy performs well, voters may reward the government for the perceived competence.
- The crime rates or PISA performance may have similar effects regardless of policy differences.
- Valence competition can also be used as a strategy, for example by demonstrating pragmatism and leadership characteristics in TV debates.

Party competition

Populist and myopic appeals

- Voters are not perfectly rational.
 - They cannot have all information about an issue.
 - They may have cognitive biases (e.g., myopia).
 - It is not their job to implement policy.
- Parties can attract votes by adopting unrealistic or myopic – populist – policy positions (e.g., by neglecting global warming or fiscal sustainability).
- Populism is also an anti-establishment rhetoric and style.

Party competition

Do they? Should they?

- Only office/vote-seeking to a certain extent.
- Mair's dilemma: Responsibility and responsiveness.
 - International agreements.
 - Targets for budget or CO₂ emissions.
 - Agreements with the opposition.
 - The right thing to do.
- Also a trade-off between responsibility, on the one hand, and party ideology, on the other.

These trade-offs are also normative. We want parties to be responsive, responsible and ideologically distinguishable.

Party systems



Party systems

A party system is the configuration of parties in a parliament

Commonly described with the following characteristics, and sometimes only the first:

- The number of parties.
- Fragmentation.
- Polarization.
- The party families that are represented (already covered).

Party systems

The number of parties

- The categories *no-party*, *single-party* and *dominant party systems* are not informative for democracies.
- Maurice Duverger observed a tendency for (single-ballot) majoritarian electoral systems to result in two-party systems (*Duverger's law*), but such systems are surprisingly(?) few today.
- The number of parties in multi-party systems have increased over time.

Party systems

Political fragmentation

- How fragmented the political landscape (parliament) is into different groups (parties).
- Often measured as the *effective number of parties*, which is the number of parties, weighted by their relative vote or seat share.
- Unless all parties are of the same size, this number is smaller than the nominal number of parties.
- 14 parties in the House of Commons, but three parties control 92 percent of the seats (Labour 62%). $ENP \approx 2.3$.

Party systems

Polarization

- Ideological polarization
 - The extent to which opinions are distributed as two(?) distinct and distant groups.
- Affective polarization
 - The tendency for partisans to dislike those from opposing parties.
- Can refer to either parliamentarians or voters.

Party systems

Causes

- Party-systems are shaped by both the electoral system and the cleavages – both historic and current – that structure societal conflict.
- Party systems are not fixed, but strongly path-dependent.

Interest groups



Interest groups

There are many kinds of interest groups

- Economic interests (e.g., unions and employers), social movements, think tanks, culture/sports organizations, etc.
- They work outside parliament and have many tools for shaping policy.
- Influence policy directly (lobbying) or affecting public opinion (advertisement, manifestations, etc.)

Interest groups

Ties between parties and interest groups

- Some interest groups have strong ties to specific parties, often reflecting the parties' previous character of a mass-party.
- To some degree, such ties can work as a counteracting force to cartelization.
- Interest groups can supply parties with ideas, legitimacy, money and manpower, while preserving the class character of their policies.

Interest groups

Ties between the government and interest groups

- The government can cooperate with interest groups.
- Institutionalization of such cooperation is called corporatism/corporativism.
- Sweden was a prime example, and some elements remain.
 - Labour law is dispositive and often negotiated between unions and employers. No minimum wages.
 - Many organizations are represented in advisory boards to government agencies.
 - The referral process, where affected organizations are consulted before a proposition is made, is sometimes seen as a remnant of corporativism.

Interest groups

Good or bad for democracy?

- Interest groups hold valuable information and can give legitimacy to government decisions. Anchoring decisions may also increase their longevity beyond next election.
- Mancur Olson (1965, 1982) stipulated that small and concentrated interests are better organized and therefore beat broad and diffuse interests.
 - Status quo–bias because losers of change (e.g., a NIMBY group) are more organized than the often diffuse winners.
 - A patchwork of industry-specific privileges and subventions may prevail over neutral policies, even if everyone would benefit from the latter.
- Broad interests may therefore promote the general interest better than narrow interests.

Concluding

Thank you, and enjoy the weekend!