# Party-system formation in Europe and the 'freezing hypothesis'

Session 01

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- 01. Introduction
- 02. Mapping the terrain
- 03. The origins of party-systems
- 04. European party-systems
- 05. The 'freezing hypothesis'
- 06. References

### 01. Introduction

Presentations

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- The course: what is it about and what are we going to do

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  - Wrap-up session

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  - 4. The 'freezing hypothesis' revisited: Mair & Bartolini in the 90s

## 02. Mapping the terrain

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- What is a party-system?
  - The interaction of parties competing in the given electoral market. It is characterised by the number, size, and ideological preferences of the parties, among other aspects

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- In the end, party politics is a crucial aspect of political science: 'the science of (public) power'
- In this seminar, we will try to understand why European party-systems looks like they are today, considering how they were born and evolved, which surely help us to assess future events (although never fully predict them)

## 03. The origins of party-systems

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- The socio-historical approach, famously indebted to Lipset and Rokkan (1967)

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- Any other example of direct vs. indirect effect?

#### 2. The socio-historical approach

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- A cleavage is characterised by 1) a social divide of which citizens at each side develop 2) political consciousness
- Any example of what may be and what may not be a cleavage nowadays in any European country?

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- The first two cleavages would be directly influenced by social changes brought by the industrial (and liberal) revolutions
- The other two would be influenced by each national revolution, and it would depend on specific preconditions (e.g., strong privilege of the Catholic Church in Italy / strong minority elites in Spain)

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- **3.** The threshold of *representation* (i.e., institutional presence)
- 4. The threshold of majority power (i.e., participation in government)
  - <sup>1</sup>Lipset and Rokkan mention (1) the traditions of decision-making in the polity, (2) the channels of expression and mobilization of protest,
  - (3) the opportunities, the payoffs and the costs of alliances,
  - (4) and the possibilities, the implications and the limitations of majority rule in the system

### 04. European party-systems

• The importance of **overlapping/coinciding** vs. **cross-cutting cleavages**, for example, on the strength of Socialist/Labor parties<sup>2</sup>:

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- What are the mechanisms underlying these processes?

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- There are typologies beyond the scope of this seminar that help to explain differences within clusters (e.g., consensual vs. majoritarian institutions)

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05. The 'freezing hypothesis'

#### 05. The 'freezing hypothesis': the German case

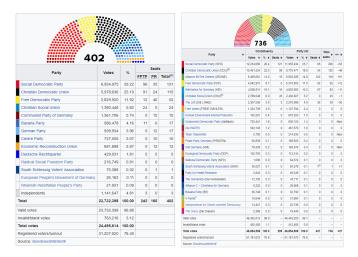


Figure 1: German Federal election results, images from Wikipedia

## 05. The 'freezing hypothesis': continuity between the 1920s and the 1960s

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- Lipset and Rokkan highlight the shockingly pervasive stability of European party-systems despite intermittent wars, autocratic periods and revolutions
- But are European party-systems currently frozen? What does the case of Germany suggest to you?

### 05. The 'freezing hypothesis': let's debate!

• *Final activity!* Let's divide the class in two groups. You have 5-10 minutes to discuss potential explanations against or in favour of the freezing hypothesis, that is, why should we expect party-systems to remain 'frozen' until nowadays (or not). Someone from each group should summarise its main points and then we will briefly debate.

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- The activity begins now!

#### 06. References

#### References I

- Boix, C. (2007). The emergence of parties and party systems. In The oxford handbook of comparative politics.
- Lipset, S. M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction. Free Press.
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