

Economic voting and the Great Recession: new politics in Southern Europe

Session 04

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- ① Overview of the last session
- ② Beyond NWE: the party systems of SE
- ③ The impact of crises on party systems
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- ② Party system change needs of both **societal change** and **political opportunity**. In the case of PRR parties, the former has to do with the shift from industrial to post-industrial economies, and the latter with the weakening of party ties
- ③ Yet the changes don't need to be **bottom-up** (as with the green/new left parties), but can also be **top-down** (as with PRR parties)

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- ④ Still, **rapid and radical changes are difficult to produce** because party systems generate embedded dynamics. The impact of PRR parties have been slow and progressive
- However, in this session we will discuss whether this must be always the case. For that, we will be looking at **the effect of crises on party systems**

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- At that time, the presence of true liberal democracies was restricted to **North America**, Oceania and a cluster of countries in **North-Western and Central Europe (NWE)**¹
- Most of the cleavage theory was therefore founded on countries that belonged to the so-called **first and second waves of democratization** (before and after the inter-war period, respectively)

¹ Plus the deviant cases of Colombia, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Israel and India

Beyond NWE: the party systems of SE

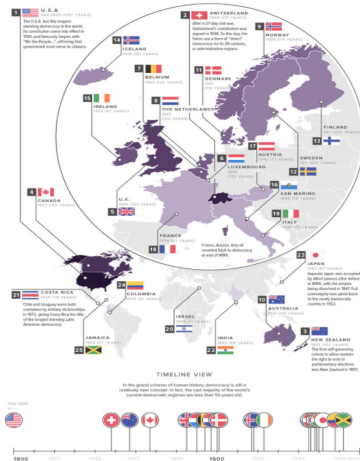


Figure 1: Oldest democracies in the world. SOURCE: Our World in Data, Boix, C., Miller, M. and Rosato, S.

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- As such, most studies on the rise of New Left/Green parties and PRR parties are restricted to party systems whose evolution follows this general framework

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 - ② Post-communist or **Central-Eastern Europe** (CEE), that are not equivalent but to which we will refer here as if they were

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 - ④ Although important cross-country differences (e.g., stability in Slovenia vs. instability in Slovakia / high democratic quality in Lithuania vs. low democratic quality in Hungary)

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- However, the autocracies of Greece, Portugal and Spain (as well as Italy before the 2nd World War) were **far-right autocracies** instead of communist regimes

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- As with the case of the national and industrial revolutions for NWE, the **transitional revolution** and the specific **pre-existent conditions** matter to determine **party system characteristics**

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- Once again: social and institutional factors

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- So let's talk about **crises**!

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- **Of what crises across the world can you think of? What political change have brought/could bring?**

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- We will focus on two cases: the Italian *tangentopoli* and the Great Recession

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- It became a **full democracy after the 2nd World War**, with a bipolar party system characterised by two strong parties at each pole of the left-right dimension: the Christian democrats (PDC) and the Communist party (PCI)

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- It also witnessed the **consequences of May 1968**. This generated an echo of strong protests in 1969 all over the country, but specially in the north. These protests were followed by the emergence of **environmentalist parties** that, however, had only **limited success**

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- However, the main factor driving party system change was the **tangentopoli or 'mani pulite'** (*clean hands*) scandals. This is the name given to an investigation that took place between 1992 and 1994 by a group of Milanese prosecutors on Italian political parties

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- It showed that most of Italian political parties were implied in cases of **illegal financing**, sometimes doing business with the mafia, and across different party and governing levels (including the leaders of the two main parties)

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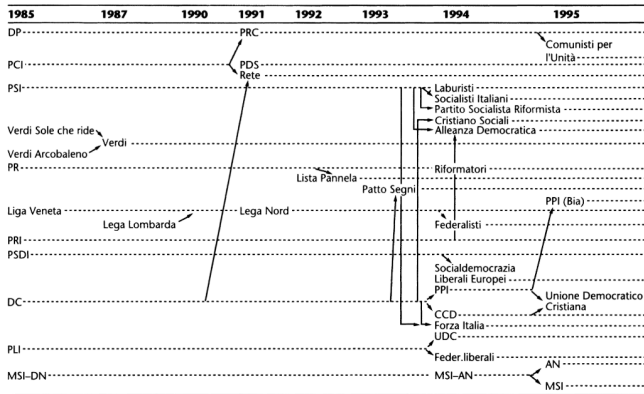
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- In sum, **the whole party system changed from the 1990 to the 1994 election, registering one of the highest levels of volatility and party system fragmentation in the modern history of Western Europe**

The impact of crises on party systems: the Italian 'tangentopoli'



MORLINO

Figure 1. A left-right map of traditional and new parties (1985–95).

Note: For the meanings of the abbreviations see the appendix. The dotted lines suggest the continuity of the same party; the arrows the relationships between the previous party and the successor one, mainly at an elite level; the point of departure of the arrows the moment when the split or the merger was carried out.

Figure 2: Figure 1 from Morlino (1996)

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 - ① Long period of **economic stagnation**
 - ② Turbulent **international politics** (i.e., the end of the Cold War)
 - ③ National **political legitimacy** crisis
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 - ⑤ Sharp **decline of party ties**
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 - ⑧ In addition, **change of the electoral law** to a majoritarian FPTP system in a geographically fragmented country (interplay of institutional and societal factors)

An introduction to economic voting theory

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³ See Achen and Bartels ([2017](#))

An introduction to economic voting theory

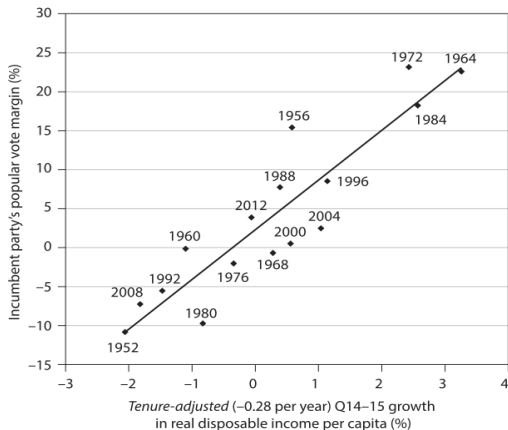


Figure 6.1. Short-Term Income Growth, Tenure, and Presidential Election Outcomes, 1952–2012

Figure 3: Figure 6.1 from Achen and Bartels (2017)

The impact of crises on party systems: the Great Recession

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- Why did Portugal's party system remain mostly unchanged?

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- Why did Portugal's party system remain mostly unchanged?
 - ① It came from a period of economic decline already (i.e., **weaker economic shock**)
 - ② The left party in opposition accommodated the demands of the citizenry (i.e., **responsiveness**)
 - ③ The economic crisis **didn't come together with a political legitimacy crisis**

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 - ④ **Portugal:** PRR entry (Chega) and other new minor parties (LIVRE!)

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- This means that volatility has remained high in those countries that experienced the strongest party system shock after the Great Recession
- Yet party ties have forged among challenger parties and its voters
- ***Final activity!*** Let's divide the class in two groups. You have 5 minutes to discuss arguments against or in favour of the re-alignment vs. de-alignment theses in SE, that is, why should we expect volatility to remain high or lower. Someone from each group should summarise the main points and then we will briefly debate.

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