Chapter 8: Political Parties

1. The Meaning of Party
   1. Party competition
      1. The battle of the parties for control of public offices. Ups and downs of the two major parties are one of the most important elements in American politics.
   2. Political party
      1. According to Anthony Downs, a “team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election.
   3. Parties roles as defined by political science
      1. Party in the electorate
      2. Party as an organization
      3. Party in the government
   4. Tasks of Parties
      1. Parties are linkage institutions
         1. Linkage institutions
            1. The channels through which people’s concerns become political issues on the government’s policy agenda. In the United States, linkage institutions include elections, political parties, interest groups, and the media.
      2. Tasks of Parties
         1. Parties pick candidates
         2. Parties run campaigns
         3. Parities give cues to voters
         4. Parties articulate policies
         5. Parties coordinate policymaking
   5. Parties, Voters, and Policy: The Downs Model
      1. Rational choice theory
         1. A popular theory in political science to explain the actions of voters as well as politicians. It assumes that individuals act in their own best interest, carefully weighing the costs and benefits of possible alternatives.
2. The Party in the Electorate
   1. The US System is Unique
      1. In the US there is no formal membership to parties unlike in many European countries. The membership is can be formed or broken at any point.
   2. Party image
      1. The voter’s perception of what the Republicans or Democrats stand for, such as conservatism or liberalism.
   3. Ticket splitting
      1. Voting with one party for one office and with another party for other offices. It has become the norm in American voting behavior.
3. The Party Organizations: From the Grass Roots to Washington
   1. Local Parties
      1. Party machines
         1. Common in 1930’s America
         2. A type of political party organization that relies heavily on material inducements, such as patronage, to win vote and to govern.
            1. Patronage

One of the key inducements used by party machines. A patronage job, a promotion, or contract is one that is given for political reasons rather than for merit or competence alone.

* 1. The 50 State Party System
     1. Each state has its own division of parties and each town may have one two.
     2. Discrepancies arise between members of a party from different parts of the country.
     3. Each state has own election rules
  2. The National Party Organizations
     1. National Convention
        1. The meeting of party delegates every four years to choose a presidential ticket and write the party’s platform.
     2. National Committee
        1. One of the institutions that keeps the party operating between conventions. The national committee is composed of representatives from the states and territories.

1. The Party in Government: Promises and Policy
   1. Coalition
      1. A group of individuals with a common interest on which every political party depends.
   2. Parties from coalitions on certain issues to drawn in voters from respected sides of that issue.
      1. Abortion
      2. Gay Marriage
      3. Health Care
      4. Taxes
      5. Education
2. Party Eras in American History
   1. Party eras
      1. Historical periods in which a majority of voters cling to the party in power, which tends to win a majority of the elections.
   2. Critical elections
      1. An electoral “earthquake” where new issues emerge, new coalitions replace old ones, and the majority party is often displaced by the minority party. Critical election periods are sometimes marked by a national crisis and may require more than one election to bring about a new party era.
   3. Party realignment
      1. The displacement of the majority party by the minority party, usually during a critical election period.
   4. Party Eras
      1. 1796-1824: The First Party System
         1. Federalists
            1. Short lived major party
            2. Lacked organization and could not win after 1800
            3. Founded by Hamilton
      2. 1828-1856: Jackson and the Democrats Versus the Whigs
         1. Democrats v. Republicans
         2. Democrats shaped by Van Buren
         3. Whig Party headed by Clay and Webster
            1. Whigs consisted of both Northern industrialists and southern planters
      3. 1860-1928: The Two Republican Eras
         1. Republicans rose in the 1850’s as antislavery
         2. Republicans maintained power from 1896-1929 because of their favor of “the gold standard”
      4. 1932-1964: The New Deal Coalition
         1. New Deal Coalition
            1. A coalition forged by the Democrats, who dominated American politics from the 1930’s to the 1960’s. Its basic elements were the urban working class, ethnic groups, Catholics and Jews, the poor, Southerners, African Americans, and intellectuals.
         2. Democrats controlled
         3. Lots of progress in the nation
      5. 1968-Present: Southern Realignment and the Era of Divided Party Government
         1. Nixon wanted to win over southern conservatives with his strong military and police position.
         2. Nixon’s election marked the first time that the incoming president and congress didn’t have the same political affiliations.
         3. Party dealignment
            1. The gradual disengagement of people from the parties, as seen in the shrinking party identification.
3. Third Parties: Their Impact on American Politics
   1. Third parties
      1. Electoral contenders other than the two major parties. American third parties are not unusual, but they rarely win elections.
   2. Winner-takes-all system
      1. An electoral system in which legislative seats are awarded only to the candidates who come in first in their constituencies.
   3. Importance of third parties
      1. Can draw attention to a certain position that could be picked up by one of the other parties in order to draw in voters.
4. Understanding Political Parties
   1. Proportional representation
      1. An electoral system used throughout most of Europe that awards legislative seats to political parties in proportion to the number of votes in an election.
   2. Coalition government
      1. When two or more parties join together to form a majority in a national legislature. This form of government is quite common in the multiparty system of Europe.
   3. Democracy and Responsible Party Government: How should we govern?
      1. Responsible party model
         1. A view about how parties should work, held by some political scientists. According to the model, parties should offer clear choices to the voters, who can then use those choices as cues to their own preference of candidates. Once in office, parties would carry out their campaign promises.
         2. Parties should meet the following conditions
            1. Provide distinct programs and guidelines to govern the nation
            2. Each candidate must be committed to following these guidelines
            3. The majority party must implement programs. The minority party must lay out their perspective
            4. The majority party must accept responsibility for the performance of the government
      2. Blue Dog Democrats
         1. Fiscally conservative democrats who are mostly from the south and or rural parts of the US
   4. American Political Parties and the Scope of Government
      1. American politics is not as broad as it is in other democracies
      2. There is a battle between parties and also battles within parties which puts extra faith in the system.