

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

Comparative Politics

Guillermo Toral

IE University

What we are covering today

- Midterm debrief and next steps

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- What are party systems and where do they come from?
- Describing party systems: morphology and dynamics

Midterm debrief

Midterm exam

- **Solutions are posted** on Blackboard

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- I hope to post **grades by the end of next week**

Midterm debrief

- How did it go?

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 - What felt good and what didn't in the exam?

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- **Any format or policy changes you think I should make for the final?**

Research design assignment

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- Due on November 28, on Blackboard

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 - There will be no presentation
 - I will ask at least one question to each team member.
- **Defenses can push the grade up, but also down even to a failing grade** (especially if there is evidence of AI abuse, or no evidence that the design was actually elaborated by the team)

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 - Strive to form a simple theory of the form “A causes B”
 - Go beyond what we have seen in class – be innovative and at the same rigorous (in your theory and in your plan to test it)

Key guidelines for now

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 - **Your empirics can focus on just one country / town / party / firm...** – while the theory needs to be stated in general terms, your empirics can focus on just one case

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- It is meant to help you make progress towards the final deliverable

Back to the high-level view of the course

So far we have examined states, political regimes, and varieties of representation

1. Introductions
- 2-3. Approach and method of comparative politics
- 4-5. The nature, formation, and development of states
- 6-7. Authoritarianism
- 8-9. Democracy
- 10-11. Parliamentarism and presidentialism
- 12-13. Elections and electoral systems

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14. Review session
15. Midterm exam

In the second half of the course, we will focus on political actors operating within those institutions

- 16-17. Parties and party systems
- 18-19. Voters and political behavior
- 20-21. Subnational authorities
- 22-23. Courts
- 24-25. Interest groups and social movements
- 26-27. Bureaucrats
- 28-29. Review session (December 3)
- 30. Final exam (December 18)**

What are political parties, and how do they matter?

Definitions of political party

- “A body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed” (Edmund **Burke**)

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- “An institutionalized coalition of elites to capture and use political office” (John **Aldrich**)

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- Historically, political parties were seen with mistrust or cynicism
- Parties are often seen as a source of corruption, artificial divisions, inefficiencies, or “noise”
- Current trends in societal dealignment of parties and the “unfreezing” of party systems reinforce those old ideas

Across democracies, less people identify with parties

318  D. GARZIA ET AL.

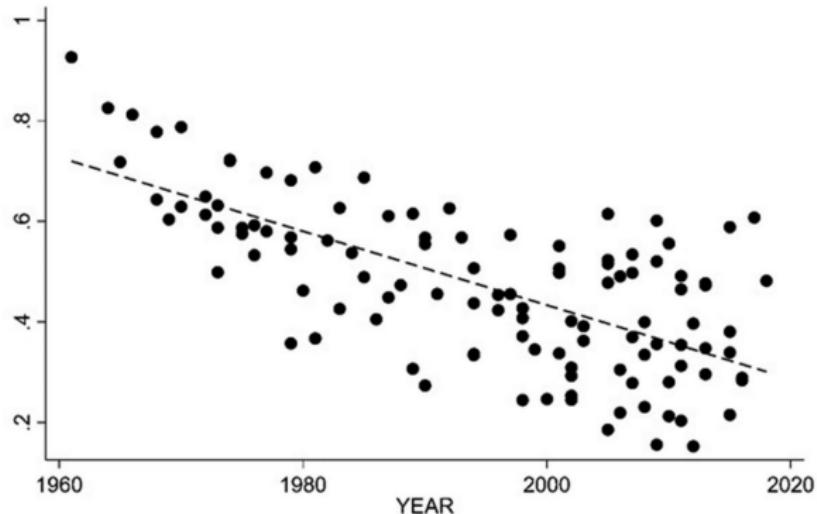


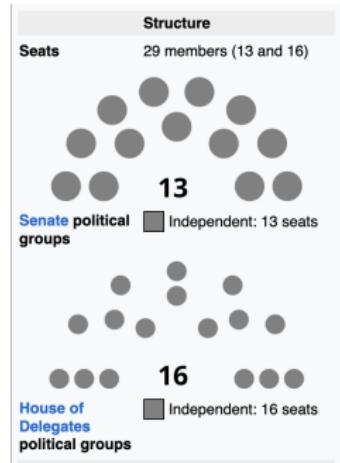
Figure 1. Percentage of party identifiers in Western Europe, 1961–2018.

What would democracy without parties look like?

What does democracy without parties look like?



Palau National Congress Olbiil era Kelulau	
11th Olbil Era Kelulau	
Type	Bicameral
Houses	Senate House of Delegates
History	
Founded	First Government Est. 1955 Gained Independence on 1 October 1994
Leadership	
President of the Senate	Hokkons Baules, Independent
Speaker of the House	Sabino Anastacio, Independent
Chief of Staff	Landisang Kotaro



What does democracy without parties look like?

Article

Party Politics

How democracy functions without parties: The Republic of Palau

Party Politics
2016, Vol. 22(1) 27–36
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DOI: 10.1177/1354068813509524
ppq.sagepub.com


Wouter P Veenendaal

Leiden University, The Netherlands

Abstract

Whereas the belief that political parties are necessary elements of democracy is widespread in political science, it is in fact empirically false. Six small Pacific island democracies function without parties, and several explanations for the absence of parties in these countries have been developed. In the present article, an interview-based qualitative analysis of one of these six democracies without parties – the Republic of Palau – is offered in order to examine why parties are absent here, and how the Palauan democracy functions without parties. The findings of this case study indicate that both size and culture contribute to the non-existence of parties in Palau, and that the role of parties is in many ways fulfilled by clan structures. In several respects the absence of parties is found to undermine the functioning of Palauan democracy, whereas respondents paradoxically indicate that non-elected traditional leadership contributes positively to the performance of democracy in Palau.

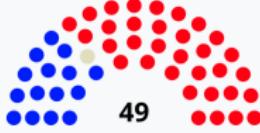
Keywords

Clan relations, democracy, Palau, political parties, smallness, traditional leadership

What does democracy without parties look like?

Nebraska	
State	
	
Flag	Seal
<p>Nickname: The Cornhusker State Motto: Equality before the law Anthem: "Beautiful Nebraska"</p>	
 0:50	
	
Map of the United States with Nebraska highlighted	
Country	United States
Before statehood	Nebraska Territory
Admitted to the Union	March 1, 1867 (37th)

Nebraska Legislature	
	MARCH 1 st 1867
Type	Unicameral
Term limits	2 consecutive terms
Leadership	
President	Joe Kelly (R) since January 5, 2023
Speaker	John Arch (R) since January 4, 2023
Executive Board Chair	Ray Aguilar (R) since January 3, 2024
Executive Board Vice Chair	John Lowe (R) since January 3, 2024

Structure	
Seats	49
	49
Legislature political groups	Officially nonpartisan
Majority (33)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Republican (33)^[a] 33 / 49 (67%) 
Minority (16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Democratic (15)^[a] 15 / 49 (31%) Independent Democrat (1)^[a] 1 / 49 (2%) 
Length of term	4 years
Authority	Article III, Nebraska Constitution
Salary	\$12,000/year + per diem

What does democracy without parties look like?

American Political Science Review

Vol. 96, No. 2 June 2002

The Influence of Party: Evidence from the State Legislatures

GERALD C. WRIGHT *Indiana University*

BRIAN F. SCHAFFNER *Western Michigan University*

American legislative studies in recent years have been occupied to a large degree with the question of the effects of political parties on the policy behavior of elected legislators, with most of the research focusing on the U.S. Congress. We undertake a comparative analysis of state legislatures for a window into the character and extent of party's effects. Specifically, we compare the impact of party on the partisan polarization and dimensionality of campaign issue stances and roll call voting in the Kansas Senate and the largely comparable, though nonpartisan, Nebraska Unicameral. This comparison offers us a nice quasi-experiment to assess the impact of party by establishing a baseline condition in Nebraska for what happens when party is absent. We argue that party lends order to conflict, producing the ideological low-dimensional space that is a trademark of American politics. Where parties are not active in the legislature—Nebraska is our test case—the clear structure found in partisan politics disappears. This works to sever the connection between voters and their elected representatives and, with it, the likelihood of electoral accountability that is essential for the health of liberal democracy.

What does democracy without parties look like?

The Influence of Party

June 2002

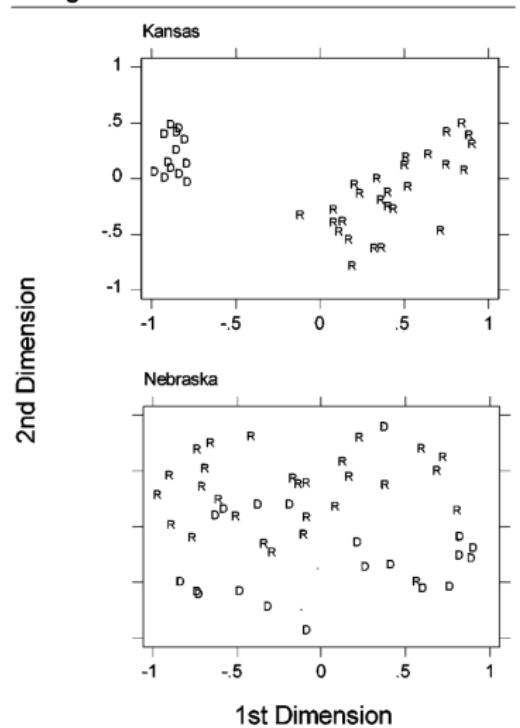
TABLE 4. Effect of Party and Urbanism on Roll Call Voting in Kansas and Nebraska

Variable	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
Kansas ($N=40$)		
Party	-1.27*** (0.08)	0.40*** (0.10)
Urban district	-0.12 (0.08)	-0.24* (0.10)
Constant	0.53*** (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)
Adj. R^2	0.87	0.32
Nebraska ($N=50$)		
Party	0.21 (0.17)	-0.45*** (0.11)
Urban district	-0.02 (0.17)	-0.35** (0.10)
Constant	-0.12 (0.12)	0.34*** (0.08)
Adj. R^2	-0.01	0.44

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

the coefficient of -1.27 for party (and the adjusted R^2 of 0.87 for the model) represents a substantial difference between Democrats and Republicans. In addition to its impact on the first dimension in Kansas, party also has a significant influence on the second dimension. While this coefficient is not as strong as in the first dimension, it does reinforce the impact of party in the Kansas Senate. In addition to party, the coefficient for urbanism is also significant for this second dimension. Thus, both dimensions of voting in Kansas are highly structured by partisanship, with the second also being influenced by district urbanism.

FIGURE 2. Two Dimensions of Roll Call Voting in Kansas and Nebraska



What does democracy with weak parties look like?

Republic of Peru
República del Perú (Spanish)
Co-official names^[a] [show]



Flag



Coat of arms

Motto: "Firme y feliz por la unión!" (Spanish)
"Firm and Happy for the Union"

Anthem: "Himno Nacional del Perú" (Spanish)
"National Anthem of Peru"



3:10

March:
"Marcha de Banderas" (Spanish)
"March of Flags"



1:43

National seal
REPÚBLICA DEL PERÚ



Gran Sello del Estado (Spanish)
Great Seal of the State



Location of Peru (dark green)

Congress of the Republic
Congreso de la República
2021–2026 Period



PERÚ

CONGRESO de la REPÚBLICA

Type
Unicameral

Established
20 September 1822
(First Constituent Congress)
26 July 1995
(1995 Peruvian general election)

Leadership

President of Congress
Fernando Rospigliosi
(acting), Popular Force since 10 October 2025

1st Vice President of Congress
Fernando Rospigliosi, Popular Force since 26 July 2025

2nd Vice President of Congress
Waldermar Cerrón, Free Peru since 26 July 2023

3rd Vice President of Congress
Illich López, Popular Action since 26 July 2025



What does democracy with weak parties look like?

59		Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (born 1938)	28 July 2016	23 March 2018	1 year, 238 days	Peruvians for Change	2016	First Vice President Martín Vizcarra (2016–2018) Second Vice President Mercedes Aráoz (2016–2018)
60		Martín Vizcarra (born 1963)	23 March 2018	9 November 2020	2 years, 231 days	Independent	—[n]	First Vice President None Second Vice President Mercedes Aráoz (2018–2020)
61		Manuel Merino (born 1961)	10 November 2020	15 November 2020	5 days	Popular Action	—[ak]	None
62		Francisco Sagasti (born 1944)	17 November 2020	28 July 2021	253 days	Purple Party	—[ak]	None
63		Pedro Castillo (born 1969)	28 July 2021	7 December 2022	1 year, 132 days	Free Peru	2021	First Vice President Dina Boluarte (2021–2022) Second Vice President None
64		Dina Boluarte (born 1962)	7 December 2022	10 October 2025	2 years, 307 days	Independent	—[n]	None
65		José Jerí (born 1986)	10 October 2025	present	3 days	We Are Peru	—[ak]	None

What does democracy with weak parties look like?

OCTOBER 13TH 2025



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El Boletín

The best of *The Economist's* Latin American coverage



John Roach/Magnum/EP/Alamy Stock

Political chaos in Peru



Mitra Taj

Latin America contributor

Even by Peruvian standards, Dina Boluarte's downfall was swift. I heard the first rumblings of a bid to oust her around noon on October 9th. The night before, hitmen attacked a popular *cumbia* group with a machine gun during a live performance, incensing Peruvians fed up with surging gang violence. With an eye on elections in six months, the parties that had propped Ms Boluarte up started turning on her. At midnight on October 9th she was impeached. As her last pre-recorded message from the gilded halls of the presidential palace aired minutes later, state TV switched its feed to Congress, where lawmakers were preparing to swear in her successor: a 38-year-old attorney named José Jerí.

While some observers in the United States might envy such an expeditious impeachment, in Peru it is a symptom of an ailing political system rather than a cure. In the past decade I've covered two presidential

THE AMERICAS

All the prison's presidents: Peru's special jail for ex-leaders is all full up

JULY 9, 2023 - 1:35 PM ET

HEARD ON WEEKEND EDITION SATURDAY

By John Otis



Peruvian parties and the origins of the Fujimori dictatorship

- In the 1980s, Peru had a relatively coherent party system: 4-parties with clear structures and ideologies.



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- Hyperinflation and political violence had led to a deep distrust for the political status quo
- Alberto Fujimori was elected in 1990 as an anti-establishment outsider, but rather than solving the crisis his election deepened it.
- With no party behind him, no program, no team, and weak support in Congress, and growing opposition in different sectors of the elite, Fujimori resorted to an authoritarian strategy, staging a self-coup in 1992



The Peruvian party system after Fujimori

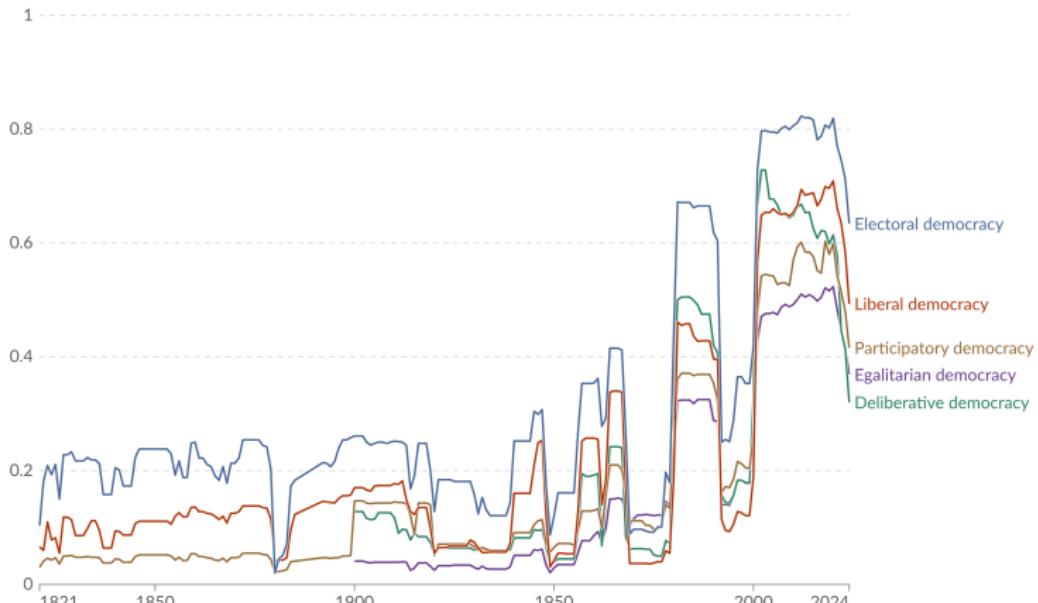
Party system **decomposition continued** throughout the post-Fujimori period, resulting in levels of fragmentation and fluidity rarely seen in Latin America. Established parties [...] became marginal actors. At the same time, **every new party created after 1990 collapsed, failed to achieve national electoral significance, or remained a strictly personalistic vehicle.** Increasingly, politicians operated outside of parties, either creating their own personalistic vehicles or negotiating candidacies with different parties at each election. In effect, **parties were replaced by “coalitions of independents,”** or short-lived alliances of political “free agents” who come together on candidate slates for a single election cycle. (Levitsky 2018)

... which can be associated to Peru's experiences of democratic backsliding

Varieties of democracy, Peru

Our World
in Data

The indices are by V-Dem¹, based on expert estimates, and range from 0 to 1 (most democratic).



Data source: V-Dem (2025)

OurWorldinData.org/democracy | CC BY

1. V-Dem The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project publishes data and research on democracy and human rights.

It relies on evaluations by around 3,500 country experts and supplementary work by its own researchers to assess political institutions and the protection of rights.

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What are party systems, and where do they come from?

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Origins of party systems

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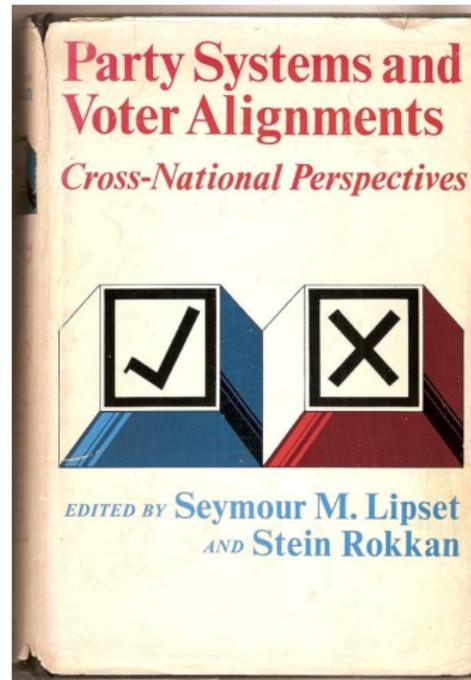
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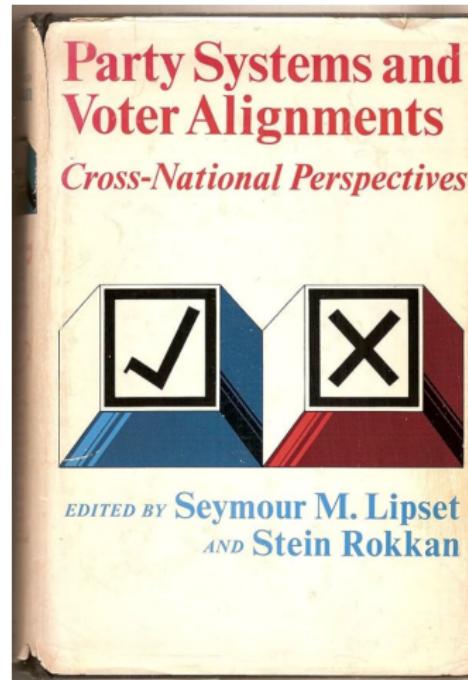
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- Within these conditions, there's some space for the influence of **political entrepreneurs**

Cleavages: What they are and how they matter



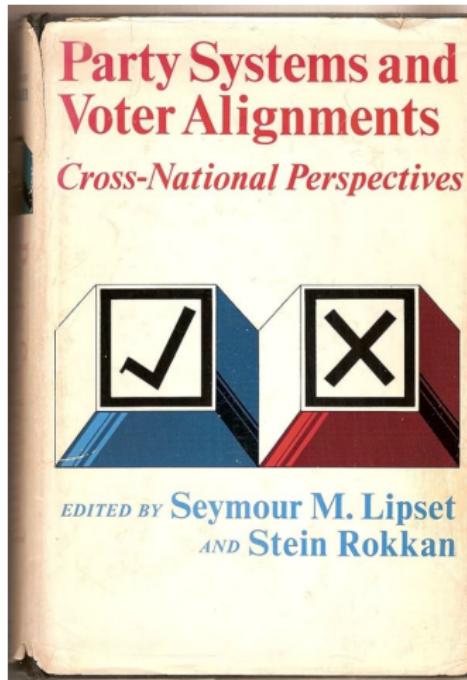
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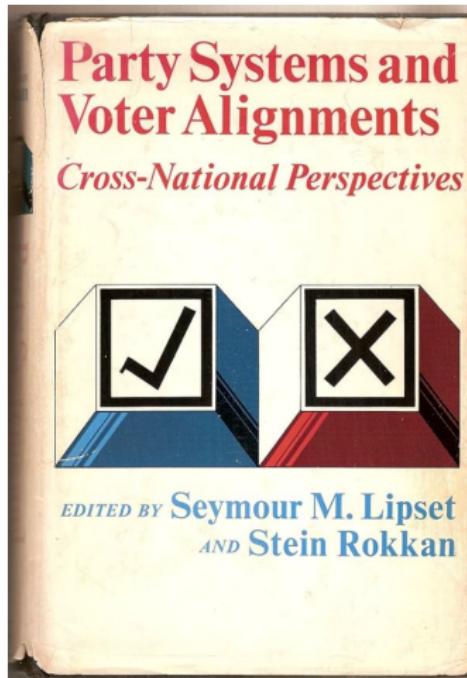
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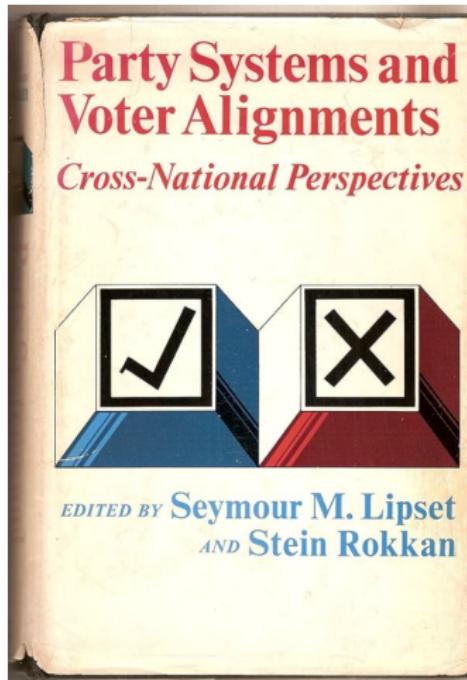
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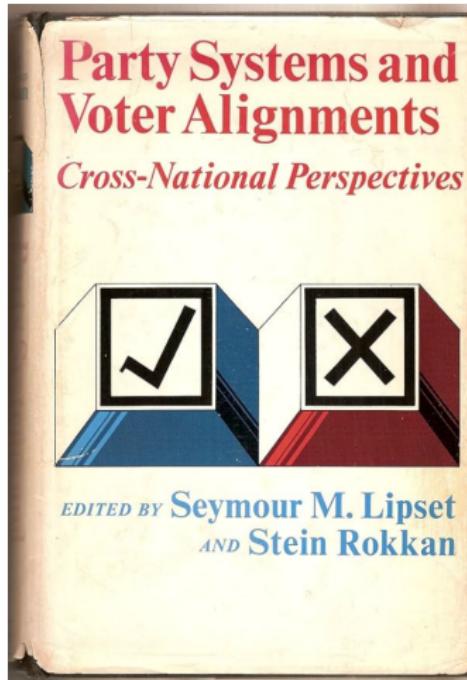
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 - Second, **awareness by key actors** about their collective identity, and willingness to act based on it
 - An **organizational reflection** of that division. Those organizations reinforce the cleavage they reflect.

The freezing hypothesis



- “*The 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.*’ (Lipset and Rokkan 1967)

Cleavages: Where they come from

Revolution	Timing of the revolution	Resulting cleavage	Sample parties today
National	Early 19 th century	Center – periphery	SNP, PNV
		State – church	CDU, PP
Industrial	Late 19 th century	Rural – urban	SK
		Workers – employers	SPD, PSOE
Communist	Early 20 th century	Communists – socialists	PCI, IU
Post-industrial	Late 20 th & early 21 st	Materialist – post-materialist values	Die Grünen, MP
		Open – closed societies (trade, supranational integration, migration)	RN, AfD

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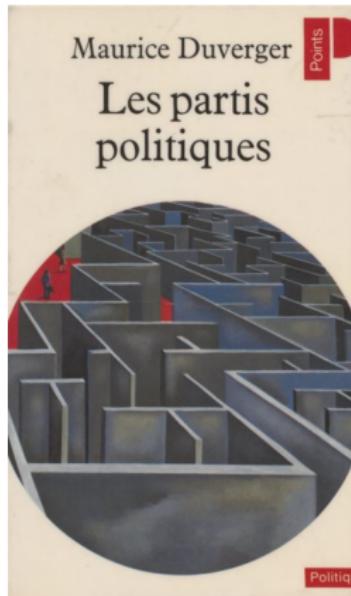
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- A key mechanism for this path dependency is that parties and party systems themselves reinforce the cleavages that created them

How electoral rules interact with cleavages

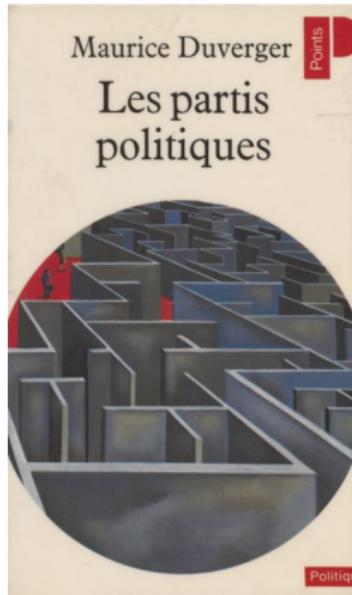
- Duverger's laws:



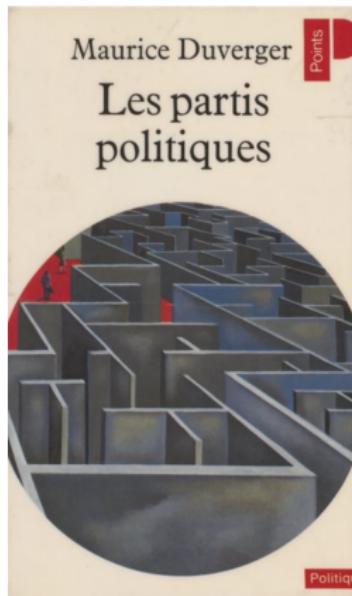
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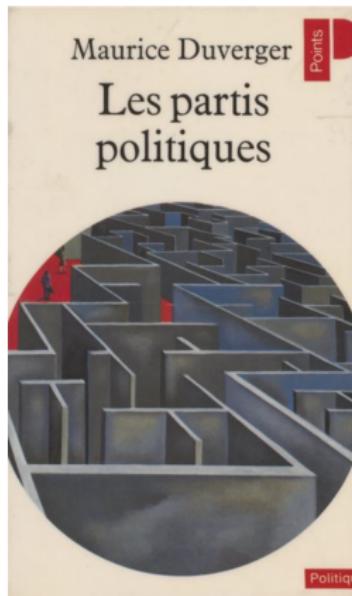
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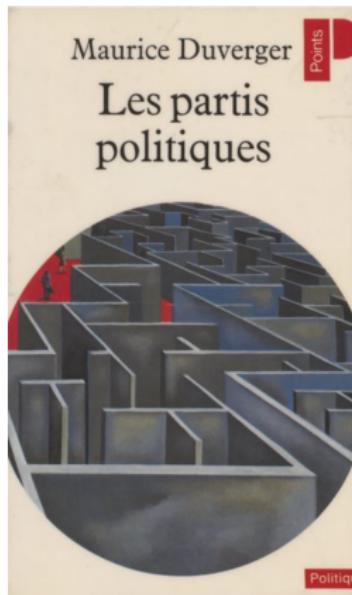
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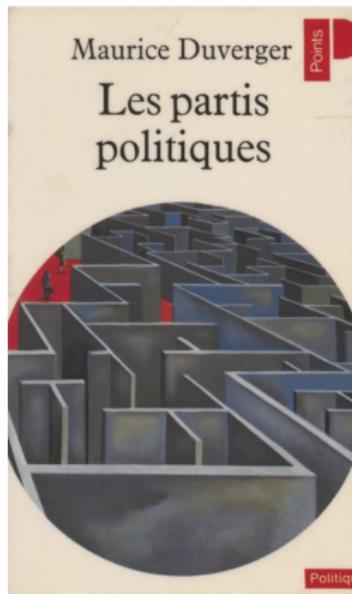
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Describing party systems: morphology and dynamics

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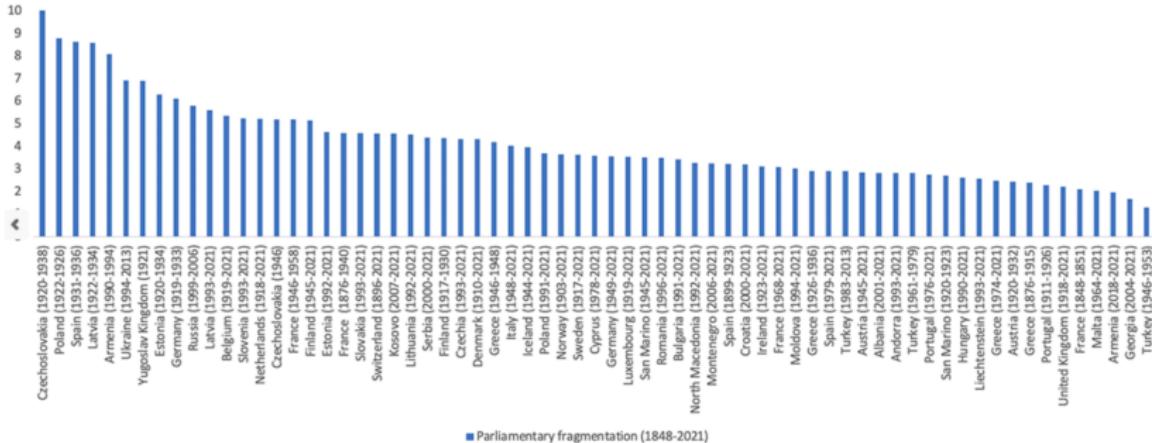
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- Higher values mean more disproportionality between votes and seats; v_i and s_i stand for the share of votes and seats received by party i

Effective number of parties, Europe 1848 - 2021



Effective number of parties: Lowest and highest values in national parliaments as of 2023

Country	Year	Effective number of parties
Barbados	2022	1.00
Venezuela	2020	1.17
Singapore	2020	1.24
Antigua and Barbuda	2018	1.27
Monaco	2018	1.29
Belize	2020	1.37
Bermuda	2020	1.38
Bahamas	2021	1.42
Jamaica	2020	1.53
Mozambique	2019	1.57
Nicaragua	2016	1.59
Israel	2022	6.51
Guatemala	2019	6.73
Denmark	2022	7.24
Indonesia	2019	7.47
Malaysia	2022	7.72
Netherlands	2021	8.54
Colombia	2022	8.74
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2022	9.00
Belgium	2019	9.70
Brazil	2022	9.91

Should we prefer a two-party or a multi-party system?

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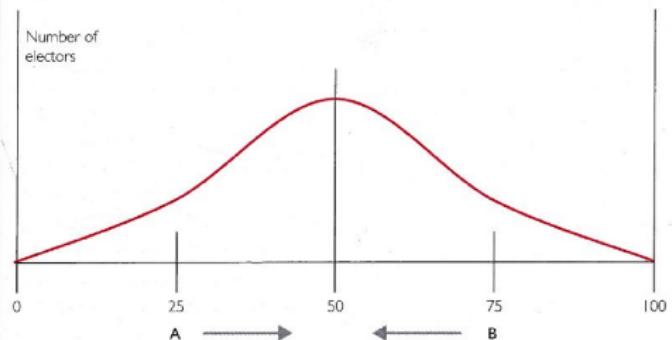
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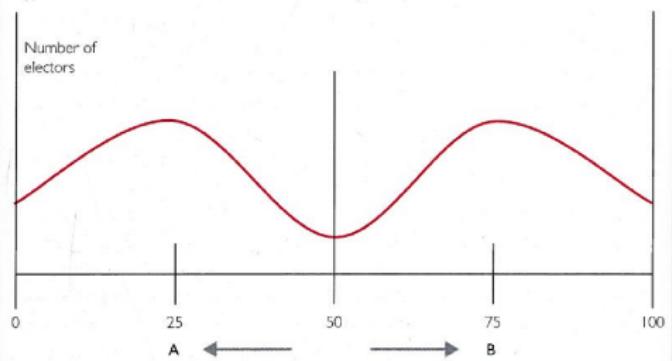
Anthony Downs' model (1957)

Figure 13.3 Types of voter distribution

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



Anthony Downs' model (1957)

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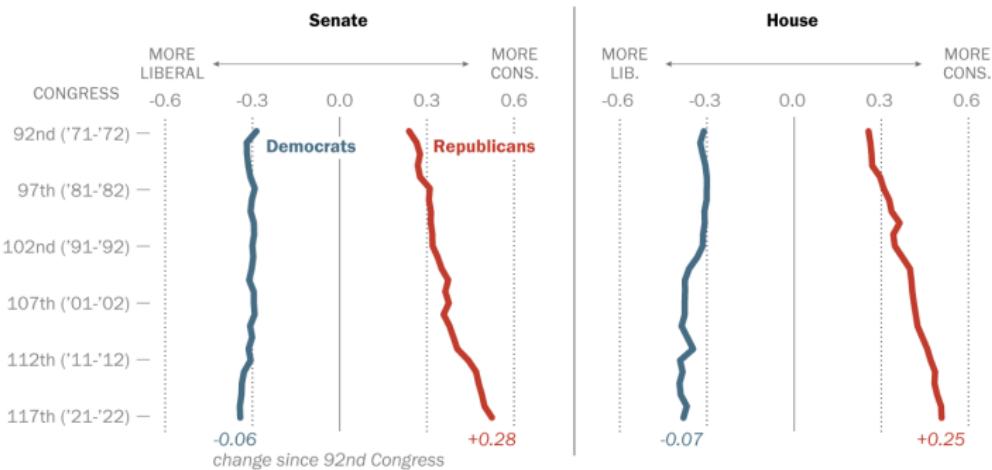
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Empirical distribution of voters and political elites in a two-party system

Republicans have moved further to the right than Democrats have to the left

Average ideology of members, by Congress



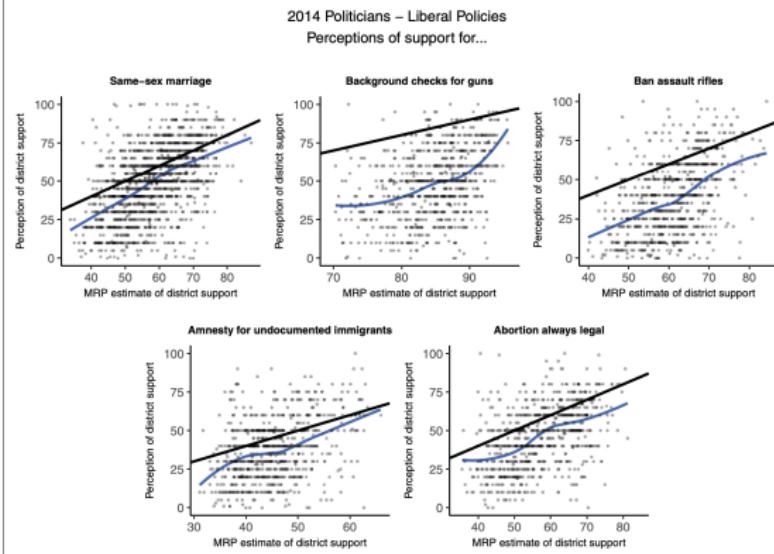
Note: Data excludes nonvoting delegates, as well as lawmakers who officially served but (due to illness, resignation or other factors) didn't have a scorable voting record for a given Congress. Party categories include independents who caucus(ed) with that party. Members who changed parties (or became independents) during a Congress were classified according to the status they held the longest during that Congress. For most of the 116th Congress, Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan was either an independent or a Libertarian, and didn't caucus with either major party.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Voteview DW-NOMINATE data accessed on Feb. 18, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Politicians often have biased perceptions of voters' preferences: Data from the US

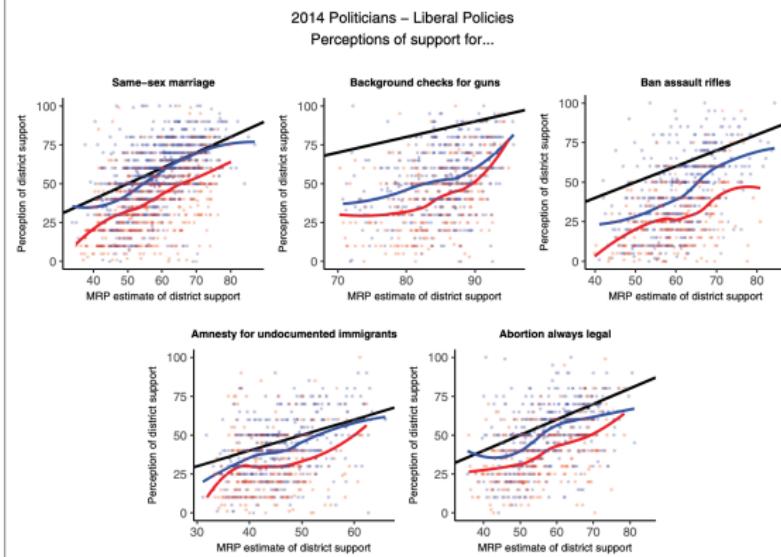
FIGURE 3. Politicians' Perceptions of District Opinion as a Function of MRP Estimates of District Opinion.



You can download the article at
www.guillermotoral.com/cp/broockman.pdf

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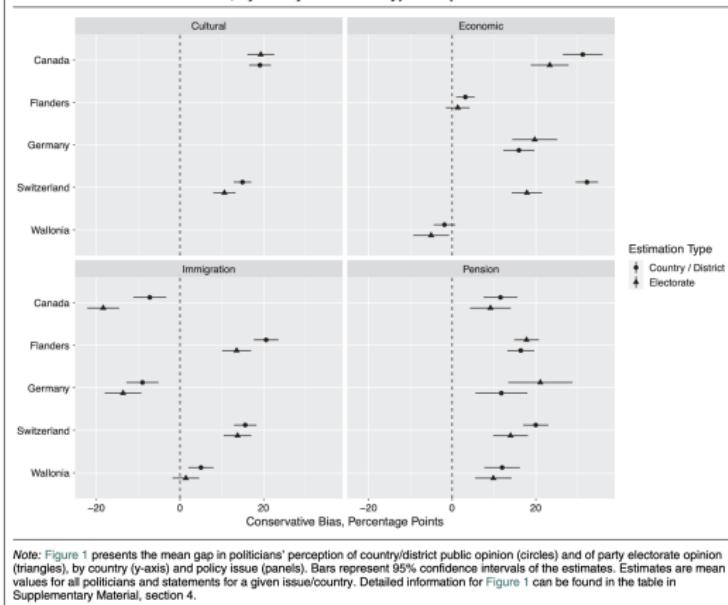
FIGURE 5. Partisan Differences in Misperceptions: MRP.



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Politicians often have biased perceptions of voters' preferences: Data from Europe

FIGURE 1. Conservative Bias, by Policy Issue and Type of Opinion Estimated



You can download the article at
www.guillermotoral.com/cp/pilet.pdf

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