

# Party Systems

Political Science 225  
North Dakota State University

# Political Parties

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Parties:

- Organize voters' choices
- Mobilize electorate
- Link citizen preferences and policy
- Recruit, select, and train leaders
- Structure government, legislating

# Party Roles

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  - How many options?
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- Decisiveness
  - Bottlenecks/gridlock
  - Cycling

# Party Families

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- Communist
- Green
- New Left
- Social Democratic
- Christian Democratic
- Agrarian or Center Right
- Conservative
- Liberal
- New Right

# Christian Democrats



# Conservatives



# Greens



# The New Right



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We often focus on the number:

- Non-partisan
- One-party
- Dominant-party
- Two-party
- Multi-party



# The Effective Number of Parties

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- Ignores parties that don't get into legislature
- Weights parties by strength

## Example: U.S. House Elections 2006

Party	Vote %	Seat %
Democrats	52.0	53.6
Republicans	45.6	46.4
Independents	0.7	0.0
Others	1.7	0.0
Effective number of parties = 1.99		

- 435 SMDs
- Plurality rule

## Example: Canadian Legislative Elections 2006

Party	Vote %	Seat %
Conservatives	36.3	40.3
Liberals	30.2	33.4
New Democrats	17.5	9.4
Quebec Bloc	10.5	16.6
Other	5.5	0.3
Effective number of parties = 3.21		

- 308 SMDs
- Plurality rule

## Example: Dutch Legislative Elections 2006

Party	Vote %	Seat %
CDA	26.5	27.3
CU	4.0	4.0
D66	2.0	2.0
GL	4.6	4.7
LPF	0.2	0.0
PvdA	21.2	22
PvdD	1.8	1.3
PVV	5.9	6.0
SGP	1.6	1.3
SP	16.6	16.7
VVD	14.7	14.7
Others	1.0	0.0

Effective number of parties =  
5.54

- 1 MMD (150 seats)
- List PR

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D.V.

Electoral system → # parties



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- Institutional theory

I.V.		D.V.
Electoral system	→	# parties

- Sociological theory

I.V.		D.V.
Social cleavages	→	# parties

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- MMD PR allows multiparty competition

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What's the causal mechanism?

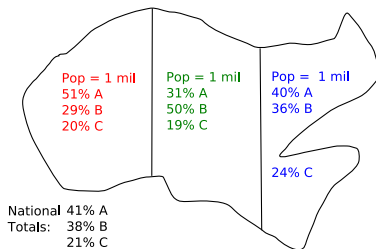
Under majoritarian SMD:

- Voters are strategic and don't want to waste votes on a loser
- Politicians are strategic and coalesce into two parties

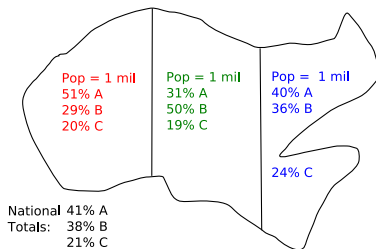
# Mechanical Effects

- Votes don't produce seats for small parties in majoritarian systems
- Small parties don't thrive in these systems, die off

# Votes and Seats



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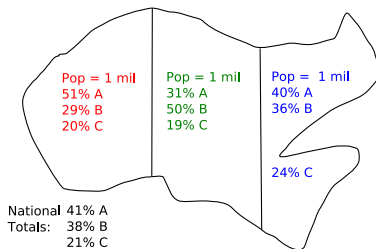


## Proportional Representation

- A: 122 seats (41%)
- B: 115 seats (38%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)



# Votes and Seats



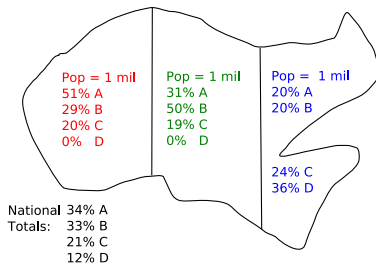
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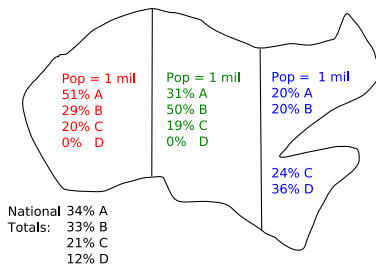
## Single Member Districts

- A: 200 seats (66%)
- B: 100 seats (33%)
- C: 0 seats (0%)

# Votes and Seats



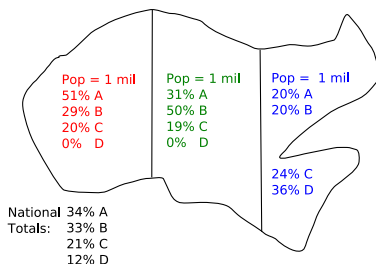
# Votes and Seats



## Proportional Representation

- A: 102 seats (34%)
- B: 99 seats (33%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)
- D: 36 seats (12%)

# Votes and Seats



## Proportional Representation

- A: 102 seats (34%)
- B: 99 seats (33%)
- C: 63 seats (21%)
- D: 36 seats (12%)

## Single Member Districts

- A: 100 seats (33%)
- B: 100 seats (33%)
- C: 0 seats (0%)
- D: 100 seats (33%)

# Strategic Effects

## SMDP and disproportional systems

- Strategic Voting
- Voters vote for realistic parties, not sincere
- Strategic Entry
- Strong candidates will not form or enter new parties

# Where Do Parties Come From?

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Divisions or “cleavages” in society

- Depends how we view cleavages
  - Primordial—Bottom up explanations
  - Instrumental—Top down explanations
- Many potential, but what parties do end up forming?

# Social Cleavages

We think of parties fundamentally forming from groups with different attributes and therefore shared interests

- Key distinction between attributes and identity categories
- Attributes (religion, class, etc)
  - Hard to change; sticky
  - Not necessarily politicized
- Identity categories
  - Evolves from attribute
  - A politically activated attribute



# Common Cleavages

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- Urban-Rural
- Confessional (Religious)
- Secular-Clerical
- Class
- Post-materialist
- Ethnic/Linguistic

# Attributes to Identities

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What are some theories? Causal mechanisms?

- Political entrepreneurs over time determine which attributes become politicized identities
- Cross cutting attributes (uncorrelated) make many parties equally likely
- Reinforcing attributes (correlated) make those fewer correlated attributes very likely to be activated
- We expect that more cross cutting cleavages lead to more parties, otherwise attributes combine to form an identity

# Types of Attributes

- Cross-cutting

	<b>French speaker</b>	<b>Dutch speaker</b>
Northerner	0.25	0.25
Southerner	0.25	0.25

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- Reinforcing

	<b>French speaker</b>	<b>Dutch speaker</b>
Northerner	0.03	0.57
Southerner	0.36	0.04

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# Cleavages and Institutions

## Duverger's theory

- More cross-cutting cleavages lead to more parties–heterogenous societies
- Disproportional systems restrict party formation even with those cleavages
- Duverger's Law: SMDP systems encourage 2 party systems
- Duverger's Hypothesis: Proportional representation rules favor multiparty systems

