

Political Parties: Definition & Purpose

- *What Is a Political Party?*
- A political party is a coalition of people formed around *political cleavages* seeking to control government by contesting elections & winning office.
- *What Is the role & core purpose of a Political Party?*
- The core of a political party's purpose, and the basis on which most scholars define parties, is their role as electoral organizations=>
- Get their party's candidates elected to office.

Political Parties

Parties link people and governments by providing:

- **Organization *and* Information**

What are the main functions of political parties?

Seven Functions of Parties

- Recruit candidates
- Nominate candidates
- Mobilize voters
- Contest elections
- Form governments
- Coordinate policy across independent units of government
- Provide accountability

Examine in greater detail

7 Party Functions

- recruit candidates – give training & info to run for office
- nominate candidates - by most common method today?*
- contest election- “wage war” in the *general election*
- form governments- organized along party lines
 - government appointments in executive & judiciary branches
 - leaders & members of Congressional committees
- coordinate policy across different branches of Gov’t
- mobilize voters – get out the vote drives
 - President, Congress, State, local party cooperation to win elections
 - Leaders stress *party loyalty* to proposed policies (with mixed results)
- Provide accountability- unintended side effect
 - Used by voters to hold elected official accountable

**How are candidates nominated today?*

Methods of Nominating Candidates

**Direct
Primary**

**Open
Primary**

**Closed
Primary**

**Blanket
Primary**

Direct Primary

An election in which voters and not party leaders directly choose a party's nominees for political office.

Open Primary

A direct primary in which voters may choose which party primary they will vote in on Election Day

Closed Primary

**A direct primary in which
voters must register their
party affiliations before
Election Day**

Blanket Primary

A direct primary in which voters may cast ballots for candidates of any party, but may only vote once for each office.

U.S. Political Parties

Characteristics:

- *U.S. Two party system* $\leftarrow \text{linked to} \rightarrow$?
- “*Centrist*” political ideology
 - *Capitalism & democracy* accepted by both sides
 - No *socialists* or *fascists* parties stand realistic chance
- Disagreement comes at the narrow margins
 - Mostly about how to meet same accepted goals:
 - *Political & economic security* for the US –
- *What theory is used to explain this “Centrist” characteristic?* *Spatial theory of elections*

Party Organization Hierarchy



Modern Party Organization

- ***Formal Party Structure**** – (see Figure 9-4)
 - Parallel the different levels of government:
 - City (local), State, and National Governments
 - All pursuing *shared goal* of electing party's candidates
 - Each level with different focus, priorities & functions
- First we examine: ***Local Organizations***
 - Power of the ***party machine*** => loyalty & benefits
 - Party offers ***Selective benefits*** => ***material benefits***- like?
 - ***Patronage jobs*** => loyalty to the party (example: Chicago)
 - Loyal Party workers are rewarded with political appointments (jobs) & city contracts

State Organizations

- *State party chair, party central committee & very small staff to administer:*
 - Lack any significant political power – *not enough \$\$\$*
- *Main job: support candidate selected in the primary*
 - Raise & distribute small amounts of funds
 - Run voter registration & get out vote drives
 - Conduct public opinion surveys & polls
- *Role of State governor in state party organization?*
 - Party chair manages Gov's *patronage appointments*
 - Gives Governor & his party some leverage & political power

National Party Organizations

- *Focus: National Politics*
- *National Party Convention*
 - Convenes every 4 yrs
 - Nominates president & vice president
 - (Based on *Direct Primaries* results)
 - Writes party platform & party rules (for next time)
- *National Party Committee*
 - Little power (but recently growing status & power)
 - Assist in presidential campaign of Party's nominee
 - No control over nomination & few \$\$\$ resources

Recent Developments

- Lately Political Parties' status have improved:
- Based on 1996 *Supreme Court* ruling:
 - Allowed unlimited uncoordinated Campaign contributions to Party (AKA: **Soft Money**)
- Result: \$\$\$ poured into the Parties (especially GOP)
 - Used to improve & expand staffs & services to Party nominee:
 - *Registration & get out the vote* drives
 - *Polling & issue research & candidate schooling*
 - Limited *cash donations & TV & mass mail ads*
 - Parties gained more influence *nation wide campaigns*:
 - Recruit candidates to challenge weak incumbent opponents
 - Branched out to states & cities (*GOP* in 2002 in Texas- *Delay*)
- Relationships among other levels of Party Organizations?
 - No formal control => cooperation is strictly voluntary
 - But all levels share common goal: get Party's candidate elected

U.S. Two-Party System versus Multiparty Systems

Single Member Plurality Electoral System:

A system in which each district elects a single member as its representative; the winner in each district is the candidate who receives a plurality* of the vote.

Single district rep. => *“winner take all” => *impact?*

Duverger's Law & voter limited choice

Proportional Representation System

A system in which legislators are elected at large and each party wins legislative seats in proportion to the number of votes it receives.

National parliament => proportional seats -> impact?

More minor party challenges & greater voter choice- *why?*

*The **Spatial Model** Applied to Real Politics*

An attempt to explain shift of different voter groups:

- 1956 *Party platforms* on *Brown v. Board of Ed.*
 - Democrats waffle while **GOP** accepts decision – *Why?*
- 1960 *civil rights movement*
 - **JFK** seen as symbolically supportive
 - Southern voters begin to reassess their party loyalties
- 1964 *civil rights act* => **LBJ** vs. *Goldwater*
 - Party positions? => impact on voters?
- Since 1968 => *Nixon's "Southern Strategy"*
 - Southern white voters => **GOP**
 - Solidification of *African Americans* w/*Democrats*

Reassessment of Party's Direction

- Debate of the losers over direction of Party on the most contentious issues:
 - Debate: *Back toward center or closer to Party's roots?*
 - *Similar debate goes on today with which party?*
- *Spatial Theory* model limitations =>
 - *Over-simplification* of influencing criteria (i.e. The Center)
 - Ignores *party in power's* performance, scandals, wars, \$\$\$
 - Reality: *too many variables* affect model's ability to describe the real world
 - Value of theory lies in its providing a model for conceptual understanding of a very complex theory

The History of U.S. Parties and Elections (2)

- *The First Party System* (1796–1824)
 - *Federalists*
 - Strong central government & economic policy
 - Northeast sectional concentration
 - *Democratic-republicans*
 - Weak central government w/rural agrarian \$\$\$
 - South & Western states
 - *Federalist* overreach themselves + *War of 1812* stand
 - *Dem-republicans* take over=> *era of good feelings*

**First Party
System
1796-1824**

Federalists

- Led by Alexander Hamilton and John Adams
- Sought a strong central government

**Democrat-
Republicans**

- Led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison
- Sought a weak federal government

The Second Party System

(1828–1856)

- *Jackson & 1st mass political party => Democratic party*
 - Rules expanding right to vote to all males 21 years +
- *Whig party formed in opposition (primarily to Jackson)*
 - Formed coalition: North's industrialist & South's \$\$

Second Party System 1828-1856

Democrats

- Led by Andrew Jackson
- Used party organization to mobilize voters
- Used new *convention system* to select party nominee

Whigs

- Built a coalition of Northern Industrialists and rich Southerners
- Led by Daniel Webster and Henry Clay at times

The Third Party System (1860–1892)

- *Slavery* issue became more contentious by mid-1850s
- *Whigs* attempted to hold North-South coalition together
 - Avoid clear statement on slavery as result
- *Republican* party formed & made clear anti-slavery aim
 - 1860=> *Lincoln*=> *Civil War*=> *Union Victory*
 - *Reconstruction*=> *Democratic South*=>
 - Series of close presidential races follow

Third Party System 1860-1892

Democrats

- **Most Democrats were from the South**
- **Fought many close elections with the Republicans**

Republicans

- **Sought to give a clear anti-slavery choice**
- **Abraham Lincoln won the White House in 1860**

The Fourth Party System (1896–1928)

- *Democrat Cleveland => \$\$\$ depression of 1893*
 - *William Jennings Bryan* nominated by Democrats:
 - *“Cross of Gold” speech => cheap \$\$\$ for debts*
- *GOP blames poor economy on Cleveland*
 - *GOP’s nominee McKinley* wins landslide victory
 - Begins 32 year *GOP* control of presidency
 - (*Woodrow Wilson* only exception in 1912)

Fourth Party System 1896-1928

Democrats

- Cleveland in office during 1893 depression
- William Jennings Bryan, running on populist platform was nominee

Republicans

- Blamed Democrats for economic problems
- Nominated McKinley
- Dominated the White House during this time

The Fifth Party System (1932–1980s)

- 1929 *Stock Market Crash* => *Great Depression*
 - *GOP Hoover* offers balanced budget as solution
 - Nation's unemployment rises to 25%
 - Nation (voters) demands jobs & bold Federal action
 - *GOP* fails to produce \$\$\$ recovery
- *FDR's* landslide & *New Deal coalition* begins major party shift of voters from one party to the other:
 - Poor, working class & unions align w/*Democrats*
 - Upper middle class & wealth align w/*GOP*
 - Above alignments *cut across sectional lines*
 - (In contrast to previous *sectional alignment* of past party systems)
 - *Only exception?* => *The Solid South* (why?)
- *Democrats* would dominate Congress as majority until 1960s
 - *New Deal coalition* would start to weaken from then on
 - Ended sometime in the 1980s

Fifth Party System 1932-1980s

Democrats

- Roosevelt launches *New Deal*
- Southerners remained loyal to party

Republicans

- Upper and middle class elsewhere moved towards Republicans
- *GOP* made election inroads during the 1960s

Critical Elections and *Party*

Realignment Theory:

- Disruption causing changes in basic party coalitions – *called?*
 - *Critical Elections* =>
 - Occurred during the 1828, 1860, 1896, & 1932 elections
- Result: parties became more ideologically polarized
 - Voter turnout was significantly increased
 - Blocks of voters switched parties in reaction to their dissatisfaction with their *former party's* platforms
- *Name scholars give this shift in party coalitions?*

Party Realignment

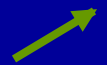
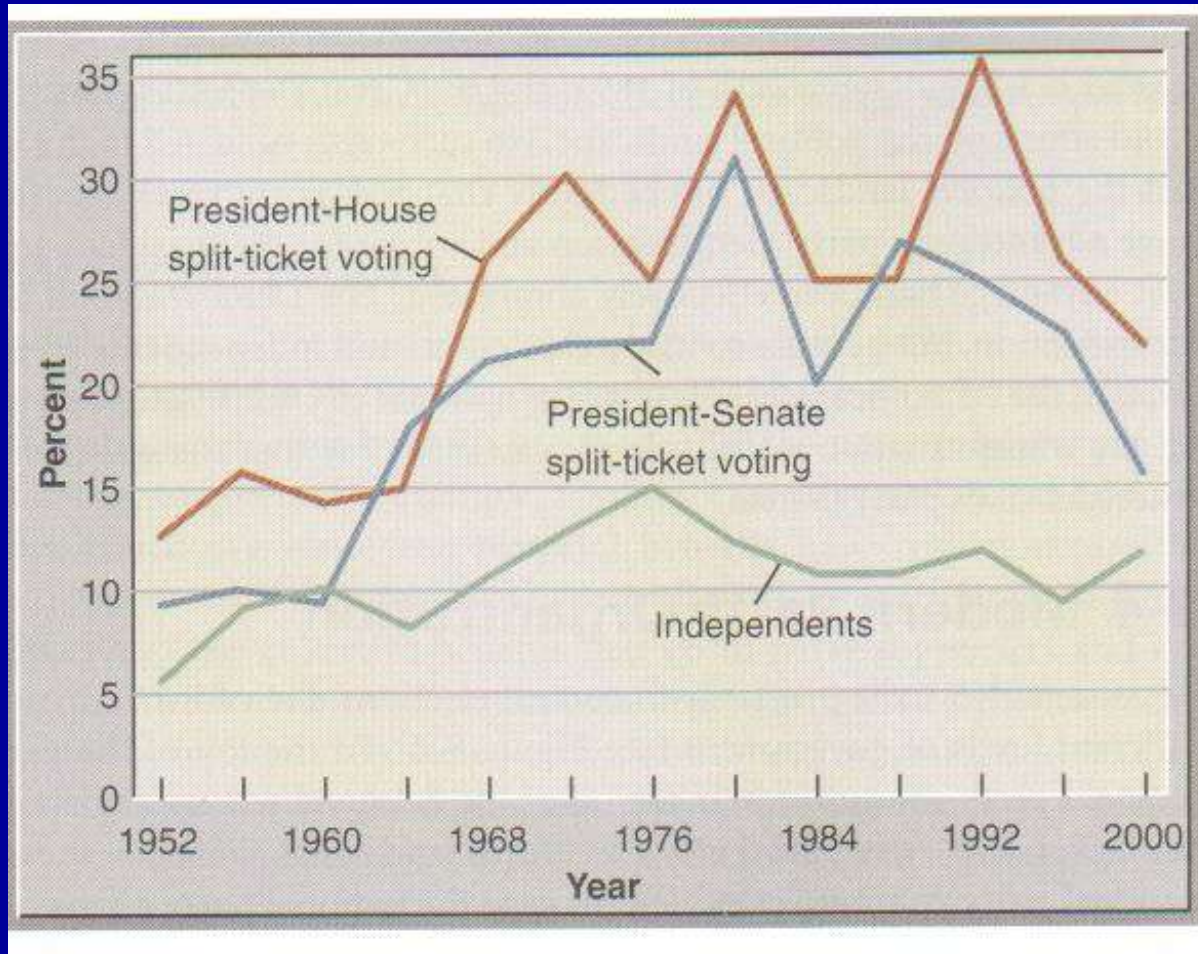
Conflicting Theories

- Two theories describing causes of shifts:
 - 1. *Parties fail to respond* to \$, social, demo. *tensions*
 - Example: impact of rapid *industrialization* after *Civil War*
 - Democrats move closer to pro-business center=> labor leaves
 - 2. *Party straddles major issue* cutting across party lines
 - *Whigs* straddle slavery issue
 - *Republican party* wins election
- If the Party fails to adapt to major social, economic, or political changes or ...
 - Fails to offer its members new choices:
 - Discouraged voters quite their old party
 - Realign themselves with the party that meets their needs

From *Realignment* to *Dealignment*?

- Historically, realignments occur every 35-40 years
 - (It's been over 70 years since the last one)
 - what's the problem? Are we already in realignment?
- The growth in *ticket spitting*? *(Figure 9-3)
 - Signs of *party dealignment*?
 - Growth in no party identification => *Independent*
- Signs of *6th party realignment* forming?
 - Shift of *South & Rocky Mountain West* to *GOP*
 - *NE & Midwest* Voters => *Democratic Party*

Earlier Signs of Party *Dealignment* (1952-2000)

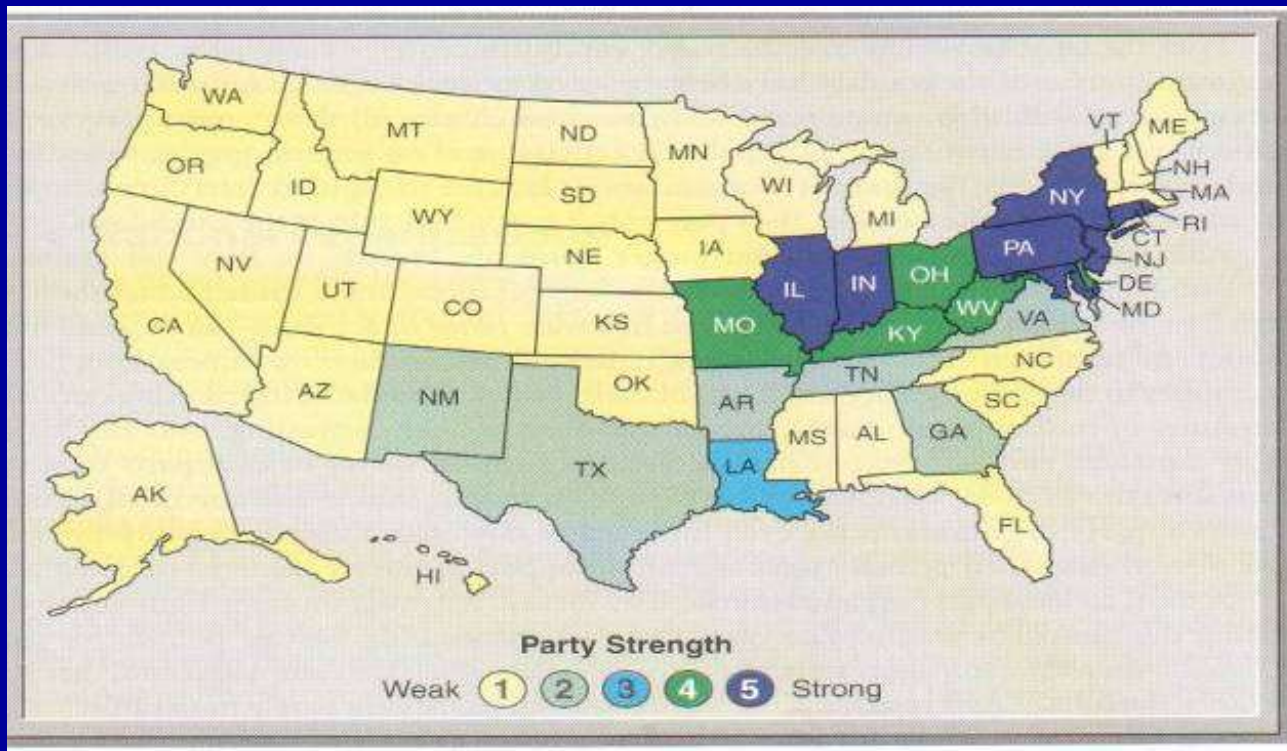


The Uncertain Future- “Polarization”?

- Nobody knows for sure what’s going on =>
 - Evidence of both *realignment* & *dealignment* occurring
 - No clear trend apparent (shifts back & forth)
- Current balance of power favors GOP
 - Electorate becoming more ideologically divided
 - Contentious 2000 election
 - 2004 election even more divisive
 - Trend toward social & cultural division and possibly *Polarization?*
- Recent GOP problems & upcoming midterm elections:
 - *Delay* under indictment & *SEC* investigating *Senate Majority LDR*
 - Iraq War, rising oil prices, and *Katrina* are major drag on economy
 - Recent Federal mismanagement of Katrina & the unknown future
- Democrats are reassessing their party’s direction
 - Back towards the center (*spatial theory*) or to core party values?
 - Role of Howard Dean?

Impact of *Progressive Reforms*

- Reforms reducing power of the *party machine* (Fig. 9-5)?
 - *Australian ballot*
 - *Direct Primary*
 - *Merit civil service system* => *spoils system's* decline
 - *Pendleton Act of 1883* (*Garfield's assassination*)



Other *Progressive reforms*

- *Other Progressive reforms & their consequences:*
- *Club movement* => parallel formal party organization
 - Response to rules weakening parties (California)
- *Candidate centered campaign* => independent of Parties
 - Impact of *TV & radio* => eliminate middle man
 - ***FECA*** campaign \$\$ limits \$1000 & \$5000(PACs) => impact =>
 - Candidates must conduct mass fundraising
 - Computer technology and mass mailing lists
 - organize independent fundraising operations apart from Party
 - (Candidate's use of internet during 2004 election)
- Result: *parties relegated to support role* (less power)
 - Organize fundraising & campaign rallies & social events
 - Distribute literature & operate phone banks & conduct surveys
 - Door to door canvassing (very effective) & other activities

KEY TERMS – *Political Parties*

- **Australian ballot:** A government-printed, secret ballot.
- **Blanket primary:** A direct primary in which voters may cast ballots for candidates of any party, but may only vote once for each office.
- **Candidate-centered campaigns:** Campaigns in which candidates set up campaign organizations, raise money, and campaign independently of other candidates in their party.
- **Caucus/convention system:** A nomination method in which registered party members attend a party caucus, or meeting, to choose a nominee. In large districts, local caucuses send delegates to represent them at convention.
- **Centrist parties:** Parties close to the political center.
- **Closed primary:** A direct primary in which voters must register their party affiliations before Election Day.
- **Critical elections:** Elections that disrupt party coalitions and create new ones in a party realignment.
- **Direct primary:** An election in which voters and not party leaders directly choose a party's nominee for political office.
- **Duverger's Law:** The generalization that if a nation has a single-member, plurality electoral system, it will develop a two-party system.
- **Median voter hypothesis:** The theory that the best possible position for a politician who cares only about winning elections in the center—that is, in the position of the median voter.

KEY TERMS – *Political Parties*

- **New Deal coalition:** The Democratic Party coalition that formed in 1932. It got its name from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal policies.
- **Open primary:** A direct primary in which voters may choose which party primary they will vote in on Election Day.
- **Party dealignment:** A trend in which voter loyalties to the two major parties weaken.
- **Party machine:** A party organization built on the use of selective, material incentives for participation.
- **Party platform:** An official statement of beliefs, values, and policy positions issued by a national party convention.
- **Party realignment:** A long-term shift in the electoral balance between the major parties.
- **Patronage job:** A job given as a reward for loyal party service.
- **Political cleavages:** Societal divisions that parties organize around.
- **Political party:** A coalition of people seeking to control the government by contesting elections and winning office.
- **Proportional representation system:** A system in which legislators are elected at large and each party wins legislative seats in proportion to the number of votes it receives.
- **Selective benefit:** Any benefit given to a member of a group, but denied to nonmembers.
- **Single-member, plurality electoral system:** A system in which each district elects a single member as its representative; the winner in each district is the candidate who receives a plurality of the vote.
- **Two-party system:** A political system in which two major parties dominate.