

Party Competition in Western Europe

Concepts

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Logistics

Your feedback on the syllabus:

- Any open questions regarding the grading requirements?
- Suggestions for alternative literature? Any gaps to fill?
- Other comments?

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If any questions come to your mind in the course of the term,
please let me know!

Selection of Essay

You can choose the roundtable session on which you want to write your essay after the session (on Learnweb).

- Keep in mind: you are required to participate in **both** sessions
- If you write an essay, you'll serve as an expert in the respective session.
- Otherwise, you'll be a commentator of the submitted essays

On well-being...

One important add-on to last week's session:

- information on sexualized violence and harassment in universities on the Learnweb

Plan for today

Today, we've got two points on the agenda:

1. We'll talk about the core pillars of empirical political science
2. We deal with some crucial concepts in studying party competition [more to come in the following sessions]

What's good academic research for you?

In pairs, please discuss what's good academic research to you?
Think of an academic article you've recently read and elaborate
what you liked about it. Which elements should every piece of
academic writing contain? [5 minutes]

Academic Research

Good research

● ...

Criteria defined by KKV (1994)

King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, pp. 16–17) define scientific research based on the following criteria:

1. Inference
2. Transparency
3. Probabilistic conclusions
4. Science is not the content, it's the *method*

Science is more than mere description (still important!), it's about identifying causal explanations of political phenomena.

Research at the Chair of Comparative Politics

We adopt a similar, **evidence-based** approach in our studies of political phenomena. This implies that we...

- ...formulate research questions that are of both theoretical and empirical relevance
- ...derive testable research hypotheses
- ...are often interested in causal explanations for political realities
- ...and use appropriate designs to test our expectations empirically

The Comparative Method

As the Chair of *Comparative Politics*, the comparative approach is the core pillar of our research.

What's the value of comparing?

An example

Example:

The more democratic a political system the less wars against other democratic states it is involved in.



Causal effect

The unit-specific causal effect is defined as:

$$\delta_i = Y_i^1 - Y_i^0 \quad (1)$$

...which means the difference between the same unit (e.g. a regime) that is democratic and authoritarian at the same time.

Fundamental problem of causal inference

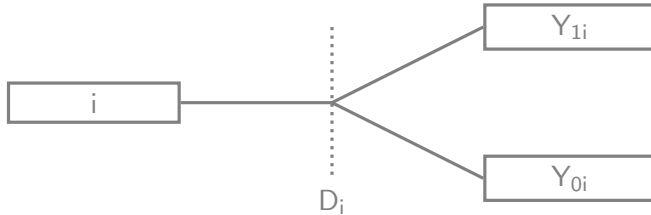


Figure: Potential Outcomes

¹see Cunningham (2021, pp. 125–128)

Fundamental problem of causal inference

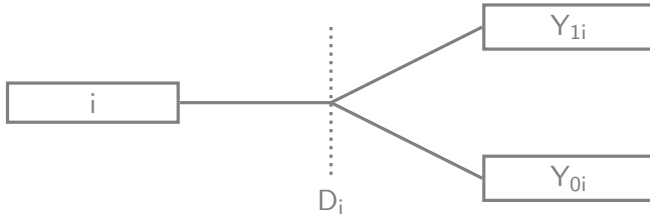


Figure: Potential Outcomes

Problem: We cannot observe the same unit in different conditions at the same time.¹

¹see Cunningham (2021, pp. 125–128)

Why comparison? II

“If we cannot rerun history at the same time and the same place with different values of our explanatory variable each time—as a true solution to the Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference would require—we can attempt to make a second-best assumption: we can rerun our experiment in two different units that are ‘homogeneous.’” (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, p. 90)

Our workaround: **Compare!**

Why comparison?



If we studied only one case, we would never know whether cats are responsible for bumpy roads.

Comparative Designs

1. Experiments (gold standard for causal designs)
2. Observational studies
 - Statistical studies
 - Comparative case studies

What counts as a comparison?

- An analysis that tries to explain the voting behaviour of citizens in Germany?
- Investigating what determines the economic performance of Italian regions?
- A study of how Europe developed after World War II?
- Examining whether democratic countries are less likely to lead wars than authoritarian regimes?

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In this seminar, we treat comparative politics more broadly. It's not necessarily a study across countries, but includes within-country studies (Pepinsky 2019).

Definitions?

What is a party? What's a party system?

Definitions?

Parties are collective agents which are comprised of individual politicians who pool their resources to seek votes, policies and offices.

Party systems denote the interactions between parties. Analysis on party systems is about their composition in terms of ideology and numbers as well as the behaviour of political agents.

Party's from a functionalist view

Following Sartori (2005, 23ff.)

- Communication (representative function)
- Opinion leader (*influencer*)
- Political participation
- Mobilization
- Aggregation and moderation of political demands
- Integration and conflict resolution
- Recruitment of political personnel
- Policy-making (cf. *party government*)

Any order in the relevance of functions?

Types of parties



(a) Elite parties



(b) Mass parties



(c) 'Catch-all' parties



Table 4: Party membership change in established democracies, 1980-2000

Country	Change in ratio of members to electorate	Change in number of members	% change in number of members
United Kingdom	-2.41	-1,118,274	-46.05
Norway	-18.20	-24,401	-61.75
France	-3.31	-574,472	-56.09
Sweden	-4.54	-241,130	-47.46
Ireland	-2.9	-50,836	-46.27
Netherlands	-2.96	-178,000	-41.22
Poland	-7.80	-340,241	-40.86
Denmark	-1.27	-195,462	-39.70
Italy	-4.49	-1410,413	-39.41
Belgium	-1.41	-191,113	-38.97
Austria	-13.21	-422,401	-38.41
Netherlands	-12.75	-321,499	-35.19
Germany	-2.22	-311,876	-27.33
Portugal	-1.86	-45,306	-14.26
Spain	-1.46	-110,008	-18.89
Greece	-1.10	-1,208,218	-179.40

Source: Van der Meer et al. (2009)

(d) Cartel parties according to Mair (2013, 41)

Figure: Evolution of Party Types

Party's Motivations

Scholars often distinguish three different motivations of parties

- *vote-seeking*: parties seek to maximize votes (Downs 1957)
- *office-seeking*: parties aim to get into office (Riker 1962)
- *policy-seeking*: parties want to implement policy

Party's Motivations



(a) Austrian Greens
1986



(b) Austrian Greens
2020

Party's Motivations



(c) Austrian Greens
1986



(d) Austrian Greens
2020

→ Motivations interact and are dynamic (Strøm 1990)

Parties and systems...

In groups of 5 people, please choose one of the following countries (Italy, Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). Please gather information on their party system, the electoral system as well as the parties present in the system. [10 minutes]

Parties and systems...

You can freely use the tools and decide on which kind of information you want to present. These are useful data sources:

- Electoral System Design Database
- Comparative Political Dataset
- Veto Points Dashboard

Systemic criteria for party system classification

- **Fractionalization:** How many parties are (effectively) constituting the system?
- **Volatility:** How much does the composition of a party system change over time?

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- **Fractionalization:** How many parties are (effectively) constituting the system?
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Both shape the competitiveness of a party system. *What about your cases? How would you assess their fractionalization and volatility?*

Why do voters vote for parties?

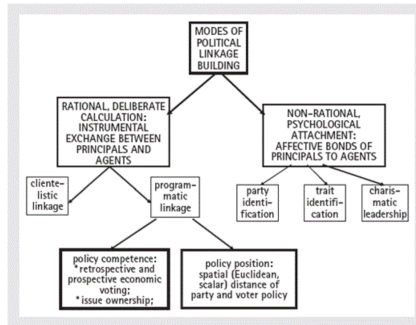


Fig. 30.1. Modes of political linkage in democracies

Figure: Different dimensions in party competition by Kitschelt (2011, p. 622)

Why do voters vote for parties?

- **sociological** models of party competition: voting behaviour shaped by socialization (microsociological vs macrosociological, e.g. *cleavages*)
- **social-psychological** models of party competition: voting influenced by psychological causes, such as party identification
- **rational-choice** (or economic) models of party competition: voting follows utilitarian considerations

To prepare for next week...

- Choice of essay and questions on Learnweb
- Next session: Cleavages and realignment + data session [bring your laptops!]
- Readings:
 - **Main readings**
 1. **Marks G et al. (2023)** The Social Bases of Political Parties: A New Measure and Survey. *British Journal of Political Science* **53** (1), 249–260. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123421000740](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000740)
 - **Complementary readings**

To prepare for next week...


1. **Abou-Chadi T and Hix S** (2021) Brahmin Left Versus Merchant Right? Education, Class, Multiparty Competition, and Redistribution in Western Europe. *The British Journal of Sociology* **72**. DOI: [10.1111/1468-4446.12834](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12834)
2. **Lipset SM and Rokkan S** (1967) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. Free Press

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

-  **Abou-Chadi T and Hix S (2021)** Brahmin Left Versus Merchant Right? Education, Class, Multiparty Competition, and Redistribution in Western Europe. *The British Journal of Sociology* **72**.
-  **Cunningham S (2021)** *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale University Press, 2021. JSTOR: [j.ctv1c29t27](#).
-  **Downs A (1957)** An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy. *Journal of Political Economy* **65** (2), 135–150.
-  **King G, Keohane RO, and Verba S (1994)** *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, New Edition*. Princeton University Press, 1994.
-  **Kitschelt H (2011)** Party Systems. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Ed. by R Goodin. Oxford University Press, 2011, 0.

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-  **Lipset SM and Rokkan S (1967)** *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. Free Press, 1967.
-  **Mair P (2013)** *Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy*. London: Verso, 2013.
-  **Marks G et al. (2023)** The Social Bases of Political Parties: A New Measure and Survey. *British Journal of Political Science* 53 (1), 249–260.
-  **Pepinsky TB (2019)** The Return of the Single-Country Study. *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (Volume 22, 2019), 187–203.
-  **Riker WH (1962)** *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1962.

Literature



Sartori G (2005) Party Types, Organisation and Functions. *West European Politics* **28** (1), 5–32.



Strøm K (1990) A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties. *American Journal of Political Science* **34** (2), 565–598.