

GV101 Week 08: Political Parties

Questions to Consider

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Office Hours (by appointment via the [Student Hub](#)):
Wednesdays, 10:30 – 11:30, CBG.4.13
Wednesdays, 14:30 – 15:30, CBG.4.13

Country Question:

- What are the main political parties in your country? Please describe each party.
 - How stable has the party system in your country been from the middle of the twentieth century until now? Are the main parties now the same ones that existed in the middle of the twentieth century?

Essential Reading Questions:

1. What are the political cleavages identified by Clark, Golder, and Golder?
 - a) How closely related are these to the ideological dimensions that we considered in week 05?
 - b) What do you think affects whether, and how, social cleavages relate to ideological dimensions?
2. What are Duverger's theory, Duverger's law, and Duverger's hypothesis?
 - a) How does Duverger describe the relationship between the social cleavages and the electoral rules that shape party systems?
 - b) What qualifications of Duverger's theory, regarding the difference between local and national level party vote, and centralisation of political power, have been observed?
 - c) According to Duverger, what combination of factors must be in place for a multi-party system to emerge?
3. Golder presents evidence supporting both the 'materialist hypothesis' and the 'ideational hypothesis' in relation to populist, but not neofascist, parties. What are those hypotheses and, therefore, what do his results tell us?
 - a) What does the distinction between instrumental behaviour of populist voters and the expressive behaviour of neofascist voters tell us?
4. What is Mudde's definition of populism, and how useful do you think it is?
 - a) According to Mudde, what are the two alternative ways to conceptualise and organise society that populism is opposed to, and what are their features?
 - b) How does Mudde characterise the supporters of recent populist movements as opposed to supporters of the New Left in the past? Do you think this is a helpful distinction to make?
5. What possible factors help explain rising support for populism according to Mudde?
 - a) Which of those do you think is most important? Why?
 - b) Can the tension between populism, as defined by Mudde, and liberal democracy be resolved? How?

Additional Essential Reading Questions:

6. What are the four functions of political parties identified by Clark, Golder, and Golder?
 - a) Which of those functions, if any, do you think best explains parties?
 - b) Which of those functions, if any, do you think is the most useful?
7. According to Mudde, how are Weber's three forms of authority helpful in understanding support for populist parties?
 - a) And why is the opening of democratic institutions, and the move towards more direct democracy, a flawed response to recent populist movements?

Further Reading Questions:

8. What is the overarching factor identified by Green and Hobolt (drawing on Downs) that influences whether elections relate to positional or competence issues?
 - a) If an election is more about competence than positional issues, what are the factors that influence which issues parties choose to campaign on?
 - b) What factors could affect voters' views of what the most important issue is, and which party is most competent on it?
9. Ezrow, De Vries, Steenbergen, and Edwards identify a 'general electoral result' and a 'partisan constituency result'. What are these?
 - a) What are the two reasons that mainstream parties conform to the 'general electoral result'?
 - b) What are the four reasons that niche parties conform to the 'partisan constituency result'?

Essential Readings for Next Week:

- 'Elections and Electoral Systems' chapter in William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, and Sona Nadenichek Golder, *Foundations of Comparative Politics* (London, Sage Publications, 2019), pp. 253-287.
- John M. Carey and Simon Hix, 'The Electoral Sweet Spot: Low-Magnitude Proportional Electoral Systems', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Apr., 2011), pp. 383-397.

Further Readings for Consideration Next Week:

- André Blais, 'The Debate over Electoral Systems', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Jul., 1991), pp. 239-260.
- Joseph M. Colomer, 'It's Parties That Choose Electoral Systems (or, Duverger's Laws Upside Down)', *Political Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Mar., 2005), pp. 1-21.