

WEEK 9: Political Parties

Parties and Party Systems

In politics shared hatreds are almost always the basis of friendship.

Contents

- Party politics 200
- Types of party 201
- Functions of parties 201
- Development of parties 202
- Party systems 202
- One party system 203
- Two party system 204
- Domestic party systems 204
- International systems 205
- The decline of parties? 208
- Summary/Questions for discussion/Partner reading 208

So fundamental are political parties to the operation of modern politics that their role and significance is often taken for granted. It is hardly, for instance, that parties are a relatively recent invention. As political machines organized to win elections and wield government power, parties only came into existence in the last three or four centuries. Now, however, they are virtually ubiquitous. The only parts of the world to which they do not exist are those where they are suppressed by dictatorship or military rule. Quite simply, the political party is the major organizing principle of modern politics. Whether they are the great tools of democracy or sources of tyranny and repression, political parties are the vital link between the state and civil society, between the institutions of government and the private and informal life of the citizenry. Nevertheless, parties and party systems have increasingly become under attack. They have been blamed for failing to articulate the views and more diverse aspirations that have emerged in modern societies, and for failing to solve, or perhaps even address, many of these most serious problems.

The principal issues discussed in this chapter are the following:

- What is a political party? How can parties be classified?
- What are the major functions of political parties?
- How do parties organize, and where is power located within them?
- What kinds of party system are there?
- What kinds of party system shape the broader political process?
- How does the party system decline, and is this decline terminal?

Party is a group of people in which people get together who are having common objective and that aim is getting into power. They have motto in the beginning, and they want to get into power to get this motto.

The concept of political party is a new concept a 19th century concept. In the early election of US, there was no concept of party. Then there was a party development, then two party dev.

Parties and Party Systems

Party politics

Political parties are found in the vast majority of countries and in most political systems. They are not, however, a universal phenomenon. In some countries, such as the United States, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government.

Types of party

- One party system
- Two party system
- Multi party system
- Proportional representation
- First past the post
- List system
- Mixed system

Party politics

Political parties are found in the vast majority of countries and in most political systems. They are not, however, a universal phenomenon. In some countries, such as the United States, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government.

Party politics

Political parties are found in the vast majority of countries and in most political systems. They are not, however, a universal phenomenon. In some countries, such as the United States, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government.

PARTY POLITICS

could they develop an extra-parliamentary machinery of constituency branches, local groups and so on. In contrast, socialist parties and parties representing religious, ethnic and language groups were invariably born as social movements or interest groups operating outside government. Subsequently, they developed into fully fledged parliamentary parties in the hope of winning formal representation and shaping public policy. By the beginning of the twentieth century parties and party systems had, in effect, become the political manifestation of the social and other cleavages that animated society at large. However, the resulting party forms varied considerably.

Types of party

A variety of classifications have been used for political parties. The most important of these are the following:

- **Cadre parties** (also known as **Kirchheimer parties**) - these are parties which are organized on a basis of discipline and ideological commitment. They are usually small and are often found in countries with a high level of political commitment and ideological discipline. In Germany, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) are examples of cadre parties.
- **Mass parties** - these are parties which are organized on a basis of mass membership and are usually found in countries with a high level of political participation. They are usually large and are often found in countries with a high level of political participation. In Germany, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) are examples of mass parties.

Most modern parties fall into the category of what **Otto Kirchheimer (1966)** termed 'catch-all parties'. These are parties that drastically reduce their ideological baggage in order to appeal to the largest possible number of voters. Kirchheimer particularly had in mind the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany, but

12 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

The best example of catch-all parties are found in the USA in the form of the Republicans and Democrats. Modern 'catch-all' parties such as these are characterized by their emphasis on broad appeal and mass membership. They are usually large and are often found in countries with a high level of political participation. In Germany, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) are examples of mass parties.

Party politics

Political parties are found in the vast majority of countries and in most political systems. They are not, however, a universal phenomenon. In some countries, such as the United States, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government.

Party politics

Political parties are found in the vast majority of countries and in most political systems. They are not, however, a universal phenomenon. In some countries, such as the United States, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, they are the only way in which a group of individuals can be organized to influence government.

PARTY POLITICS

... has been so weakened that the 'ruling party has in effect substituted itself for the government, creating a fixed party-state apparatus. It was common in the USSR, for instance, for the General Secretary of the CPSU to act as the chief executive or head of government without bothering to assume a formal title post.

The final way of distinguishing between parties is on the basis of ideological orientation, specifically between those parties labelled left-wing and those labelled right-wing (see p. 234). Parties seen as part of the Left (progressive, socialist and communist parties) are characterised by a commitment to change, in the form of either social reform or wholesale economic transformation. These have traditionally drawn their support from the ranks of the poor and disadvantaged (in urban societies, the working classes). Parties thought to constitute the Right (conservative and fascist parties in particular) generally uphold the existing social order and are, in that sense, a force for continuity. Their supporters usually include business interests and the materially contented middle classes. However, this notion of a neat left-right party divide is at best simplistic and at worst deeply misleading. Not only are both the left and the right often divided along reformist/revolutionary and constitutional/extraconstitutional lines, but also all parties, especially constitutional ones, tend to be 'broad churches' in the sense that they encompass their own left and right wings. Moreover, electoral competition has the effect of blurring ideological identities. Finally, the shift away from old class polarities and the emergence of new political issues such as environment, animal rights and feminism has perhaps rendered the conventional ideas of left and right redundant (Giddens, 1994).

Functions of parties

Although political parties are defined by a central function (the filling of political office and the wielding of government power), their impact on the political system is substantially broader and more complex. It goes without saying that there are dangers in generalising about the functions of parties. Constitutional parties operating in a context of electoral competition tend to be portrayed as 'business of democracy', indeed, the existence of such parties is often seen as the litmus test of a healthy democratic system. On the other hand, regime parties that enjoy a monopoly of political power are more commonly portrayed as instruments of manipulation and political control. A number of general functions of parties can nevertheless be identified. The main functions are as follows:

- 1. representation
- 2. elite formation and recruitment
- 3. goal formulation
- 4. interest articulation and aggregation
- 5. socialisation and mobilisation
- 6. organisation of government.

Representation

Representation (see p. 240) is often seen as the primary function of parties. It refers to the capacity of parties to respond to and articulate the views of both members and the voters. In the language of systems theory, political parties are major 'inputting

17 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

FOCUS ON

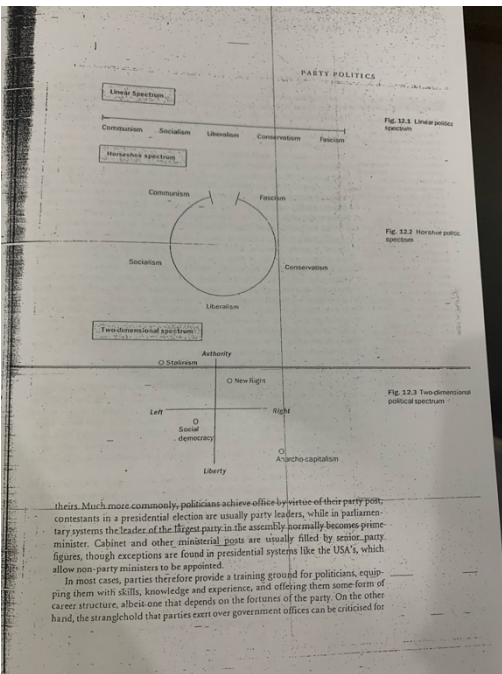
The political spectrum

The left-right political spectrum is a traditional method of describing political parties and movements, summarising the ideological positions of competing parties and movements. Its origins date back to the French Revolution and the positions groups adopted at the first meeting of the French National Assembly in 1789. The terms left and right do not have exact meanings, however. In a narrow sense, the linear political spectrum (see figure 12.1) summarises different attitudes to the economy and the role of the state. Left-wing views favour the market and individualism, right-wing views favour the market and individualism. This supposedly reflects deeper ideological or value differences.

Left	Right
Equality	Order
Fraternity	Duties
rights	Tradition
Progress	Discipline
Reform	Stability
Internationalism	Nationalism

An alternative, zig-zag shaped political spectrum (see figure 12.2) was devised in the 1950s period to highlight the totalitarian and monistic tendencies of both fascism and communism by contrast with the pluralist tendencies of mainstream capitalism. The 1960s systems theorist Anthony Downs (1957), who has developed a two-dimensional political spectrum (see figure 12.3) has tried to compensate for the crudeness and oversimplification of the conventional left-right spectrum by adding a vertical dimension to it. This enables parties on economic organisation to be distinguished from those devoted to civil liberty.

... ensures that government heeds the needs and wishes of the larger society. One of the rare exceptions to this rule was General de Gaulle, who offered himself to France in 1944 as a 'lone figure' standing above party divisions. Parties such as the Union for the New Republic (UNR) were his creation, as opposed to him being



17 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

... ensuring that political leaders are drawn from a relatively small pool of talent, the one figure in a handful of major parties. In the USA, however, this stranglehold has been weakened by the widespread use of primary elections, which reduce the chance that a party has over the process of candidate selection and nomination.

Goal formulation

Political parties have traditionally been one of the means through which societies set their collective goals and, in some cases, ensure that they are carried out. Parties play this role in the process of articulating, aggregating, and formulating programmes of government. In the process of articulating, aggregation, election manifestos and so on, parties articulate their goals and objectives, and ensure that they are carried out. Parties also play a role in the process of articulating, aggregating, and formulating programmes of government. In the process of articulating, aggregation, election manifestos and so on, parties articulate their goals and objectives, and ensure that they are carried out.

Interest articulation and aggregation

In the process of developing collective goals, parties also help to articulate and aggregate the various interests found in society. Parties, indeed, often develop as vehicles through which business, labour, religious, ethnic and other groups advance or defend their interests. The UK Labour Party, for instance, was created by the trade union movement with the aim of achieving working class political representation. Other parties have, effectively, recruited interests and groups in order to broaden their electoral base: as the US parties did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with immigrant groups.

The fact that national parties invariably articulate the demands of a multitude of groups forces them to aggregate these interests by drawing them together into a coherent whole, balancing competing interests against each other. Constitutional parties are clearly forced to do this by the pressures of electoral competition, but even monopolistic parties articulate and aggregate interests through their close relationship with the state and the economy, especially in centrally planned systems. However, not even in competitive party systems are all interests articulated, those of small groups, the relatively poor and the politically unorganised being the most vulnerable to exclusion.

Socialisation and mobilisation

Through internal debate and discussion, as well as campaigning and electoral competition, parties also play a central role in political education and socialisation. The

12 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

Focus on

The iron law of oligarchy

Oligarchy is government or domination by the few. The iron law of oligarchy was formulated by Michels (1911/1962), suggesting that there is an inevitable tendency for political organisations, and by implication all organisations, to become oligarchic. Participation in democratic structures cannot change this. Michels advanced a number of arguments in support of his law:

- This results from the need for specialisation. The members of a party are expert in their own fields but lack the general skills that those possessing a wider expertise possess.
- Leaders form cohesive groups because they recognise that this improves their chances of remaining in power.
- Rank-and-file members of an organisation tend to be apathetic and are therefore generally disposed to accept subordination and leadership by party figures.

This view was more memorably expressed by Robert Michels in *Political Parties* (1911/1962) in the form of the 'iron law of oligarchy', or, as Michels put it, 'he who says organisation says oligarchy'. Michels (1876-1936), a prominent elite theorist, wished to analyse the power structure of the German SPD, but argued that despite the party's formally democratic organisation, power was concentrated in the hands of a small group of party leaders.

For Michels, the 'law' explained the inevitable failure of democratic socialism and, indeed, exploded the myth of political democracy. Critics, however, point out that Michels' observations are generalisations made on the basis of a single political party at a particular moment in time, and also rest on questionable psychological theories. In practice, party elites have often proved to be more factious, indeed, and mass memberships less deferential and quiescent, than Michels suggested. A more modern version of the same theory was developed in *British Political Parties* (1955) by Robert McKenzie. McKenzie challenged the established view that the Conservative Party was elitist and leader-dominated, while the Labour Party was characterised by a high measure of internal democracy. Despite the parties' different structures and value systems, McKenzie concluded that the distribution of power within the two parties was essentially the same: both were dominated by a nexus of parliamentary leaders.

Attempts have been made to strengthen the democratic and participatory features of parties through reform. One of the clearest examples of this occurred in the USA in the 1970s and 1980s. US parties differ in many respects from their European counterparts. Being loose coalitions of sometimes conflicting interests held together by little more than the need to contest presidential elections, they are highly decentralised and generally non-programmatic. Traditionally, state-based or city-based power brokers exercised a decisive influence at nominating conventions. Following protest and backlash in the 1968 Democratic national convention in Chicago, however, a reform movement sprang up aimed at weakening the power of local party leaders and strengthening the role of rank-and-file members.

This was largely accomplished through the wider use of nominating primaries

and encourages...
 growing numb...
 nomination, g...
 Democrats in...
 have needs...
 that more o...
 undesirable...
 by modern...
 congression...
 party reser...
 for individ...
 focused elec...
 Similar...
 Party in th...
 the 'betray...
 the party's...
 strengthener...
 tion of M...
 deputy le...
 affiliated...
 internal...
 contribu...
 (SDP) in...
 The...
 towards...
 could b...
 Kinne...
 ber, on...
 Blair's...
 ship) i...
 1980s...
 - Robe...
 Con...
 proced...
 dyna...
 elec...
 T...
 dete...
 app...
 riv...
 col...
 sou...
 mu...
 Re...
 ica...
 m...
 let...
 wi...
 19

12 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

Party democracy

Party democracy is a form of political organisation in which the party operates through the agency of a party as a democratic institution. There are few types about how this can be achieved. In the last century, democratic parties are...
 present with their...
 energy. This...
 evidence, that...
 broad particip...
 election of candid...
 selection of candid...
 second...
 formulation...
 model, party...
 that party...
 should be...
 the...
 who are...
 themselves...
 accountable...
 wide and...
 power...
 need to...
 needs...
 activists.

Party politics

Party politics is the process of political competition between political parties. It involves the contest for power and the formation of government. Party politics is a central feature of modern democracies. It involves the contest for power and the formation of government. Party politics is a central feature of modern democracies.

Party organisation: where does power lie?

Because of the crucial role that political parties play, considerable attention has been focused on where power lies within parties. The organisation and structure of parties thus provides vital clues about the distribution of power within society as a whole. Can parties function as democratic bodies that broaden participation and access to power? Or do they simply entrench the dominance of leaders and elites?

One of the earliest attempts to investigate internal party democracy was undertaken in Mosei Ostrogorski's *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties* (1902), which argued that the representation of individual interests had lost out to the growing influence of the party machine and control exerted by a caucus of senior

12 PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

Party systems

Party systems are important not only because of the range of functions they carry out (representation, elite recruitment, aggregation of interests, and so on), but also because of the complex interrelationships between and among parties are crucial in structuring how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice.

Party systems

Party systems are important not only because of the range of functions they carry out (representation, elite recruitment, aggregation of interests, and so on), but also because of the complex interrelationships between and among parties are crucial in structuring how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice.

Party systems

Party systems are important not only because of the range of functions they carry out (representation, elite recruitment, aggregation of interests, and so on), but also because of the complex interrelationships between and among parties are crucial in structuring how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice. This network of relationships is structured how political systems work in practice.

PARTY SYSTEMS 24

parties contested the December 1993 parliamentary elections, with the largest of them, the Russian Communist Party, gaining just 22 percent of the vote.
The major party systems found in modern politics are as follows:

- one-party systems
- two-party systems
- dominant-party systems
- multiparty systems

One-party systems

Strictly speaking, the term one-party system is contradictory since 'system' implies interaction amongst a number of entities. The term is nevertheless helpful in distinguishing between political systems in which a single party enjoys a monopoly of power through the exclusion of all other parties (by political or constitutional means) and ones characterized by a competitive struggle amongst a number of parties. Because monopolistic parties effectively function as permanent governments with no mechanism (short of a coup or revolution) through which they can be removed from power, they invariably develop an entrenched relationship with the state machine. This allows such states to be classified as 'one-party states', their machinery being seen as a fused 'party-state' apparatus. Two rather different types of one-party system can be identified, however.

The first type has been found in state socialist regimes where 'ruling' communist parties have directed and controlled virtually all the institutions and aspects of society. Such parties are subject to strict ideological discipline, in accordance with the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and they have highly structured internal organizations in line with the principles of democratic centralism. These are cadre parties in the sense that membership is restricted on political and ideological grounds. Some 4 percent of the Chinese population are members of the Chinese Communist Party, and around 9 percent of the Soviet population belonged to the CPSU. In this type of party, the party core consists of well paid full-time officials, the apparatchiki, who run the party apparatus, or apparatus, and exercise supervision over both the state machine and social institutions.

A central device through which communist parties control the state, economy and society, and ensure the subordination of 'lower' organs to 'higher' ones, is the comradely system. This is a system of vetted appointments in which, effectively, all senior posts are filled by party-approved candidates. The justification for both the party's monopoly of power and its supervision of state and social institutions lies in the Leninist claim that the party acts as the 'vanguard of the proletariat' in providing the working masses with the ideological leadership and guidance needed to achieve that they fulfil their revolutionary destiny. Vanguardism (the belief in the need for a leading or revolutionary party) has, however, been criticised for being deeply elitist and providing the seed from which Stalinism later grew. Trotsky (1937), on the other hand, offered an alternative interpretation by suggesting that, far from the 'ruling' party dominating Soviet development, its formal monopoly of power merely concealed the burgeoning influence of the state bureaucracy.

The second type of one-party system is associated with nationalist nationalism, and state consolidation in the developing world. In Ghana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, for example, the 'ruling' party developed out of an independence movement that

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

proclaimed the overriding need for national unity and economic development in Zimbabwe, one-party rule only developed in 1986 (six years after independence). Through the merger of the two major parties, ZANU and ZAPU, both former guerrilla groups, in other cases, such parties have developed as little more than vehicles through which a national leader has tried to consolidate power, as with General Ershad's People's Party in Bangladesh and President Mobutu's Popular Movement of the Revolution in Zaïre.

One-party systems in Africa and Asia have usually been built around the dominant role of a charismatic leader and drawn whatever ideological identity they have possessed from the views of that leader. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the Convention People's Party (CPP) in Ghana until his overthrow in 1966 is often seen as the model such leader, but other examples are Julius Nyerere in Tanzania and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Mugabe, you occasionally, these parties are weakly organised (very different from the tight discipline found in communist one-party states), and they play at best, only a peripheral role in the process of policy making. Their monopolistic position nevertheless helps to enrich authoritarianism (see p. 36) and to keep alive the danger of corruption.

(Two weak parties dominated the market)

Two-party systems

A two-party system is diabolical in that it is dominated by two 'major' parties that have a roughly equal prospect of winning government power. In its classical form, a two-party system can be identified by three criteria:

- Although a number of 'minor' parties may exist, only two parties enjoy sufficient electoral and legislative strength to have a realistic prospect of winning government power.
- The larger party is able to rule alone (usually on the basis of a legislative majority); the other provides the opposition.
- Power alternates between these parties, both are 'electable', the opposition serving as a 'government in the wings'.

The UK and the USA are the most frequently cited examples of states with two-party systems, though others have included Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Archetypal examples of two-party politics are nevertheless rare. The UK, for instance, often portrayed as the model two-party system, has only conformed to its three defining criteria for particular (and, some would argue, untypical) periods of its history. Even the apparent Labour-Conservative two-party system of the early post-Second World War period (power alternating four times between 1945 and 1970) during which time Labour's electability was called into question. Moreover, despite the fact that a two-party system has existed in the country since 1974, it is more suggested by the decline of combined Labour-Conservative support (down from over 95 percent in the early 1950s to a postwar low of 70 percent in 1983), as well as by prolonged Conservative rule after 1979.

Even the seemingly incontrovertible two-party system of the US, which, for instance, sees the Republicans and Democrats holding between them all the seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate, can be questioned. On the one hand, the presidential system allows one party to capture the White House (the presidency) while

PARTY SYSTEMS

the other control (Congress) has occurred since 1984, meaning that it may not be possible to identify a clear government-opposition divide. On the other hand, 'third' party candidates are sometimes of significance. Ross Perot's 16 percent of the vote in the 1992 presidential election not only highlighted the decline of the Republican and Democratic parties, but also, arguably, proved decisive in securing victory for Clinton.

Two-party politics was once portrayed as the surest way of reconciling responsiveness with order, representative government with effective government. Its key advantage is that it makes possible a system of party government, supposedly characterized by stability, choice and accountability. The two major parties are able to offer the electorate a straightforward choice between rival programmes and alternative governments. Voters can support a party knowing that, if it wins the election, it will have the capacity to carry out its manifesto promises without having to negotiate or compromise with coalition partners. This is sometimes seen as one of the attractions of majoritarian electoral systems that exaggerate support for large parties, and two-party systems have also been praised for delivering strong but accountable government based on relentless competition between the governing and opposition parties. Although government can govern, it can never relax or become complacent because it is constantly confronted by an opposition that acts as a government in waiting. Two-partyism, moreover, creates a bias in favour of moderation, as the two contenders for power have to battle for 'floating' votes in the centre ground. This was, for example, reflected in the so-called social-democratic consensus that prevailed in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s.

However two-party politics and party government have not been so well regarded since the 1970s. Instead of guaranteeing moderation, two-party systems (see p. 308). This is reflected in ideological polarisation and an emphasis on conflict and argument rather than consensus and compromise. In the UK, in the 1970s, this was best demonstrated by the movement to the right by a 'Thatcherised' Conservative Party and the movement to the left by a 'Thatcherised' Labour Party, although a new, post-Thatcherite consensus soon emerged. Adversarial two-partyism has often been explained by reference to the class nature of party support (party conflict being seen, ultimately, as a reflection of the class struggle), or as a consequence of party democratisation and the influence of ideologically committed grass-roots activists.

A further problem with the two-party system is that two evenly matched parties are encouraged to compete for votes by outdoing each other's electoral promises, or perhaps causing spiralling public spending and fueling inflation. This amounts to perhaps causing spiralling public spending and fueling inflation. This amounts to perhaps causing spiralling public spending and fueling inflation. This amounts to perhaps causing spiralling public spending and fueling inflation.

Dominant-party systems

Dominant-party systems should not be confused with one-party systems, although they may at times exhibit similar characteristics. A dominant-party system is one in which a single party has held power for a long period of time. This is often the case in developing countries, where the dominant party is usually the one that led the struggle for independence. In such cases, the dominant party is often seen as a 'government in the wings'.

PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

12. PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

competitive in the sense that a number of parties compete for power in regular and popular elections, but is dominated by a single major party that consequently enjoys prolonged periods in power. This apparently neat definition, however, runs into problems, notably in relation to determining how 'prolonged' a governing period must be for a party to be considered 'dominant'. Japan is usually cited as the classic example of a dominant-party system. Until its fall in 1993, the Liberal Democratic Party had been in power continuously for 36 years, having only failed to gain an overall majority in the House of Representatives (the lower chamber of the Japanese Diet) in 1976, 1979 and 1983. LDP dominance was underpinned by the Japanese 'economic miracle'. It also reflected the powerful appeal of the party's neo-Confucian principles of duty and obligation in the still-traditional Japanese countryside, and the strong links that the party had forged with business elites.

The Congress Party in India enjoys an unbroken spell of 30 years in power commencing with the achievement of independence in 1947. Until 1982, it had only endured three years in opposition, following Indira Gandhi's 1975-77 state of emergency. The best European example of a dominant-party system are Sweden, where the Social Democratic Labour Party (SAP) remained in power from 1951 to 1993 for all but two years (either alone or as the senior partner in a coalition), and Italy, where the Christian Democratic Party dominated every one of the country's 52 post-Second World War governments until the party's effective collapse amidst mounting allegations of corruption in 1993.

The most prominent feature of a dominant-party system is the tendency for the political focus to shift from competition between parties to factional conflict within the dominant party itself. The DC in Italy, for example, functioned as little more than a coalition of privileged groups and interests in Italian society, the party acting as a broker to these various factions. The most powerful of these groups were the Catholic Church (which exercised influence through organisations such as Catholic Action), the farming community and industrial interests. Each of these were able to cultivate voting loyalty and exert influence upon DC's members in the Italian parliament.

Factions are also an integral institution in the Japanese political process. A perennial struggle for power has taken place within the LDP as various subgroups have coalesced around rising or powerful individuals. Such factionalism is maintained at the local level by the ability of faction leaders to provide political favours for their followers, and at the parliamentary level through the allocation of senior government and party offices. Although the resulting infighting may be seen as a means of guaranteeing argument and debate in a system in which small parties are usually marginalised, in Japan, factionalism tends to revolve around personal differences rather than it does around policy or ideological divisions. One example of this was the conflict between the Fukuda and Tanaka factions during the 1970s and 1980s, which continued long after the two principals had left the scene.

Whereas other competitive party systems have their supporters, or at least apologists, few are prepared to come to the defence of the dominant-party system. Apart from a tendency towards stability and predictability, dominant-partyism is usually seen as a regressive and unhealthy phenomenon. In the first place, it tends to erode the important constitutional distinction between the state and the party in power. When governments cease to come and go, an insidious process of politicisation takes place through which state officials and institutions adjust to the ideological and political priorities of the dominant party. For example, about one-quarter of the

LDP's Diet members that Second and even politics in a legislation in the 19 ballot box Prolong party as particular This item C are not 'electio' democ dist that Mu A m red con ter BE go C (P of t s s

no party is outside possible perhaps no strong gov.

PARTY SYSTEMS

LDP's Diet members are former civil servants, this creates the kind of party-state nexus that is usually associated with one-party systems.

Secondly, an extended period in power can engender complacency, arrogance and even corruption in the dominant party. The course of Italian and Japanese politics has, for example, regularly been interrupted by scandals, usually involving allegations of financial corruption. Indeed, the decline of both the LDP and the DC in the 1990s was closely linked to such allegations. When parties cease to 'fear the ballot box', they are likely to become unresponsive and ideologically entrenched. Prolonged Conservative rule in the UK, 1990-97, for instance, resulted in a party seemingly incapable of breaking loose from its Thatcherite heritage, and in particular, unable to criticise or question the dogma of the market.

Thirdly, a dominant-party system is characterised by weak and ineffective opposition. Criticism and protest can more easily be ignored if they stem from parties that are no longer regarded as genuine rivals for power. Finally, the existence of a 'permanent' party of government may erode the democratic spirit by encouraging the electorate to fear change and to stick with the 'natural' party of government. Dominant-party systems may, then, be psychologically self-perpetuating. A genuine democratic political culture arguably requires a general public that has a healthy distrust of all parties, and most importantly, a willingness to remove governments that have failed.

Multiparty systems

A multiparty system is characterised by competition amongst more than two parties reducing the chances of single-party government and increasing the likelihood of coalition. However, it is difficult to define multiparty systems in terms of the number of major parties, as such systems sometimes operate through coalitions involving smaller parties that are specially designed to exclude larger parties from government. This is precisely what happened to the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Français or PCF) in the 1950s, and to the Italian Communist Party (PCI) throughout its existence. If the likelihood of coalition government is the index of multipartism, this classification contains a number of sub-categories.

Germany, for example, appears to have a 'two-and-a-half-party' system, in that the CDU and SPD have electoral strengths roughly equivalent to those of the Conservative and Labour parties in the UK. However, they are forced into coalitions with servative and Labour parties in the UK. However, they are forced into coalitions with the small Free Democrat Party (which usually receives less than 10 per cent of the vote) by the workings of the additional member electoral system (see p. 219). In contrast, Italian multipartism involves a larger number of relatively small parties. However, the DC rarely came close to achieving 40 per cent of the vote. Sartori (1976) distinguished between two types of multiparty system, which he termed the moderate and polarised pluralist systems. In this categorisation, moderate pluralism exists in countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway, where ideological differences between major parties are slight, and there is a general inclination to form coalitions and move towards the middle ground. Polarised pluralism, on the other hand, exists when more marked ideological differences separate major parties, some of which adopt an anti-system stance. The existence of electorally strong communist parties as in France, Italy and Spain, or of significant fascist movements, such as the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) (born in 1955 as the 'post-Fascist' Alleanza Nazionale), provides evidence of polarised pluralism.

Handwritten notes:
- LDP's Diet members are former civil servants, this creates the kind of party-state nexus that is usually associated with one-party systems.
- When parties cease to 'fear the ballot box', they are likely to become unresponsive and ideologically entrenched.
- A genuine democratic political culture arguably requires a general public that has a healthy distrust of all parties, and most importantly, a willingness to remove governments that have failed.

12 - PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

The strength of multiparty systems is that they create internal checks and balances within government and exhibit a bias in favour of debate, conciliation and compromise. The process of coalition formation and the dynamics of coalition maintenance ensure a broad responsiveness that cannot be taken account of by a single party. In Germany, the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) and the socialist SPD bring views and contending interests. Thus, in Germany, the liberal Free Democrats bring views and contending interests. Thus, in Germany, the liberal Free Democrats bring views and contending interests. Thus, in Germany, the liberal Free Democrats bring views and contending interests.

The principle criticisms of multiparty systems relate to the pitfalls and difficulties of coalition formation. The post-election negotiations and horse-trading that take place when no single party is strong enough to govern alone can take weeks, or (as in Italy) sometimes months, to complete. More seriously, coalition governments may be fractured and unstable, paying greater attention to squabbles amongst coalition partners than to the tasks of government. Italy is usually cited as the classic example of this, its post-war governments having lasted on average only ten months. It would nevertheless be a mistake to suggest that coalitions are always associated with instability, as the record of stable and effective coalition government in Germany and Sweden clearly demonstrates. In some respects, in fact, the Italian experience is peculiar, owing as much to the country's political culture and the ideological complexion of its party system as to the dynamics of multipartism.

A final problem is that the tendency towards moderation and compromise may mean that multiparty systems are so dominated by the political centre that they are unable to offer clear ideological alternatives. Coalition politics tends, naturally, to be characterised by negotiation and conciliation, a search for common ground, rather than by conviction and the politics of principle. This process can be criticised as being implicitly corrupt, in that parties are encouraged to abandon policies and principles in their quest for power. It can also lead to the over-representation of centrist parties and centrist interests, especially when, as in Germany, a small centre party is the only viable coalition partner for larger conservative and socialist ones. Indeed, this is sometimes seen as one of the drawbacks of proportional representation electoral systems, which, by ensuring that the legislative size of parties reflects their electoral strength, are biased in favour of multiparty politics and coalition government.

The decline of parties? Home work

Criticism of political parties is certainly not new. Indeed, the emergence of political parties was usually greeted with grave suspicion and distrust. For instance, in common with other 'founding fathers' who wrote the US constitution, Thomas Jefferson was fiercely critical of parties and factions, believing that they would promote conflict and destroy the underlying unity of society. The view that there is an indivisible public or national interest has also been used in the modern period by one-party

Handwritten notes:
- The strength of multiparty systems is that they create internal checks and balances within government and exhibit a bias in favour of debate, conciliation and compromise.
- The principle criticisms of multiparty systems relate to the pitfalls and difficulties of coalition formation.
- A final problem is that the tendency towards moderation and compromise may mean that multiparty systems are so dominated by the political centre that they are unable to offer clear ideological alternatives.

THE DECLINE OF PARTIES!

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)
US political philosopher and statesman. A wealthy Virginia planter who was Governor of Virginia (1779-81), Jefferson served as the first US Secretary of State (1790-94). He was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, and wrote a vast number of addresses and letters. He developed a democratic form of government. He thought to better to be ruled by a natural aristocracy with a commitment to better government and leadership. He also demonstrated sympathy for social reform, favouring the extension of public education, the abolition of slavery, and greater economic equality.

systems to justify the suppression of rival parties, and by military rulers to explain the suppression of all political parties. A further concern, expressed by liberals such as J. S. Mill (see p. 44), was that, as collective bodies, parties necessarily suppress freedom of thought and the politics of individual conscience. Modern concern about parties, however, stems from evidence of their decline as agents of representation and as an effective link between government and the people.

Evidence of a 'crisis of party politics' can be found in a decline of both party membership and participation, reflected in partisan disaffection. For example, since the high point of party membership in the UK in the early 1950s, the Labour Party has lost approximately two-thirds of its members, and the Conservatives over half. A non-partisan study of the age of party members is as significant, the average age of members of the Conservative Party members in 1993 being 62. Dramatic electoral swings against the governing parties have intensified such concerns. Notable examples of this include the slump of the French Socialists in 1993 from 282 seats to just 70, and the virtual annihilation the same year of the Canadian Progressive Conservatives, who were swept out of office retaining only two seats.

Alongside these changes there is evidence of what has been called 'antipolitics', that is, the rise of political movements and organisations the only common feature of which appears to be antipathy towards conventional centres of power and opposition to established parties of government. This has been reflected in the emergence of new political movements the principle attraction of which is that they are unaffiliated by having held power. Good examples have been the 1987 presidential bid of Ross Perot gained in his independent bid for the US presidency in 1992, and the dramatic success of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi's newly created Forza Italia in 1994. The rise of new social movements, is also part of the same phenomenon. Even when they articulate their views through party organisation, as in the case of Green parties, these movements tend to assume the mantle of anti-party parties.

Point 0 How can the decline of parties be explained? One of the problems that parties suffer from is their real or perceived oligarchic character. Parties are seen as bureaucratized political machines, whose grass-roots members are either inactive or engaged in dull routine tasks (attending meetings, sitting on committees, and so on). In contrast, single-issue protest groups have been more successful in attracting mem-

Handwritten notes:
- systems to justify the suppression of rival parties, and by military rulers to explain the suppression of all political parties.
- Evidence of a 'crisis of party politics' can be found in a decline of both party membership and participation, reflected in partisan disaffection.
- Alongside these changes there is evidence of what has been called 'antipolitics', that is, the rise of political movements and organisations the only common feature of which appears to be antipathy towards conventional centres of power and opposition to established parties of government.

12 - PARTIES AND PARTY SYSTEMS

bership and support, particularly from amongst the young, partly because they are more loosely organised and locally based, and partly because they place a heavier emphasis on participation and activism. The public image of parties has been further tarnished by their links to government and to professional politicians. As political 'insiders', parties are perceived to be associated with high office. In other words, parties are perceived to be 'people's' too often, they appear to be consumed by political infighting and the scramble for power, so becoming divorced from the concerns of ordinary people.

An alternative way of explaining party decline is to see it as a symptom of the fact that complex, modern societies are increasingly difficult to govern. Disillusionment that complex, modern societies are increasingly difficult to govern. Disillusionment that complex, modern societies are increasingly difficult to govern. Disillusionment that complex, modern societies are increasingly difficult to govern.

As a final explanation is that parties may be declining because the social identities and traditional loyalties that gave rise to them in the first place have started to fade. This can certainly be seen in the decline of class politics, linked to the phenomenon of post-Fordism (see p. 180). In addition, with the decline of old social, religious and other solidarities, new aspirations and sensibilities have come onto the political agenda, notably those associated with post-materialism (see p. 193). Whereas broad, programmatic parties once succeeded in articulating the goals of major sections of the electorate, issues such as gender equality, nuclear power, animal rights and pollution may require new and different political formations to articulate them. Single-issue groups and social movements may thus be in the process of replacing parties as the crucial link between government and society.

Summary

- ◆ A political party is a group of people organised for the purpose of winning government power, and usually displays some measure of ideological cohesion. The principal classifications of parties have distinguished between cadre and mass or, later, catch-all parties, parties of representation and parties of integration, constitutional or 'mainstream' parties and revolutionary or anti-system ones, and left-wing parties and right-wing parties.
- ◆ Parties have a number of functions in the political system. These include their role as a mechanism of representation, the formation of political elites and recruitment and aggregation of interests, the formulation of social goals and government policy, the articulation of the organisation of governmental processes and institutional relationships.
- ◆ The organisation and structure of parties crucially influences the distribution of dispersal of power within the party, or the concentration of power in the hands of an inevitable consequence of organisation, or they may arise from the need for party unity and electoral credibility.
- ◆ A party system is a network of relationships through which parties interact and influence the political process. In one-party systems, a 'ruling' party effectively func-

Handwritten notes:
- bership and support, particularly from amongst the young, partly because they are more loosely organised and locally based, and partly because they place a heavier emphasis on participation and activism.
- An alternative way of explaining party decline is to see it as a symptom of the fact that complex, modern societies are increasingly difficult to govern.
- As a final explanation is that parties may be declining because the social identities and traditional loyalties that gave rise to them in the first place have started to fade.