The UK Party System and Party Politics

Part 1: The electoral dimension

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Gv 311: British Politics course,
Lecture 13    Lent Term 2014
A ‘party system’ is constituted by

a. How voters behave
b. Electoral institution effects favouring one or more parties over others
c. Party ideologies and cleavages
d. Governance institutions favouring some parties
e. How parties recruit elites and how they behave in office and opposition
f. How much parties shape public policies
Six key propositions for this week

1. In terms of voting Great Britain is a standard European multi-party system
2. GB has not been a ‘two-party system’ since 1974 - nor a 2.5 or 3 party system since 2000
3. Voters’ multi-partism is artificially suppressed by plurality rule voting at general elections
Six key propositions for this week

1. In terms of voting Great Britain is a standard European multi-party system
2. GB has not been a ‘two-party system’ since 1974 - nor a 2.5 or 3 party system since 2000
3. Voters’ multi-partism is artificially suppressed by plurality rule voting at general elections
4. Duverger’s Law is falsified (USA’s special case)
5. Dickson & Scheve provide a strong theory basis for maturity/modernity = multi-partism
6. GB’s party system is evolving like many others
The 2014 party system, in England

Left Centre Right

Labour
Lib Dems
Conservative
UKIP
BNP
Greens
Respect
The Scottish party system
2010 The English party system

Lib Dems  Labour  Conservative

Respect  GREEN  UKIP  BNP

left  centre  right

2010 The Scottish party system

Grn  SNP  Lab  LD  Con  UKIP

SSP  BNP

left  centre  right
## State of the Parties: 2001-10 general elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% vote share</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Con</th>
<th>Lib Dem</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Lab lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+ 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+ 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 av. poll</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12+3</td>
<td>+ 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: The vote share results for the 2010 general election in Great Britain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Britain share of the votes</th>
<th>% votes</th>
<th>Change in support (% points) since 2005</th>
<th>Compare 2005 % vote share</th>
<th>MPs in 2010</th>
<th>Other party representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>+ 4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>All forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>- 6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>All forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>+ 0.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>All forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Independence Party (UKIP)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>+ 0.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>EP, GLA, LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British National Party (BNP)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>+ 1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>EP, GLA, LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish National Party (SNP)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>+ 0.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>EP, SP, LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>- 0.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>EP, GLA, LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaid Cymru (Wales only)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>- 0.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EP, WNA, LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties/candidates</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: EP European Parliament; GLA Greater London Assembly; LG local government councillors; SP Scottish Parliament; WNA Welsh National Assembly
The decline of the Labour and Conservatives two party system at general elections since 1950

The graph shows the combined % Con and Lab votes from 1950 to 2005. Key events marked include:
- 1974 hung Parliament
- 1983 Labour slump

Lab vs Con are top 2 in local seats until 1983, after which New Labour period sees a change.

Source: Prof Ron Johnston, Bristol
Figure 1: Trends in the vote shares for the top two parties and for smaller parties, 1970 to 2010

Note: The numbers in grey area here show the combined Conservative and Labour per cent support, minus the combined support for the Liberal Democrats.
## Per cent of each ‘occupational class’ voting for main parties 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational class</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Liberal Democrat</th>
<th>Other parties</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper non-manual (AB)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine non-manual (C1)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual (C2)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled manual/ not working (DE)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional factors supporting the top two parties, despite voters’ changing view
The DV (deviation from proportionality) score

- We calculate the differences in seats shares compared with votes shares for each party
- Add up all the scores ignoring + or - signs
- Divide by 2 to remedy double-counting
- Gives DV score
- Note: Minimum DV score is 0%
  No maximum DV score – unless all MPs go to a party with no votes at all, which is not a democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Vote %</th>
<th>Seats %</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Con</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total (Ignore = or -) | 36

Deviation from Proportionality | 18%
The chart represents the 'Deviation from proportionality' scores from 1992 to 2012. The practicable minimum score for any voting system is around 4%. The chart shows the scores for various years, with the highest score in 2010 at 22.7. The chart also indicates the percentage deviation from proportionality for Plurality elections.
‘Deviation from proportionality’ scores, 1992-2012

The practicable minimum score for any voting system is around 4%.

British AMS (PR) election
Counting parties – the ENP score

- We calculate the effective number of parties (ENP) by squaring the decimal vote shares, summing and dividing 1 by the sum.
- The squaring process weights the contribution of large parties highly, and marginalizes that of small parties.
- Here 1 divided by 0.312 = 3.21 parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Vote sq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Con</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>0.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The practicable minimum score for any voting system is around 1.5 parties.
‘Effective number of party’ scores, 1992-2012

Practicable minimum score for any voting system is around 1.5 parties.
’Effective number of party’ scores, 1992-2012

Practicable minimum score for any voting system is around 1.5 parties.
Duverger’s Law and the modernization of party systems
Duverger’s Law

• Plurality rule elections always produce/encourage the emergence of a two-party system. PR systems facilitate multi-partism

• Initially framed at national level

• Then re-framed to mean only at district level

• Cox reformulation – in plurality rule the maximum number of parties per district = $M + 1$ (where $M$ is district magnitude).

Nationalization of parties is separate
Dickson and Scheve counter-theory

• Under plurality rule, a social group with 67%+ support in a constituency can split two ways, knowing they will still always beat the opposition

• Splitting majority vote is rational in maximizing the welfare of the majority of the majority – MP closer to their view

• Implies – we should never see $P_1 > 67$

• If opposition splits too, majority social group may fragment further yet still win
## Comparing with other countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election districts with a given number of parties receiving 1% or more of local votes</th>
<th>United States, House of Representatives 2006</th>
<th>Indian general election 2004</th>
<th>Great Britain, general election 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine or more</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| No of cases | 435 | 546 | 628 |

Rows consistent with Duverger’s Law
The Crown diagram

- **Total vote for all other parties in each electoral district**

The diagram illustrates the vote distribution between the top national party and the second national party in each electoral district. It highlights scenarios where one party wins a local majority.

- **Second national party wins local majority**
  - When the second national party leads in a district.

- **Top national party wins local majority**
  - When the top national party leads in a district.

- **Double APT**
  - When both parties have a significant lead in a district.

- **Top national party lead over second national party**
  - The diagram shows how the top national party leads over the second national party in each electoral district.
USA House of Representatives district-level outcomes 2006 election - classic two-party system

- Republican lead over Democrats in each electoral district
- Total vote for all other parties in each electoral district

67% Republicans ahead of Democrats
67% Democrats ahead of Republicans

Democrats ahead of Republicans
Republicans ahead of Democrats
The constituency outcomes in the 1955 general election, in Great Britain - predominantly two-party system
Constituency outcomes in the 2005 general election, in Great Britain

Conservative lead over Labour in each local seat

Labour MPs with a local majority

Conservative MPs with a local majority

Labour ahead of Conservatives

Conservatives ahead of Labour

Total vote share for all other parties in each local seat
Constituency outcomes in the 2010 general election, in Great Britain
Figure 6: The patterns of constituency outcomes across four different regions in 2010

South-east

North-west

Scotland

Wales

Conservative % lead over Labour in each local seat

Labour ahead of Conservatives
Conservatives ahead of Labour

67% 67%

Total % vote share for all other parties in each local seat

2009 2004 1999

Crown
Indian district-level outcomes 2004 general election

- Seats won by third and subsequent parties

- Congress ahead of BJP

- BJP ahead of Congress

BJP bloc lead over Congress bloc in each local electoral district
Next week:
Party System – Ideology, Strategy, Governance and Policy-making aspects