Chapter Five

Interest Aggregation and Political Parties

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Interest Aggregation

- The activity in which the political demands of individuals and groups are combined into policy programs.
- How interests are aggregated is a key feature of the political process.
  - In a democratic system, two or more parties compete to gain support for their alternative policy programs.
  - In an authoritarian system, a single party or institution may try to mobilize citizens’ support for its policies.
    - Covert and controlled
    - Process is top-down rather than bottom-up
- Parties
  - The distinctive and defining goal of a political party - its mobilization of support for policies and candidates - is especially related to interest aggregation.
Personal Interest Aggregation

- Patron-Client Networks
  - System in which a central officeholder, authority figure, or group provides benefits (patronage) to supporters in exchange for their loyalty
    - Defining principle of feudalism
  - Primitive structure out of which larger and more complicated political structures are composed
  - When interest aggregation is performed mainly within patron-client networks, it is difficult to mobilize political resources behind unified policies of social change or to respond to crises.
  - Static system
  - Structure runs through the political processes of countries such as the Philippines, Japan, and India.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Patron-Client Networks</th>
<th>Associational Groups</th>
<th>Competitive Parties</th>
<th>Authoritarian Parties</th>
<th>Military Forces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Extensiveness of interest aggregation rated as low, moderate, or high. Rating refers to broad-level performance issue areas and at different times. Blank implies that such actors do not exist.*
Institutional Interest Aggregation

- Modern society and interest aggregation
  - Citizens aware of larger collective interests; have resources and skills to work for them
  - Personal networks tend to be regulated, limited, and incorporated within broader organizations.

- Institutional Groups
  - Bureaucratic agencies and military groups are institutional groups that can be important interest aggregators.
  - Government agencies may even be “captured” by interest groups and used to support their demands.
Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation

- In many contemporary political systems, parties are the primary structures of interest aggregation.
- Political parties are groups or organizations that seek to place candidates in office under their label.
  - Party system
    - Competitive party system
    - Authoritarian party system
Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation

- History and development of parties
  - Internally created parties
  - Externally created parties
  - Stable party families: Social Democrats, Conservatives, Christian Democrats, Nationalists, Liberals, etc.
- The party systems of most democratic countries reflect a mix of these various party families.
- No two two party systems are exactly alike.
  - Differences emerge due to various factors, including electoral systems.
Placement of Parties on the Left-Right Scale and Their Voter Support in Election

Source: Party positions from the self-placements of party voters. The height of the bar represents the percentage of the total vote won by that party in the legislative election identified on the left.
Elections

- In democracies, elections are very important to parties.
  - Determine whether they survive
  - The act of voting is one of the simplest and most frequently performed political acts.
  - By aggregating these votes, citizens can make collective decisions about their future leaders and public policies.
  - Elections are one of the few devices through which diverse interests can be expressed equally and comprehensively.

- Parties
  - Often caught between the demands of voters and activists
  - Do parties need to be internally democratic?
    - Some say yes, others (J. Schumpeter) argue that vigorous competition between parties is what matters for a healthy democracy and that democracy within parties is irrelevant or even harmful.
Electoral Systems

- Rules by which elections are conducted
  - Determine who can vote, how people vote, and how the votes get counted
  - Single-member district plurality (SMDP) election rule
    - First past the post
    - A variation on this is the majority runoff system (or double ballot)
  - Proportional representation

- Nominations
  - Primary elections
    - In most countries with SMD elections, party officials select the candidates.
    - In proportional representation elections, the party draws up a list of candidates.
      - Closed-list PR systems
      - Open-list system
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Electoral System</th>
<th>Effective Number of Parties—Vote Shares</th>
<th>Effective Number of Parties—Seat Shares</th>
<th>How Are Individual Candidates Selected?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>PR open list</td>
<td>10.63</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>Candidate preference vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>SMD plurality</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>Nominated by local constituency association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>No contested elections</td>
<td>No contested elections</td>
<td>No contested elections</td>
<td>No contested elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>SMD majority run-off</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Nominated by local constituency association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list</td>
<td>3.75*</td>
<td>3.44*</td>
<td>National party + state party conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>SMD plurality</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>Nominated by local constituency association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>MMD majority run-off</td>
<td>No available data</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Must be approved by Council of Guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>National party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>Nominated by local constituency association + national party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>SMD plurality</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>Nominated by local constituency association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>PR closed list</td>
<td>4.71 (under previous electoral system with SMD plurality + PR closed list)</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>National party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>SMD plurality</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Primary elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data from the most recent national elections, as of October 1, 2006.
MMD = Multimember district
SMD = Single-member district
PR = Proportional representation
*Calculated using proportional representation results.
Patterns of Electoral Competition

- Duverger’s law
  - Mechanical effect
  - Psychological effect
  - Strategic voting
- Anthony Downs
  - Media voter result: centrist pull or “convergence”
- Effective number of parties
Competitive Parties in Government

- Ability to implement policies is determined by the nature of the electoral outcome
  - Winning control of legislature and executive
  - Question of level of support: system produces majority outcome without a majority of voter support
- Coalition governments
- The aggregation of interests at the executive rather than electoral can have both costs and benefits.
- Minority interests
Cooperation and Conflict in Competitive Party Systems

- **Majoritarian two party systems**
  - Either dominated by just two parties (U.S), or they have two dominant parties and election laws that usually create legislative majorities for one of them, as a Britain.

- **Majority-coalition systems**
  - Establish pre-electoral coalitions so that voters know which parties will attempt to work together to form government

- **Multi-party systems**
  - Have election laws and party systems that virtually ensure that no single party wins a legislative majority and no tradition of pre-election coalitions
Cooperation and Conflict in Competitive Party Systems

- **Consensual party system**
  - The parties commanding most of the legislative seats are not too far apart on policies and have a reasonable amount of trust in each other and in the political system.

- **Conflictual party system**
  - The legislative seats are not too far apart on policies and have a reasonable amount of trust in each other and in the political system.

- **Some party systems have both consensual and conflictual features.**
  - Consociational (accommodative)

- Some party systems have both consensual and conflictual features.
Authoritarian Party Systems

- Can also aggregate interests
- Aggregation takes place within the party or in interactions with groups.
- Sham elections: no real opportunity for citizens to shape aggregation by choosing between party alternatives
- Exclusive governing party
- Inclusive governing party
  - Authoritarian corporatist system
  - Electoral authoritarianism
The Military and Interest Aggregation

- Major limitation of the military in interest aggregation is that its internal structures are not designed for interest aggregation.
  - Good at some things, but not others
Trends in Interest Aggregation

- Democratic trend in the world has gained momentum since the end of the 1980s.
  - In 1978 fewer than one-third of the world’s almost 200 independent countries were classified as free.
  - These regimes (free) tended to have competitive party systems as their predominant interest aggregation. They were dominant in Western Europe and North America.
  - Military dominated regimes accounted for a third or more countries in Africa and Latin America (not free).
  - Single party systems were the main form in Eastern Europe and relatively common in Africa and Asia and accounted for the remaining unfree countries.
Trends in Interest Aggregation

- Trend toward democracy
  - Eastern Europe (began in 1989)
  - Declining acceptance of authoritarian regimes.
  - Few authoritarian party systems with exclusive governing parties are still around: China and Cuba
  - Most of the unfree states are in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa.
Change in Predominant Interest Aggregation Structure—Moving Toward Democracy in the World?

Significance of Interest Aggregation

- How interests are aggregated is an important determinant of what a country’s government does for and to its citizens.
- In democratic countries, competitive party systems narrow down and combine policy preferences.
- In noncompetitive party systems, military governments, and monarchies, aggregation works differently, but with the similar effect of narrowing policy options.
- Interest aggregation can alter the polarization that the political culture projects into policymaking.
- Aggregation ultimately affects the government’s adaptability and stability.
  - Authoritarian regimes
  - Free and fair electoral competition; democracy