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Citizen Politics
Public Opinion and Political Parties
in Advanced Industrial Democracies
THIRD EDITION

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PART THREE
The Electoral Connection
Elections and Political Parties

Citizens use various ways to influence politics, but the electoral connection through political parties is still the primary basis of public influence in representative democracies. Elections are one of the few methods that enable a society to reach a collective decision based on individual preferences. The choice between parties aggregates the preferences of individual voters, thereby converting public opinion into specific political decisions. Other forms of citizen participation may exert substantial influence on government, but they lack this representative quality.

Elections also are important because of what they decide. Electoral outcomes determine who manages the affairs of government and makes public policy. The selection of leaders and the ability to "throw the rascals out" at the next election are the public's penultimate power. Political elites may not always act as they promise, but the selection of a government provides some popular control over these elites.

Elections attract disproportionate attention from social scientists for several other reasons. Elections involve most of the public, so they enable us to see how most people make political decisions. Voting also provides an opportunity to study how political attitudes are linked to actual behavior—the casting of a ballot. Hence, voting choices are likely to be relatively well thought out, intelligible, and predictable. The electoral connection is thus a good setting for studying political thoughts and behavior that is more developed than simply a response to a public opinion survey. If there is one political act that provides a window into the mind of most citizens, it would be voting.

To study elections, one must start by understanding the political parties that provide the foundation of the electoral process. Parties are the primary institutions of representative democracy, especially in Europe (Katz and Mair 1994; Ziegler 1993). Parties define the choices available to voters. Candidates in most European nations are selected by the parties and elected as party representatives, not as individuals. Open primaries and independent legislators are virtually unknown outside the United States. A large proportion of Europeans (including the Germans) vote directly for party lists rather than individual candidates.
Political parties also shape the content of election campaigns. Party programs help define the issues that are discussed during the campaign (Budge, Robertson, and Heath 1987). In many European nations, the parties, not individual candidates, control advertising during the campaign. Political parties and party leaders thus exercise a primary role in articulating the public's concerns.

Once in government, parties control the policymaking process. Control of the executive branch and the organization of the legislative branch are decided on the basis of party majorities. The parties' control is often absolute, as in the parliamentary systems of Europe, where representatives from the same party vote as a bloc (Bowles, Farrell, and Katz 1999). American parties are less united and less decisive, but even here parties actively structure the legislative process. Because of the centrality of political parties to the democratic process, political scientists describe many European political systems as a system of "responsible party government."

Political parties thus provide the focus for our study of the electoral connection, and ultimately the workings of democratic representation. In 1942 E.E. Schattschneider, a well-known political scientist, concluded that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties democracy." Similarly, James Bryce (1921, 119) stated that "parties are inevitable. No one has shown how representative government could be worked without them." These are refrains echoed by many contemporary political scientists.

This chapter summarizes the history and social bases of contemporary party systems. This discussion presents a framework for understanding the party options available to the voters, as well as the characteristics of the major parties as political organizations and agents of representative democracy.

**An Overview of Four Party Systems**

To introduce the party systems in our four core nations, we begin by describing the characteristics of each of the major parties in each nation. Parties vary in their size, structure, and governmental experience, as well as in their political orientations.

As table 7.1 shows, the American party system is atypical in many ways. The single-member district electoral system encourages the development of a two-party system of Democrats and Republicans because seats are awarded only to
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Year founded</th>
<th>Vote share</th>
<th>Leg. seats</th>
<th>Internal structure</th>
<th>Years in government (1970–2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Democrats (SPD)</td>
<td>1863</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Democrats (FDP)</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Democrats (CDU)</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republikaner</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Personalistic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party (PC)</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists (PS)</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>Centralized</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Front</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personalistic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled by the author; election statistics from http://www.electionworld.org

the largest vote-getter in the district. A party system based on only two parties is unusual, since most democracies have multiparty elections and thus multiparty coalitions are necessary to form a government majority. In the United States, in contrast, power shifts back and forth between the two major parties. In congressional elections, the Republicans' dramatic breakthrough in the 1994 elections ended forty years of Democratic rule. The Republicans still held control of both the House and the Senate following a close vote in the 2000 elections; then the Senate shifted to the Democrats in 2001. The fluctuations in congressional vote totals over time are relatively small, averaging less than a 3 percent vote change between elections.
The results of presidential elections are more varied, however. For instance, Lyndon Johnson won a huge Democratic landslide in 1964, and Ronald Reagan won an equally impressive Republican majority in 1984. Presidential elections are heavily influenced by the candidate's own attributes, instead of merely partisan considerations. Therefore, our cross-national analyses of electoral patterns in subsequent chapters study American congressional elections because they are more similar to Western European parliamentary contests.

Another distinctive aspect of the American political system is the decentralized nature of party organizations. Because of the federal system of American government, instead of one Democratic Party (or Republican Party), there are really fifty: one in each state. National party meetings are something like medieval gatherings of feudal states, rather than the actions of a unitary organization. The presidential nominating convention is not controlled and directed by a national party but is taken over every four years by the personnel of the winning candidate. Even in Congress, American legislators are more likely to cross party lines than are parliamentarians in disciplined party systems. This means there is considerably more diversity and fluidity within the American party system. The institutional weakness of the parties is also apparent in their small memberships (chapter 3).

Britain presents a different partisan pattern. Britain is often described as a two-and-a-half-party system: the Labour Party is the major force on the Left, and the Conservative Party is the representative of the Right. In addition, the Liberal Democrats are located near the center of the political spectrum. The Labour and Conservative parties each routinely receive between 40 and 50 percent of the national vote, whereas the small Liberal Democrats in the center garner 10 to 15 percent.3

The diversity of the British party system has increased during the past two decades. Revived regional movements strengthened the nationalist parties in Scotland (Scottish Nationalist Party) and Wales (Plaid Cymru) in the 1970s. Thatcher's polarized politics of government retrenchment stimulated the creation of a new centrist party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), in the early 1980s. By the end of the 1980s the SDP had merged with the Liberal Party to form the Liberal Democrats. The development of regional parliaments in Scotland and Wales in the 1990s further strengthened parties representing these regional interests. Despite these changes in the party system, the competition between Labour and the Conservatives still structures British electoral competition at the national level.

The British political parties also are more highly organized and centralized than the major American political parties. The national parties' organizations in Britain play an important role in selecting candidates and determining the strategies and activities of election campaigns. This is because Britain, like most other democracies, lacks the system of primaries that are used to select candidates in the United States. Once elected, British Members of Parliament (MPs) generally follow party lines in policy debates and in their voting behavior. Thus, party unity has great rewards.
Another feature of parliamentary systems is the constant emphasis on the party rather than the individual politicians. For instance, British voters do not cast a vote directly for the chief executive (the prime minister), as Americans cast a vote for president. Under the procedures of its parliamentary system, the party group that controls Parliament is able to elect the prime minister who heads the executive branch. Even when it comes to electing a local district representative, British voters choose a party, often without knowing much about the candidate who represents the party in the district. The British political system is based on a model of strong party government.

The German party system is even more diverse. The German electoral system is based on proportional representation: A party’s share of the votes determines its share of the seats in Parliament. As a result, Germany has a multiparty system with two major parties and several smaller parties. The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) are the major conservative party and the Social Democrats are the major leftist party. The CDU/CSU controlled the government for the first two decades of the Federal Republic and again from 1982–98. The SPD is the historical successor to the pre–World War II Socialist Party. The SPD controlled the national government from 1969 until 1982, and again since the 1998 election in coalition with the Green Party.

Several smaller parties also compete in German elections. The Greens emerged on the partisan stage in the 1980s as representatives of a postmaterial agenda (Poguntke 1993). Now in coalition with the SPD, the Greens use their position within the government to advocate a variety of New Politics causes. The small Free Democratic Party (FDP) captures between 5 and 10 percent of the vote. It has been a junior coalition partner in most governments since the Federal Republic was formed.

German unification further changed the political landscape. Unification added millions of new voters from the East, and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) emerged as a successor to the communist and socialist values of the German Democratic Republic. In 1998 the PDS won just over 5 percent of the national vote, although most PDS voters resided in the East. The Republikaner are a right-wing party that advocates nationalist and antiforeigner sentiments. The Republikaner have not won seats in the national Parliament, though their presence has affected the climate of political debate in contemporary Germany.

The German political system emphasizes the role of political parties to a greater degree than that in the United States. For example, parties control the candidate selection process. In Bundestag elections, the voter casts two votes. The first vote (Erststimme) is for a candidate from the district. The district candidates are nominated by a small group of official party members or by a committee appointed by the membership. The second vote (Zweitstimme) is directly for a party, which leads to the selection of half the Bundestag deputies from lists created by the parties. In addition, election campaigns are generously financed by the government, and government funding and access to public radio and tele-
vision are allocated to the parties and not the individual candidates. Government funding for the parties also continues between elections, to help them perform their educational functions as prescribed in the Basic Law. Within the Bundestag, parties caucus in advance of major legislation to decide the party position and most legislative votes follow strict party lines. With the notable exception of the Greens, the German political parties are highly organized and centralized institutions. Therefore, it is not surprising to hear Germany described as a system of “party government.”

France is an even more highly fragmented multiparty system. Instead of one party on the Left, there are several: the Communist Party (PC), the Socialist Party (PS), and several smaller Left extremist parties. Instead of one major party on the Right, there are several: the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the Union for French Democracy (UDF). During the 1980s the National Front (FN) emerged as an extreme right-wing party that attracts voters opposed to social changes occurring in France. A new environmental party also formed in the early 1980s, then reformed in mid-decade, and reformed again in the early 1990s. Now running under the label of the Green Party, it attracts the support of a small number of young, postmaterial voters. Add to this mix a miscellaneous assortment of small centrist or extremist parties. In the 1997 election, more than seven party groups won representation in Parliament and many more ran for office.

The electoral history of the Fifth Republic is one of party change and electoral volatility. The Gaullist Party, now RPR, was originally the major party on the right and participated in conservative governments for the first two decades of the Fifth Republic. Eventually it was joined by the UDF as another major conservative party. The tide shifted toward the Left in the 1980s, especially toward the Socialists, with their broad program of Old Politics and New Politics reforms. The leader of the Socialist Party, François Mitterrand, was elected president in 1981, and this was followed by a socialist majority in legislative elections. The conservatives temporarily gained control of Parliament from 1986 to 1988 and then a Left majority reestablished itself. The conservatives (RPR and UDF) swept the parliamentary elections of 1993 and won the presidency in the 1995 elections. In short, the French party system is exceptionally fluid.

It is difficult to describe the French system in terms of a theoretical model of responsible party government. On the one hand, the French party system offers voters greater ideological choice than is available to American, British, or German voters. Political parties also play a major role in running political campaigns and directing the activities of Parliament. On the other hand, the fragmentation of the party system necessitates coalitional politics in which parties are forced to negotiate and compromise on their programs. This weakens the chain of party responsibility found in British or German governments. Moreover, it is often the party leader, rather than the national party organization, who defines a party’s goals and strategies. French parties are often highly personalis-
tic, even for a highly centralized party such as the PC. The French party system thus might be characterized as a party system in constant transition.

**The History of Party Systems**

Discussions of political parties normally focus on the present: the policy positions and political leaders that define current party images. We often think of each election in terms of the issues of the day. But across elections, parties normally take consistent positions that reflect their historical roots based either in an ideology or a connection with enduring social interests. At the same time, many voters repeatedly support the same party across elections for the same reasons. The Democratic tendencies of American Catholics, for example, result from their class position when they first emigrated to America and the history of how Catholics were integrated into society and politics. The Republican leanings of Cuban Americans can be traced to their unique historical experiences, which linked them to the Republican Party.

Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) described the development of modern party systems in terms of the historical conditions of national and socioeconomic development. They maintained that two successive revolutions in the modernization of Western societies—the National Revolution and the Industrial Revolution—created divisions among certain social groups that still structure partisan competition today. Although their discussion deals primarily with Western Europe, the approach is relevant to other Western democracies including the United States.

The National Revolution involved the process of nation building that transformed the map of Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The National Revolution spawned two sets of competing social groups (social cleavages). The *center–periphery* cleavage pitted the dominant national culture against ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities in the peripheral regions. It involved conflicts over values and cultural identities. For example, were Alsatians to become Germans or French? Was Scotland a separate nation or a region within Britain? The diverse state histories within the United States generated similar tensions between regional cultures, even leading to a civil war.

This cleavage is visible today in persisting regional differences in political orientations: between the English, Welsh, and Scots; between Bretons and the Parisian center; between the “Free State of Bavaria” and the Federal Republic of Germany; between the “old” Federal Republic and the new German Länder in the East; and between the distinct regional cultures in the United States.

The second cleavage is the *church–state* conflict that casts the centralizing, standardizing, and mobilizing forces of the national government against the traditional influence of the Catholic Church. In the face of a growing secular government, the church often sought to protect its established privileges by resisting the new national government. Furthermore, Protestants often allied themselves with
nationalist forces in the struggle for national autonomy. Contemporary divisions
between religious denominations and between secular and religious groups are
a continuation of these earlier social divisions.

The Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century also generated two new
social cleavages. The land–industry cleavage pitted the rural and agrarian interests
against the economic concerns of the rising class of industrial entrepreneurs.
For instance, the Ruhr industrialists challenged the power of the Prussian Junkers;
the landed gentry of Britain and the United States were challenged by the barons
of industry. We see this cleavage in contemporary conflicts between rural and
urban interests.

As industrialization progressed, a second cleavage developed between owners
and workers within the industrial sector. This cleavage furnished the basis of class
conflict between the working class and the middle class composed of business
owners and the self-employed. The struggle for the legitimization and representa-
tion of the working-class movement often generated intense political conflict
in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today this cleavage is seen
in the political competition between business associations and labor unions, and
more generally between members of the middle class and the working class.

These historical events may seem far removed from contemporary party
systems, but Lipset and Rokkan (1967) claimed that a linkage exists. These four
cleavages define the major bases of social conflict existing within these nations.
As social groups that were related to these cleavages developed—such as labor
unions or farmer associations—they won access to the political process before the
extension of the voting franchise. When mass voting rights were granted to most
Europeans around the turn of the century, this structure of group competition
was already in place. In most instances, new voters were mobilized into support-
ing the party groups that already were politically active. New voters thus entered
the electorate with preexisting partisan tendencies. The Conservative Party in
Britain, for example, became the representative of the middle-class establish-
ment, and the Labour Party catered to the interests of the working class. The
working class in France and Germany supported the Communist and Socialist
Parties. The American party system developed more gradually because the voting
franchise was granted earlier and social groups were less polarized; still, the
modern party system reflects political cleavages that are connected to the Civil
War and the Great Depression. The Democratic Party, for instance, still draws
on the New Deal coalition that formed the basis of the party in the 1930s.

The formation of mass political parties thus tended to institutionalize the
existing group alignments, creating the framework for modern party systems. Once
voters formed party loyalties and interest groups established party ties, these became
self-perpetuating relationships. At each election, parties turned to the same social
groups for their core support, and most voters in these groups habitually supported
the same party. In one of the most often cited conclusions of comparative politics,
Lipset and Rokkan (1967) stated: "the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with but few significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s" (p. 50).

Early electoral research substantiated Lipset and Rokkan's claims. Regional voting patterns from early in this century were mirrored in recent election returns. Survey research found that social cleavages, especially class and religious differences, exerted a potent effect on voting. Richard Rose and Derek Urwin's (1969, 1970) comparative studies of postwar party systems found striking stability in electoral results because voting choices were frozen around the cleavages that Lipset and Rokkan described.

As this theme of partisan stability became the conventional wisdom, dramatic changes began to affect these same party systems. The established parties were presented with new demands and challenges, and the evidence of partisan change mounted (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984). New parties emerged to compete at elections, and some of the established parties fragmented. Voting results became more changeable from election to election, and voter choices appeared less frozen and predictable.

At the root of this development was a weakening relationship between traditional social cleavages and partisan choice. In their comparative study of Western democracies, Mark Franklin and his colleagues (1992) found broad evidence that traditional social divisions were losing their ability to predict voting choices (also see chapter 8). Because of this erosion in traditional social group–based voting, voting choices became more fluid. Voting is now characterized by higher levels of partisan volatility at the aggregate and individual levels. Popular attachments to political parties weakened and discussions of the crisis of party systems became commonplace (see chapter 9). In sum, the major research question changed from explaining the persistence of contemporary party systems to explaining their instability.

Several unique national circumstances contributed to these patterns: the Vietnam War and Watergate in the United States, regional and economic tensions in Britain, and the Green movement in Germany. The party systems of Europe and North America also experienced their normal share of political crises and economic problems that often rocked the incumbent parties.

In addition, however, a common set of new postmaterial issues emerged on the political stage in these nations (chapter 5). The established parties faced the new issues of environmental protection, social equality, nuclear energy, sexual equality, and alternative lifestyles. People demanded more opportunities to participate in the decisions affecting their lives and pressed for a further democratization of society and politics. Once these trends began, they evoked a conservative counterattack that opposes the liberalization of social norms, women's rights, environmentalism, and related issues. These new postmaterial conflicts are now an important aspect of contemporary politics.

A major factor in the destabilization of modern party systems was the initial inability or unwillingness of the major parties to respond fully to the new
demands. As a result, several new parties formed specifically to represent the new political perspectives. The first wave included environmental parties, such as the Green parties in Germany and France or Left-libertarian parties (Richardson and Rootes 1995; Müller-Rommel and Pridham 1991). This stimulated a countermovement of New Right parties, such as the National Front in France or the Republikaner in Germany (Betz 1994; Ignazi 1992). It is unclear whether these parties reflect temporary adjustments to new issues or a more long-lasting realignment of political conflict. American history is filled with third-party movements eventually incorporated into the established parties. Is the present partisan instability in advanced industrial democracies just another case of this recurring pattern?

Party systems are in a state of flux, and it is difficult to determine how fundamental and long-lasting these changes will be. It is clear, however, that the new political conflicts of advanced industrial societies have contributed to this situation. While we wait for history to determine the significance of these trends, we can look more closely at the political alignments that now exist in America, Britain, Germany, and France.

The Structure of Political Alignments

Most parties and party systems are still oriented primarily toward the traditional political alignments described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). We shall refer to these alignments collectively as the Old Politics cleavage. The Old Politics cleavage is based on the political conflict between Old Left and Old Right coalitions. Lipset and Rokkan considered the class cleavage to be the primary factor in structuring the Old Politics cleavage because class issues were the most salient during the extension of the franchise. The Old Left therefore identifies itself with the working class and labor unions, as well as secular groups and urban interests. The Old Right is synonymous with business interests and the middle class; in some nations, this conservative coalition also includes religious and rural voters. When political issues tap the concerns of the Old Politics cleavage—for example, wage settlements, employment programs, social security programs, or abortion legislation—class and religious characteristics are strongly related to voting preferences.

The political conflicts of advanced industrial societies also include a new dimension of postmaterial cleavage (chapter 5). This New Politics dimension involves conflict over new issues such as environmental quality, alternative lifestyles, minority rights, participation, social equality, and other postmaterial issues. This dimension represents the cleavage between proponents of these issues, the New Left, and citizens who feel threatened by these issues, the New Right.

The Old Politics cleavage is likely to remain the primary basis of partisan conflict in most advanced industrial democracies for the immediate future. The New Politics dimension is significantly affecting these party systems, however, because it can cut across the established Old Politics cleavage. Despite their differences, labor unions and business interests occasionally join forces to fight
the opponents of nuclear energy. Farmers and students sometimes become allies to oppose industrial development projects that may threaten the environment. Fundamentalist blue-collar and white-collar workers unite to oppose changes in moral codes. The emergence of New Left and New Right interests may restructure social group alignments and party coalitions in new and contrasting ways. In sum, the simple dichotomy between Old Left and Old Right is no longer adequate to describe present patterns of political competition. The contemporary political space is now better described by at least two (or more) dimensions.

We can illustrate the separation of the Old Politics and New Politics cleavages with examples drawn from the American experience. For much of the twentieth century, the Old Politics cleavages defined the primary basis of party competition in the U.S. party system. The New Deal coalitions created by the Great Depression determined the social bases of party support: the Democratic Party and its working-class supporters against the Republicans and big business. Religious differences were muted because of the formal separation of church and state in the United States.

In the 1960s the New Politics introduced a new set of issues into the American political process. Student protesters, the women's movement, and the alternative lifestyles movement challenged the symbols of the political establishment. Herbert Weisberg and Jerold Rusk (1970) described how this cultural conflict introduced a new dimension of cleavage, as represented by dissident Democratic candidates in the late 1960s and early 1970s. New Politics issues entered the agenda of subsequent campaigns. Rusk and Weisberg found, however, that Democrats and Republicans were not clearly divided on New Politics issues; these issues divided parties internally rather than separating them politically. Another study of party cleavages in 1974 found that the Democrats and Republicans were only slightly differentiated on the New Politics dimension (Inglehart 1984).

The policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations stimulated a convergence of Old Politics and New Politics alignments over the 1980s and early 1990s. The tax and spending priorities of the Reagan administration sharply favored business and the more affluent sectors of society. This served to reinforce ties between business interests and the Republican Party. Furthermore, the Reagan administration pursued a conservative social agenda and developed strong political links to religious groups such as the Moral Majority and other fundamentalist organizations. To an extent atypical of modern American politics, religion was injected into partisan politics.

The Reagan and Bush administrations also clarified party positions on the New Politics agenda. Environmental protection had some roots in the Republican Party; Richard Nixon, for example, had established the Environmental Protection Agency during his first presidential term and had introduced a variety of environmental legislation. Yet Ronald Reagan openly speculated that "killer trees" were a major cause of air pollution. The policy initiatives of the Reagan
administration demonstrated its hostility toward the environmental movement. Although George Bush claimed to be the environmental president in 1988, the assault on environmental protection legislation continued under his administration. Similarly, the Reagan and Bush administrations were openly antagonistic toward feminist organizations. The abortion issue became a litmus test of Republican values in the appointment of federal judges and the selection of candidates.

As the Republicans became critical of the New Politics agenda, the Democrats became advocates of these same issues. The Democrats became the partisan supporters of the environmental movement in congressional legislation. In 1984, the Democrats were the first to nominate a woman and feminist for national political office, Geraldine Ferraro. Clinton’s new Democratic coalition attempted to unite the old constituency of labor unions and the new constituency of environmentalists and feminists. Similarly, the Republican party attempted to bring together its traditional middle-class and business supporters with its new voters among cultural conservatives.

We can illustrate the present social and partisan alignments with data from the 2000 American National Election Study. The survey asked respondents about their feelings toward a set of sociopolitical groups and the political parties. We used a statistical analysis method to represent the interrelationship of group perceptions in graphic terms. This technique maps the political space as perceived by Americans. When there is a strong similarity in how two groups are evaluated, they are located near each other in the space. When groups are evaluated in dissimilar terms, they are positioned a distance apart in the space. Thus, one can think of this figure as the map of the political space that voters use to orient themselves to social groups and political parties.

The American sociopolitical space in 2000 is depicted in figure 7.1. The traditional Left/Right cleavage of the Old Politics is quite evident as the horizontal dimension in the figure. Al Gore is located at the left of the horizontal dimension, along with Bill Clinton, and both politicians are seen as close to the labor unions. Indeed, in 2000 Gore made a more forceful appeal for the traditional class-based Democratic vote than Bill Clinton did in his two campaigns. George W. Bush is located at the opposite end of this continuum, and the nearest group is big business and the Christian Coalition.

The figure also portrays a second dimension of political cleavage. A new liberal coalition comprised of environmentalists, the women’s movement, and minority groups is located at one end of the continuum. They are closer to the Democratic candidate but still distinct from the party’s traditional base among the working class. The other end of this dimension is represented by Pat Buchanan, who led a conservative campaign that emphasized cultural issues in opposition to women’s movements and minority groups. This conservative New Politics position in 2000 is somewhat similar to the constituency that Ross Perot mobilized for the Reform Party in the 1992 and 1996 elections. And despite the Democrats’
attempts to merge their Old Politics and New Politics constituencies, the distinction between these two groups is still apparent in the 2000 campaign.\(^9\)

Comparable current data on the sociopolitical space in Britain, Germany, and France are not available, but another study uses a different method to illustrate party positions on Old Politics and New Politics issues in all four party systems. Michael Laver and W. Ben Hunt (1992) asked experts to position the parties in their respective nations on a set of policy dimensions. Figure 7.2 presents party positions on two issues: taxes versus social spending as a measure of the socioeconomic issues of the Old Politics, and the environment versus economic growth as a measure of New Politics priorities.

The top panel of the figure locates parties on the spending/taxes issue. Here we find a traditional Left/Right party alignment in each nation. The Democratic Party in the United States is located at the left end of this continuum, following the pattern found previously in mapping the sociopolitical space. At the opposite end of the Old Politics dimension is the Republican Party. From Ronald Reagan to the 1994 “Contract with America” to the George W. Bush campaign, the Republicans have developed a strong commitment to cutting public services and cutting taxes. This is now ingrained in the Republican policy image.

In Britain, the Labour Party has been the representative of the working class and the advocate for socialist policy. The party’s working-class orientation is institutionalized through formal ties to the labor unions. Normally, membership in a union automatically includes a dues-paying membership in the Labour Party;
union leaders also control this large bloc of votes at Labour Party conventions. Past Labour governments have nationalized several major industrial sectors, expanded social welfare programs, and vigorously defended the interests of their working-class supporters. The Labour Party is located to the left of both the
American Democrats and the German SPD on this dimension. The British Liberal Democrats are a small centrist party that occupies a midpoint on this dimension. The party was traditionally a representative of liberal, middle-class values. In recent years it has formed and reformed itself, but it still holds a centrist position on issues of the government's socioeconomic role.

Beginning with Margaret Thatcher's first election in 1979, the Conservative Party has aggressively attempted to roll back the scale of national government. Thatcher's government privatized many government-owned industries, reduced governmental social and educational programs, sold off public housing, and generally tried to lessen the scope of the government's involvement in society. These policies reinforced the Conservatives' traditional image as a party that favored business interests and that drew disproportionate support from middle-class voters. Even more than a decade after Thatcher left the party leadership, these images remain part of the Conservative Party's public image, placing it to the right on this economic dimension.

The major representative of Old Left in Germany is the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD emerged from the socialist working-class movement and still consistently represents working-class interests. Although German labor unions no longer have institutional ties to the SPD, the relationship nevertheless remains close. Because of these liberal traditions, the SPD is seen as favoring increased social spending—though this may have moderated a bit since the early 1990s. In the 1998 election, the SPD tried to temper this image in order to attract more moderate voters, much as the British Labour Party pursued this strategy in 1997, but the Social Democrats remain strong advocates of government social spending. The German Greens have been described as a Left-libertarian party because they combine a distinctly liberal position on many traditional issues of the social spending and the welfare state with an advocacy for New Left causes (Kitschelt 1989). Thus, political experts position the Greens to the left of the SPD on the social spending dimension in figure 7.2.

The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) is the major political force on the Right in Germany. The CDU was formed after the war as a conservative-oriented catchall party (Volkspartei). In the state of Bavaria, the CSU runs as the party of the conservative bloc. As their names imply, both conservative parties represent religious voters on the church-state cleavage. The Union parties also advocate conservative economic policies and a free-market economy. The CDU/CSU and FDP occupy similar a conservative position on the services/taxes dimension. Indeed, during the sixteen years (1982–98) when the two parties shared control of the government, they pursued conservative economic programs that limited the size of government and stimulated economic development. The exceptional costs of German unification forced these parties to turn temporarily away from these policies, but their commitment to smaller government remains strong. The National Democratic
Party (NPD) is a small, extreme-Right party known for its nationalistic and reactionary policies, more so than for its economic agenda. Nevertheless, experts locate the NPD at the conservative end of the social services dimension.

France has two major parties that represent traditional Old Left positions: the Communist Party (PC) and the Socialists (PS). The PC strongly believes that the government is responsible for social needs and is the most leftist party in all four nations. The PC depends very heavily on working-class votes and has formal ties with the communist labor union, the CGT. Furthermore, although other communist parties have lost their Marxist ideology with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the French Communist Party remains committed to these values. The French Socialists, by comparison, have moderated their ideological image to appeal to liberal middle-class voters. Still, political experts see the PS as strongly committed to extensive governmental social programs.

France has two major conservative parties, the Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the Union for French Democracy (UDF). The RPR is the modern successor to the Gaullist forces that created the Fifth Republic and governed the republic for most of its history. The party is a representative of conservative business interests and the middle class; it favors a reduction of government social programs and taxes. The UDF is a moderate conservative party that attracts liberal elements of the middle class. The president of France, Jacques Chirac, is a leader of the RPR. At the far right of the political spectrum is the National Front (FN). The FN is an example of a New Right party, focusing its attention on cultural and social issues, such as opposition to foreigners, a nationalistic foreign policy, and traditional social values. Its identity is formed more as a backlash to the liberal themes of the New Politics than by traditional economic issues, but on issues of social spending it is perceived as sharply conservative.

If Old Politics issues such as government social spending were the only factors structuring electoral competition, then Lipset and Rokkan would still be correct in describing contemporary party systems in terms of the cleavages of the 1920s. The class-based Left/Right party alignment that historically structured partisan politics remains clearly visible on how political experts position the contemporary parties on the services/taxes dimension.

The content of the political agenda, however, now includes more than the economic and security concerns of the Old Politics. The New Politics introduce new postmaterial interests into the political debate, and this has led to a different alignment of parties. The partisan alignments along the New Politics cleavage can be seen in the bottom panel of figure 7.2, which positions parties on the environment/economy policy dimension.

In the United States, we find the same Left/Right ordering of the parties. The Democrats are seen as the advocates for environmental protection. The Republicans are perceived as more concerned with protecting the economy even at a cost to the environment. This party cleavage was aptly illustrated in the
2000 presidential election. The Democrats nominated Albert Gore, a political figure who is closely identified with environmental protection and author of a best-selling book on the environment, as their candidate. George W. Bush expressed concerns for environmental quality, but he also promised to roll back what he considered excessively strict environmental regulations and balance environmental protection against the nation's economic and energy needs. In the United States, the alignment of the two parties is now similar on both Old Politics and New Politics dimensions.

In most other party systems, the environmental issue creates a new pattern of partisan alignment. In Britain, for example, the centrist Liberal Democrats have distinguished themselves as the party most sympathetic to the environmental issue. In Germany, the Green Party is seen as a strong advocate for environmental causes and is located at the far end of this continuum. Over time the SPD has become more sympathetic to the environmental movement, but experts still position the SPD near the center of this policy scale. The Social Democrats are closer to the conservative CDU and FDP on this dimension than they are to the Greens. On the far right of this continuum is the extremist NPD, which illustrates where this party and the New Right Republikaner would be located on the New Politics dimension. As the Greens are advocates for modernization and liberal issues, the NPD (and more recently the Republikaner) are the most vocal critics of social and cultural change. Overall, the major cleavage on the environmental dimension separates the Greens from all the other German parties.

The ability of New Politics to transform party alignments is most clearly illustrated in the French party system. The French Greens are strong supporters of the environment, occupying an extreme New Left position. But the traditional leftist parties are neutral or critical of environmental protection. The French Socialists are at the center of this scale and have an ambivalent record on environmental matters. The French Communists, who are extremely leftist on Old Politics issues, are positioned between the conservative UDF and RPR on the environmental dimension. The Communists and the National Front hold similar positions on the environmental dimension. Overall, as we saw in the German party system, the New Politics cleavage separates the Greens from all the other French parties.

If we combine the evidence in this section, we can begin to map the socio-political space that voters use to orient themselves to partisan politics. In each nation there is a clear representation of political positions along the traditional socioeconomic issues that initially structured party competition in these democracies. In addition, the political controversies of advanced industrial societies are bringing new issues to the fore, and this is prompting the formation of new parties or the realignment of the established parties to represent these positions. Much of the current research on electoral politics attempts to assess the relative position of the political parties on both dimensions and the relative weight of both dimen-
sions in structuring political choice for the electorate. The mix of these is one of
the forces that fuels the current processes of electoral change in these nations.

**Contemporary Party Systems**

This chapter has described broad similarities in the ideological structure of
contemporary party systems. Most political parties are still oriented to the Old
Politics cleavages of class and religion. Even if these cleavages have become less
salient, the political ties between social groups and political parties perpetuate
these images. Parties are, after all, still turning to the same interest groups and
associations for the core of their support. Contemporary publics see rightist
parties as linked to business interests (and sometimes the Catholic Church), and
leftist parties are allied with the labor unions.

Although major party differences exist on the Old Politics dimension, there
are indications of the increasing importance of the New Politics cleavage. Earlier
chapters (5 and 6) found that people are developing postmaterial values that lead
to new policy interests. These new issues initially gained representation outside
the established parties. The growth of citizen-action groups, for example, often
reflected a mix of the new style of citizen participation and New Politics issue
concerns. These interests are now gaining representation through partisan poli-
tics, which places new demands on the established parties.

Some indications of partisan change along the New Politics dimension are
already evident. New parties, such as the German and French Greens, have
emerged to represent New Politics concerns. These small parties draw their
support from the young, the better educated, and postmaterialists—key groups
defining the New Politics cleavage. A more basic change would occur if the larger
established parties adopt clearer positions on New Politics issues. There is some
evidence of this change in the policy and electoral strategies of the major leftist
parties in several nations. These parties are attempting to combine Old Left and
New Left issue appeals into a single program, though this is a difficult coalition
to maintain.

The established parties have been understandably hesitant to formalize close
ties to New Left or New Right groups, however, especially in Western Europe
where the Old Politics ties remain strong. Parties are naturally cautious about
taking clear stands on a new dimension of conflict until the costs and benefits are
dead. The major European leftist parties, for example, are internally split on many
Old Politics/New Politics conflicts. Whereas most industrial labor unions favor
economic development projects that will strengthen the economy and produce
jobs, leftist environmentalists often oppose these same projects because of their
ecological consequences. Many conservative parties also face divisions between
conservative business elites, new cultural conservatives, and liberal middle-class
voters. Political alliances between Old Politics and New Politics groups so far have
been temporary because of the conflicting values of these groups.
Added to these uncertainties are the new questions of partisan identities in the post–Cold War era. The end of communism requires a rethinking of the foreign policy stances of many parties. Many conservative parties used anticommunism as part of their political image, and this must now be replaced by other political themes. Similarly, the collapse of East European socialism has weakened the ability of social democratic parties to advocate expanding the role of government. In short, parties of the Left and the Right are rethinking some of the themes that furnished their electoral identities.

Because of the uncertainties facing the parties and the difficulties in integrating a new political cleavage into the existing party systems, future partisan change is likely to follow an uncertain course. Continuing changes in citizen values and issue interests mean that the potential for further partisan change is real.

**Suggested Readings**


**Notes**

1. There are several good analytic studies of recent American elections (Pomper 2001; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999), British elections (Evans and Norris 1999; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1993), German elections (Dalton 1996b; Hampton and Soe 1999; Klein et al. 2000), and French elections (Lewis-Beck, 1999; Boy and Mayer 1995).

2. Vote share is based on the most recent national election: United States (2000), Britain (2001), Germany (1998), and France (1997). Years in government is complicated by the separation of powers in the United States and France; we decided to count the number of years a party was part of the legislative majority between 1970 and 2000 as the most comparable cross-national statistic.

3. Because of the single-member district electoral system, the Liberal Democrats are routinely disadvantaged in winning seats in Parliament. In 2001, for example, the party won 18 percent of the popular vote nationwide but won only 8 percent of the seats in the House of Commons.

4. The German electoral law requires that a party win 5 percent of the national vote on the second ballot, in the first or three districts, in order to share in the proportional distribution of Bundestag seats. In 1998 the PDS won four district seats in East Berlin and 7 percent nationally, thus it received additional seats in Parliament based on its national share of the vote.

5. Bartolini and Mair (1989) forcefully argue that earlier historical periods were also marked by high levels of partisan volatility. But their methodology underestimates the degree of the current levels of partisan change (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3).
6. For instance, the 1984 Democratic primaries featured a confrontation between Old Left and New Left Democrats. Walter Mondale was identified with the traditional New Deal policies of the Democratic Party and won early endorsements from labor unions and the party establishment. Gary Hart, in contrast, explicitly claimed that he was the New Politics candidate, the representative of new ideas and a new generation. Hart's core voters were the yuppies—young, urban, upwardly mobile professionals—one of the groups linked to the New Politics cleavage.

7. These are the so-called "feeling thermometer" questions that measure positive and negative feelings toward each object. Respondents are given a thermometer-like scale to measure their "warmth" or "coldness" toward each group.

8. The feeling thermometers were analyzed using a multidimensional scaling program, and the solution was then rotated so the Clinton-Gore dimension was aligned horizontally in the scale. For earlier analyses of similar sociopolitical spaces, see Barnes, Kaase et al. (1979), Inglehart (1984), and Dalton (1996a, chap. 7).

9. Ideally what is needed is a tracking of these sociopolitical alignments over time so that we can see if there has been a systematic change in the Democrats' and Republicans' electoral alliances.

10. Other evidence suggests that the Labour Party moved dramatically to the center in the 1997 campaign in an attempt to attract moderate voters and win a parliamentary majority (Budge 1999). Even with this movement to the center, however, the Labour Party still retained its distinct orientation on class issues.

11. The German portion of the Cross National Election Project also contained a question on the partisan leanings of social groups. About three-quarters of the German public saw labor unions as leaning toward the SPD, and an equal number saw business associations and the Catholic Church as leaning toward the CDU/CSU; nearly 80 percent saw environmental groups as favoring the Greens. See Dalton (1993a, 266) and Wessels (1993).

12. A new entrant to the German party system is the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), a successor of the communist party of the German Democratic Republic. The PDS would be positioned on the far left of this scale.
CHAPTER 8

The Social Bases of Party Support

THERE IS A well-worn saying that people act politically as they are socially, and this has been the case for electoral politics. The preceding chapter discussed how party systems were formed to provide political representation for class, religious, and other social groups. Contemporary political parties maintain ties to their clienteles groups and project images in group terms: Labour is a working-class party, the Republicans are the party of business, the Christian Democrats represent religious voters, and so forth. Although the issues and personalities of the campaign change from election to election, parties generally maintain their institutional and ideological ties to specific social groups. Most parties depend on the votes of their clienteles groups to provide a stable base of electoral support.

From its beginnings, electoral research has stressed social group attachments as an important influence on voting behavior. One of the first empirical studies of American voting focused on the social bases of partisanship (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948). This study found that an Index of Political Predispositions based on social class, religion, and rural/urban residence strongly influenced voting choice. Social stratification is even greater in Europe, producing even sharper group differences in voting patterns. A common cliche states that social class is the basis of British politics, and all else is just embellishment and detail. Both class and religion are strong correlates of voting in Germany and France.

This chapter begins our analysis of voting behavior by studying the group basis of voting. We highlight both the stability and change in group-based voting. On the one hand, the partisan loyalties generated by social characteristics produce stable party coalitions, since the parties routinely attract the same kinds of core voters. This constancy in the bases of party support reinforces the partisan images presented in chapter 7. On the other hand, there is strong evidence that the social bases of partisanship are changing (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992). In addition, the increasing sophistication of contemporary electorates may lessen voter reliance on social cues as individuals make their own political decisions. We examine these theories by tracking group voting patterns over time and across nations.
The Social Group Model of Voting

Social characteristics influence a voter's choice of party in several possible ways. First, a person's social position often indicates his or her values and political beliefs. A French steelworker is more likely than a shopkeeper, for example, to favor an expansion of social services or governmental regulation of business. Opposition to liberal abortion laws is more likely among devout Catholics than the nonreligious. Thus, social characteristics are an indirect measure of attitudinal differences between groups of voters and their perceptions of which party best represents these policy positions.

Social characteristics also indicate some of the political cues to which an individual is exposed. A British mine worker, for example, hears about politics from his coworkers or other working-class neighbors and friends; the mine worker also receives political persuasion from the union representative at work and union publications at home. This social milieu provides repeated cues on which policies will benefit people like oneself and which party best represents one's interests—a strong Labour Party bias in these cues is inevitable. Similarly, a Bavarian Catholic hears about political issues at weekly church services, from Catholic social groups, and from predominately conservative Catholic friends. This information generally encourages a favorable opinion of the Christian Social Union and its program.

In addition, social groups can be an important reference point in orienting voters to political issues and providing information about politics. Even if an individual is not a member of a labor union or a regular churchgoer, the knowledge that unions favor one party and the Catholic Church another can help voters locate themselves in relation to the parties. For many citizens, the cues provided by social networks and group party cues help to guide their political orientations and voting behavior.

Voter reliance on social group cues is an example of the satisficing decision making presented in chapter 2. Social cues can narrow the voter's choice to parties that are consistent with one's social position. Voters enter an election favoring the party (or parties) that historically supports the class or religious groups to which they belong, while excluding parties with unsupportive records. Political parties
nurture such ties. The parties communicate their group loyalties to the voters, such as when they call themselves “Labour” or “Christian Democrats.”

Voters can decide between competing parties based on the cues that social groups provide—the endorsements of labor unions, business associations, religious groups, and the like—as well as the group appeals of the parties themselves. The stable group ties of the parties mean that many voters develop standing partisan predispositions that endure across elections, simplifying the decision process still more. British industrial workers who cast their votes for Labour because the party represents people like themselves are making a reasonable electoral decision.

Reliance on social characteristics is a shortcut in making voting decisions. A citizen who is knowledgeable about all the issues and all the candidates is well prepared to make an informed voting choice and justify this decision in issue-oriented and ideological terms. Social characteristics provide a simpler, although less certain, method of choosing which party represents the voter’s interests. Still, when strong social group identities are matched by clear party positions on these social cleavages, as they are in most European nations, then social characteristics can provide a very meaningful guide for voting behavior.

**Social Class and the Vote**

Class politics taps the essence of what we have described as the Old Politics—an economic conflict between the haves and have-nots. The class cleavage represents the economic and material problems of industrial societies: improving standards of living, providing economic security, and ensuring a just distribution of economic rewards. Issues such as unemployment, inflation, social services, tax policies, and governmental management of the economy reinforce class divisions.

Social scientists have probably devoted more attention to the relationship between social class and voting than to any other social characteristic. Theoretically, the class cleavage involves some of the most basic questions of power and politics that evolve from Marxian and capitalist views of societal development. Empirically, one’s position in the class structure is often a strong predictor of voting choice. Seymour Lipset’s early cross-national study of electoral politics described the class cleavage as one of the most pervasive bases of party support:

> Even though many parties renounce the principle of class conflict or loyalty, an analysis of their appeals and their support suggests that they do represent the interests of different classes. On a world scale, the principal generalization which can be made is that parties are primarily based on either the lower classes or the middle and upper classes. (1981a, 230)

Most other early empirical studies supported these conclusions.

Research on the class cleavage normally defines social class in terms of occupation. Following Karl Marx’s writings, occupations are typically classified on the
basis of their relationship to the means of production. The bourgeoisie are the owners of capital and the self-employed; the proletariat are the workers who produce capital through their labor. This schema is then generalized to define two large social classes: the middle class and the working class. These class differences provided the basis for the creation of socialist and communist parties that represent the interests of the working class; conservative parties, in turn, defend the interests of the middle class.

Although this Marxian dichotomy once defined the class cleavage, the changing nature of advanced industrial societies has reshaped the class structure. The traditional bourgeoisie and proletariat have been joined by a “new” middle class, or what others have called a “salariat.” This stratum consists primarily of salaried white-collar employees and civil servants (Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1991). Bell (1973) defined a “postindustrial” society as one in which most of the labor force holds new middle-class positions; by the 1980s nearly all Western democracies had passed the postindustrial threshold.

The new middle class is an important addition to the class structure because it lacks a clear position in the traditional class conflicts between the working class and the old middle class. The separation of management from capital ownership, the expansion of the service sector, and the growth of government (or nonprofit) employment creates a social stratum that does not conform to Marxian class analysis. The new middle class does not own capital as the old middle class did but also differs in lifestyle from the blue-collar workers of the traditional proletariat. Members of the new middle class seem less interested in the economic conflicts of the Old Politics and are more attuned to New Politics issues. Consequently, the identity of the new middle class differs from both the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Table 8.1 presents the voting preferences of these social classes in the most recent election for which data are available. Historical class alignments persist in each nation. The working class in each nation gives disproportionate support to leftist parties, ranging from 52 percent in the United States to 72 percent in Germany (the combined SPD, Green, and PDS vote). At the other extreme, the old middle class is the bastion of support for conservative parties. This traditional proletariat/bourgeoisie cleavage remains strong in each nation—but in each nation less than half of the electorate now belongs to either of these two classes.

The new middle class now constitutes the majority of voters and, more important, holds ambiguous partisan preferences. The new middle class is normally located between the working class and the old middle class in its Left/Right voting preferences. In addition, the new middle class gives disproportionate support to parties that represent a New Politics ideology, such as the German Alliance 90/Greens and the French Greens. The new middle class is a key element in the changing political alignments of advanced industrial democracies.

Before continuing, class voting in Germany deserves additional mention.
Table 8.1  Social Class and Party Support (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Working Class</th>
<th>New Middle Class</th>
<th>Old Middle Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States, 2000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Britain, 2001</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France, 1996</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC/Far left</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Front</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany, 1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance 90/Greens</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: United States, 2000 American National Election Study (CSES); Great Britain, 2001 British Election Study (CSES); Germany, German Postelection Study 1998 (CSES); France, 1996 ISSP Survey.

Notes: American data are based on congressional vote; German data are for East and West electorates combined. Social class is based on the occupation of the head of the household where this information is available; otherwise, it is the occupation of the respondent.

The 1998 postelection study indicates an increase in class voting, but this largely occurred in the West. In western Germany, as in most other Western democracies, the class voting index was positive in 1998 and grew as the working class rallied around the Schröder campaign (PDI = +17). In the East, the class alignment was actually reversed in the two prior elections, with eastern workers supporting the CDU (Dalton and Bürklin 1996). In 1998 the “normal” class voting pattern emerged in the East, but the Left only gained 3 percent more of
the working-class vote. These two differing class alignments weaken the impact of class in German electoral politics.

To place class voting in our four nations in perspective, figure 8.1 compares the strength of the class differences in partisan preferences for a dozen advanced industrial democracies. The Cramer’s V correlation measures the size of class voting differences. This statistic shows the greatest degree of class polarization in the Scandinavian party systems: Sweden (.26), Norway (.17). Not only are these highly fragmented party systems, which encourages the representation of social interests, but the Social Democratic Parties in these nations have a strong class identity. In addition, class voting also tends to be stronger where unions have large memberships and are politically involved; this also fits the Scandinavian case.

British class differences also rank in this upper tier, reflecting the continuing importance of class interests in British politics—and the influence of class cues on voting. Germany and France display moderate levels of class voting, slightly less than the cross-national average. Germany ranks low because of the mixed impact of East/West differences as noted previously. The United States also has weak class differences in party preferences. As many others have observed, the American party system blurs the influence of social class on voting choice (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999, chap. 3).

Although social class remains a significant influence on voting choice in many nations, electoral research finds that class cues carry much less weight than they did a generation ago (Nieuwbegra and De Graaf 1999). This pattern can be seen in figure 8.2, which presents the Alford index of class voting across elections in our four core nations. To maximize comparability, the analyses focus on the Left/Right voting patterns of the working class versus the combined middle class (old and new). The Alford index measures class voting as the simple difference between the percentage of the working class voting for the Left and the percentage of the middle class voting Left.

The general trend in figure 8.2 is obvious; class differences are declining. The size of the class voting index in Britain has decreased by almost half during the past fifty years and in Germany by equal measure. Class voting patterns follow a varied decline in American congressional elections, and in the 2000 elections the gap was virtually nonexistent (Alford index = 1). Paul Abramson and his colleagues (1999, chap. 5) show that the erosion of class voting is even more pronounced in U.S. presidential elections. In France, social class had a modest impact on voting during the French Fourth Republic. The turbulent events surrounding the formation of the Fifth Republic—including the creation of a broad-based Gaullist Party—abruptly lowered class voting in 1958. Class voting in the Fifth Republic stabilized at a level significantly below pre-1958 levels (Lewis-Beck and Skalaban 1992). There are indications, such as figure 8.2, that French class voting is also declining (also see Boy and Mayer 1993).

Despite this evidence that class voting differences are narrowing, some
researchers argue that the new class alignments of advanced industrial societies are perpetuating class voting, albeit in new forms (Evans 1999). John Goldthorpe (1987), for example, proposed a new categorization of social class incorporating notions of job autonomy and authority relationships into traditional class criteria such as income level and manual labor. Others create an expanded list of class categories that incorporate new social contexts, such as the middle-class salariat or affluent blue-collar workers (Hout et al. 1996; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1991; Wright 1997). Researchers also explore criteria other than employment as potential new bases of socioeconomic cleavage. Some suggest that education might form the basis of a political cleavage separating the information-rich and technologically sophisticated from the information-poor and unskilled voter. Others maintain that conflicts between the public and private sectors are supplanting traditional class conflicts. Other innovative research defines social
Figure 8.2  Trends in Class Voting


Notes: Table entries are the Alford Class Voting index, that is, the percentage of the working class preferring a leftist party minus the percentage of the middle class voting for the Left. American data are based on congressional elections, except for 1948, which is the presidential vote.

position by lifestyle characteristic, distinguishing between industrial employees and yuppies, for example (Gluchowski 1987; Pew Center 1999; Delli Carpini and Sigelman 1986).

This reconceptualization of social class implies that social cues now function in more complex and differentiated ways than in the past. Yet the empirical reality remains: Even these complex new class frameworks have only a modest value in explaining how citizens vote. Richard Rose and Ian McAllister (1986, 50–51) compared several of these alternative models for British voting behavior in the 1983 election and found that they all explain a very modest share of the vote (also see Crewe 1986). Paul Nieuwbetrra (1995; Nieuwbetrra and De Graaf 1999) shows that
alternative statistical measures of class voting do not change these trends. Similarly, the analyses of figure 8.1 are based on a more extensive measure of social class that includes a separate new middle-class category. Yet the average level of class differences in these nations is quite modest (Cramer's V = .15). The most persuasive evidence comes from the longitudinal comparative analyses of Franklin and his colleagues (1992, chap. 19). They combine occupation, union membership, income, education, and other class traits and find a general decline in the ability of these social characteristics to explain electoral choice in most Western democracies.

David Butler and Donald Stokes (1969, 85–87) developed a conceptual framework of group-based voting that might help identify the source of the decline in class voting. They describe the group voting as a two-step process: voters are first linked to a social group and then the group is linked to a political party. The combined strength of these two links determines the overall level of group-based voting. Using this framework, there have been changes in either (a) the relationship between voters and class groupings or (b) the relationship between class groupings and the political parties. The first explanation, for example, highlights how the changing class structure of contemporary societies may be weakening the link between individuals and class groupings. Members of the traditional social strata—industrial workers, farmers, and the self-employed—often remain integrated into class networks and remain distinct in their voting preferences. But there are simply fewer of these voters today. The growth of the new middle class lessens the percentage of the electorate for whom traditional class ties are directly relevant.

The blurring of the relationship between voters and class groupings also arises from a general narrowing in the life conditions of social classes. On the one hand, the spread of affluence leads to the enbougeoisement of some sectors of the working class: Some workers have incomes and living standards that overlap with the middle class. On the other hand, the expanding ranks of low-paid and low-status white-collar employees and the growth of white-collar unions are producing a proletarianization of part of the middle class. Few individuals possess exclusively middle-class or working-class social characteristics, and the degree of class overlap is increasing over time. In sum, a convergence of life conditions contributes to the convergence of class voting patterns.

Increasing social and occupational mobility also may weaken the link between individuals and traditional social classes. All the nations in this study have had a decline in the number of farmers and an increase in middle-class employment during the late 1990s. Dramatic changes in the size of economic sectors often occurred within a few decades. High levels of social mobility mean that an individual's ultimate social position is often different from that of his or her parents. Many farmers' children moved from conservative political upbringings into unionized, leftist, working-class environments in the cities, just as many working-class children went from urban, leftist backgrounds into traditionally
conservative, white-collar occupations. Some socially mobile individuals will change their adult class identity and voting behavior to conform to their new social contexts; others will not. This mix of social forces blurs traditional class and partisan alignments.

A second explanation of declining class voting involves changes in the relationship between class groups and the political parties. Over the past generation, many political parties have tried to broaden their electoral appeals, partially to attract new middle-class voters, which led to more moderate party positions on traditional class-based issues. Socialist parties in Europe shed their Marxist programs and adopted more moderate domestic and foreign policy goals. Conservative parties also tempered their views and accepted the basic social programs proposed by the Left. Socialist parties vied for the votes of the new middle class, and conservative parties sought votes from the working class. Historical analyses of party programs document a general convergence of party positions on socioeconomic issues during the last half century (Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987; Caul and Gray 2000). With smaller class-related differences in the parties’ platforms, it seemed only natural that class cues would become less important in guiding voting behavior.

Initially, at least, this appeared to be another plausible explanation for the decline in class voting differences. However, various studies show that party positions on the class cleavage remain clearly differentiated. For example, a survey of political experts documented a clear awareness of the continuing party differences on the socioeconomic issues that underlie the class cleavage (Laver and Hunt 1992; also see chapter 7). Additional evidence from Germany shows that the partisan clarity of class cues actually has increased over the same period that class voting has diminished (Dalton 1992, 60). Furthermore, the American public still clearly perceives the partisan leanings of unions and business associations (chapter 7), and comparable data are available for Germany (Wessels 1994). In short, it does not appear that ambiguity about the class positions of the parties is the prime reason for decreased class voting—instead, these cues are less relevant to today’s voters.

The decline in class voting patterns therefore seems to represent a weakening of the bonds linking voters to politically oriented class groups rather than a blurring of the political cues provided by the parties. Union members, for example, realize that labor leaders want them to vote for parties of the Left, but the union members are now more likely to make their own decisions. Thus, the nature of these changes implies that the long-term decline in class voting should continue.

**Religion and the Vote**

Another major basis of social division in most Western nations is the religious cleavage in its various forms. The relationship between religion and politics arises from a centuries-old interplay of these two forces. The Reformation created divi-
tions between Catholics and Protestants that carried over into politics. Control of the nation-building process often became intermixed with religious differences (chapter 7). In Anglican England, for example, the Protestant church supported national independence and became identified with the dominant national culture. In Germany, the tensions between Lutherans and Catholics were a continuing source of conflict and even open warfare. Gradually the political systems of Europe accommodated themselves to the changes wrought by the Reformation, and a new status quo developed. Then the French Revolution renewed religious conflicts in the nineteenth century. Religious forces—both Catholic and Protestant—defended church interests against the liberal, secular movement spawned by the events in France. Conflicts over church/state control, the legislation of mandatory state education, and disestablishment of state religions occurred across Europe.

As was true with the class cleavage, disagreements over religion structured elite conflict and defined the political alliances existing in the late nineteenth century. The political parties that formed during this period often allied themselves with specific religious interests: Catholic or Protestant, religious or secular. Thus, the party alignments that developed at the start of the twentieth century institutionalized the religious cleavage, and many features of these party systems have endured to the present (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Early empirical research on voting behavior underscored the continuing importance of the religious cleavage. Rose and Urwin (1969) examined the social bases of party support in sixteen Western democracies. Their oft-cited conclusion maintains that “religious divisions, not class, are the main social bases of parties in the Western world today” (p. 12). Numerous other cross-national and longitudinal studies have documented the persisting importance of the religious cleavage (Baker, Dalton, and Hildebrandt 1981, chap. 7; Wald 1983; Lewis-Beck and Skalaban 1992).

Measuring the impact of religious cues on voting behavior is more complex than for class voting. The class composition of most industrial democracies is similar, but their religious composition is more varied. Britain is largely Protestant, and nearly two-thirds of the population are nominally Anglicans. In contrast, nearly all French citizens are baptized Catholics, and the Protestant minority is very small. Germany is a mixed denominational system, with Lutheran Protestants slightly outnumbering Catholics. The United States lacks a dominant national religion; there are a significant number of Catholics, Reformation-era Protestants, Pietist Protestants, other Protestant and Christian groups, Jews, and the nonreligious.

In addition to the diverse religious composition of nations, the partisan tendencies of religious denominations also vary cross-nationally. Catholics normally support parties of the Right, and Protestants normally support parties of the Left. But historical events sometimes led to different religious alignments.
Thus, the voting cues provided by religious affiliation may differ across nations in contrast to the consistent working-class/middle-class pattern for social class.

Table 8.2 presents the relationship between religious denomination and party support in the four core nations. Religious differences in voting are often substantial; however, each nation displays its unique pattern of religious voting. The historical conflict between the Catholic Church and Liberal/Socialist parties still appears in Germany. Most Catholics support the CDU/CSU, which defends traditional values and the church's prerogatives. Among Catholics who are closely

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States, 2000</th>
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<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Reformation Protestant</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Other Protestant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>84</td>
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<td>53</td>
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</tr>
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<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Labour</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>France, 1996</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC/Far left</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>RPR</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<th>No religion</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance 90/Greens</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: United States, 2000 American National Election Study (CSES); Great Britain, 2001 British Election Study (CSES); Germany, German Postelection Study 1998 (CSES); France, 1996 ISSP Survey.
tied to the church (those who attend church weekly), the CDU/CSU received 70 percent of their vote in 1998. In contrast, Protestants and the nonreligious give greater support to the leftist parties: SPD, Greens, and PDS.

Although more than 80 percent of the French population are baptized Catholics, sizable differences in voting behavior still separate French Catholics and non-Catholics. In 1996 only 19 percent of non-Catholics favored conservative parties, compared to 55 percent among Catholics. Because the French public is overwhelmingly Catholic, the political consequences of this imbalance on election outcomes is limited.

In Britain, the religious cleavage follows another pattern. The Anglican church historically allied itself with the political establishment; thus most Anglicans vote for the Conservative Party. Catholics lean toward the Labour Party because of their minority status and the issue of Irish independence. Presbyterians give disproportionate support to Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Religious and moral conflicts are a recurring theme in American history (Wald 1993), yet the formal separation of church and state limits the impact of religion on partisan politics. Table 8.2 shows that the Reformation-era Protestant denominations (Anglicans, Calvinists, Lutherans, etc.) predominately supported the Democrats in 2000, whereas other Protestant groups leaned toward the Republicans. These differences are modest, however, and may reflect factors other than religion per se. Similarly, the Democratic ties of American Catholics are primarily the result of ethnic and class influences rather than explicitly religious values. Jewish Americans also gave disproportionate support to the Democrats in 2000, probably because of Joseph Lieberman's candidacy at the top of the ticket. Still, this is only 7 percent more votes for the Democratic ticket than the Jewish vote in the 1996 election.

To place these religious voting patterns into a cross-national context, the left side of figure 8.3 displays the levels of denominational-based voting in several nations. The starkest religious differences are often found in religiously divided societies, such as Germany and Canada. In France and Italy, the correlation largely results from differences between religious and nonreligious voters who are both disproportionately Catholics. Both Britain and the United States rank below the average in the size of religious differences in voting.

Another aspect of the religious cleavage is the influence of religiosity, such as church attendance or religious feelings. In predominately Catholic nations, such as France, this dimension represents a voter's integration into the Catholic culture. In mixed denominational systems, the secularization process has often stimulated an alliance between Protestants and Catholics in a joint defense of religious interests, so denominational differences are replaced by a secular/religious cleavage. In Germany, for example, the Christian Democratic Union unites active Catholics and Protestants against secular interests in society. Even in the United States, similar patterns have developed. Recent Republican Party presidential
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Denomination</th>
<th>Church Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy (.27)</td>
<td>Norway/Sweden (.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada (.18)</td>
<td>Italy (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (.17)</td>
<td>New Zealand (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (.16)</td>
<td>Ireland (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland (.15)</td>
<td>Germany (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand (.14)</td>
<td>Canada (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States (.13)</td>
<td>France (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway (.12)</td>
<td>United States (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan/Sweden (.11)</td>
<td>Australia (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain (.10)</td>
<td>Great Britain/Japan (.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8.3 The Overall Level of Religious Voting**

*Source: 1996 International Social Survey Program.*

*Note: Values in parentheses are Cramer's V correlations.*

candidates campaigned for the votes of religious conservatives from all denominations. The Republicans hoped to tap a common concern with the preservation of traditional values and opposition to abortion.

Table 8.3 presents the relationship between religious involvement, measured by the frequency of church attendance, and party preference. The voting gap between religious and nonreligious citizens is considerable in both France and Germany. For instance, only 20 percent of French citizens who attended church weekly preferred the Socialists or the Communists in 1996, compared to 63 percent among those who never went to church. Because of the Anglican church's relationship to the government, religious conflicts have not been a major factor in British electoral politics since early in the twentieth century. Similarly, religious feelings exert a limited partisan influence in America.
Table 8.3 Church Attendance and Party Support (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
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<td><em>United States, 2000</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Great Britain, 1997</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Conservatives</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>France, 1996</em></td>
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<td>PC/Far left</td>
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<td>Socialists</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Greens</td>
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<td>Alliance 90/Greens</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>SPD</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>100</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *United States, 2000* American National Election Study; *Great Britain, 1997* British Election Study (CSES); *Germany*, German Postelection Study 1998 (CSES); *France, 1996* ISSP Survey.

The cross-national pattern of voting by church attendance is displayed on the right-hand side of figure 8.3. The religious divide (average correlation is .17) is a stronger explanation of the vote than either class or religious denomination. Despite the paucity of explicitly religious issues in most campaigns, religious attachments are often a strong predictor of party choice. In Norway and Sweden, for instance, religion reflects continuing controversies over lifestyle issues, such as temperance and moral values. In other nations, the religious/secular cleavage is related to issues such as abortion or other moral issues (chapter 6). Religion constitutes a hidden agenda of politics, tapping differences in values and moral
beliefs that might not be expressed in a campaign but nevertheless influence voter choices. Indeed, there is a variety of evidence that indicates that moral or religious images continue to divide the parties in many Western democracies.\footnote{6}

Figure 8.3 also underscores the diversity of religious voting across the four core nations. Both religious denomination and church attendance are significantly related to partisan preferences in Germany. The religious cleavage in France is based on the voting differences between practicing Catholics and the nonreligious. In both the United States and Britain, there are only modest partisan differences by religious denominations or church attendance. The limited degree of religious voting in the United States illustrates the continued separation of church and state, despite the attempts by some to politicize religion.

Despite the evidence of a strong relationship between religious values and partisan preferences, we might expect the religious cleavage to follow the same pattern of decline as the class cleavage. Social modernization may disrupt religious alignments in the same manner that social class lines have blurred. Changing lifestyles and religious beliefs have decreased involvement in church activities and diminished the church as a focus of social (and political) activities. Most Western nations display a steady decline in religious involvement over the past fifty years (Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992, chap. 1). In the Catholic nations of Europe, for instance, frequent church attendance has decreased by nearly half since the 1970s. Predominately Protestant countries, such as the United States and the nations of northern Europe, began with lower levels of church involvement but follow the same downward trend. By definition, this secularization trend means that fewer voters are integrated into religious networks and exposed to the religious cues that can guide the vote.

The expectation about a decline in religious voting can be tested by observing the pattern of religious voting over time. Similar to the class voting index, figure 8.4 plots a religious voting index based on the difference in party preferences between religious denominations. For instance, the differences in Conservative Party support between Anglicans, nonconformist Protestants, and Catholics in Britain have changed only slightly since 1959. Similarly, the gap in leftist voting between German Catholics and Protestants averages in the 20- to 25-point range for much of the Federal Republic’s existence. This gap narrowed during the 1980s, however, and the merger of a secular eastern electorate has further dampened religious voting differences since unification.

Partisan differences between American Catholics and Protestants vary across elections; the religious cleavage intensified with John Kennedy’s candidacy in 1960, whereas other elections display weak religious voting. Overall, there is only a slight convergence in religious voting patterns in American congressional elections (see Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999, chap. 5, for evidence on presidential elections).

The long-term trends in voting differences between religious and nonrelig-
Figure 8.4  Trends in Denominational Voting


Notes: Comparisons for the United States and Germany are between Protestants and Catholics. GB-1 is a comparison of the Labour Party vote of Anglicans and Catholics; GB-2 is a comparison of the Conservative Party vote of Anglicans and nonconformists.

Religious citizens are also relatively stable over time (Dalton 1996a, chap. 8). Religious involvement in France has a strong and persisting impact on voting preferences, averaging more than a 40 percent difference in leftist party support. The religious cleavage in Germany was relatively strong and stable until the 1980s; it has weakened in the past two decades, especially since unification. British party differences on the religious voting index are initially quite small and display little change over time. The recent attempts of the Republican Party to court religious voters has heightened religious differences over the past three U.S. elections—but the magnitude of this gap remains limited.7

In summary, the trends for religious voting do not show the marked drop-off found for class voting. Despite the paucity of explicitly religious issues and the lack of religious themes in most campaigns, religious characteristics still can be a strong predictor of party choice. Weak religious voting patterns, such as those in the United States and Britain, reflect an ongoing characteristic of the party system rather than the recent erosion in religious voting. The stability of religious voting is all the more surprising because advanced industrial societies have become more secular during the past few decades. In addition, many of the societal changes that weakened the class cleavage presumably should have the same effect on religious voting.

Despite these appearances, the importance of religion as a basis of voting
behavior is declining, but the pattern of decline is less obvious than for class voting. Comparisons of the voting patterns of religious denominations include only those voters with religious attachments. Individuals who attend church regularly remain well integrated into a religious network and maintain distinct voting patterns; however, there are fewer of these individuals today. By definition, the growing number of secular voters do not turn to religious cues to make their electoral choices. Thus, as the number of individuals relying on religious cues decreases, the partisan significance of religious characteristics and their overall ability to explain voting are weakened.

Other Social Group Differences

The decline of social group–based voting is most apparent for class and religion, but a similar erosion of influence has occurred for most other social characteristics.

Regional differences occasionally flare up as a basis of political division. Britain, the United States, and now the unified Germany have seen regional interests polarize over the past generation. In other societies, such as Spain, Canada, and Italy, sharp regional differences from the past have persisted to the present (e.g., Rose 1982; Clarke, Kornberg, and Wearing 2000). Yet in most nations, region exerts only a minor influence on voting. Similarly, urban/rural residence displays only modest differences in voting patterns. Furthermore, these differences often have narrowed as the forces of modernization decrease the gap between urban and rural lifestyles.

The media have devoted considerable attention to debates about an emerging gender gap in voting. Nevertheless, the available empirical evidence points to a narrowing of male/female voting differences in most Western party systems (Studlar, McAllister, and Hayes 1998; Jelen, Thomas, and Wilcox 1994). In contemporary elections, gender is seldom a major explanation of voting patterns, normally averaging less than a 10-percentage-point gap between men and women. Significant differences begin to emerge, however, if one combines gender and life-status measures, such as employment status (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999, chap. 5; Norris 1999a).

One possible exception to the pattern of declining social cleavages is race and ethnicity. There are sharp racial differences in partisan support within the American electorate, and these differences have widened over time (Tate 1993; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999). For instance, 90 percent of African Americans gave their congressional votes to Democrats in 2000, compared to 63 percent among Hispanics and 46 percent among white Americans. The minority immigrant populations in Europe may produce similar differences in these party systems. Ethnicity has the potential to be a highly polarized cleavage because it may involve sharp social differences and strong feelings of group identity. Yet most societies remain relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, and this
limits the impact of race or ethnicity as an overall predictor of vote choice. For example, the Cramer's V correlation for race and vote is significant in the United States (0.35) but quite modest in a nation such as Britain (0.06) that has a smaller minority population (Saggar and Heath 1999).

This evidence leads to one of the most widely repeated findings of modern electoral research: Sociological factors have declining influence on voting behavior. Franklin and his colleagues (1992) compiled the most comprehensive evidence supporting this conclusion. They tracked the ability of a set of social characteristics (including social class, education, income, religiosity, region, and gender) to explain partisan preferences. Across fourteen democracies, they found a marked and consistent erosion in the voting impact of social structure. The rate and timing of this decline vary across nations, but the end product is the same. In party systems such as those in the United States and Canada, where social group-based voting was initially weak, the decline has occurred slowly. In other electoral systems—such as Germany, the Netherlands, and several Scandinavian nations—where sharp social divisions once structured the vote, the decline has been steady and dramatic. Franklin and his colleagues conclude with the new "conventional wisdom" of comparative electoral research:

One thing that has by now become quite apparent is that almost all of the countries we have studied show a decline during our period in the ability of social cleavages to structure individual voting choice. (1992, 385)

**New Politics and the Vote**

As traditional social group influences decrease in importance, the New Politics (or postmaterial) cleavage may provide the basis for a new partisan alignment. The erosion of Old Politics cleavages is at least partially the result of the increasing salience of New Politics issues (Knutsen 1987, 1995b). Environmental protection, women's rights, and other social issues are not easily related to traditional class or religious alignments. Furthermore, New Politics issues attract the attention of the same social groups that are weakly integrated into the Old Politics cleavages: the young, the new middle class, the better educated, and the nonreligious.

The development of a new basis of partisan cleavage can be a long and difficult process. Groups must organize to represent New Politics interests and mobilize voter support, but the group bases of these issues are still ill defined. The environmental and women's movements, for example, have multiple groups representing them, they seldom speak with a single voice, and the voters' bonds to specific groups are weaker than for class and religious groups. The parties also must develop clear policy images on these issues. Many established parties are hesitant to identify themselves with these issues because the stakes are still unclear and the parties are often internally divided on the issues (Rohrschneider 1993b; Dalton 1994a, chap. 9).
Despite these limiting factors, the potential impact of New Politics values on voting has increased in recent years. Small Green or New Left parties now compete in many European democracies (Richardson and Rootes 1995). In response, the established parties are gradually becoming more receptive to the political demands of New Politics groups. The emergence of Green parties into the government coalition in France (1997) and Germany (1998) and Al Gore’s candidacy in the 2000 U.S. elections signal how the established parties are accepting Green issues.

People also seem willing to base their voting choices on New Politics concerns. Harvey Palmer (1995), for example, found that postmaterial values gradually became a better predictor of British party preferences than either income or occupation. Postmaterialism has also exercised a significant impact on German voting preferences, at least until unification created a new set of policy concerns (Fuchs and Rohrschneider 1998). Knutsen’s research (1995b; Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995) similarly points to a growing relation between postmaterial values and party choice in most European nations. In addition, many Europeans express a willingness to vote for an environmental party—the potential electorate for a Green party rival that of socialist and Christian democratic parties (Inglehart 1990, 266).

Chapter 7 suggested that the initial structure of this new cleavage may focus on the conflict between New Politics and Old Politics adherents. Therefore, we used the material/postmaterial values index (chapter 5) to see if these orientations influence voting. Materialists emphasize security, stability, economic well-being, and other Old Politics objectives. Postmaterialists place greater stress on New Politics goals, such as participation, social equality, and environmental protection.

Table 8.4 displays the strong relationship between value priorities and party preferences. In every nation, postmaterialists favor the Left by a significant margin, whereas materialists lean toward the Right. The influence of changing values is especially clear for the New Left environmental parties in France and Germany. For example, 21 percent of French postmaterialists supported the Greens, compared to only 3 percent of materialists.

The overall size of these voting differences is considerable, often exceeding the Alfaro index scores for class or religious voting. There is a 44-percentage-point gap in Labour Party support between materialists and postmaterialists. Sizable FDI scores also appear in Germany (35) and France (33), whereas value differences are less pronounced in the United States (17).

The extent of values-based voting in advanced industrial democracies is described in figure 8.5. As other studies have noted, postmaterialism has an exceptionally strong influence in Denmark and the Netherlands (and Finland), where established political parties have responded to these new issue concerns. Values-based voting is also significant in Britain, Germany, and France; in all three nations the influence of values exceeds class voting differences (compare to figure 8.1). Repeating a pattern we have seen for other cleavages, New Politics values only weakly affect American electoral behavior.
Table 8.4  Value Priorities and Party Support (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Postmaterial</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Britain</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Left</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Front</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance 90/Greens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 1990–91 World Values Survey.*

*Note: Value priorities are measured with the twelve-item index (see chapter 5).*

Previous electoral research found that the extent of values polarization is partially a function of the diversity of choice in a party system; with more parties, it is more likely that one will choose to represent these concerns. In addition, affluence stimulates postmaterial concerns. This is most clearly evident in the eastern/western German comparisons. Postmaterial values have a significant influence on the voting choices of many westerners (Cramer's V = .21). Eastern Germans, however, are less likely to possess postmaterial values and are preoccupied with the economic problems that accompanied German union. Thus, values play a smaller role in their voting behavior (Cramer's V = .14) even though they are voting on the same party choices. Figure 8.5 also shows that across the advanced industrial
democracies, the average weight of value priorities (Cramer's V = .17) now exceeds the weight of social class in determining party choice (compare to figure 8.1).

Extensive long-term trend data are not available for the twelve-item index, but we can gain some idea of these trends by comparing results from a survey in the 1970s to our current findings (figure 8.6). In contrast to class voting, which is decreasing over time, the impact of values has strengthened in most nations. For example, the voting difference between materialists and postmaterialists in Germany was 22 percentage points in 1973; by 1990 this gap had increased to 35 points. Thus, the sources of partisan cleavage are changing in advanced industrial democracies—the long-standing Old Politics cleavages are being joined by a new values cleavage.
It would be a mistake to assume that New Politics differences in voting means an inexorable increase in support for leftist parties. The Old Politics cleavages will remain the major forces structuring party competition for some time. Furthermore, the partisan consequences of the New Politics depend on how parties respond to these issues. For instance, although American environmentalists normally feel closer to the Democratic Party, an early Republican president (Teddy Roosevelt) nurtured the modern environmental movement and another Republican president (Richard Nixon) created the Environmental Protection Agency. Similarly, the conservative Kohl government took more forceful action than its SPD predecessors in dealing with acid rain, pollution of the North Sea, and other environmental problems in Germany (but the new SPD government has been even more active). Environmentalism is not a Left or Right issue in the traditional Old Politics meaning of these terms; the partisan results of these issues depend on how parties respond (see Dalton 1994a, chap. 9). The real

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**Figure 8.6 Trends in New Politics Voting**


*Note*: The values plotted are the Percentage Difference Index (PDI) quantities relating postmaterial value priorities to leftist party preference.
lesson is that public interests and party alignments are changing, and the party systems in advanced industrial democracies are affected by these trends.

**The Transformation of Social Cleavages**

This chapter has described a general decline in the influence of social characteristics on voting choice. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the dominant social cleavage in most democracies separated working-class and middle-class parties. But the socioeconomic transformation of these societies is weakening class alignments. Similarly, the number of churchgoers available for mobilization by confessional parties is decreasing, leading to a declining influence of religion on voting behavior. These class and religious trends are often accompanied by declines in the influence of regional, residential, and other social cleavages.

Since there is a natural logic (and political rationale) to thinking about party systems as the representation of social group differences, one response to the erosion of Old Politics group divisions has been to search for potential new social bases of alignment. Political scientists term this a partisan realignment. A realignment is defined as a significant shift in the group bases of party coalitions, usually resulting in a shift in the relative size of the parties’ vote shares.

There have been many prior examples of realignment in Western party systems, in which one system of group cleavages was supplanted by another. For example, the 1930s New Deal realignment in the United States is traced to the entry of large numbers of blue-collar workers, Catholics, and blacks into the Democratic Party coalition. Realignments have been a regular feature of American electorate politics for well over a century and probably since the emergence of the first mass party coalitions around 1800 (Clubb, Flanigan, and Zingale 1980). Similar historical realignments have occurred in European party systems, such as the Labour Party’s rise in the early 1900s and the Gaullist realignment at the beginning of the French Fifth Republic.

Some analysts suggest that New Politics issues—environmental protection, nuclear energy, sexual equality, consumer advocacy, and human rights—may provide the basis of a new partisan alignment. These issues are attractive to voters who are weakly integrated into Old Politics alignments. Eventually, these interests may coalesce into political movements that will realign electorates and party systems. The growing partisan polarization along the New Politics value cleavage apparently supports this realignment thesis. Value priorities have become a more important influence on voting choice, and new parties now represent these perspectives.

I am not convinced that it is accurate to think of contemporary partisan politics in the same terms as past partisan realignments. The process of partisan realignment is normally based on clearly defined and highly cohesive social groups that can develop institutional ties to the parties and provide clear voting cues to their members. A firm group base provides a framework for parties to develop institutional ties to the groups and for groups to socialize and mobilize their members.
There are few social groupings comparable to labor unions or churches that might establish the basis of a New Politics realignment. For instance, generational differences in support for New Politics parties might indicate an emerging New Politics cleavage, but age groups provide a very transitory basis for mobilizing voters. Other potential group bases of voting cues, such as education or alternative class categorizations, so far remain speculative, without firm evidence of realigning effects.

Postmaterial values are related to partisan preferences, but these values are unlikely to provide a basis for a new group-party alignment. Values define clusters of like-minded people. One cannot identify a postmaterialist in the same way that class, religion, or region provides a basis of personal identity and group mobilization. Indeed, postmaterial values are antithetical to such traditionally structured organizations as unions and churches. Instead, a vast array of single-issue groups and causes represent New Politics concerns, from the women's movement to peace organizations to environmental groups. These groups generally are loosely organized with ill-defined memberships that wax and wane.

The lack of a group basis for the New Politics cleavage highlights another aspect of the new style of citizen politics. The kinds of cleavages that divide modern electorates and the kinds of groups they define are changing. Electoral politics is moving from cleavages defined by fixed social groups to value and issue cleavages that identify communities of like-minded individuals. The growing heterogeneity, secularization, and *bourgeoisement* of society are weakening social group ties generally. Increasing levels of urbanization, social mobility, and geographic mobility work against the continued existence of exclusive, cohesive social groups. The revolutions in education and cognitive mobilization work against the dominance of disciplined, hierarchic, clientelist associations.

In summary, two kinds of changes are affecting contemporary electoral politics. First, the shift from the Old Politics toward the New Politics marks a transformation from social group cleavages to issue group cleavages. Because issue group cleavages are more difficult to institutionalize or "freeze" via social group ties to mass organizations, they may not be as stable. In addition, because many of the new issue concerns involve only a narrow sector of the public, the linkage between these issues and party support may remain unclear. Some parties may adopt vague issue stands to avoid offending specific interests; other parties may cater to special interest groups and lose their broader programmatic image.

A second change involves the weakening of social group bonds. Social groups may still represent some of the changing political interests of contemporary electorates. Nevertheless, all forms of political mobilization are subject to the atomizing influences of advanced industrial societies. Interest mobilization along any political dimension necessarily will be characterized by more complex, overlapping, and crosscutting associational networks; more fluid institutional loyalties; and looser, more egalitarian organizational structures. Thus, the question is not
whether labor union leaders support leftist parties (they do) or whether labor
union members perceive these cues (they do)—but whether the union rank and
file will follow their leaders anymore. And the fact is that fewer individuals are
following such external cues. This change affects the breadth, effectiveness, and
stability of any future partisan alignment. Not only is the style of the Old Politics
cleavages fading, but the prognosis for an eventual revival is not an optimistic one.

The new style of citizen politics, therefore, should include a more fluid and
volatile pattern of party alignments. Political coalitions and voting patterns will
lack the permanence of past class and religious cleavages. Without clear social
cues, voting decisions will become a more demanding task for voters, and voting
decisions will become more dependent on the individual beliefs and values of
each citizen.

SUGGESTED READINGS
Anderson, Christopher J., and Carsten Zelle, eds. Stability and Change in German Elections: How
Dalton, Russell, Scott Flanagan, and Paul Beck, eds. Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial
Evans, Geoffrey, ed. The End of Class Politics? Class Voting in Comparative Context. New York:
Franklin, Mark, Tom Mackie, and Henry Vallen, eds. Electoral Change. New York: Cambridge

NOTES
1. Most American voting studies analyze presidential elections. Because of the importance of
candidate image, presidential elections reflect a different set of electoral forces than normally
found in European parliamentary elections. To assure comparability of American and European
results, the American data in this chapter are based on voting patterns in congressional elections.

2. We measured social class by the occupation of the respondent coded into the following
categories: (1) government, (2) professional/managerial, (3) technical/clerical, (4) service/sales,
(5) farming, (6) workers, and (7) other occupations.

3. In the United States, this is the percentage voting Democratic in congressional elections; in
Britain, the percentage voting Labour; in Germany, the percentage voting SPD of the two-party
vote (SPD and CDU/CSU) before 1980 and leftist percentage (SPD, Greens, and PDS) in later
elections; in France, the percentage voting for leftist parties (PC, Socialist, and other Left).

4. Generational patterns in class voting also reinforce the argument of the long-term erosion in this
cleavage (Franklin, Mackie, and Vallen 1992, chap. 19). Research generally finds strong
relationships between class and vote among older generations. Among younger generations,
these relationships are weak and decreasing.

5. In support of this interpretation, new middle-class voters have been a major source of elec-
toral volatility in the United States (Flouj et al. 1996; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999)
and Germany (Dalton 1996a). The following table shows that the French new middle class
has also shifted its vote preferences for the Left over time:

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Laver and Hunt (1992) show that political elites in most Western democracies still perceive significant party differences on dimensions such as pro- and anticlerical and the permissiveness of social policy. There is evidence that Germans can clearly differentiate the parties in their religious leanings, and these perceptions have grown more distinct over time (Dalton 1993a, 66; Wessels 1994). Finally, chapter 7 found that the American public perceives conservative religious groups as closer to the Republican Party.

7. In 2000 there was an 18 percent gap in party support between those who never attend church and those who attend on a weekly basis. This is about double the level of religious polarization in elections of the 1950s and 1960s, but it is still half the level of religious differences in nations such as Germany and France.

8. Value polarization in France decreased between 1973 and 1990. This may be coincidental to these two surveys or may reflect the initial polarization over postmaterial issues that occurred as a result of the May Revolts. The French case deserves additional research.
CHAPTER 9
Partisanship and Electoral Behavior

SOCIAL CLEAVAGES MAY provide the foundation of modern party systems, as seen in the two previous chapters, but this represents only the beginnings of electoral decision making. Each election presents voters with choices over policy proposals and the candidates for office. Although social characteristics and group cues might be a basis for making decisions, citizens also hold a variety of political beliefs and values that affect their electoral calculus. Often these considerations go beyond group ties or the perceptions derived from group cues.

Consequently, contemporary electoral research emphasizes the attitudes and values of voters as key factors in understanding electoral choice. Most elections are not presented as conflicts over historical cleavage alignments but deal with more contemporary problems (which may reflect long-term conflicts). Citizens make judgments about which party best represents their interests, and these perceptions guide voting behavior. Attitudes toward the issues and candidates of an election are thus a necessary element in any realistic model of voting. Attitudes are also changeable, and their incorporation into a voting model helps explain variation in party results across elections.

A SOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL OF VOTING

Faced by the limitations of a purely sociological approach to voting, early electoral researchers developed voting models to include psychological factors, such as attitudes and values, as influences on voting decisions and other political behavior. A team of researchers at the University of Michigan first formalized a model integrating both sociological and psychological influences on voting (Campbell et al. 1960, 1966). This sociopsychological model describes the voting process in terms of a funnel of causality (figure 9.1). At the wide mouth of the funnel are the socioeconomic conditions that generate the broad political divisions of society: the economic structure, social divisions such as race or religion, and historical alignments such as the North–South division in the United States. These factors influence the structure of the party system (see chapter 7) but are far removed from the voting decisions of individual citizens.
As we move through the causal funnel, socioeconomic conditions influence group loyalties and basic value orientations. For instance, economic conditions may bond an individual to a social class, or regional identities may form in reaction to social and political inequalities. Thus, social conditions are translated into attitudes that can directly influence the individual's political behavior.

The causal funnel narrows further as group loyalties and value priorities are linked to more explicitly political attitudes. Campbell and his colleagues explained individual voting decisions primarily in terms of three attitudes: partisanship, issue opinions, and candidate images. These beliefs are most proximate to the voting decision and therefore have a direct and very strong impact on the vote.

Although the funnel of causality appears simple by contemporary standards of social science, it represented a major conceptual breakthrough for voting

![Diagram of the Funnel of Causality Predicting Vote Choice](image-url)
research. This model provides a useful device for organizing the factors that potentially influence voting behavior. To understand voting decisions, one has to recognize the causal relationship between the many factors involved. The wide end of the funnel represents broad social conditions that structure political conflict but are temporally and psychologically far removed from the actual voting decision. As we move through the funnel, attention shifts to factors that are explicitly political, involve individual beliefs, and are more proximate to voting choice. Social characteristics are therefore seen as an important aspect of the voting process, but their primary influence is in forming broad political orientations and group loyalties; most of the direct impact of social characteristics on voting is mediated by attitudinal dispositions. Attitudes, in turn, depend on the group loyalties and value orientations of the individual, as well as external stimuli such as friends, media, government actions, and the activities of the campaign. There is a place in the funnel of causality for each element of the voting process, and we can understand each element in relation to the others.

In addition to the descriptive value of the model, the sociopsychological approach is also very successful in predicting voting choices. Attitudes toward the parties, issues, and candidates of an election are psychologically very close to the actual voting decision and therefore are strongly related to voting choices. In fact, the model can predict voting decisions more accurately than individuals can predict their own behavior (Campbell et al. 1960, 74).

The sociopsychological model has defined a paradigm of voting behavior that structures how we think about elections and how researchers analyze the voting process. Researchers have tested and applied the basic elements of the model in a variety of nations. This chapter examines partisan attachments as a central concept in the sociopsychological model of voting. Then chapter 10 examines how specific issue opinions provide another element in this model.

**Partisan Attitudes**

The sociopsychological model focuses on the specific issue opinions and candidate evaluations that determine voting behavior. Yet it soon became clear that partisan loyalties strongly influenced many of the specific political beliefs and behaviors of the citizenry. As one elderly Tallahassee voter once commented to me while waiting to vote, “I vote for the candidate and not the party. It just seems like the Democrats always choose the best candidate.” Many voters begin each electoral season with already formed partisan predispositions. These partisan loyalties are a central element in an individual’s belief system, serving as a source of political cues for other attitudes and behaviors.

The Michigan researchers described these party attachments as a sense of *party identification*, similar to identifications with a social class, religious denomination, or other social group. Party identification is a long-term, affective, psychological identification with one’s preferred political party (Campbell et al.
These party attachments are distinct from voting preferences, which explains why some Americans vote for the presidential candidate of one party while expressing loyalty to another party. Indeed, it is the conceptual independence of voting and party identification that initially gives the latter its theoretical significance.

The discovery of party identification is one of the most significant findings of public opinion research. Partisanship is like a “super attitude.” It provides a starting point for individual belief systems, as discussed in chapter 2. Partisanship is also the ultimate heuristic, because it provides a reference structure for evaluating many new political stimuli—what position does “my” party take on this issue—and making political choices. As seen in chapter 3, partisanship is also a stimulus for engagement in campaigns and elections. The functional importance of partisanship was emphasized by the developers of the concept:

The present analysis of party identification is based on the assumption that the . . . parties serve as standard-setting groups for a significant proportion of the people in this country. In other words, it is assumed that many people associate themselves psychologically with one or the other of the parties, and that this identification has predictable relationships with their perceptions, evaluations, and actions. (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, 90)

Thus, the concept has become a key to understanding citizen political behavior.

After the description of party identification in the United States, the concept was exported to other democratic nations. In several cases, researchers had problems finding an equivalent measure of partisanship in multiparty systems or in nations where the term partisanship holds different connotations for the voters (Budge, Crewe, and Farlie 1976). The concept of a partisan “independent” is not as common in other electoral systems as it is in the United States. Thus, researchers could not simply translate the American party identification question into French or German; they had to find a functional equivalent for partisan attachments. Still, most public opinion specialists agree that voters hold some party allegiances that endure over time and strongly influence other opinions and political behavior. Equivalent measures of party identifications are now included in the election studies of virtually all contemporary democracies.

The Learning of Partisanship

The importance of party identification for understanding political behavior partially results from the early origins of these attachments. Socialization studies find that children develop basic partisan orientations at a very early age, often during the primary school years (Hess and Torney 1967, 90). Children learn party loyalties before they can understand what the party labels stand for, a
process similar to the development of many other group ties. These early party attachments then provide a reference structure for future political learning (which often reinforces early partisan biases).

The early-life formation of party identities means that parents play a central role in the socialization of these values. The transmission of partisanship within the family can be seen by comparing the party identifications of parents and their children. A cross-national socialization study interviewed parents and their children to compare their opinions directly (table 9.1). This research found relatively high levels of partisan agreement within American, British, and German families. In the United States, for example, 70 percent of the 16–20-year-old children of Democratic parents are themselves Democrats, and 55 percent of Republican parents have Republican children. Less than 10 percent of the children actually favor the party in opposition to their parents. These levels of partisan agreements are similar to those found in a larger and more representative study of American adolescents (Jennings and Niemi 1973). The British and German surveys also show that the party attachments of these parents are frequently re-created in the values of their offspring. Parents apparently have a strong formative influence on the partisan values of their children, even before most children become active in the political process.

There are many reasons why parents are so successful in transmitting their partisanship to their children. Partisan loyalties are formed when parents are the dominate influence in a child’s life, and the exposure to partisan cues from the parent is common. Parties are very visible and important institutions in the political process, and virtually all political discussion includes some partisan content. We identify candidates and judge them by their party affiliation, and we evaluate policies by their party sponsor. It does not take long for a child to identify the parents’ partisan leanings from their reactions to television news and statements in family discussions. Furthermore, most parents have party attachments that endure across elections; children are thus exposed to relatively consistent and continuous cues on which party their parents prefer. For example, one of my university colleagues was proud that he had conditioned his preschool child to groan each time a specific former president appeared on television. Either through explicit reinforcement or subconscious internalization of parental values, many children learn of their parents’ partisan preferences and take them as their own.

Once individuals establish party ties, later partisan experiences often follow these early predispositions. Democrats tend to vote for Democratic candidates; Republicans vote for Republicans. Thus, electoral experience normally reinforces these partisan tendencies because most citizens cast ballots for their preferred party. The accumulated experience of voting for the same party and the political agreement that leads to such partisan regularity both tend to strengthen partisan ties. Consequently, researchers generally find that partisan loyalties strengthen with age or, more precisely, with continued electoral support of the same party (Converse 1969, 1976).
Table 9.1 The Transmission of Parental Partisanship (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>United States</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PARENTAL PARTY PREFERENCE</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's party preference</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent</td>
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Source: Political Action Survey.

Figure 9.2 displays this increasing percentage of those with a party identification by age. Regardless of which party one supports, party bonds are stronger among older age groups. Most people in the United States and Britain develop a strong sense of party identity by middle age, which continues to strengthen through the rest of the life cycle. For example, only 46 percent of the youngest French age group say they are partisans, compared to 65 percent among the old
The same general age pattern is evident for British and American electors. Measures of the strength of partisanship depict a similar pattern of party bonds intensifying with age (or more precisely, with accumulated experience of supporting the same party in successive elections).

In the last edition of this book, the Federal Republic of Germany was an exception to this general pattern. Residents of communist East Germany obviously did not have the same opportunity over the past several decades to develop attachments to the democratic parties of the West. Their experience with the current party system dates only to 1990. Thus, the overall level of partisan attachments was significantly weaker in the East. In addition, there was relatively little difference in the strength of partisan ties between young easterners and those over age 50.

As we predicted, as eastern Germans are accumulating more experience with democratic electoral politics, the life-cycle pattern of partisan learning is becoming more apparent. This learning process probably has been accelerated by the conscious attempt by the PDS to appeal to easterners; this has apparently served to integrate these citizens into the new electoral system of the Federal Republic.
The East/West gap in partisanship consequently has narrowed substantially from the pattern of the early 1990s, and the pattern of greater partisanship among the old now applies to both halves of Germany.

Thus, partisan attachments are normally learned early in life, become deeply embedded in a child's belief system, and then are reinforced by later partisan experiences. Partisanship may change in reaction to later life experiences, but these attachments are not easily altered once they have formed. For example, party identification is one of the most stable political attitudes, far exceeding the stability of opinions on several long-standing national issues: race relations, economic programs, and foreign policy (Converse and Markus 1979). Additional evidence of long-term partisan stability comes from a panel study of high school seniors and their parents. M. Kent Jennings and Greg Markus (1984) found that 78 percent of American adults and 58 percent of adolescents did not change their partisan ties across one of the most turbulent political periods in recent American history (1965–73).

Evidence from other nations mirrors this pattern. British party attachments are significantly more stable than other political beliefs (Schickler and Green 1997). On the average, between 80 and 90 percent of the British public retain constant party ties from one election to the next. Hilde Himmelweit and her colleagues (1981) interviewed a sample of British middle-class males over a twelve-year period. They found that most voters supported the same party in 1959 and 1974 (a fifteen-year time span); conversions between Labour and Conservative partisans were exceedingly rare. Longitudinal studies in Germany find that partisanship is a very stable political attitude (Baker, Dalton, and Hildebrandt 1981). The limited evidence for France shows that below the surface of substantial turbulence in the actions of party leaders, there is considerable continuity in the partisan orientations of the French public (Converse and Pierce 1986, chap. 3).

Important evidence on the relative constancy of partisan attachments comes from comparing the stability of partisanship and voting preferences (table 9.2). For instance, reinterviews with the same American voters in 1972 and 1976 found that 93 percent had stable party identifications, whereas only 75 percent had stable congressional voting preferences. Moreover, when there was some variability, more voters maintain a stable party identification while changing their vote (22 percent) than the other way around (4 percent). Party preferences are also more stable than voting preferences in Britain and Germany, but this difference is more modest than in the United States (Leduc 1981; cf. Heath and Pierce 1992). In Europe there is a greater tendency for partisanship and vote to travel together; when one changes, so does the other (Holmberg 1994). Because of their limited amount of electing, Europeans are less likely to distinguish between long-term partisanship and current voting preferences. Still, partisanship generally is a political orientation that continues over time, even in the face of vote defections.

In sum, electoral research stresses the importance of partisanship in shaping
Table 9.2  The Relative Stability of Party Attachments and Vote (in percentages)

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<td>N = 539</td>
<td></td>
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<td>N = 795</td>
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</table>

|                      | Stable                 | Variable               |
| Stable               | 71                     | 22                     |
| Variable             | 4                      | 3                      |
| N = 707              |                        |                        |

Sources: LeDuc (1981, 264); Berger (504).

Note: The tables present percentages of the total N based on those who were voters and identified with a political party at each time point. American and British results are based on changes between two elections; West German data are based on changes during a three-wave 1976 election panel.

the political orientations of the public. Partisanship is a central element in an individual's belief system and a basis of political identity. These orientations are formed early in life and thus may condition later life learning. Thus, it is easy to see why researchers give it a central role in a sociopsychological model of voting choice.

The Impact of Partisanship

In sports, loyalty to a specific team helps one know whom to root for and which players to admire, and it motivates individuals to participate in support of their
team. People often develop such ties early in life, and they endure through the ups and downs of the franchise. Moreover, one's attachment to the Dodgers (in my case) strengthens with repeated trips to root for one's team, even if they lose.

It is the same with feelings of partisan attachment. Political parties help to make politics "user-friendly" for citizens. When the political parties take clear and consistent policy positions, the party label provides a key informational shortcut on how "people like me" should decide. Once voters decide which party generally represents their interests, this single piece of information can act as a perceptual screen—guiding how they view events, issues, and candidates. A policy advocated by one's party is more likely to meet with favor than one advocated by the other team.

Moreover, in comparison to social group cues such as class and religion, party attachments are a much more valuable heuristic. Party cues are relevant to a much broader range of political phenomena because parties are so central to politics. Issues and events frequently are presented to the public in partisan terms, as the parties take positions on the political questions of the day or react to the statements of other political actors. Thus, reliance on partisanship may be the ultimate example of the satisficing model of politics.

The Washington Post performed an interesting experiment that illustrates the power of partisanship as a political cue (Morris 1993). The paper included a question on a fictitious government act on one of its opinion surveys. One form of the question included reference to either Clinton's or the Republicans' position on the issue, and another form discussed the act without any partisan cues. They found that the number of people expressing an opinion on this act increased when a partisan cue was given. Moreover, there were dramatic partisan effects. Democrats were far more likely to oppose the fictitious act when told Clinton wanted repeal; Republicans disproportionately opposed the act when told the Republicans in Congress wanted repeal.

An example from the 1992 American National Election Study demonstrates the power of partisanship to shape even nonpartisan opinions. Before the 1992 U.S. elections, the survey asked the public to judge whether the national economy would improve or worsen over the next twelve months. With George Bush in the White House, Republicans were more optimistic about the nation's future than Democrats by a 15 percent margin. After the election, with Clinton entering the presidency, Republican optimism waned and Democrats now became much more positive about the economy, by a 29 percent margin.

This reversal of the relationship between pre-election and post-election surveys illustrates the power of partisanship to shape citizen perceptions of the political world. Partisanship has an even stronger influence on opinions that are more closely linked to the parties, such as evaluations of governmental performance and candidate images (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999; chap. 8; Miller and Shanks 1996). Partisans root for the players (candidates) on their team and save their catcalls for the opponents.
Party ties also mobilize individuals to become politically active. Just like sports loyalties, attachment to a political party encourages an individual to become active in the political process to support his or her side. Voting turnout and participation in campaign activities are generally higher among strong party identifiers (chapter 3). The 2000 American National Election Study, for example, finds that turnout was 23 percent higher among strong partisans compared to independents. In addition, strong partisans are more likely to try to influence others, to display campaign paraphernalia, to attend a rally, or to give money to a candidate during the campaign. Partisanship functions in a similar way in Britain. Strong partisans voted at a slightly higher rate in the 1997 House of Commons election and were more likely to attend a campaign meeting or read the party brochures on the election. Although 95 percent of strong British partisans cared which party (team) won the election, only 63 percent of weak partisans and 26 percent of nonpartisans shared their concerns.

The cue-giving function of partisanship is strongest for voting behavior. Partisanship means that voters enter an election with a predisposition to support their preferred party. Philip Converse (1966) described partisanship as the basis for a "normal vote"—the vote expected when other factors in the election are evenly balanced. If additional factors come into play, such as issue positions or candidate images, their influence can be measured by their ability to cause defections from standing partisan commitments. For the unsophisticated voter, a long-term partisan loyalty and repeated experience with one's preferred party provide a clear and low-cost cue for voting. Even for the sophisticated citizen, a candidate's party affiliation normally signifies a policy program that serves as the basis for reasonable electoral choice.

A close relationship generally exists between partisanship and voting in parliamentary elections (Holmberg 1994). Even with multiple parties to choose from and a large swing to Labour in 1997, only 14 percent of British partisans defected from their preferred party in the election. Defection is also low in Germany, since one of the votes that citizens cast is directly for a party list. In 1994, 11 percent of partisans in western Germany defected. The limited voting opportunities in most European nations tend to lessen the separation between partisanship and vote.

The American elector, on the other hand, "has to cope simultaneously with a vast collection of partisan candidates seeking a variety of offices at federal, state, and local levels; it is small wonder that he becomes conscious of a generalized belief about his ties to a party" (Butler and Stokes 1969, 43). Thus, the separation between attitudes and behavior is most noticeable in American elections, especially when voters are asked to make a series of choices for local, state, and federal offices (Beck et al. 1992). In highly visible and politicized presidential elections, candidate images and issue appeals have the potential to counteract partisan preferences, and thus party defections are common in these elections. The success of Republican presidential candidates from Reagan to George W. Bush
occurred because they attracted defectors from the Democratic majority. Even in the two-party contest of 1988, for instance, more than 12 percent of American partisans cast presidential votes contrary to their party identification.

A similar situation exists in France. The two-candidate runoff in French presidential elections is decided by the size of the vote the candidates can attract from parties other than their own (Boy and Mayer 1993). In French parliamentary elections, however, voting choice more closely conforms to standing partisan preferences.

In summary, it is easy to see why partisanship is the ultimate heuristic, because it performs a variety of functions for the partisan:

- Creates a basis of political identity
- Provides cues for evaluating political events, candidates, and issues
- Mobilizes participation in campaigns and election turnout
- Provides cues on voting preferences
- Stabilizes voting patterns, for the individual and the party system

Thus, partisan attachments became the cornerstone to our understanding of how citizens manage the complexities of politics and make reasonable decisions on the questions they face at election time.

**Partisan Dealignment**

Because partisanship is a central variable in the study of many different aspects of citizen political behavior, it came as some surprise when researchers first noted that party ties were eroding in many advanced industrial democracies. The initial signs of partisan decline appeared in the rising fluctuations of party outcomes from election to election (Crewe and Denver 1983). The erosion of the social group basis of party support contributed to this trend of increasing party volatility; the frozen group alignments that Lipset and Rokkan had described were beginning to thaw (chapter 8). In addition, election surveys in several nations found that partisan identifications were weakening (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984).

At first it was difficult to be certain that party bonds were eroding when this trend was intermixed with the normal patterns of partisan change between elections. Partisan change is a regular element of the electoral process, and periods of heightened partisan volatility and fragmentation dot the electoral histories of most democracies. As we argued previously, relatively few voters change their partisan preferences between adjacent elections. Some scholars thus were quite vocal in expressing their doubts that partisan ties were systematically changing across the advanced industrial democracies. For example, Peter Mair claimed that “The electoral balance now is not substantially different from that 30 years ago, and, in general electorates are not more volatile than once they were” (1993, 132; also see Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Bartolini and Mair 1989; Keith et al. 1992; Zelle 1995).
But as our evidence has grown, adding more nations and more elections, it is now clear that a general pattern of partisan decline is affecting most Western democracies. Voters are not simply defecting from their preferred party in one or two elections. Instead, there is a continuing erosion in partisan loyalties—the same loyalties that electoral research emphasized as a core element in explaining citizen political behavior.

The weakening of party ties first became apparent in the United States (figure 9.3). American partisanship was extremely stable from the 1950s to the early 1960s; the percentage of party identifiers remained within the 70 to 75 percent range, and less than a quarter of the public claimed to be “independents” without standing partisan ties. Partisan loyalties began to weaken after the 1964 election. By the 1980s more than a third of the electorate were nonpartisans and Perot’s candidacy pushed the percentage of independents still further (Wattenberg 1998; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999, chap. 8). At the turn of the century the percentage of independents was at a new high in the 2000 election survey (41 percent).

![Figure 9.3 The Percentage of Partisan Identifiers](image)

*Figure 9.3 The Percentage of Partisan Identifiers*

An almost identical pattern of declining party ties occurred in Britain. Because of the traditions of the British party system and the format of the British partisanship questionnaire, fewer Britons claim to be nonpartisans. In the 1964 British election study, only 4 percent claimed to lack a standing partisan preference. By the 1980s the number of nonpartisans had trebled to roughly 14 percent. Questions asking about the strength of attachments among partisans display a similar pattern. More than 40 percent of the British public were strong partisans during the late 1960s. Less than 20 percent of Britons claim to be strong partisans in the most recent elections.

Germany initially deviated from the pattern of partisanship found in other advanced industrial democracies. There was a large increase in partisanship between 1961 and 1976, as West Germans developed initial commitments to the postwar party system (Baker, Dalton, and Hildebrandt 1981, chap. 8). But at some point in the late 1970s the trend began moving in the opposite direction. Nonpartisans numbered only 16 percent of the public in 1976; by 1998 they accounted for more than 38 percent among westerners. Partisanship is even lower among easterners, since they lack prior partisan experience and are just beginning to develop party attachments.

The series of comparable French survey data is much shorter. Because of the volatility of the French party system, a relatively large number of people claim to lack any standing partisan commitment. Since the 1970s the number of partisans may have increased further, although the evidence is less certain than for the other three nations (e.g., Haegel 1993).

This weakening of party ties in our four core nations typifies a pattern that affects almost all advanced industrial democracies. An analysis of the nineteen advanced industrial democracies for which long-term survey data exist shows that the percentage of partisans has decreased in seventeen cases (Dalton 2000a). Furthermore, if we focus on the strength of partisanship, it has decreased in all nineteen nations. In nations as diverse as Austria, Canada, Japan, and New Zealand, the pattern is the same: The partisan attachments of the public weakened during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Other evidence points to growing public doubts about parties as political institutions. Surveys in Germany find that public confidence in political parties rates at the bottom of a list of diverse social and political institutions (IPPOS 1995). Similarly, the British public has become significantly less trusting of political parties (Webb 1996). Indeed, the ebb of public attachment to political parties is broadly evident in most contemporary democracies.

These trends suggest that advanced industrial democracies are experiencing a new period of partisan dealignment. Dealignment means that a significant proportion of the public fails to develop party attachments or becomes openly critical of political parties as institutions of government. Electoral analysts first thought that partisan dealignment was a temporary phenomenon, as parties and politicians struggled with problems that temporarily weakened their support
among the public (like a sports team on a losing streak), but it now appears to be a continuing feature of contemporary politics. After more than thirty years, for example, American partisanship remains below its high points in the 1950s and early 1960s. More important, if party identification is the most important attitude in electoral behavior research, then the breadth of these realignment patterns should have major implications for these nations.

The Consequences of Realignment

Because partisan ties are seen as so central to the workings of electoral politics and political behavior, the erosion of these ties should have obvious and predictable effects on citizen politics. Indeed, the evidence of partisan realignment is visible in a range of different aspects of electoral behavior.

For instance, partisanship binds individual voters to a preferred party. Thus, as these ties weaken, so should patterns of partisan-centered voting choice. Weakened party attachments lead fewer American voters to cast straight-party ballots, and split-ticket voting has risen in recent elections (figure 9.4). In the 1960s less

Figure 9.4  The Growth of Split-Ticket Voting

*Source: United States, 1952–91, American National Election Studies (third-party presidential candidates are counted as split voting); Germany, Statistisches Bundesamt (various years) and Schoen (2000) for 1994 and 1998. German data for 1990–98 are from western Germany.
than a sixth of Americans split their ballots between a presidential candidate of one party and a congressional candidate of another party. By the 1980s this had risen to a quarter of the electorate. With Perot’s third-party candidacy in 1992, 36 percent of Americans split their ballots. Even without Perot, split-ticket voting remained relatively high in the 2000 election. Split-ticket voting between House and Senate votes has also increased dramatically (Stanley and Niemi 1994, 146). There is similar evidence of split-ticket voting in other Western democracies that allows the voters to divide their party choices (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3). This appears to be a general consequence of the dealignment trend.

Weakened partisanship is also increasing the fluidity of voting patterns. For instance, there is evidence that the number of political parties and the shift in vote shares between elections are generally increasing in advanced industrial democracies—including the four we are studying here (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3). Similarly, David Butler illustrated this pattern for Britain; the average fluctuation in Gallup polls measuring Conservative Party support was 7.5 percent for the 1955–64 period and 20.6 percent for the 1985–92 period (Butler 1995, 71). Although most voters continue to support the same party over time, the number of floating voters is increasing in these party systems. Partisanship was once a stable guidepost for citizen political behavior, and now fewer individuals are following its guidance.

Since partisanship also mobilizes individuals to participate in the politics, it is no surprise that dealignment has been accompanied by the decline in electoral participation (see chapter 3). Election turnout has decreased in most advanced industrial democracies. In addition, participation in campaigns—going to meetings, working for candidates, and displaying party support—has also atrophied (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3). If politics is like sports, then when there are fewer habitual fans, there will be fewer to attend each game and participate in the sport.

Finally, when citizens do turn out to vote, the nature of the voting process should change. If long-term party and social group cues are decreasing in importance, this should shift the decision-making process toward the issues and candidates of specific campaigns. As one indicator of this shift, trend data show a systematic tendency for voters to make their decisions later in the campaign (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3); campaigns are now more likely to matter because fewer voters base their choice on standing partisan predispositions. Voters are beginning to choose.

**THE CAUSES OF DEALIGNMENT**

There are several explanations for the spreading pattern of partisan dealignment. At least initially, the decline of partisanship was linked to political events and political crises. In the United States, the dramatic events of the 1970s initially turned many young people away from political parties. The antipartisan sentiments stirred by the Vietnam War, Watergate, and similar crises kept new voters
from developing the early-life partisan attachments that could build over time. The student protests in Europe and a seemingly growing number of party scandals may have had a similar effect in other nations.

The cross-national breadth of dealignment trends, however, suggests that more than a series of coincidental political crises lie behind these trends. The sources of partisan dealignment more likely reflect broader patterns of social and political change in advanced industrial democracies. The declining role of parties as political institutions seems to play a key role in this process. Many of the parties' traditional political functions have been taken over by other institutions. A myriad of special interest groups and single-issue lobbies have developed in recent years, and political parties have little hope of representing all these groups. Instead, these groups press their interests without relying on partisan channels. Party leaders are even losing some control over the selection of elected party representatives. The most advanced example is the United States, where the expansion of open primaries and nonpartisan elections has undermined the parties' hold on recruitment. The British Labour Party has experienced a similar shift in nomination power away from the party in Parliament to party conventions and local constituency groups. In 1994 the German SPD selected its chancellor candidate through a mail ballot of its members. These and other developments lessen the importance of parties in the political process and therefore weaken the significance of parties as political reference points.

Changes in the mass media also contribute to dealignment trends. The mass media are assuming many of the information functions that political parties once controlled. Instead of learning about an election at a campaign rally or from party canvassers, television and newspapers have become the primary sources of campaign information (see chapter 2). Furthermore, the content of the mass media has changed to downplay the importance of political parties. The American media have shifted their campaign focus away from the political parties toward the candidates, and a weaker parallel trend is evident in several parliamentary democracies (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3).

Partisan dealignment is also encouraged by the failure of parties to deal successfully with contemporary political issues (Lawson and Merkl 1988; Zelle 1995). On the one hand, contemporary parties are struggling with problems of maintaining social services in the face of governmental budget limits. Some of the economic and welfare issues traditionally associated with the class cleavage have not been fully resolved. On the other hand, the new issues of advanced industrial societies often appear unsuited for mass political parties. Many of these issues, such as nuclear energy, minority rights, or local environmental problems, are too narrow to affect mass partisan alignments on their own. The rise of single-issue interests does not translate well into partisan attachments because of the uncertain electoral impact of these issues and the difficulty of accommodating these issues within large political coalitions. In the United States, this has led
to a proliferation of citizen interest groups and direct-action politics; in Europe
this has spawned similar groups as well as a variety of small parties on the Left
and Right (Müller-Rommel and Pridham 1991). Analysts thus maintain that
political parties have lessened their critical programmatic function of aggregat-
ing and articulating political interests.

Although these systematic factors are important, their ability to explain the
dealignment trend has limitations. For instance, although it is true that some fail-
ures in party performance may have initially stimulated a dealignment trend,
this trend did not reverse when a new party won control of the government or
policy failure was replaced by policy success. Furthermore, each nation points to
a unique set of policy failures, but the dealignment trend is a common feature
across these diverse experiences. Thus, one looks for general changes affecting
advanced industrial societies. Even the emphasis on the changing role of the
media overlooks the diverse roles the media play across these nations, because of
their different public/private ownership and different journalist norms. Thus,
another factor to consider involves changes in the citizenry, which may have
contributed to partisan dealignment.

**Cognitive Mobilization and Apathy**

Part of the dealignment literature holds that the process of cognitive mobiliza-
tion is increasing voters' political sophistication and thereby their ability to deal
with the complexities of politics without reliance on external cues or heuristics
(chapter 2). In addition, the growing availability of political information through
the media reduces the costs of making informed decisions.

The process of cognitive mobilization thus lessens the need for citizens to
develop party identifications as a shortcut to help them handle difficult and
often confusing political decisions (Shiveley 1979; Borre and Katz 1973). In other
words, the need to develop a habitual partisan attachment may be decreasing for
certain groups of citizens, and thus they are less likely to develop party ties.
Indeed, the self-defined political interests of the cognitively mobilized may drive
them away from habitual party cues that provide less room for individual choice.

The cognitive mobilization theory also implies that the recent increase in inde-
dependents will be concentrated among a distinct group of citizens: the better
educated, the better informed, and those who are cognitively mobilized. In contrast,
the early literature on partisanship held that nonpartisans were at the margins of
the electoral process; they were uninvolved in elections and unsophisticated about
politics (Campbell et al. 1960). If the growth of independents is concentrated
among the politically unsophisticated, which is possible in some explanations of
dealignment, then it would contradict the cognitive mobilization theory (and
potentially represent a negative development for the contemporary democracies).

Research on the dealignment trends in advanced industrial societies tends
to support the cognitive mobilization theory (Dalton 2000a). The greatest decline
in partisanship occurs among the better educated and the cognitively mobilized. In addition, in most nations dealignment is concentrated among younger generations, who are now less likely to be socialized into a partisan identity. At the same time, there is less evidence that policy dissatisfaction is driving dealignment, which suggests that it is the public's changing norms rather than party performance that is stimulating dealignment.

These empirical findings lead us to think of party mobilization and cognitive mobilization as two alternative ways that citizens can connect themselves to the political process (Dalton 1984). Some voters remain oriented to politics based on their partisan attachments—and this is a potent source of political cues. In addition, cognitive mobilization produces another group of politically interested and well-educated voters who orient themselves to politics on their own. The combination of both traits defines a typology of four types of citizens (figure 9.5). Apoliticals are neither attached to a political party nor cognitively mobilized; this group conforms to the independents originally described by Campbell and his colleagues (1960, 143–45). Ritual partisans are mobilized into politics primarily by their strong party attachments and are not cognitively mobilized. Cognitive partisans are highly ranked on both mobilization dimensions. They have strong party attachments, and they are psychologically involved in politics even when party cues are lacking.

Aparitians are the "new independents." It is essential to distinguish aparanians from traditional independents (apoliticals). Aparitians are cognitively mobilized, which implies high levels of political involvement and sophistication, though these citizens remain unattached to any political party. Aparitians also are concentrated among the young, the better educated, and postmaterialists (Dalton 1984). Other research shows that the development of advanced indus-

![Figure 9.5 Patterns of Political Mobilization](image-url)
trial societies is increasing the proportion of apartisans within contemporary publics as well as shifting the ratio of ritual and cognitive partisans. For instance, data from the American National Election Studies find that the number of partisans more than doubled over the past forty years—to a quarter of the electorate. In addition, the number of cognitive partisans has grown slightly, whereas the proportion of ritual partisans has decreased by more than half. Inglehart (1990, 366) found that the percentage of partisans in Europe increased significantly over a single decade (1976–87). Furthermore, Inglehart found sharp differences in the percentage of partisans across European generations, which suggests that the number of partisans will continue to grow. Sören Holmberg’s (1994) longitudinal analyses of Swedish partisanship yield similar findings.

The recognition of partisans has several implications for contemporary political behavior. Apartisans have the political resources to follow the complexities of politics and they are free of affective party ties. Thus, these new independents are less consistent in their voting patterns because voting behavior is not dependent on long-standing party predispositions. This group also should inject more issue voting into elections and demand that candidates are more responsive to public opinion.

Apartisans should press for an expansion of citizen input beyond the narrow channel of elections and other party-related activities. The political skills of partisans enable them to organize effective citizen action groups, citizen lobbies, protest demonstrations, and other unconventional political activities. The nonpartisan and issue-oriented characteristics of these activities make them ideal participation modes for partisans.

Finally, ongoing processes of socioeconomic change gradually should increase the number of partisans. The actions of parties in specific elections may hasten or retard this process in the short term. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests a long-term trend toward partisan dealignment in advanced industrial societies.

Politics in a Dealigned Era

Most elections involve a choice between parties or their representatives, and parties remain the central actors in the political process of most contemporary democracies. This chapter has argued that most citizens develop a psychological identification with a preferred political party, and these attachments are a potent guide for political behavior.

And yet the extent of these party ties is eroding in virtually all the advanced industrial democracies—producing a new characteristic of partisan dealignment. In addition, the decline has been more pronounced among the better educated and the politically engaged. It is as if the most sophisticated fans of the sport of politics are becoming disengaged with the partisan players they see on the field.

Furthermore, as with the weakening of the sociological model, the relative simultaneity of dealignment trends across various nations is striking. Long-term
sources of partisan preferences—social characteristics and partisanship—are weakening in most advanced industrial societies. In a single nation, such developments might be explained by the specific trials and tribulations of the parties. When a pattern appears across a wide variety of nations, however, it suggests that the causes are common to advanced industrial societies. Indeed, in linking the process of cognitive mobilization to partisan dealignment, this seems to represent yet another feature of the new style of citizen politics. Cognitively mobilized citizens are better able to make, and more interested in making, their own political decisions without relying on heuristics or external cues. These new apartisans are producing the dealignment trend.

Weakening party bonds have real consequences for the operation of the political process. For instance, partisan dealignment is part of a general process of political change that is transforming the relationship between voters and parties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). The personal connection between parties and their members and voters is being replaced by professionalized organizations that rely on the media and direct mailing to connect to voters. Instead of depending on party members to staff election campaigns, these become professionalized activities by hired specialists. Instead of relying on party members’ dues to fund party activities, many party systems are turning to public funding sources. As citizens’ connections to the parties have weakened, the parties have sought alternative sources of support. Such changes in organizational style may exacerbate dealignment trends by further distancing parties from the voters.

Weakened party-line voting also may contribute to the unprecedented level of split-party control of both the federal and state governments in the United States (Brody et al. 1994). In 1988 only 40 percent of the states had one party in control of both legislative houses and the governor’s office. Not since the formation of the Republican Party in the 1850s can one find any comparable split in the history of state party politics. Similarly, between 1981 and 1986 different parties controlled the House and Senate for the first time since 1916. Most visible, of course, is the division in partisan control of the presidency and Congress since 1992. From 1952 to 2000 the same party controlled the presidency and the House for just sixteen out of forty-four years. The culmination of these trends was the dramatic shift in partisan control of the U.S. Congress following the 1994 elections. After more than forty years of Democratic domination, the House fell to the Republicans without a corresponding realignment in partisan attachments.

The Federal Republic of Germany also has a federal system, and the same pattern is found there. For the first twenty years of the FRG’s history, the same party coalition controlled the Bundestag (the directly elected lower house of Parliament) and the Bundesrat (which represents the majority of state governments). From 1976 until 2000 federal and state control has been divided for about one-third of this period. In Britain, one sees a growing regionalization of voting patterns, as local electoral results are less closely tied to national patterns.
Of course, one of the best signs of dealigned politics is the rise of new political parties that can draw on independents for their initial support. The number of political parties grew during the latter half of the twentieth century in most parliamentary democracies (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000, chap. 3). Even in the United States, Perot’s candidacy in the 1992 and 1996 elections illustrates the potential to appeal to the growing number of nonpartisans. A candidate without prior political experience and without the support of a party apparatus garnered 19 percent of the U.S. presidential vote in 1992. The rise of “flash parties,” such as the success of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia or Jorg Haider’s Freedom Party in Austria, and the general rise of New Left and New Right parties in Europe are additional indicators of the volatility now present in contemporary party systems.

Finally, the erosion of the influence of long-term sources of partisanship suggests that factors further along the funnel of causality can play a larger role in voter choice. Citizens are still voting, even if they are not relying on party cues or early-learned partisanship to the degree they once did. On the one hand, this might encourage the public to judge candidates and parties on their policies and governmental performance—producing a deliberative public that more closely proximates the classic democratic ideal. On the other hand, the lack of long-standing partisan loyalties may also make electorates more vulnerable to manipulation and demagogic appeals (Holmberg 1994, 113–14). Dealignment has the potential to yield both positive and negative consequences for electoral politics, depending on how party systems and voters react in this new context. The following chapters consider how the changing roles of issues and candidate images are affecting the calculus of elections.

Suggested Readings


Notes

1. The standard party identification question is one of the most frequently asked questions in U.S. public opinion surveys. It measures both the direction of partisanship and the strength of party attachments: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or what?" For those expressing a party preference: "Would you call yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or a not very strong Republican/Democrat?" For independents: "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?" The question yields a seven-point measure of partisanship ranging from strong Democrat identifiers to strong Republican identifiers.
One of the current debates in the American voting literature is the question of how closely aggregate levels of partisanship track current voting preferences. For the contrasting sides of this debate, see MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson (1989) and Abramson and Ostrom (1991, 1994).

For instance, the German version of the party identification question specifically cues the respondent that it is asking about long-term partisan leanings: “Many people in the Federal Republic lean toward a particular party for a long time, although they may occasionally vote for a different party. How about you?”

These data are drawn from the Political Action Survey. The study supplemented its national sample of adults with additional parent-child interviews in families in which a 16-20-year-old was still living in the parent’s home. For additional analyses, see Jennings et al. (1979).

Fiorina (1984) describes partisanship as a “running tally” of an individual’s accumulated electoral experience. If early partisan leanings are reinforced by later voting experience, party ties strengthen over time. If voting experiences counteract partisanship, then these party loyalties may gradually erode. Also see Niemi and Jennings (1991).

Researchers have debated whether age differences in American partisanship represent generational or life-cycle effects (Converse 1976; Abramson 1979). We emphasize the life-cycle (partisan learning) model because the cross-national pattern of age differences seems more consistent with this explanation.

Part of these relationships are due to patterns of accumulated partisanship over the life cycle. In addition, the lower levels of partisanship among the young can be traced partially to decreasing attachments among younger generations.

We define cognitively mobilized citizens as having a combination of interests and skills, that is, “very interested” in the election and/or having at least some college education. The following table presents the distribution of types using data from the American National Election Studies (also see Dalton 1984, 282):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartrians</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive partisans</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual partisans</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apolitcals</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1992 American National Election Study found that Perot garnered 10 percent of the vote among Democrat identifiers, 17 percent among Republican identifiers, and 36 percent among pure independents. This pattern continued in the 1996 election, and in 2000 both Buchanan and Nader gained the greatest percentage of their votes from independents.
CHAPTER 10
Attitudes and Electoral Behavior

PARTY CONFLICT MAY begin as the competition between rival social groups or party camps, but elections inevitably revolve around the issues and candidates of the campaign. The issues and candidates are important because they give political meaning to the partisan attachments and social divisions we have discussed in earlier chapters. The electoral significance of partisanship (or class attachments) is expressed in the cluster of issue positions and candidate preferences that evolve from long-term partisan ties. Labour supporters, for example, do not just support the party out of blind loyalty, but because they share a belief in policies that the party normally advocates.

Issue beliefs and candidate images are also important because they represent the dynamic aspect of electoral politics. The distribution of partisanship may define the broad parameters of electoral competition. However, specific campaigns are fought over the policies the contenders advocate, the images of the candidates, or the government's policy performance. The mix of these factors almost always varies across elections, and thus issue beliefs and candidate images explain the ebb and flow of voting outcomes. This is why the funnel of causality (figure 9.1 on p. 173) locates issue beliefs and candidate images as proximate to voting choice. Although partisanship may partially determine these attitudes, the content of a campaign also shapes these attitudes and thus the ultimate voting decision.

Finally, as the electoral impact of long-term partisan attachments and social cues is decreasing, many political scientists maintain that there is a corresponding increase in the influence of issue opinions on voting choice (e.g., Franklin, Mackie, and Valen 1992). Martin Wattenberg (1991) has written provocatively about the rise of candidate-centered choices by American voters, and the role of candidate images is now more widely debated in European party systems (Kaase 1994; McAllister 1996).

This chapter examines the role of issues and candidate images in electoral choice. We consider both the conditions that determine the potential influence of these attitudes on the vote and their actual impact in contemporary party systems. This evidence enables us to complete our model of voter choice and discuss the implications of our findings for the democratic process.
PRINCIPLES OF ISSUE VOTING

The study of issue voting has been closely intertwined with the scholarly debate on the political sophistication of the citizenry. In theoretical terms, issue voting is presented as the defining feature of a sophisticated, rational electorate; voters evaluate the government and opposition and then thoughtfully cast a ballot for their preferred party. To the skeptics of mass democracy, this theoretical ideal seldom exists in reality. Instead, they see voters as lacking knowledge of the party’s or their positions and often voting on the basis of ill-formed or even incorrect beliefs (see chapter 2).

The early empirical voting studies were often critical of the electorate’s ability to make informed choices. The authors of *The American Voter* maintained that meaningful issue voting is based on three requirements: citizens should be interested in the issue, they should hold an opinion on the issue, and they should know the party or candidate positions on the issue (Campbell et al. 1960, chap. 8). *The American Voter* maintained that on most policy issues, most voters fail to meet these criteria. These researchers classified a third or less of the public as possible issue voters on each of a long list of policy topics. Moreover, Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan believed that these small percentages reflected the conceptual and motivational limits of the electorate; the lack of issue voting was presumably an intrinsic aspect of mass politics (Converse 1990). These political scientists therefore rejected the notion that election results represent the policy choices of the public.

Even from the beginning of empirical voting research, there were critics of this negative image of issue voting. V.O. Key was one of the first to present survey evidence showing that citizens were "moved by concern about the central and relevant questions of public policy, of government performance, and of executive personality" (Key 1966, 7–8). In short, Key’s unorthodox argument stated "voters are not fools." Key’s position gradually has become less unorthodox as our understanding of citizen voting behavior has grown.

Because only a minority of the public may fulfill the criteria of rational issue voting for each specific issue, this does not mean that only a third of the total
public are capable for any and all issues. Contemporary electorates are comprised of overlapping issue publics, groups of people interested in specific issues (see chapter 2). These issue publics vary in size and composition. A large and heterogeneous group of citizens may be interested in basic political issues such as taxes, inflation rates, budget deficits, and the threat of war. On more specific issues—agricultural policy, nuclear energy, transportation policy, foreign aid—the issue publics normally are smaller and politically distinct. Most voters are politically attentive on at least one issue, and many voters may belong to several issue publics. When citizens define their own issue interests, they can fulfill the issue-voting criteria for their issues of interest. For example, David RePass (1971) found that only 5 percent of Americans were interested in medical programs for the elderly, but more than 80 percent of this group could be classified as potential issue voters. Adopting a more diversified view of the electorate—not all citizens must be interested in all issues—greatly strengthens the evidence of issue voting.

The conflicting claims about the nature of issue voting also may arise because researchers think of issue voting in different terms or use contrasting empirical examples to support their claims. Indeed, the literature is full of descriptions of how various types of issues function within the electoral process, and why we must differentiate between issues. Issue voting may be more likely for some sorts of issues than for others, and the implications of issue voting also may vary depending on the type of issue.

Figure 10.1 introduces a framework for thinking about issue voting. One important characteristic is the type of issue. Position issues involve conflicts over policy goals (Stokes 1963). A typical position issue might concern debates on whether or not the U.S. Congress should support the Kyoto agreement on global warming or whether or not Britain should privatize government-owned industries. Discussions of issue voting often focus on position issues that define the current political debate.

In contrast to position issues, performance issues involve judgments on how effectively the candidates or parties pursue widely accepted goals. For instance, most voters favor a strong economy, but they may differ in how they evaluate a government’s job in accomplishing this goal. Conflicting claims about performance judgments often lie at the heart of electoral campaigns. Finally, voters might judge the attributes of the parties or candidates; do they possess desired traits or characteristics? For example, a party must be considered trustworthy if its campaign promises are to be believed. These different issue characteristics reflect on the types of decisions being made and the implications of these decisions for judging voters and electoral outcomes.

Types of issue voting also can be characterized by the time frame of the voters’ judgments (Fiorina 1981; Miller and Borrelli 1992; Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999, chap. 7). Retrospective judgments occur when citizens rate political actors primarily on their past performance. Evaluating Al Gore in 2000 based
on the performance of the Clinton-Gore administration would be an example
of retrospective voting. Prospective judgments are based on expectations of future
performance. A voter judging Gore based on what his administration would do
differently in the future would be an example of prospective voting.

Retrospective and prospective judgments hold different implications for the
nature of citizen decision making. Retrospective judgments should have a firmer
empirical base, since they arise from past experience. Retrospective political eval-
uations can be a relatively simple decision-making strategy: Praise the incumbents
if times have been good, criticize them if times have been bad. A pure reliance
on retrospective judgments limits the scope of citizen evaluations, however. Elec-
tions enable voters to select a government for the future, and these decisions
should include evaluations of a party’s promises and its prospects for success.
Therefore, voting decisions should consider prospective judgments about a
government’s likely behavior in the future. Prospective judgments are based on
a speculative and complex decision-making process. Individuals have to make
their own forecasts and link these projections to the expected performance of
political actors—a task that imposes a considerable information burden on the
voter. How citizens balance retrospective and prospective judgments thus reflects
directly on the nature of electoral decision making.

The combination of both sets of characteristics provides a typology of the
different types of issue calculations that voters may use in elections. Some issue
voting involves a policy appraisal that assesses a party’s (or candidate’s) past posi-
tion on a policy controversy. For instance, when some voters supported Gore in
2000 because they favored strong measures to protect the environment, they
were making a judgment about the past policies of the Clinton-Gore adminis-
tration. Alternatively, voters may consider what a party or candidate promises in
policy terms as the basis of their voting decision. When George W. Bush wanted
voters to support him in 2000 in order to reduce taxes, he was asking for a policy
mandate from the electorate.

Policy appraisal and policy mandates represent a sophisticated form of issue
voting: Citizens are making choices between alternative policy goals for their
government. This places high requirements on the voters: They must be informed, have a preferred policy, and see meaningful choices between the contenders. Sometimes this information is acquired directly by the voter, sometimes by using surrogate information sources (Popkin 1991; Lupia 1994).

In comparison, performance evaluations involve more general judgments about how a political actor (party or candidate) has been doing its job in the past. If the government has been successful, then voters support its return to office; if the government has struggled, then voters cast their ballots for an acceptable challenger to the incumbents. For example, in 1980 Ronald Reagan asked Americans to make a performance evaluation of Carter’s presidency when he asked: “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” In other instances, voters might make anticipatory judgments about the future performance of government. For instance, some analysts claim that the Labour Party lost in 1992 because some voters doubted the party’s ability to function effectively as a governing party, although they favored many of Labour’s policy proposals.

Finally, some aspects of “issue voting” may involve candidate or party attributes as a basis of choice. This type of voting is less often conditioned by a time frame. Voters judge candidates on their personal characteristics, which although not immediately political in their content, are legitimate factors to consider in selecting a candidate (Kinder et al. 1980). As Carter’s moral integrity helped him in 1976, Clinton’s “slick Willie” image hurt him at the polls—and both images were politically relevant although they did not involve explicit policy or performance calculations. Similar stylistic considerations can influence voter choices for a political party. Tony Blair’s 1997 victory in Britain and Gerhard Schröder’s 1998 victory in Germany are at least partially attributed to their ability to project a dynamic, forward-looking image compared to their electoral opponents.

Electoral researchers consider attribute voting as a low level of political sophistication because this does not involve explicit policy criteria. As we will discuss later, however, many attributes involve traits that are directly relevant to the task of governing or to providing national leadership. Thus, we should consider attribute voting as a potentially meaningful basis of electoral choice.

The typology of figure 10.1 provides a framework for thinking about different aspects of issue voting. For example, Martin Wattenberg’s (1991, chap. 6) analysis of support for Ronald Reagan provides an especially insightful example of how policy positions and performance evaluations are theoretically and empirically distinct aspects of issue voting. Some candidates can win because of their policy promises; some win despite their program. There is evidence that a similar interplay of factors was at work in the 2000 U.S. presidential election.

We will not explicitly examine each type of issue voting in this chapter. Still, we will highlight how various types of issues can influence contemporary electoral outcomes and the implications of each type for the nature of democratic politics.
POSITION ISSUES AND THE VOTE

Nearly a generation ago, some social scientists speculated about the imminent end of political conflict. They thought that advanced industrial societies would resolve the political controversies that have historically divided their populations (the controversies of the Old Politics), leading to the end of meaningful policy disagreements. We have witnessed just the opposite.

Contemporary electoral research documents the increased levels of policy-based voting in modern party systems. Real changes in the nature of electorates (and politics itself) have facilitated issue voting. The process of cognitive mobilization increases the number of voters who have the conceptual ability and political skills necessary to fulfill the issue-voting criteria. The growth of citizen action groups, new issue-oriented parties, and the general renaissance of ideological debate at election time are obvious signs of the public's greater issue awareness. Political elites have become more conscious of the public's preferences and more sensitive to the results of public opinion polls.

Advanced industrialism obviously has not meant the end of policy differences within these societies. Contemporary issue voting still involves many longstanding policy debates. Economic cycles inevitably stimulate shifting concerns about the economic role of government and the nature of the modern welfare system. Indeed, the 1980s saw a revival of economic controversy, spawned initially by economic recession and then by the “free market” programs of Reagan, Thatcher, Kohl, and other neoconservatives. Similarly, political events can often revive latent conflicts, such as the current debate over affirmative action in the United States, or renewed regional tensions in many democratic societies.

Issue controversies also are born from the changing nature of politics. This is most clear for foreign policy. The United States and other Western democracies are grappling with a new post–Cold War international system, in which international terrorists may become the major threat to peace. Germany is preoccupied with the problems of unification, and Europe is debating the future role of NATO and the European Union.

Another recent set of political controversies involves New Politics issues such as nuclear energy, women's rights, environmental protection, and related issues. These issues entered the political agenda of most advanced industrial democracies over the past few decades, introducing new political controversies and a heightened degree of policy polarization. Furthermore, these issues have played a special role in providing a political base for many new parties and reorienting the voting patterns of the young.

Faced with a diversity of issues across elections and electoral systems, it is difficult to provide a summary assessment of the impact of issues across time or nations. Indeed, the impact of issues should ebb and flow across time since they represent a dynamic part of elections. We can provide a general measure of the impact of policy preferences on voting behavior by examining the
relationship between Left/Right attitudes and vote, however. Chapter 6 described Left/Right attitudes as a sort of "super issue," a statement of positions on the issues that are currently most important to each voter. For some voters, their Left/Right position may be derived from positions on traditional economic conflicts; for others, Left/Right position may reflect positions on New Politics controversies—or Left/Right can signify a mix of different types of issues. The specific issues therefore might vary across individuals or across nations, but Left/Right attitudes can provide a single measure of each citizen's overall policy views.4

Most citizens can position themselves along a Left/Right scale, and these attitudes are linked to specific policy views, fulfilling the first two criteria of policy voting (Inglehart 1990). Figure 10.2 shows that citizens in each nation can also fulfill the third requirement: positioning the major political parties on this Left/Right scale. The figure presents the voters' average self-placement and the average score they assign to political parties in their respective nations.

American voters perceive fairly modest political differences between the Democrats and Republicans, a reflection of the diversity within these two large parties and the resulting policy overlap in the issue positions their candidates stress. And although specific presidential candidates might be perceived as relatively more or less ideological, the perceived positions of the parties themselves change relatively little from election to election.

The perceived party differences are much greater in the three European party systems. In France, for example, the political spectrum runs from the Communist Party at the leftist extreme to the National Front on the far right. By crude estimate, the French voter sees a range of party choices that extends more than twice as far across the political landscape in comparison to the differences among American political parties. Similarly, the German partisan landscape ranges from the PDS, the reformed communist party on the far Left, to the extremist Republikaner on the far Right. In Britain, the Labour and Conservative Parties assume distinct positions on the Left/Right scale, opening a void in the center that the Liberal Democrats occupy. Most political observers would agree that these party placements are fairly accurate portrayals of actual party positions (e.g., Laver and Hunt 1992, chap. 7). Therefore, in overall terms citizens fulfill the third issue voting criterion: knowing party positions.

These Left/Right attitudes are strongly related to voting choice in every nation (table 10.1). The impact of Left/Right attitudes is greatest when a large number of parties offer clear policy options, as in France. A full 92 percent of self-identified French leftists favored a leftist party (Communists, Socialists, or Greens) in 1993, compared to only 5 percent among self-identified rightists. Even in the United States, there is a 46-percentage-point gap in the Democrats' share of the vote as a function of Left/Right attitudes. These voting differences are much larger than the effects of social characteristics noted in chapter 8. The
Figure 10.2  Left/Right Placement of the Parties and Voter Self-Placement

Sources: Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data for the United States, Britain, and Germany; the 1995 Presidential Election Study for France.

Notes: Figure entries are mean scores. An 11-point Left/Right scale was used in the CSES and a 7-point Left/Right scale was used in the French survey. The placement of the U.S. parties is estimated from other questions in the 1996 American National Election Study.

substantial influence of Left/Right attitudes exists because policy evaluations are located closer to the end of the funnel of causality.

The patterns of Left/Right voting also show the relative positions of the parties along this continuum. For instance, as the most extreme leftist party in
### Table 10.1  Left/Right Attitudes and Party Support (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United States, 1996</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Britain, 1997</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germany, 1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU/CSU</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep/DVU</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France, 1995</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCF, extreme Left</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NF, other Right</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


France, the PC attracts the greatest share of its vote among the most extreme leftists; the Socialists do best among more moderate leftists. This pattern is mirrored in support for the UDF and RPR on the Right. Another significant contrast occurs between the Greens in Germany and France. The German Greens' disproportionate support from leftists shows their position along this continuum, whereas the French Greens are more likely to draw support from the Center, reflecting their relative positions in figure 10.2.
We can add more detail to how issue positions affect votes by studying the relationship between specific policy attitudes and party preferences. Several surveys from the International Social Survey Program include different issue positions across several policy domains (see chapter 6 for additional discussion of these items). Table 10.2 describes the relationship between these issue positions and party choices in our four nations. We should be cautious about overinterpreting these data. The strength of each relationship reflects both the varying size of the relevant issue public and the clarity of party positions. The dynamic, short-term nature of issue beliefs means that either of these factors, and thus the impact of an issue, may change greatly between elections. These data, therefore, are only a snapshot.

Table 10.2  The Correlation between Issue Opinions and Party Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left/Right attitudes</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
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Note: Table entries are Cramer's V coefficients.
description of the relationship between issue opinions and party preferences, and not an explanation. Still, snapshots provide a valuable picture of reality.

The traditional economic issues of the Old Politics—such as support for social services and governmental measures to lessen income inequality and manage the economy—display strong relationships with party preferences in all four nations. The impact of these issues is greatest in France, where the Communist Party and the Right vie over distinctly different economic programs. In each nation, however, the strongest correlation involves an economic issue. This pattern is perpetuated across most elections because economic topics have large issue publics and most political parties have clear policies on issues of the government’s role in the economic and related economic policies (see figure 7.2 on p. 138). These issues were even significantly related to partisan preferences in the 1993 American survey because Newt Gingrich and the Republicans were renewing their challenges against Clinton’s social spending programs.

New Politics issues dealing with the environment have a modest impact on party choice. In Britain, for instance, the average correlation for socioeconomic issues is .19; for environmental issues the average is .13. Although many people are interested in issues such as environmental protection, the translation of policy attitudes into party preferences is still limited. Partially this is because materialist, economic issues still attract greater attention. In addition, the established parties often offer less distinct policy choices on environmental and other New Politics issues. For instance, although the German Greens have a distinct profile on environmental issues, the positions of the CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP are less clear-cut (figure 7.2, p. 138). This same pattern applies to many gender-related issues. This reflects the tendency of New Politics issues to cut across traditional party lines. New Politics issues are significant more for their potential impact than for their present influence in electoral outcomes.

Foreign policy issues normally are weakly related to party preferences. France is the one nation where foreign policy issues often impact on partisanship; this reflects continuing conflicts over France’s role in the international system ranging from its relation to NATO to the policies of European unification. Foreign policy can sometimes influence partisan choice (Aldrich, Sullivan, and Bordia 1989), but its impact is normally secondary to domestic issues. Foreign policy issues attract the primary attention of only a small share of the public, except at times of international crisis. Party differences on most foreign issues are also modest in comparison to party polarization on many other topics.

A much richer compendium of information on issue voting exists for each nation separately (Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde 1999; Evans and Norris 1999; Boy and Mayer 1993). This literature indicates that many position issues potentially influence the partisan preferences of contemporary electorates. The impact of any one issue for the entire public is often modest because not all issues are salient to all voters. A more refined analysis of specific issue publics would find
that individual voting decisions are heavily influenced by each voter's specific issue interests. When these findings are combined with evidence of increasing issue voting overall, Key's (1966) positive assessments of the public's voting decisions no longer appear so unorthodox.

**Performance Issues and the Vote**

Another element of issue voting involves performance as a basis for electoral choice. Many voters say they turn to performance criteria, judging the success of the incumbents or their prospects for the future, as part of their voting decision. Fiorina put it best when he stated that citizens "typically have one comparatively hard bit of data: they know what life has been like during the incumbent's administration. They do not need to know the precise economic or foreign policies of the incumbent administration in order to judge the results of those policies" (1981, 5). In other words, performance-based voting offers people a reasonable shortcut for ensuring that unsuccessful policies are dropped and successful policies continued.

This literature argues that it is only important that voters dispense electoral rewards and punishments—regardless of whether or not the policies and the outcomes are connected. Benjamin Page (1978, 222), for example, writes that "even if the Great Depression and lack of recovery were not at all Hoover's fault . . . it could make sense to punish him in order to sharpen the incentives to maintain prosperity in the future." He acknowledged that blame may be placed unfairly, yet "to err on the side of forgiveness would leave voters vulnerable to tricky explanations and rationalizations; but to err on the draconian side would only spur politicians on to greater energy and imagination in problem solving." Therefore, performance voting requires that voters have a target for their blame when the government falters in some respect. Typically, this target is poor economic performance, although voters can consider foreign policy performance or other policy areas.

The literature on performance-based economic voting has burgeoned in recent years. Considerable evidence documents the importance of macroeconomics on micropolitics, both in the United States (MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992) and Europe (Lewis-Beck 1988; Lewis-Beck and Paldam 2000; Anderson 1995; Norpoth 1992). Even a simple measure of performance evaluation—overall judgments about the performance of the national economy over the past twelve months—displays a significant relationship with party preferences. Figure 10.3 displays the relationship between perceptions that the economy is improving/worsening and support for the incumbent party. In each case there is a clear tendency for negative economic perceptions to hurt the incumbents and positive perceptions to benefit the party in power. In the 1997 British election, for example, John Major's Conservatives won 48 percent among those who thought the economy was improving versus only 5 percent among those who thought the economy was deteriorating.
One might ask, however, whether or not these relationships are really evidence of causality. As we noted in chapter 9, some people adjust their economic expectations to reflect their other images of the government (see p. 206). If voters like the incumbent, they are more likely to put a favorable spin on economic conditions; if voters are critical of government for one aspect of policy, they may generalize this dissatisfaction to their economic judgments. Such projections are a normal part of incumbent images (Page and Jones 1979). These projections likely magnify the relationship between economic perceptions and party preferences, but the underlying relationship is still important. A rising economic tide benefits the incumbents, and a failing economy often spells defeat at the next election.

Another factor involves the exact scope and nature of economic influences. One point of debate concerns whether voters base their political evaluations on their own personal economic situation (pocketbook voting) or the performance of the broader national economy (sociotropic voting). Most of the evidence suggests that voters follow the sociotropic model, which implies that policy outcomes rather than narrow self-interest are the driving force behind performance voting (Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Lewis-Beck 1988). Researchers also disagree on whether voters evaluate performance retrospectively or base their judgments on prospective expectations (see Fiorina 1981; Miller and Wattenberg 1985; Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992).
The state of the economy can be so important in some elections that it overrides other policy considerations. Many election analysts claim that incumbent parties are virtually unbeatable during strong economic upturns and extremely vulnerable during recessionary periods (this was before Gore’s loss in 2000). For example, researchers argue that Americans and Britons elected conservative governments in 1979 and 1980 not for ideological reasons but merely because they were the only instruments available for defeating incumbents who had failed to deliver the economic goods (Crewe and Searing 1988; Wattenberg 1991). Four years after coming to power, both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan won reelection on the basis of improved economic performance (and the Falklands War in the case of Thatcher)—in spite of continuing policy differences with most of their country’s voters (Norpoth 1992). Others have documented the role of economic performance in German elections (Anderson 1995).

Although narrow performance voting does not conform to democratic theory’s emphasis on policy evaluation, researchers defend performance voting as entirely rational. Does it make sense, they ask, to pay much attention to the positions of an ineffective administration that seemingly cannot make good on its promises and program? Retrospective voting theorists emphasize that the only really effective weapon of popular control in a democratic regime is the electorate’s capacity to throw a party from power.

**Candidate Images and the Vote**

Democratic theorists describe issue voting in positive terms, but they view candidate-based voting decisions less positively. Some voting researchers have described voting on the basis of personality characteristics as “irrational” (cf. Converse 1964; Page 1978). They view candidate images as commodities packaged by image makers who manipulate the public by emphasizing traits with special appeal to the voters. People’s judgments about alternative candidates are, in this view, based on superficial criteria such as the candidate’s style or looks (e.g., Sullivan and Masters 1988). Indeed, there is much experimental evidence indicating that it is possible to manipulate a candidate’s personal appearance to affect voters’ choices.

Recently the voting literature has stressed a different approach to candidate assessments. This emerging view holds that candidate evaluations are not necessarily superficial, emotional, or purely short-term. Voters may focus on the personal qualities of a candidate to gain important information about characteristics relevant to assessing how the individual will perform in office (Kinder 1986; Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk 1986; Rahn et al. 1990). This approach presumes that individuals organize their thoughts about other people into broad preexisting categories. These category “prototypes” are used in making judgments when limited factual information is available. Donald Kinder and his colleagues
(1980), for example, explored the features that citizens use to define an ideal president. They showed that people can choose attributes they believe would make for an ideal president, but these prototypic conceptions are only related to ratings of the incumbent president.

Arthur Miller, Martin Wattenberg, and Oksana Malanchuk presented data to support a rational voter interpretation of candidate evaluations. They argued that "candidate assessments actually concentrate on instrumental concerns about how a candidate would conduct governmental affairs" (1986, 336). Analyzing candidate image data from the American National Election Studies, they found that the three most important dimensions of candidate image for Americans are integrity, reliability, and competence. Such criteria are hardly irrational, for if a candidate is too incompetent to carry out policy promises or too dishonest for those promises to be trusted, it makes perfect sense for a voter to pay attention to personality as well as policies. Interestingly, both David Glass (1985) and Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk (1986) found that college-educated voters are the most likely to judge the candidates by their personal attributes.

The United States is certainly in the lead in developing a pattern of candidate-centered electoral politics (Wattenberg 1991). Presidents are the focal point of the quadrennial elections, and the large shifts in vote shares between presidential elections has often been traced to the effects of candidate images (Stokes 1965). Presidents (and executives in state and local governments) are elected independently of their legislatures and largely run on personal platforms rather than as representatives of a fixed party position. Thus, candidate image is one of their major electoral resources. To an extent, a similar personalization of politics occurs in France, where the president functions separately from the legislative majority and even his own party within the legislature.

Electoral research on parliamentary systems initially suggested that popular images of party leaders had a minor impact on voting choice because these electorates did not directly vote for the chief executive. Recent research, however, finds significant effects. Clive Bean and Anthony Mughan (1989) showed that the perceived effectiveness of party leaders was moderately important in the British election of 1983 and possibly decisive in the Australian election of 1987. Analyses of German parliamentary elections similarly emphasized the growing role of candidate images (Ohr 2000). French politics has long valued the importance of a strong political leader, institutionalized in its directly elected presidency. Thus, evidence from elections and from internal party politics points to the growing importance of candidate images even in parliamentary systems (Pryce 1997; McAllister 1996; Ansell and Fish 1999). Anyone who has watched modern parliamentary campaigns, with candidates staging walkabouts for television and hosting discussion sessions with voters (in front of the cameras), must recognize that candidate images have become a growing part of contemporary electoral campaigns in virtually all advanced industrial democracies.
THE END OF THE CAUSAL FUNNEL

When we reach the end of the causal funnel and individuals are ready to vote, it is difficult to come to a precise assessment of the influence of partisanship, issues, and candidate images on voting choices. Since candidate images are at the very end of the funnel of causality, they have a strong relationship to voting preferences, at least in systems in which voters cast a ballot for a specific candidate. But at the same time, candidate images are themselves the cumulation of prior influences. Long-term partisanship can have a potent effect in cuing voters on which politicians to like and to dislike, just as voters' issue preferences can lead them toward specific candidates. Thus, it is often difficult to determine the separate causal influences when there is such overlap. In the 1994 German election, for instance, among those who voted for the CDU/CSU, 92 percent preferred Helmut Kohl as chancellor; among SPD voters, 84 percent favored Rudolf Scharping.

Furthermore, in parliamentary systems partisan and candidate preferences are often closely intertwined because parliamentary candidates normally are chosen merely for the party they represent, and in some nations citizens vote directly for parties. In very few party systems do voters directly cast ballots for the governmental leaders; British voters did not elect Blair and German voters did not elect Schröder; both were selected by the partisan majority of Parliament. Only in a system of direct election of candidates who can exercise autonomy from their party—such as the U.S. and French presidents—are we likely to see much separation between party preferences and candidate preferences.

So in the nexus of overlapping candidate, party, and issue preferences, it is difficult to separate the independent influence of each. But an illustration of the mix of factors at play can be drawn from comparing the weight of several core variables discussed in this chapter across our set of nations. Figure 10.4 combines Left/Right attitudes, economic perceptions, and candidate image to explain voting choices. (Of course, there are other factors that should be considered, such as party identification and social group cues, but the figure summarizes the key variables at the end of the causal funnel.) Each of these factors is significantly related to voting preferences, but perhaps the most interesting feature is the relative pattern across nations. The effect of candidate image—in this case, feelings toward Bill Clinton—were strongest in the American survey, even though we were predicting congressional voting preferences in 1996. Although the 1997 British elections and the 1998 German elections were widely interpreted as personal triumphs for Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, images of the incumbent party leader exerted less weight in these two elections. This is strong evidence of the personalization of American party politics, in which candidate images sometimes overwhelm partisan images (Wattenberg 1991).

Issues—represented here by Left/Right attitudes or economic perceptions—generally carry more weight in European parliamentary elections, and this is seen in the patterns for Britain and Germany. Since European parties offer clearer
party choices than American parties, and people vote for a party more so than for a candidate, it is not surprising that the policy images of the parties are a stronger basis of voting in European elections. The specific mix of issue and candidate influences will be highly variable across elections because these are short-term elements of the vote, but these trans-Atlantic differences reflect institutional structures that are likely to endure over time.

**Citizen Politics and Voting Behavior**

The last several chapters have described the changing patterns of voting behavior in advanced industrial democracies. One major change is a general decline in the long-term determinants of voting choice. The influence of social class on voting preferences has decreased in virtually all Western democracies, as has the impact of religion, residence, and other social characteristics (chapter 8). Simi-
larly, dealignment trends signal a decrease in the impact of enduring party attachments on voting decisions (chapter 9). Fewer voters now approach elections with standing party predispositions based either on social characteristics or early-learned partisan ties.

As the long-term determinants of party choice have decreased in influence, there has been a counterbalancing growth in the importance of short-term attitudes such as issue opinions (and possibly candidate image) (see Miller and Borrelli 1992; Franklin 1985; Rose and McAllister 1986). The most persuasive cross-national evidence comes from a study of voting behavior in seventeen Western democracies. In reviewing their findings, Franklin and his colleagues (1992, 400) conclude: "If all the issues of importance to voters had been measured and given their due weight, then the rise of issue voting would have compensated more or less precisely for the decline in cleavage politics."

This trend toward greater issue voting (and possibly candidate voting) in most Western nations is a self-reinforcing process. Issue voting contributes to, and benefits from, the concomitant decline in party voting patterns. The weakening of party ties increases the potential for issue opinions to influence voting choice. In addition, the increasing importance to the voter of policy preferences encourages some party defection and erodes the voter's party attachments. Thus, the rise of issue voting and the decline of partisanship are interrelated trends.

This shifting balance of long-term and short-term voting influences represents another aspect of the new style of citizen politics. As modern electorates have become more sophisticated and politically interested, and as the availability of political information has expanded, many citizens can now reach their own voting decisions without relying on broad external cues such as social class or family partisanship. In short, more citizens now have the political resources to follow the complexities of politics; they have the potential to act as the independent issue voters described in classic democratic theory but seldom seen in practice.

Additional evidence in support of this interpretation comes from the work on cognitive sophistication by Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock (1991). These researchers find that the better educated and the politically sophisticated place more weight on issues as a basis of their electoral decision making; less sophisticated voters rely more on partisanship and social cues. These findings conform to evidence from chapter 9 that locates sophisticated partisans within the better educated, especially among the young (also see Dalton 2000c). Taking these two developments together, social change is shifting the basis of electoral choice by transforming the skills and resources of contemporary electorates.

We can illustrate the changing styles of citizen voting behavior by the changing impact of economics on the vote. Traditionally, economic conflicts were structured by social divisions: the working class versus the middle class, industrial versus agrarian interests. In this situation, one's social position was often a meaningful guide to voting decisions. As social divisions have narrowed and the
group bases of political interests have blurred, social class has decreased as a source of voting cues. This does not mean that economic issues are unimportant. Quite the opposite. Contemporary evidence of economic voting is widespread, but now issue positions are individually based rather than group derived. The political cues of a union leader or business association must compete with the voter's own opinions on economic policy and party programs. That a partial return to the old issues of economic growth and security has not revived traditional class divisions provides compelling evidence that a new style of citizen politics now affects voting patterns.

This new style of individually based voting decisions may signify a boon or a curse for contemporary democracies. On the positive side, sophisticated voters should inject more issue voting into elections, increasing the policy implications of electoral results. In the long term, greater issue voting may make candidates and parties more responsive to public opinion. Thus, the democratic process may move closer to the democratic ideal.

On the negative side, many political scientists have expressed concerns that the growth of issue voting and single-issue groups may place excessive demands on contemporary democracies (see chapter 12). Without the issue-aggregating functions performed by party leaders and electoral coalitions, democratic governments may face conflicting issue demands from their voters. Governments may find it increasingly difficult to satisfy unrestrained popular demands.

Another concern involves the citizens who lack the political skills to meet the requirements of sophisticated issue voting. These people may become atomized voters if traditional political cues (party and social groups) decline in usefulness. Lacking firm political predispositions and a clear understanding of politics, these individuals may be easily mobilized by charismatic elites or fraudulent party programs. Many political analysts see the rise of New Right parties in Europe, especially those headed by a dynamic party leader, as negative consequence of a dealigned electorate. Indeed, the development of television facilitates unmediated one-on-one contacts between political elites and voters. Despite its potential for encouraging more sophisticated citizen involvement, television also offers the possibility of trivialized electoral politics in which video style outweighs substance in campaigning.

In summary, the trends discussed here do not lend themselves to a single prediction of the future of democratic party systems. But the future is within our control, depending on how political systems respond to these new challenges. The new style of citizen politics will be characterized by a greater diversity of voting patterns. A system of frozen social cleavages and stable party alignments is less likely in advanced industrial societies in which voters are sophisticated, power is decentralized, and individual choice is given greater latitude. The diversity and individualism of the new style of citizen politics are major departures from the structured partisan politics of the past.
Suggested Readings


Notes

1. I want to acknowledge my collaboration with Martin Wattenberg (Dalton and Wattenberg 1993), which helped to develop my thinking on many of these issues.

2. For example, Carmines and Stimson (1980) make a distinction between “hard” issues, which are complex and difficult to evaluate, and “easy” issues, which present clear and simple choices. Kinder and Kiewiet (1982) stress the distinction between personal issues of self-interest, such as voting on the basis of narrow economic self-interest, and issues that reflect national policy choices, such as voting on the basis of what will benefit most Americans.

3. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954) described these as style issues; Stokes (1963) used the term valence issue. Later research made the further distinction between performance and attributes that we present here (Miller and Wattenberg 1993; Shanks and Miller 1990).

4. Downs conceived of Left/Right labels as a way to reduce information costs rather than as fully informed ideological orientations. As he explained (Downs 1957, 98): “With this shortcut a voter can save himself the cost of being informed upon a wide range of issues.”

5. Several pieces of evidence point to a conscious effort by the Labour Party to moderate its leftist image in 1997 (Evans and Norris 1999, chaps. 1 and 2). Moving closer to the voters was a key factor in propelling the party to victory.

6. The relationship is described by a Cramer’s V correlation statistic. A value of .00 means that issue opinions are unrelated to party preference. A Cramer’s V of .20 is normally interpreted as a moderate relationship, and .30 is considered a strong relationship.

7. Understandably, the relationship between candidate preference and vote is even higher in American presidential elections. In the 1996 election, about 95 percent of those who rated Clinton or Gore as their most favorable candidate followed by voting for the preferred candidate.

8. One productive new area of research examines how institutional context systematically affects the correlates of voting. For instance, candidate effects are predictably stronger in a candidate-based system than in party-based proportional representation. In addition, the ability of the electorate to identify party responsibility also affects the potential for issue voting. See, for example, Powell (2000), Anderson (2000), Miller and Niemi (2002), Whit-ten and Palmer (1999).

9. The conventional wisdom holds that partisanship is often a strong influence on issue opinions, whereas the reverse causal flow is minimal (figure 9.1, p. 175). As issue voting has increased, researchers have found that issues can mold basic party attachments. Recent studies show that the causal influence of issues in changing partisanship can be quite large (Niemi and Jennings 1997; Fiorina 1981).
CHAPTER 11

Political Representation

CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACIES OWE their existence to a relatively modern invention: representative government. From the ancient Greeks up through the time of Rousseau, democracy was equated with the direct participation of the citizenry in the affairs of government. Political theorists believed that democracies must limit the definition of citizenship or the size of the polity so the entire public could assemble in a single body to make political decisions. The Greek city-state, the self-governing Swiss canton, and the New England town meeting exemplify this democratic ideal.

The invention of representative government freed democracies from these constraints. Instead of directly participating in political decision making, groups of citizens selected legislators to represent them in governmental deliberations. The functioning of the democratic process depended on the relationship between the representative and the represented.

The case for representative government is largely one of necessity. Democracy requires citizen control over the political process, but in a large nation-state the town meeting model is no longer feasible. Proponents of representative government also stress the limited political skills of the average citizen and the need for professional politicians. Citizen control over government is routinized through periodic, competitive elections to select these elites. Elections should ensure that elites remain responsive and accountable to the public. By accepting this electoral process, the public gives its consent to be governed by the elites selected.

Many early democratic theorists criticized the concept of representative government and believed that it undermined the very tenets of democracy. Representative government transferred political power from the people to a small group of designated elites. Voters had political power only on the day their ballots were cast and then waited in political servitude until the next election—four or five years hence. Under representative government, the citizens may control, but elites rule. Jean Jacques Rousseau warned that "the instant a people allows itself to be represented it loses its freedom."

Recent proponents of direct democracy are equally critical of representative government. European Green parties, for example, criticize the structure of repre-
sentative government while calling for increased citizen influence through referendums, citizen action groups, and other forms of "basic" democracy. Populist groups in the United States display a similar skepticism of electoral politics in favor of direct action. Benjamin Barber articulated these concerns:

The representative government principle steals from individuals the ultimate responsibility for their values, beliefs, and actions. . . . Representation is incompatible with freedom because it delegates and thus alienates political will at the cost of genuine self-government and autonomy. (1984, 145)

These critics worry that the democratic principle of popular control of the government has been replaced by a commitment to routinized electoral procedures; democracy is defined by its means, not its ends. Thus, other opportunities for increasing public influence and control are not developed because elections provide the accepted standard of citizen influence. These critics are not intrinsically opposed to representative government, but they oppose a political system that stops at representation and limits or excludes other (and perhaps more influential) methods of citizen influence.

The linkage between the public and political decision makers is one of the essential questions for the study of democratic political systems. The commitment to popular rule is what sets democracies apart from other political systems. Although we cannot resolve the debate on the merits of representative government, this chapter asks how well the representation process functions in Western democracies today.

**Collective Correspondence**

In the broadest sense of the term, the representativeness of elite attitudes is measured by their similarity to the overall attitudes of the public. Robert Weissberg (1978) referred to this comparison as *collective correspondence*. When the distribution of public preferences is matched by the distribution of elite views, the citizenry as a collective is well represented by elites as a collective.

The complexity of the representation process obviously goes beyond a defi-
nition based simply on citizen–elite agreement. Some political elites may stress their role in educating the public instead of merely reflecting current public preferences. In other instances, voters may hold contradictory opinions, and the policymaking role of elites may lead them to adopt more consistent but less representative opinions. Policy preferences also are not necessarily equivalent to policy outcomes. We could add other qualifiers to this list. Still, citizen–elite agreement is the normal standard for judging the representativeness of a democratic system. This is a meaningful test of representation because it determines whether or not political decision makers enter the policy process with the same policy preferences as the public. This is a basic goal of representative democracy.

Data comparing the beliefs of top-level political elites and the public for our set of nations are extremely rare. More common are studies that focus on public–elite comparisons in a single nation (Miller and Jennings 1986; Miller 1987; Bürklin et al. 1990; Herzog and Wessels 1990; Converse and Pierce 1986; Esaïasson and Holmberg 1996; McAllister 1991). Therefore, our comparative analyses must rely on an early study of European voters and candidates to the European Parliament (EP) (Dalton 1985). Where possible, we update these results with findings from more recent studies.

Table II.1 presents the distribution of citizen and elite opinions in Britain, Germany, and France. The broadest measure of political orientations is the Left/Right self-placement scale discussed in chapter 6. The first row in the table shows that EP elites in each nation are significantly more likely than the public to identify themselves as leftists. This liberal tendency among political elites is a common finding; a survey of voters and EP candidates in the 1994 election found a similar pattern (Thomassen and Schmitt 1997). Political elites apparently consider themselves to be more progressive than their constituencies.

Collective correspondence on specific issues varies across these three nations. The British elites are more liberal than the public on most issues. This elite bias is strongest for foreign aid and security issues, probably because they are candidates for the European Parliament. Abortion policy is the only area in which the British public is much more liberal than elites.

More recent data have been collected by the 1992 British Candidates Survey and the 1997 British Representation Study (Norris 1999d). In 1997 the average British citizen and member of the British Parliament positioned themselves at virtually the same position on the Left/Right scale. On traditional economic issues—taxes versus services, privatization and jobs versus prices—the MPs are slightly to the Right of the British public. On the two noneconomic issues of European integration and the role of women, the MPs are to the Left of the public.

Table II.1 suggests that the German public is slightly more liberal than political elites on the Old Politics issue conflicts of economics and abortion. Conversely, elites are significantly more liberal on foreign aid, dealing with terrorists, and the free speech issue. Recent German citizen–elite studies find similar patterns of agreement. Bernhard Wessels (1993) compared the issue opinions of
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Table 11.1 The Distribution of Opinions for the European Public and Elites (in percentages)

<table>
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<td>Control multinationals</td>
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<td>Reduce income inequality</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Liberalize abortion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aid EC regions</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>Aid Third World</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action against terrorists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New Politics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuclear energy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protest environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free expression</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average liberal issue response</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 1979 Eurocandidate Survey, Eurobarometer 11; both studies have been weighted to produce representative national samples.

Note: Table entries are the percentages of respondents expressing a liberal opinion on each item.

Bundestag deputies and the German public. He found close agreement on Old Politics issues such as economic growth and public order, and somewhat lower levels of agreement on New Politics goals (also see Herzog and Wessels 1990, chap. 3; Hoffmann-Lange 1992).

The closest overall match between citizen and EP elite opinions occurs in the French data. French citizens and elites generally favor liberal policies on Old Politics issues, and there are no consistent differences between political strata on these issues. The pattern on New Politics and security issues is equally mixed. Only on foreign aid issues are EP elites clearly more liberal than the French public (also see Converse and Pierce 1986, 597).

Similar data describing the views of American voters and political elites are
also rare. The top panel in Table 11.2 compares the national electorate to members of Congress in 1987 (Herrera, Herrera, and Smith 1992), and the lower panel presents limited evidence from a 1998 study. Although the public and elites differed somewhat in their policy views, there was no systematic bias in the direction of these differences. The public was more conservative than elites on the issue of minority aid (−.83), for example, but the public is more liberal than elites on the government providing services (+.57). On overall liberal/conservative position, the match between the public and elites is quite close (−.21), which is appropriate since this measure summarizes political positions on many policy matters. And as we noted in other nations, members of Congress were slightly more liberal than the public overall in 1986–87.

In 1998 the Pew Center (1998b) surveyed members of Congress, but this study included only a few items that were comparable to questions in public opinion surveys. Only 44 percent of members of Congress said that federal governmental programs should be maintained to deal with important problems, but 57 percent of the American public shared these opinions—similar to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11.2</th>
<th>The Distribution of Opinions for the American Public and Elites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/conservative position</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government provide services</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government guarantee living standard</td>
<td>4.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government should aid minorities</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward abortion</td>
<td>2.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spend more on defense</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate more with Russia</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervene in Central America</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain government programs a</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal/conservative position a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: 1987 House of Representatives Survey (Herrera, Herrera, and Smith 1992) and 1986 ANES.

Notes: Entries are mean scores on a 7-point scale with 1 equal to the liberal position (abortion is a 4-point scale). Differences marked by an asterisk are significant at .01 level. Items marked with a superscript "a" in the table are from the 1998 Pew Center Survey of Members of Congress, Clinton Appointees, and Senior Civil Servants done in association with the National Journal.
earlier survey. On the standard liberal/conservative scale, Congress now had more self-identified conservatives than the public at large, and fewer liberals, but the percentage differences were modest on each response. These findings suggest that the Republican majority in the 1996–98 Congress shifted the balance of elite opinions away from the liberal tendencies of the 1986–88 Democratic Congress, which is what should have occurred.

In summary, if we judge collective correspondence by substantive criteria—for example, a 10 percent difference or less in issue opinions—then citizen–elite agreement is fairly common. Most economic, security, and New Politics issues fall within the 10 percent range for the British, German, and French comparisons to the European Parliament elites. Only foreign policy issues display sizable opinion differences between citizens and EP candidates. The samples of German and French elites appear most representative of their respective publics. Overall, an average of 53 percent of the German public give liberal responses on the thirteen issue questions, compared to 60 percent of elites. The match of citizen and elite opinions is even closer in France (60 percent versus 62 percent). The voter–elite gap is harder to compare in the United States because 7-point scales were used, but there appears to be a mix of agreement and disagreement in mass–elite comparisons.

**DYADIC CORRESPONDENCE**

Collective correspondence between the issue opinions of the public and the political elites does not occur as a collective process. Some degree of popular control is necessary to ensure the responsiveness of elites. Citizen–elite agreement without popular control is representation by chance, not democracy. One method of popular control makes political elites electorally dependent on a specific constituency. Weissberg (1978) defined the pairing of constituency opinion and elites as dyadic correspondence. In simple terms, liberal constituencies presumably select liberal representatives and conservative constituencies select conservative representatives.

In studying the connection between citizens and elites, researchers initially treated the individual legislator as the primary means of dyadic linkage. One explanation for this approach lies in the historical development of political theory on representation. Edmund Burke's classic "Speech to the Electors of Bristol" in 1774 defined a paradigm of representation that still influences modern political science. Traditionally, a delegate model stated the legislator's role in a deterministic fashion. Representative government required that delegates be sent to Parliament and that voters instruct the delegate on constituency preferences. The legislator was obliged to follow the constituency's mandate. Burke proposed a more independent trustee role for legislators. He argued that once elected, legislators should be allowed to follow their own beliefs about what they thought was best for their constituency and the nation.

This theoretical emphasis on the individual legislator was reinforced by the development of modern empirical research on political representation. Repre-
sentation research, especially from the American perspective, treated the legislator as the basis of political linkage (Miller and Stokes 1963). In part, this reflected the weakness of American parties and the open structure of the American political process. Many American legislators can and do act as individual entrepreneurs. Research focused on whether or not individual legislators followed the delegate or trustee model in representing their constituencies (Kuklinski 1978).

Warren Miller and Donald Stokes (1963) conducted the seminal study of political representation in America to incorporate these theoretical models of representation. They designed a complex study of the relationship between public opinion and elite actions. They interviewed a small sample of the public in each of 116 congressional districts across the nation after the 1958 congressional elections, as well as members of the House of Representatives from these same districts. Finally, they assembled the voting records of the members of Congress for the next legislative session.

Miller and Stokes used this information to build a model of the representation process (figure 11.1). Broadly speaking, these researchers envisioned two pathways by which a constituency could influence the voting behavior of its representative (Miller and Stokes 1963). One pathway defined the trustee model of representation; the constituency could select a legislator who shares its views (path a), so that in following his or her own convictions (path b) the legislator represents the constituency's will. In this case, the constituency's opinion and the legislator's actions are connected through the legislator's own policy attitudes. A second pathway follows the delegate model. A legislator turns to his or her district for cues on its policy preferences (path c) and then follows these cues in making voting choices (path d). In this case, the legislator's perception of constituency attitudes provides the linkage between actual constituency opinion and the legislator's voting behavior.

Figure 11.1 Constituency Influence in Congress
Miller and Stokes applied the model to three policy areas: civil rights, social welfare, and foreign policy. They found a strong relationship between constituency opinion and the legislator's voting record for civil rights and social welfare issues and a weaker connection for foreign policy. In addition, the path of constituency influence varied between policy domains. Civil rights issues primarily functioned by a delegate model; the delegate path was at least twice as important as the trustee path. For social welfare issues, the trustee path through the legislator's own attitude was the most important means of constituency influence.

This study provided hard empirical evidence of the representation process at work. Moreover, the process seemed to work fairly well. Most liberal constituencies were represented by liberal legislators, and most conservative constituencies were represented by conservative legislators. Although many have criticized the methodology of this study, its essential conclusions are still supported by most political scientists (for further discussion, see Erikson and Tedin 2001, chap. 10; Miller et al. 1999). Miller continued to work within this paradigm, exploring the relationship between party activists and the public, and how representational roles affect these relationships (Miller and Jennings 1986; Miller 1987).

Cheryl Lyn Herrera, Richard Herrera, and Eric Smith (1992) partially replicated the Miller-Stokes analyses with data from the 1986–88 Congress. They compared the opinions of members of Congress from thirty-three districts to the opinions of their constituents who were surveyed as part of the 1986 American National Election Study. Employing a variety of statistical measures, they found that the fit between constituencies and their representatives is fairly high on most issues, especially issues that are likely to have large issue publics and polarized public opinion, such as abortion, minority aid, and governmental services. Moreover, they concluded that “dyadic representation is better today than was true 30 years ago” (Herrera, Herrera, and Smith 1992, 201), implying that the democratic process in the United States was working even better than during the Miller-Stokes study in the late 1950s.

The Miller-Stokes model also was extended to representation studies in nearly a dozen other Western democracies (Holmgren 1989; Barnes 1977; Farah 1980; Converse and Pierce 1986; Higley et al. 1979). These studies often found little evidence of policy agreement between constituencies and their legislators, however. For instance, Samuel Barnes compared the issue opinions of Italian deputies to public opinion in their respective districts. He found virtually no correspondence between citizen and elite views (average correlation across eight issues was .04). Barbara Farah documented a similar lack of correspondence between district opinions and the policy views of district-elected deputies in the German Bundestag. The average correlation between district and deputy opinions was actually negative (average correlation across six issues was -.03). The French representation study also found a weak linkage between district and legislator opinions on specific policy issues (Converse and Pierce 1986, chaps. 22–23).
It appeared that political representation did not occur in most democracies, or that it worked through other means.

**The Party Government Model**

Research on political representation in non-American political systems gradually turned away from a theoretical model based on individual legislators to one based on the actions of political parties as collectives. This model of representation through parties—responsible party government—is built on several principles. Elections should provide competition between two or more parties contending for political power. Parties must offer distinct policy options so voters have meaningful electoral choices. Moreover, voters should recognize these policy differences among the parties. At least, voters should be sufficiently informed to award or punish the incumbent parties based on their performance. National elections therefore serve as evaluations of the political parties and their activities.

Most descriptions of responsible party government also presume that members of a party’s parliamentary delegation act in unison. Parties should vote as a bloc in Parliament, although there may be internal debate before the party position is decided. Parties exercise control over the government and the policymaking process through party control of the national legislature. In sum, the choice of parties provides the electorate with indirect control over the actions of individual legislators and the affairs of government.

Although the representation process may be based on individual legislators in the United States, political representation in Western Europe largely follows the party government model. In comparison to the United States, the party systems of most European democracies offer the voters greater diversity in party programs, which gives more meaning to party labels (chapter 7). Most democracies are parliamentary systems, in which unified legislative parties play a crucial role in determining control of the executive branch. The available evidence shows that party cohesion in European legislatures is considerably higher than in the American Congress (Thomassen 1994, 246). When a party votes as a united bloc, it makes little sense to discuss the voting patterns of individual legislators. Furthermore, public recognition of which party controls the government is more widespread in Western Europe than in the United States, probably as a result of the European parliamentary form of government. Giovanni Sartori maintains that “citizens in Western democracies are represented through and by parties. This is inevitable” (1968, 471; italics in original).

The party government model thus directs the voters’ attention to parties as political representatives, rather than to individual deputies (Miller et al. 1999). Indeed, many Europeans (including Germans) vote directly for party lists. Dyadic correspondence is based more on a voter–party model than a district–legislator model. The voter half of the dyad is composed of all party supporters in a nation (even if there are geographic electoral districts); the elite half is composed of party
officials as a collective. If the party government model holds, we should expect a close match between the policy views of voters and party elites taken as collectives.

We should stress one other point in comparing dyadic correspondence. We occasionally speak in causal terms—voter opinions presumably influence party positions—but the causal flow works in both directions. Voters influence parties, as parties try to persuade voters. This is why researchers have adopted the causally neutral term correspondence. The essence of the democratic marketplace is that like-minded voters and parties search out each other and ally forces. Even if one cannot determine the direction of causal flow, the similarity of opinions between voters and party elites is a meaningful measure of the representativeness of parties.

Some of the best evidence of the correspondence between voters and their parties comes from the 1994 European Parliament Election Study. This study interviewed parliamentary candidates from at least fifty political parties spread across Europe; they also interviewed the voters for these same parties. Figure 11.2 compares the Left/Right self-placement of voters and elites in each party. The horizontal axis in each figure plots the average position of party supporters; the vertical axis plots the average opinion of the party's elites. These two coordinates define a party's

![Figure 11.2 Voter and Party Elite Opinions on the Left/Right Scale](image)

location in the figure. The 45-degree line represents perfect intraparty agreement: when the opinions of party elites exactly match those of their supporters.

Two important patterns can be gleaned from this figure. First, there is a strong relationship between voter and elite opinions within parties ($r = .83$). Voters with leftist preferences and elites who share these views come together in the traditional leftist parties, such as the German SPD, the British Labour Party, and the French Socialists, and there is a similar congruence on the Right. This is the evidence of party differences that underlie the party government model of representation. Second, there is a systematic tendency for party elites to say they are more leftist than their own voters (since most parties lie below the diagonal line).

Unfortunately, the 1994 EP Election Study contained very few issues, so to examine more detailed patterns of issue agreement we must turn to the 1979 EP study. In addition, to examine these data in more depth, we focus our analyses on the fourteen major parties that existed in our European core nations at the time of the study (Dalton 1985).

Figures 11.3 and 11.4 display party patterns on two Old Politics issues: the economic issue of expanding governmental ownership of industry and the religious/moral issue of abortion. Party positions on these issues follow traditional

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Figure 11.3 Voter and Party Elite Opinions on Further Nationalization of Industry

Source: 1979 Europarlament Study.
Left/Right alignments. The Socialist and Communist Parties tended toward the lower-left quadrant; both their voters and party elites held liberal opinions on these Old Politics issues. For example, in 1979 supporters of the French Communist Party (PCF) were very liberal on the nationalization issues (average score = 1.78), as were PCF elites (score = 1.08). Conversely, the voters and elites of the traditional rightist parties generally shared conservative opinions on these issues. Averaged across all parties, the opinions of party elites are less than one scale point (.85 on a five-point scale) from the voter opinions on the nationalization issue, and less than half a point (.45) on the abortion issue. Because economic and religious issues are so important in structuring political conflict, a variety of more recent studies suggest that congruence on these issues remains high (Laver and Hunt 1992; Miller et al. 1999).

Attitudes toward nuclear power exemplify a salient New Politics issue. Figure 11.5 shows a basic correspondence between party voters and party elites on this issue. A voter bloc that favored (or opposed) nuclear energy is represented by party elites who generally shared these opinions. The average difference (.74) between voter and elite opinions is modest.

The pattern of party alignment on the nuclear power issue is also significant. The major established Left and Right parties did not have clear positions on
this issue in 1979. The major Left parties—the German SPD, British Labour, and the French PS—all held centrist positions on this issue that were not much different from their conservative party rivals. In fact, the voters and party elites of the French Communist Party favored nuclear power more than many conservative party groups. Opposition to nuclear power was represented by a set of new parties: the German Greens, the French Ecologists, and French PSU. Although these data are aging, more recent studies of the public’s environmental attitudes and their party images suggest the pattern described here has not changed fundamentally (chapter 7). Party alignments on nuclear power (and New Politics issues) cut across the traditional Left/Right party lines defined by Old Politics issues.

The issue of aid for Third World nations presents an example of the lack of voter–party agreement (figure 11.6). Party elites are consistently more liberal than their voters. Only a single party is within one scale point of its supporters, and the average voter–party difference is great (1.33). In this area, West European party elites display considerable independence from the policy opinions of their voters. This result is reminiscent of Miller and Stoker’s (1965) finding that foreign policy exhibits the least evidence of dyadic correspondence for their sample of American legislators.
Except for foreign policy, party elites appear fairly responsive to the views of their voters. Yet there is also a systematic tendency for party elites to exaggerate the issue differences that exist among their supporters. The intensity and ideological commitment of political elites normally generates greater issue differences among elites than among party supporters (Miller and Jennings 1986; Dalton 1985). On the nationalization of industry issue, for example, EP elites of the German SPD were significantly to the left of their voters, whereas CDU elites were to the right of their constituency. The 45-degree line in the figures represents perfect intraparty agreement, and party elites were more polarized than their supporters on the issues of nationalization, abortion, and nuclear energy.

A pattern of accentuated elite polarization also occurs in voter–elite comparisons in the United States (figure 11.7). Democratic and Republican voters in 1986 displayed only modest differences on many of their issue opinions, but party elites accentuated these differences. On six of the seven issues in the figure, Democratic elites are more liberal than their voters, and Republican elites are more conservative than their voters on six issues as well. In other words, party elites tended to overrepresent the opinions of their constituency by maintaining more extreme
issue positions. Warren Miller (1987, chap. 3) found similar patterns when he compared the American public to delegates to national party conventions in 1980 and 1984. This general pattern explains the greater clarity of party positions at the elite level and the greater intensity of party conflict among elites.

Just as important as the overall level of dyadic correspondence are the factors affecting voter–party agreement. Some parties consistently achieve a close match between the opinions of voters and party elites, whereas other parties display less correspondence. These variations in party representation determine the efficiency of the party linkage process.

A study of voter–party agreement for forty party groups across nine nations found that the clarity of party positions is an important influence on the representation process (Dalton 1985). Characteristics that clarify party positions make it easier for voters to select a party compatible with their issue beliefs. Most policy areas display a strong and consistent tendency for centrally organized parties to be more representative of their supporters. Centralized parties may be less open to innovation and allow less internal democracy, as critics suggest, but centralized parties display greater dyadic correspondence. In addition, voter–party agreement is higher among ideological parties (of either the Left or Right). Apparently these characteristics clarify party positions and make it easier for voters to select a party consistent with their issue beliefs. A centralized party is

![Figure 11.7](image_url)

**Figure 11.7** Difference between Party Voters and Party Representatives in the United States


*Note:* Table entries are the mean differences between voters and elites on each issue scale.
more likely to project clear party cues, and an ideological image helps voters identify a party's general political orientation.

At the system level, Wessels (1999) has assembled evidence from several representation studies to examine the relationship between institutional structures and voter-party correspondence. He found that majoritarian systems, like the United States and Britain, place a greater emphasis on elites representing the modal voter in society, which normally pulls elites toward the center of the political spectrum. In contrast, in proportional representation systems, elites are more closely tied to representing their party voters. This is facilitated by the greater degree of party choice in most PR electoral systems and reinforces the conclusion drawn from our previous evidence that the style of representation is affected by the institutional structures of the democratic process.

PATTERNS OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

It is regrettable that more recent data on the representation process are not available. After all, we have claimed that the representation process is an important measure of the success of modern democracy. Furthermore, the new style of citizen politics that we have described in previous chapters might affect the representation process, though the nature of these effects is uncertain (see Thomassen 1994). On the one hand, a more sophisticated, issue-oriented public might encourage candidates and parties to be more attentive to public interests. On the other hand, partisan dealignment and candidate-centered politics may weaken representation built on a system of responsible party government. Still, there are broad conclusions about the nature of representation that flow from our findings.

This chapter describes two distinct patterns of representative government among Western democracies. Political representation in the United States is more dependent on the relationship between individual legislators and their constituencies. Citizens in most other democracies are primarily represented through their choice of political parties at election time. Some research suggests that this American-European contrast might be lessening. For instance, Warren Miller (1987, chap. 4) discusses how parties play an important role in American representation (also see Erikson and Tedin 2001, chap. 11). Our own analyses suggest that the strength of the party government model is weakening in Europe (e.g., chapter 9; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). Still, it is probably the case that the contrasts between the American and European patterns of representation continue to hold.

Both models can provide an effective means of citizen–elite linkage, but they emphasize different aspects of representation. The American system of representative government based on individual legislators allows for greater responsiveness to the interests of each legislative district. The political process is more open to new political interests and the representation of minority groups because electoral control at the constituency level is more easily accomplished than
control of an entire party. The flexibility of the American style of representation also involves some costs. An entrepreneurial style of representation makes it more difficult for the public to monitor and control the actions of their representatives between elections. This representation pattern also encourages campaigns to focus on personalities and district service rather than policy and ideological orientations. Indeed, studies of congressional elections suggest that personality and constituency service are important influences on voting patterns.

A growing body of empirical research shows that policy outcomes in America generally reflect the preferences of the public—although obviously this is, and probably should be, an imperfect linkage. Alan Monroe (1979) found a broad agreement between American policy preferences and policy outcomes for the several hundred specific cases he examined. Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro (1983) similarly documented a significant correspondence between public preferences for policy change and actual changes in public policy. Sophisticated empirical analyses by Stimson and his colleagues (1995) are providing new insights into the total impact of public opinion on the policy process, and how this influence interacts with the institutional structure of American politics.

A party government model yields a different pattern of political representation. The choice of parties provides the electorate with indirect institutional control over the actions of individual legislators through party discipline. When a party votes as a united bloc, political responsibility is more clearly established. If the public is satisfied (or dissatisfied) with the party’s performance, the next election offers the opportunity to act on these evaluations. Although the party model strengthens the policy linkage between citizens and elites, this may produce rigidity and resistance to change. The highly cohesive European parliamentary parties place a necessary premium on party unity and disciplined voting. This hardly provides a fertile ground for experimentation and political change. Parties may be very responsive to their established clientele, but new social groups and internal party minorities may have difficulty gaining representation in the party government framework.

Research projects working within the party government framework also find that party choices have meaningful policy consequences. For example, Klingemann and his colleagues (1994) analyzed whether or not the programs that parties offer to the voters are translated into policy after the election. They found that parties are a meaningful vehicle for policy control in most democracies.

Many roadblocks and pitfalls stand in the way of representation through parties. In these times of change and political turmoil, the evidence of party failures is often obvious. Yet parties remain the dominant institution in the area of political representation. Citizen preferences on Old Politics issues are well represented among the top stratum of political elites. When the established parties have avoided taking clear policy stances on New Politics issues, new parties have formed to represent these views. In general terms, therefore, parties continue to perform their role as representatives of voter interests.
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In summary, even close citizen–elite policy agreement is not proof that public opinion is efficiently and effectively represented in modern democracies. A large part of the correspondence that does exist must be attributed to an interactive process. Voters migrate to the party (candidate) that best represents their views, and the party convinces supporters to adopt its policies. Congruence does not prove that the public can control government. Beyond the general patterns described here, one can think of a host of specific policies in which the impact of public preferences was uncertain. Yet congruence indicates an agreement between public preferences and public policy that is expected under a democratic system. Moreover, it underscores our belief that there is a rationality of public action that elitist theories of democracy doubt exists.

Suggested Readings

Notes
1. The development of two-way cable television, teleconferencing, and other communication advances may lead us to reconsider the physical limits on direct citizen participation in large collectives. Indeed, the technology exists for instantaneons national referendaums and national town meetings (Poole 1989).
2. Previous comparisons of public opinion and opinions of members of Congress in 1978 and 1982 found that the two groups differed by only a few percentage points (Bishop and Frankovic 1984; Erikson and Tedin 2001, 267).
3. In purely statistical terms, almost half of the citizen–elite issue comparisons in these tables yield statistically significant differences (p ≤ level). This, in part, is because of the large size of the public opinion samples.
4. The power of Converse and Pierce's (1986, chaps. 22–23) analysis was to specify the conditions that strengthen or retard the representation process. They found that citizen–elite congruence varied by policy domain, competitiveness of the district, and the legislator's role conceptions.
5. State-level comparisons provide another opportunity to study the congruence between public opinion and public policy. A recent study by Robert Erikson and his colleagues shows a strong policy correspondence (Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1994).