

PS 441: Example Exam Questions

1. Consider a fictional country, Red. The society in Red is characterized by three cleavage lines: rich/poor, Catholic/Protestant/Secular, French-speaking/Dutch-speaking. Most of the rich are also secular and Dutch-speaking. Most of the poor are also French-speaking, but they're evenly divided between Protestants and Catholics.

Short Answer:

Question 1a: Suppose now that a Christian unification movement succeeds in getting Red's poor French-speakers to think of themselves as 'Christians' rather than Protestants or Catholics. What effect if any do you expect this to have...on the party system? Why?/Explain. ...on the propensity toward social strife? Why?/Explain.

Question 1b: Suppose the salience of the religious and linguistic cleavages rises relative to the economic cleavage. Do you expect the potential for political violence to have increased, decreased, or remained unchanged? Why? How much and in what way does your answer depend on whether the Christian unification movement in 1a has occurred?

Compare Red with another fictional country, Blue. Blue has a similar set of cleavage lines: rich/poor, a Christian/Islamic/Secular, and an English-speaking/German-speaking. Blue's rich and poor are equally likely to belong to any religious and linguistic group, and *vice versa*.

Question 1b: Which country if any has greater potential for social strife? Why?

Question 1c: If both countries have the same electoral system, which is more likely to have more parties? Why?

2: Consider the following set of countries

- A) Country A has 300 single-member-plurality electoral-districts
- B) Country B has one, national-level, proportional-representation district with 300 members
- C) Country C has twenty 15-member proportional-representation districts
- D) Country D has 150 members of parliament elected from one national proportional district and 150 members elected from single-member-plurality districts

Unless I tell you otherwise, the countries are the same in every other aspect.

Question 2a: Which country should have the greatest proportionality of votes to seats?

Question 2b: Which country should have the greatest voter participation?

Question 2c: Which country should have the fewest parties?

Question 3a. Define party-system fractionalization

Question 3b. Define party-system polarization

Question 3c. Two countries, one with a fractionalized and polarized party-system and one with a non-fractionalized and non-polarized party-system, each experience a fiscal crisis (large public debt). All parties in both countries agree the debt needs to be reduced. Is either country more likely to reduce the debt quicker? Why and which? Or why not?

Consider the following regression:

$$\text{GovDur} = 24 + 3.75 \text{Maj} + 2.5 \text{NumP} - 1.4 \text{PolP} - 1.25 \text{UE}$$

(.10) (.23) (1.0) (1.9) (.41) $R^2=0.75$

Each observation is a government (cabinet) in some parliamentary democracy.

GovDur is the duration of that government in months.

Maj is the majority status of that government: 1 if the parties in government control a legislative majority, 0 if they do not

NumP is the number of parties in the government

PolP is the polarization of the parties in government, from 0=no polarization (1 party or all parties have the same ideological preferences) to 4=extremely polarized

UE is the average unemployment rate in the country during the government's reign (0% and up)

The number in parentheses below each coefficient is the standard error of that coefficient.

Question 4a: Based on the evidence reflected in this regression, do economic conditions affect the stability of governments? How exactly (in words)? Are you reasonably sure that estimate? Why or why not?

Question 4b: Consider two governments exactly alike except that one has 3 parties in it and one has 5 parties in it. Which is expected to last longer, by how much, and how would you describe your certainty in that answer?

Question 4c: How much of the variation in government durations is explicable by these four factors?

Question 4d: How long would you expect a single-party-majority government to last if unemployment in the country is 7%? What if that same government enjoyed 3% inflation?

Question 5: In 1958, France changed its constitution considerably. It replaced a very proportional PR parliamentary system with (essentially) a majority-run-off system with parliament and a president. What should this have done to the number of parties? Suppose, instead, France had maintained the PR system for its parliamentary elections but introduced a president elected by majority-run-off. Would this likely have produced any change in the number of parties? If so, more or less of a change than what France actually did? Why?

Question 6a: Governments in the United Kingdom are typically single-party majorities with either Labor or Conservative in more or less complete control of policy. Governments in the Netherlands are more usually coalitions of center and left or center and right parties. If you examined government spending over time in these two countries, in which would you expect to find greater fluctuations? Why?

Question 6b: How much fluctuation in government spending would you expect in the US relative to these two countries? Why?

Question 7: [obviously, I will ask you to apply the single- and multi-dimensional coalition-formation models we studied]