

# Lecture 5

## ***Define political parties***

Organisations that promote interests, policies, values and or ideologies by attempting to win public offices.

Political parties run for offices, through contesting for political offices

Occupy seat within legislature, executive and judiciary

Ideology can be more or less coherent, it can be contesting ideology within the party. E.g. conservative vs. radical in Liberal (traditional role vs. new role)

Three faces of political parties?

- Party in office (Government and legislature/parliament: not just party in government, but opposition and cross bench party)
- Party organisation (people behind the scene to keep the party going)
- Party on the ground/in the electorate (less visible than they used to be as members of parties have declined dramatically, but they are visible at key moments, particularly around elections. When you talk to your friends abt a political party, that's face of the party. It is a way in which party maintain its existence)

Provides political elite, they govern elite in institutional or formal political power. So the executive, legislature and even judiciary will be drawn from political party.

one key role of political party is to fill elite position, either competitively (often internally) or non-competitively (not often externally).

It helps structure political opinion of people, helps orientate people toward the political issues. People rely on trusted source to orientate themselves towards these issues. The source doesn't have to be political party, it can be media, family members. As voters we have some kind of loyalty or feeling of closeness to political party, and therefore we tend to support their attitudes in those issues. We have trusted source to save us from reading reports on issues to orientate ourselves toward the issues.

Important both at elite level and mass level, provide elite (candidates) for people to vote for, helps orientate voters into electoral process

## ***Australia's party system is a hybrid: how we see it depends which question we ask***

Political parties tend to interact with each other and political institutions in repetitive systematic way. Politics isn't random, it operates predictably. The way parties behave internally and with each other tends to endure, it is logical.

So, party system is a regularised interaction between both the political parties and parties with other institutions e.g. parliaments, electoral systems, etc.

1. 2 party system (majoritarian)  
who forms government? Winner takes all, labour v non-labour (the major parties);  
confidence; strong party discipline  
commonly associated with Westminster system but not entirely  
two party system takes care of the problem of Westminster system, which is the executive of the day has to retain confidence of the lower house of parliament, by

which it means the ministers of the day have to retain the support of the majority in the lower house of the parliament. If they don't, it's a time to form new executive. Without majority party system to retain that confidence, the coalition become unstable. E.g Italy. It also contrasts with presidential system like America, president cannot be get rid of by the majority of the executive, whereas in aus prime minister can be get rid of if the majority of the executive doesn't like him/her.

To do this, you need strong party discipline. Party members in parliament vote together.

If we ask who governs, two party system. If we ask who form government, multi-party system/ who affect legislation (strong elected upper house, senate) and elections.

## 2. a multi-party system

- *who affects legislation?* Non-labour coalition (liberal and national parties); minor parties in upper house; minority governments; federalism (federal patterns are also seen in states, gov of the day rely on minor parties or opposition support to get the legislation through in senate)  
particularly in continental Europe, proportional representative system
- *who determines election outcomes?* Standing candidates; campaigning; preferential voting. (because your second preference will count)

commonly associated with continental Europe, especially with countries using proportional representation to populate the lower houses. E.g. Dutch use proportional representation to directly elect their lower house, in which the whole country votes one electorate and there 150 seats. So, you only need less than one percent to win a seat in Dutch Parliament. So many parties get seats in the parliament. No one comes near to getting a majority. So, to form government, you have to form small seats coalition, to form agreements between a bunch of parties.

### ***distinguishing major parties from minor parties***

quite a bit of debate (especially over the national party: due to small electoral base and representation of states)

regular participation in executive government as the defining feature of major parties (1910-)

not size, vote, level of organisation, money etc.

### ***the Australian major parties***

the Australian labour party 1891- pre-federation period

the national party (country party) 1919

the liberal party 1944- (1909-)

reiteration: the liberal party and the national party – not a single party but a formal coalition (usually called 'the Coalition')

### ***4 ideas that political scientists apply to australia's major parties***

1. stable and continuous competition

2. the dominance of the coalition
3. the parties are different in important ways
4. the parties are similar in important ways

1. stable and continuous competition

- always labor or a Coalition gov
- stability of vote share over 100 years
- major splits and discontinuities on both sides end in 1950s.
- highly disciplined parties

2. the dominance of the coalition parties

- non-labour gov at national level abt two thirds of time since 1901
- liberal party a "cadre party": pragmatic (not strongly ideologically driven) (extending public owned institutions during and post war, so lots of peers working); oriented to winning and holding office; power in parliamentary party (leaders in parliament set direction of policy) (small team centred on parliamentary leader which drives the direction of party)
- labour a "mass party": ideological (committed ideologically to socialisation objective by nationalising banking industries), oriented to pursuing pure ideas (social democracy or socialism, at odds with electorate opinions); power located in extra parliamentary party (party organisation on the ground, conference of the party which is supreme in policy making, made up of delegates from trade union) (much less able to adapt to change in circumstances)
- so they differ in structure, ideology and approach to politics
- these differences mean the non-labour parties have been able to position themselves more closely to the views of australians

but

- look at the states (e.g. NSW, Tasmania, where labor has dominated)
- Australia a federal party system
- Contrasts less strong in recent decades

3. the parties are different in important ways

- because they reflect socio-economic cleavages and associated interest group (e.g. different classes: lower working-class vs middle and upper-class electorates, unions vs business)
- because they have different ideologies (variation of social democracy or "labourism" vs variations of free market liberalism and social conservatism) (public expenditure, government intervention vs free market liberalism)
- because they are organised differently (mass vs cadre parties: Maurice duverger) represent different interests: business vs workers

but

- contrasts between major parties weaker in recent decades
- policy and ideological convergence: Labor accepts much larger role for markets, de-regularise and privatise organisations
- weakening of party bases: greens, union density reduces

- both emphasise leaders
4. the parties are essentially the same
- because they maximise votes by identifying median voters and appealing to median voters. If you want majority seats, you have to move your position closer to the middle/centre (median voters)
  - because they are both “catch all” or “electoral professional” parties
  - because they compete over single broad national policy visions: e.g. “the Australian settlement” (there are settled ideas dominate the politics, e.g. disequalisation of states. Western Australians like to get rid of that. Multi-culturalisation. A set of core Australian agreements, regardless of party)
  - because they both respond to capitalism or other global (economic) forces (critical theories; e.g. Marxism) (international agreements limit the agency of gov, limits its capacity to alter public policy, economic, social, health policy)

### ***Relevant minor parties***

hundreds of parties form. Few survive. Fewer relevant.

(Giovanni Scartori) relevant if affect:

- which major party governs
- the passage of legislation
- the outcomes of elections

the notable examples:

- the Australian greens (1992-)
- the Australian democrats (1977-2008)
- the one nation party (1997-2005;2016)

### ***Why is the Australian party system (relatively) stable?***

- Political culture – high level of party identification (compared to other countries, aus voters are more likely to vote according to partisanship). NB behaviouralists emphasise this kind of interpretation
- The electoral rules (institutional rules affect the way people think abt politics). NB institutionalists emphasis this kind of interpretation (DON'T WASTE YOUR VOTES!)
- Other institutional advantages (Richard Katz and Peter Mairs “cartel party thesis”)
- Hard to find distinctive policy or ideological space (given that major parties set policies to appeal to median voters, it is hard for minor parties to find space of the electorate)
- Major party adoption, accommodation of new ideas, issues, social forces (Labor used to oppose environmentalists, now they are like Liberal)
- For new parties, developing an effective organisation with loyal members is hard

Cartel parties? Other institutional advantages

\$2.65 x first preference votes (above 4% threshold)

parliamentary travel, postal etc. allowances(major parties are already in power, use resources, they have advantage over minor parties )

### ***difficulty of developing effective, legally compliant and loyal party organisations***

- need to develop policies, select candidates (maybe not everyone follows the leader even if you get elected), raise funds, manage campaigns, etc. within regularly framework. (no experience, major parties have dealt with these over longer period of time, they know how to screen candidates, they have more resource, better training for candidates, minor parties don't have those advantages)
- often personality politics (look at the party names)
- difficult to manage expectations:
  - of supporters
  - of parliamentarians
- democracy v autocracy
- defections and splintering likely

### ***ideological space? The apparent promise of post-materialism***

- Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (1977).
- Maslow's hierarchy of human needs
- 1970s Australian party, Australian democrats, greens etc. revolution of values after ww2 – less fear that country next door is going to invade, they have access to education, jobs and security, so they begin to prioritise values (freedom of speech, sexuality, enviro etc.)
- emergence of right wing post-materialism? They are conservative of non-material values
- Slow/no growth of post materialism in affluent society

Problem with measurement: Inglehart failed to predict that order of nation become important after 911, focus on terrorism at that time. The survey is conducted in different contexts (911)

### ***conclusion: a hybrid party system***

- strong elements of a two-party system
- disruption to the major parties' traditional ideologies, membership bases, allied interest groups and electoral support
- increasing reliance on money to pay for electoral professionals
- growing relevance of minor parties in recent decades had introduced elements of multi-party system, particularly in electoral contests and upper houses. Key predictions don't work well.