Electoral institutions, cleavage structures, and the number of parties

Theory: A classic question in political science concerns what determines the number of parties that compete in a given polity. Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to answering this question, one that emphasizes the role of electoral laws in structuring coalitional incentives, another that emphasizes the importance of pre-existing social cleavages. In this paper, we view the number of parties as a product of the interaction between these two forces, following Powell (1982) and Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994). Hypotheses: The effective number of parties in a polity should be a multiplicative rather than an additive function of the permissible openness of the electoral system and the heterogeneity of the society. Methods: Multiple regression on cross-sectional aggregate electoral statistics. Unlike previous studies, we (1) do not confine attention to developed democracies; (2) explicitly control for the influence of presidential elections, taking account of whether they are concurrent or nonconcurrent, and of the effective number of presidential candidates; and (3) also control for the presence and operation of upper tiers in legislative elections. Results: The hypothesis is confirmed, both as regards the number of legislative and the number of presidential parties.

Data
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Metadados
Mostrar registro completo

Resumo

Visualizar/Abrir
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Electoral systems shape the nature of parties and party systems, and they affect the behavior of politicians and the strategies of voters. For example, in single member district plurality systems, voters have a strong incentive to select one of. On the relationship between electoral systems and the number of relevant parties, see Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State (London: Metheun, 1954); Arend Lijphart, “The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws, 1945-1985: A Critique, Re-Analysis, and Update of Rae’s Classic Study,” Paper for the World Congress of the International Political Science Association (Washington, D.C. Among other contributions, see Luis Eduardo González, “Political Structures and the Prospects and assert that cleavage structures remain mostly intact (e.g. Andersen, 1984; Evans, 1993, 1999; Brooks et al., 2006; Elff, 2007). The most recent evidence encourages us to recognize country-level differences in cleavage structures and their varying patterns of influence on voting behaviour (Brooks et al., 2006; Elff, 2007; see also Freire, 2006). The simple truth is that the numbers of traditional cleavage groups have declined as a result of structural changes in the economies and societies of Western Europe. The Electoral Relevance of Cleavage Groups. Ever since the influential work of Lipset...
and Rokkan (1967), social cleavages have been linked to the political alignments and party systems of Western Europe.