



Chapter Five

Interest Aggregation and Political Parties

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Interest Aggregation

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

Personal Interest Aggregation

- Patron-Client Networks
 - System in which a central officeholder, authority figure, or group provides benefits (patronage) to supporters in exchange for their loyalty
 - Defining principle of feudalism
 - Primitive structure out of which larger and more complicated political structures are composed
 - When interest aggregation is performed mainly within patron-client networks, it is difficult to mobilize political resources behind unified policies of social change or to respond to crises.
 - Static system
 - Structure runs through the political processes of countries such as the Philippines, Japan, and India.



Structures Performing Interest Aggregation in Selected Contemporary Nations*

TABLE 5.1

Country	Extensiveness of Interest Aggregation by Actor				
	Patron-Client Networks	Associational Groups	Competitive Parties	Authoritarian Parties	Military Forces
Brazil	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate		Moderate
Britain	Low	High	High		Low
China	Moderate	Low	—	High	High
France	Low	Moderate	High		Low
Germany	Low	High	High		Low
India	High	Moderate	Moderate		Low
Iran	High	Moderate	Low		Moderate
Japan	Moderate	High	High		Low
Mexico	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate		Low
Nigeria	High	Low	Moderate		Moderate
Russia	Moderate	Low	Moderate		Moderate
United States	Low	Moderate	High		Low

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

Institutional Interest Aggregation

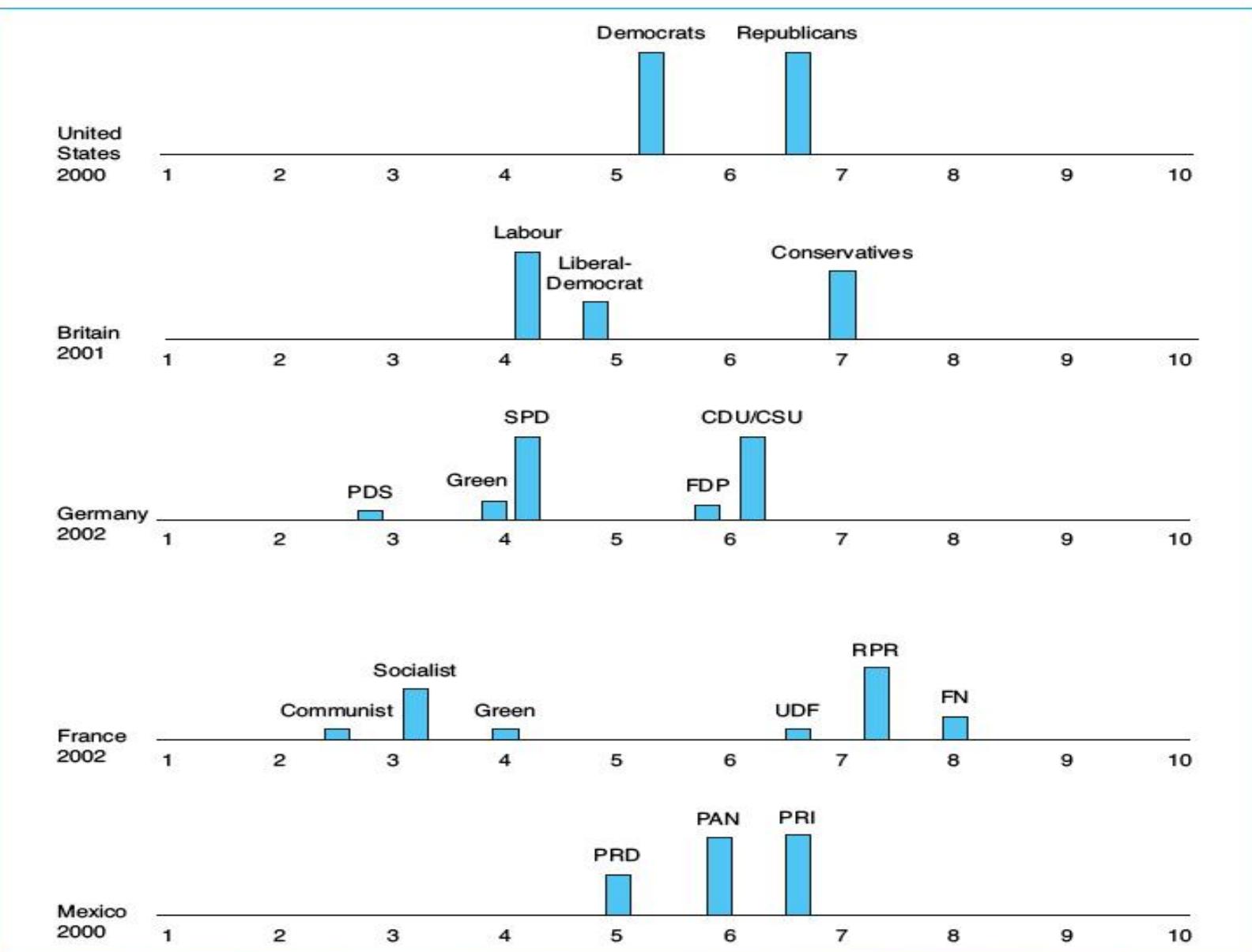
- Modern society and interest aggregation
 - Citizens aware of larger collective interests; have resources and skills to work for them
 - Personal networks tend to be regulated, limited, and incorporated within broader organizations.
- Institutional Groups
 - Bureaucratic agencies and military groups are institutional groups that can be important interest aggregators.
 - Government agencies may even be “captured” by interest groups and used to support their demands.

Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation

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

Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation

- History and development of parties
 - Internally created parties
 - Externally created parties
 - Stable party families: Social Democrats, Conservatives, Christian Democrats, Nationalists, Liberals, etc.
 - The party systems of most democratic countries reflect a mix of these various party families.
 - No two party systems are exactly alike.
 - Differences emerge due to various factors, including electoral systems.



Placement of Parties on the Left-Right Scale and Their Voter Support in Election

FIGURE 5.1

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

Elections

- In democracies, elections are very important to parties.
 - Determine whether they survive
 - The act of voting is one of the simplest and most frequently performed political acts.
 - By aggregating these votes, citizens can make collective decisions about their future leaders and public policies.
 - Elections are one of the few devices through which diverse interests can be expressed equally and comprehensively.
- Parties
 - Often caught between the demands of voters and activists
 - Do parties need to be internally democratic?
 - Some say yes, others (J. Schumpeter) argue that vigorous competition between parties is what matters for a healthy democracy and that democracy within parties is irrelevant or even harmful.

Electoral Systems

- Rules by which elections are conducted
 - Determine who can vote, how people vote, and how the votes get counted
 - Single-member district plurality (SMDP) election rule
 - First past the post
 - A variation on this is the majority runoff system (or double ballot)
 - Proportional representation
- Nominations
 - Primary elections
 - In most countries with SMD elections, party officials select the candidates.
 - In proportional representation elections, the party draws up a list of candidates.
 - Closed-list PR systems
 - Open-list system

Elections—Lower House of National Legislature

TABLE 5.2

Country	Electoral System	Effective	Effective Number	How Are Individual Candidates Selected?
		Number of Parties—Vote Shares	Number of Parties—Seat Shares	
Brazil	PR open list	10.63	9.30	Candidate preference vote
Britain	SMD plurality	3.56	2.45	Nominated by local constituency association
China	No contested elections	No contested elections	No contested elections	No contested elections
France	SMD majority run-off	3.37	2.25	Nominated by local constituency association
Germany	Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list	3.75*	3.44*	National party + state party conventions
India	SMD plurality	7.50	6.55	Nominated by local constituency association
Iran	MMD majority run-off	No available data	2.66	Must be approved by Council of Guardians
Japan	Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list	3.72	2.26	National party
Mexico	Mixed system: SMD plurality + PR closed list	3.60	3.02	Nominated by local constituency association + national party
Nigeria	SMD plurality	2.62	2.34	Nominated by local constituency association
Russia	PR closed list	4.71 (under previous electoral system with SMD plurality + PR closed list)	3.18	National party
United States	SMD plurality	2.17	2.00	Primary elections

Note: Data from the most recent national elections, as of October 1, 2006.

MMD = Multimember district

SMD = Singlemember district

PR = Proportional representation

*Calculated using proportional representation results.

Sources: Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), www.Electionguide.org; www.Wikipedia.org.

Patterns of Electoral Competition

- Duverger's law
 - Mechanical effect
 - Psychological effect
 - Strategic voting
- Anthony Downs
 - Media voter result: centrist pull or "convergence"
- Effective number of parties

Competitive Parties in Government

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

Cooperation and Conflict in Competitive Party Systems

- Majoritarian two party systems
 - Either dominated by just two parties (U.S), or they have two dominant parties and election laws that usually create legislative majorities for one of them, as in Britain.
- Majority-coalition systems
 - Establish pre-electoral coalitions so that voters know which parties will attempt to work together to form government
- Multi-party systems
 - Have election laws and party systems that virtually ensure that no single party wins a legislative majority and no tradition of pre-election coalitions

Cooperation and Conflict in Competitive Party Systems

- Consensual party system
 - The parties commanding most of the legislative seats are not too far apart on policies and have a reasonable amount of trust in each other and in the political system.
- Conflictual party system
 - The legislative seats are not too far apart on policies and have a reasonable amount of trust in each other and in the political system
- Some party systems have both consensual and conflictual features.
 - Consociational (accommodative)

Authoritarian Party Systems

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

The Military and Interest Aggregation

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

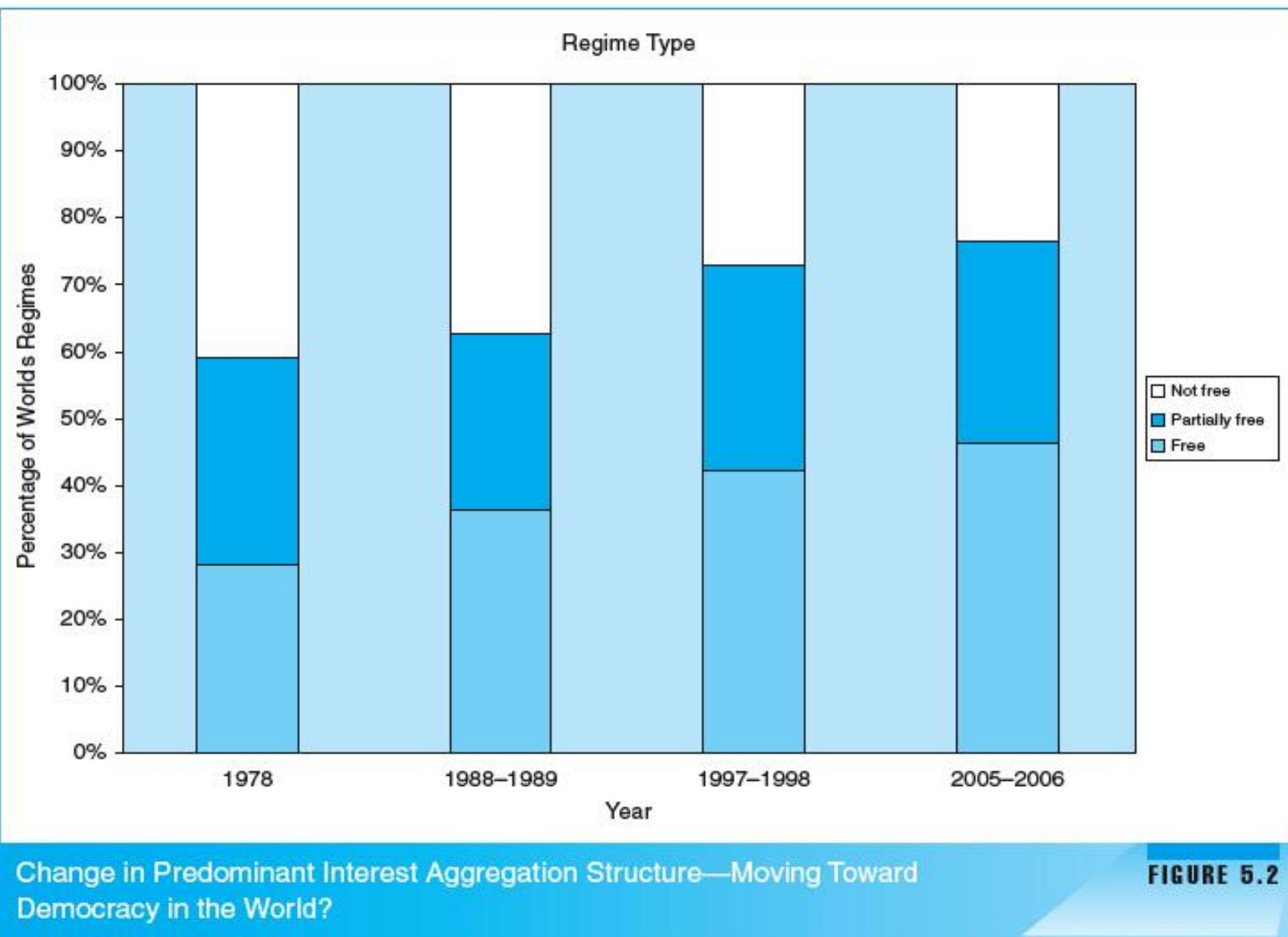
Trends in Interest Aggregation

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

Trends in Interest Aggregation

- Trend toward democracy
 - Eastern Europe (began in 1989)
 - Declining acceptance of authoritarian regimes.
 - Few authoritarian party systems with exclusive governing parties are still around: China and Cuba
 - Most of the unfree states are in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa.





Source: Adapted from Raymond D. Gastil, *Freedom in the World 1979, 1988–1989, 1997–1998* (New York: Freedom House, 1979, 1989, 1998), and other data from www.freedomhouse.org.

Significance of Interest Aggregation

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