



# **Chapter Five**

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## **Interest Aggregation and Political Parties**

**Comparative Politics Today, 9/e**

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# Interest Aggregation

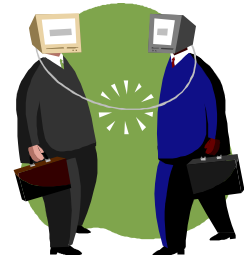
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- The activity in which the political demands of individuals and groups are combined into policy programs.
- How interests are aggregated is a key feature of the political process.
  - In a democratic system, two or more parties compete to gain support 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

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- 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       | <i>Extensiveness of Interest Aggregation by Actor</i> |                      |                     |                       |                 |
|---------------|---|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
|               | 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

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- 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

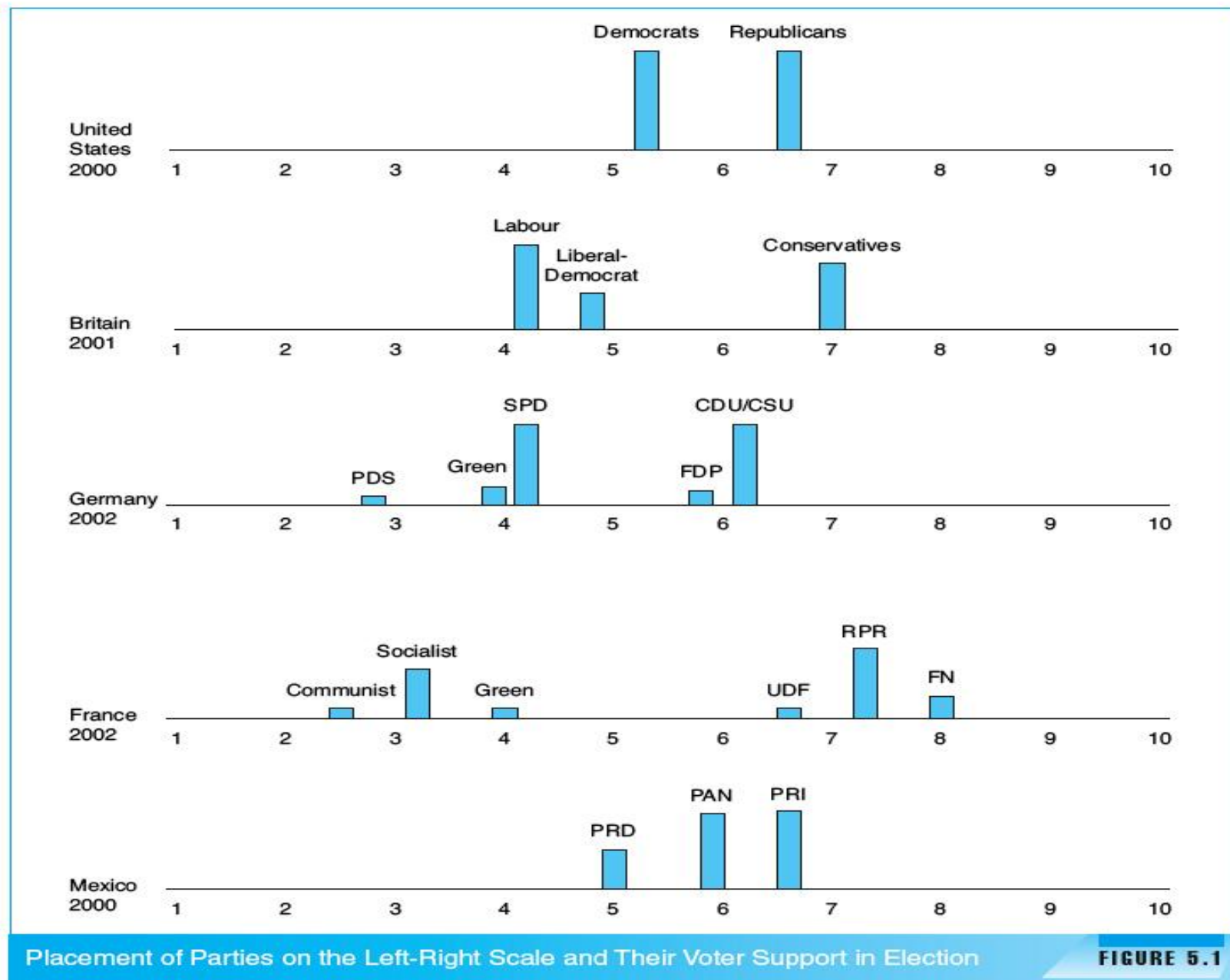
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- In many contemporary political systems, parties are the primary structures of interest aggregation.
- Political parties are groups or organizations that seek to place candidates in office under their label.
  - Party system
    - Competitive party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

# Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation

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- 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 two party systems are exactly alike.
    - Differences emerge due to various factors, including electoral systems.



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

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- 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

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- 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

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

# Patterns of Electoral Competition

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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 a 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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

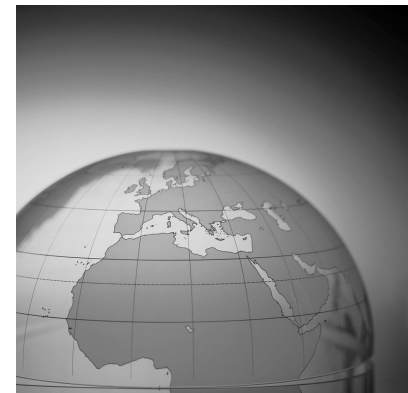
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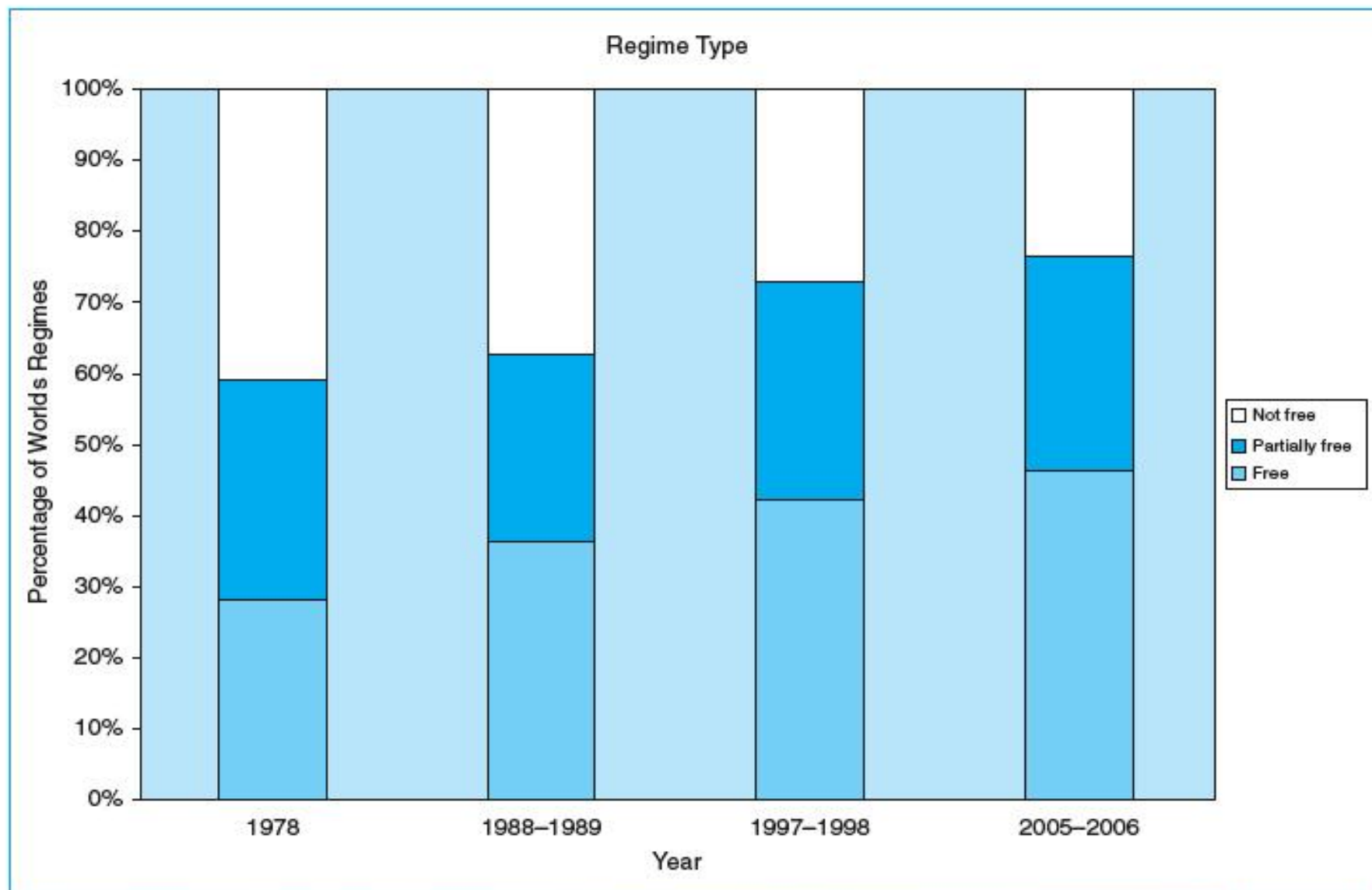
- Democratic trend in the world has gained momentum since the end of the 1980s.
  - In 1978 fewer than one-third of the world's almost 200 independent countries were classified as free.
  - These regimes (free) tended to have competitive party systems as their predominant interest aggregation. They were 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

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- 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.





**Change in Predominant Interest Aggregation Structure—Moving Toward Democracy in the World?**

**FIGURE 5.2**

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](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

# Significance of Interest Aggregation

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- 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