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Book Author(s): Arend Lijphart

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## CHAPTER 5

### **PARTY SYSTEMS: TWO-PARTY AND MULTIPARTY PATTERNS**

**T**he first of the ten variables that characterize the majoritarian-consensus contrast, presented in Chapter 1, was the difference between single-party majority governments and broad multiparty coalitions. This first difference can also be seen as the most important and typical difference between the two models of democracy because it epitomizes the contrast between concentration of power on one hand and power-sharing on the other. Moreover, the factor analysis reported in Chapter 14 shows that it correlates more strongly with the “factor” representing the first (executives-parties) dimension than any of the other four variables that belong to this dimension. It would therefore make sense to devote this chapter—the first of nine chapters that will discuss the ten basic variables<sup>1</sup>—to this first and most typical variable.

For practical reasons, however, it is necessary to discuss the subject of party systems first. The classification of cabinets—single-party cabinets versus multiparty coalition cabinets, and bare-majority cabinets versus minority cabinets and cabinets that have

1. Two of the variables—constitutional rigidity and judicial review—will be discussed in one chapter (Chapter 12).

“unnecessary” parties in them—depends a great deal on how political parties and the numbers of parties in party systems are defined. Hence these definitional problems have to be solved before the question of cabinet types can be properly addressed. It is worth noting, however, that the type of party system is also a strong component of the executives-parties dimension. To preview the factor analysis in Chapter 14 once more, the party-system variable correlates with the first “factor” almost as strongly as the type of cabinet and more strongly than the remaining three variables.

Two-party systems typify the majoritarian model of democracy and multiparty systems the consensus model. The traditional literature on party systems is staunchly majoritarian and emphatically favors the two-party system. Two-party systems are claimed to have both direct and indirect advantages over multiparty systems. The first direct benefit is that they offer the voters a clear choice between two alternative sets of public policies. Second, they have a moderating influence because the two main parties have to compete for the swing voters in the center of the political spectrum and hence have to advocate moderate, centrist policies. This mechanism is especially strong when large numbers of voters are located in the political center, but its logic continues to operate even when opinions are more polarized: at the two ends of the spectrum, the parties will lose some of their supporters, who will decide to abstain instead of voting for what is, to them, a too moderate program, but a vote gained in the center, taken away from the other party, is still twice as valuable as a vote lost by abstention. Both claims are quite plausible—but also contradictory: if the programs of the two parties are both close to the political center, they will be very similar to each other and, instead of offering a meaningful “choice” to the voters, are more likely to “echo” each other.<sup>2</sup>

2. Most two-party theorists do not make both of the competing claims simultaneously. The advantage of party moderation is typically asserted by the American school of thought, whereas the claim of a clear-cut choice reflects the British two-party school.

In addition, two-party systems are claimed to have an important indirect advantage: they are necessary for the formation of single-party cabinets that will be stable and effective policy-makers. For instance, A. Lawrence Lowell (1896, 70, 73–74), one of the first modern political scientists, wrote that the legislature must contain “two parties, and two parties only, . . . in order that the parliamentary form of government should permanently produce good results.” He called it an “axiom in politics” that coalition cabinets are short-lived and weak compared with one-party cabinets: “the larger the number of discordant groups that form the majority the harder the task of pleasing them all, and the more feeble and unstable the position of the cabinet.”

In the next two chapters I confirm Lowell’s hypothesis linking party systems to types of cabinets and his “axiom” that single-party majority cabinets are more durable and dominant than coalition cabinets. The majoritarians’ preference for two-party systems is therefore clearly and logically linked to their preference for powerful and dominant one-party cabinets. Furthermore, in Chapter 8 I show a strong connection between party systems and electoral systems, which further explains the majoritarians’ strong preference for plurality, instead of proportional representation, because of its bias in favor of larger parties and its contribution to the establishment and maintenance of two-party systems. However, whether this syndrome of features actually translates into more capable and effective policy-making than its consensual counterpart is another matter entirely. Lowell simply assumes that concentrated strength means effective decision-making; in Chapter 15 I show that this assumption is largely incorrect.

In this chapter I first address the question of how the number of parties in party systems should be counted and argue that the “effective number of parliamentary parties” is the optimal measure. I also try to solve the problem of how to treat factionalized parties as well as closely allied parties: Should such parties be treated as one party or as more than one party? Next, the average effective numbers of parliamentary parties in our thirty-six de-

mocracies are presented and discussed; these numbers exhibit a wide range—from well below two to more than five parties. I close with a brief discussion of the relationship between the numbers of parties and the numbers and types of issue dimensions that divide the parties.

#### THE EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF PARTIES

Pure two-party systems with, in Lowell's words quoted above, "two parties, and two parties only," are extremely rare. In Chapter 2, the party systems of Britain, pre-1996 New Zealand, and Barbados were also described as two-party systems in spite of the usual presence of one or more additional small parties in the legislature. Is this a correct description, or should it be modified in some way? This question points to the most important problem in determining the number of parties in a party system: whether to count small parties and, if not, how large a party has to be in order to be included in the count.

One well-known solution was proposed by Giovanni Sartori (1976, 122–23). He suggests, first of all, that parties that fail to win seats in parliament be disregarded, that the relative strengths of the other parties be measured in terms of parliamentary seats, and that not all parties regardless of size can be counted, but that one cannot establish an arbitrary cut-off point of, say, 5 or 10 percent above which parties are counted and below which they should be ignored. These preliminary assumptions are unexceptionable. More controversial are his "rules for counting." He argues that only those parties should be counted as components of the party system that are "relevant" in terms of having either "coalition potential" or "blackmail potential." A party has coalition potential if it has participated in governing coalitions (or, of course, in one-party governments) or if the major parties regard it as a possible coalition partner. Parties that are ideologically unacceptable to all or most of the other coalition partners, and that therefore lack coalition potential, must still be counted if they are large enough. Examples are the strong French and Italian

Communist parties until the 1970s. This is Sartori's "subsidiary counting rule based on the power of intimidation, or more exactly, the *blackmail potential* of the opposition-oriented parties."<sup>3</sup>

Sartori's criteria are very useful for distinguishing between the parties that are significant in the political system and those that play only a minor role, but they do not work well for counting the number of parties in a party system. First, although Sartori's criteria are based on two variables, size and ideological compatibility, size is the crucial factor. Only sufficiently large parties can have blackmail potential, but sufficiently large size is also the chief determinant of coalition potential: very small parties with only a few seats in the legislature may be quite moderate and hence ideologically acceptable to most other parties, but they rarely possess coalition potential because they simply do not have sufficient "weight" to contribute to a cabinet. Hence the parties to be counted, whether or not they are ideologically compatible, are mainly the larger ones. Second, although size figures so prominently in Sartori's thinking, he does not use this factor to make further distinctions among the relevant parties: for instance, both the Christian Democratic party that dominated Italian politics until the 1990s and its frequent but very small coalition partner, the Republican party, which never won more than 5 percent of the lower house seats, are counted equally.

To remedy this defect, Jean Blondel (1968, 184–87) proposed a classification of party systems that takes into account both their number and their relative sizes. His four categories are shown in Table 5.1. Two-party systems are dominated by two large parties, although there may be some other small parties in parlia-

3. Sartori (1976, 123) is too critical of his own criterion of coalition potential when he states that it is merely "postdictive," since "the parties having a coalition potential, coincide, in practice, with the parties that have in fact entered, at some point in time, coalition governments." For instance, immediately after the first electoral success of the Dutch party Democrats '66 in 1967, it was widely regarded as an acceptable coalition partner, although it did not enter a cabinet until 1973.

TABLE 5.1

Classification of party systems based on the numbers and relative sizes of political parties

Party systems	Hypothetical examples of seat shares	Effective number of parties
Two-party system	55–45	2.0
Two-and-a-half party system	45–40–15	2.6
Multiparty system with a dominant party	45–20–15–10–10	3.5
Multiparty system without a dominant party	25–25–25–15–10	4.5

Source: Adapted from Blondel 1968, 184–87

ment. Blondel's examples include our British and New Zealand prototypes. If, in addition to the two large parties, there is a considerably smaller party but one that may have coalition potential and that plays a significant political role—such as the German and Luxembourg Liberals, the Irish Labour party, and the Canadian New Democrats—Blondel calls this a “two-and-a-half” party system. Systems with more than two-and-a-half significant parties are multiparty systems, and these can be subdivided further into multiparty systems with and without a dominant party. Examples of the former are pre-1990 Italy with its dominant Christian Democratic party and the three Scandinavian countries with their strong Socialist parties. Representative instances of party systems without a dominant party are Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Finland.

The concepts of a “dominant” party and a “half” party—still widely used by political scientists (Colomer 2011, 184; Siaroff, 2003a, 2009, 201–2)—are extremely useful in highlighting, respectively, the relatively strong and relatively weak position of

one of the parties compared with the other important parties in the system, but they are obviously imprecise. What we need is an index that tells us exactly how many parties there are in a party system, taking their relative sizes into account. Such an index was developed by Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera (1979), and it is now the index most commonly used by comparativists in political science: the effective number of parties. This number ( $N$ ) is calculated as follows:

$$N = \frac{1}{\sum s_i^2}$$

in which  $s_i$  is the proportion of seats of the  $i$ -th party.<sup>4</sup>

It can easily be seen that in a two-party system with two equally strong parties, the effective number of parties is exactly 2.0. If one party is considerably stronger than the other, with, for instance, respective seat shares of 70 and 30 percent, the effective number of parties is 1.7—in accordance with our intuitive judgment that we are moving away from a pure two-party system in the direction of a one-party system. Similarly, with three exactly equal parties, the effective-number formula yields a value of 3.0. If one of these parties is weaker than the other two, the

4. It is also possible to calculate the effective number of parties based on their vote shares instead of their seat shares, but I consistently use seat shares because this study's focus is on the strengths and patterns of parties in parliaments and on their effects on the formation of cabinets. The effective number of parties ( $N$ ) carries the same information as Douglas W. Rae and Michael Taylor's (1970, 22–44) index of fragmentation ( $F$ ) and can easily be calculated from  $F$  as follows:

$$N = \frac{1}{1 - F}$$

The advantage of  $N$  is that it can be visualized more easily as the number of parties than the abstract Rae-Taylor index of fragmentation. It has not been without critics (for instance, Dunleavy and Boucek 2003), but I agree with Taagepera (2007, 47) that, although not ideal in every respect, all of the alternatives “are worse.”



effective number of parties will be somewhere between 2.0 and 3.0, depending on the relative strength of the third party. In the hypothetical example of the two-and-a-half party system in Table 5.1—with three parties holding 45, 40, and 15 percent of the parliamentary seats—the effective number of parties is in fact very close to two and half, namely 2.6.

In all cases where all the parties are equal, the effective number will be the same as the raw numerical count. When the parties are not equal in strength, the effective number will be lower than the actual number. This can also be seen in Table 5.1. The two hypothetical examples of multiparty systems contain five parties each. When there is a dominant party, the effective number of parties is only 3.5. Without a dominant party, the seat shares are more equal and the effective number increases to 4.5, close to the raw number of parties in which all parties are counted regardless of size.

#### CLOSELY ALLIED PARTIES

The problem of how to count parties of different sizes is solved by using the effective-number measure. This measure, however, does not solve the question of what a political party is. The usual assumption in political science is that organizations that call themselves “political parties” are, in fact, political parties. This assumption works well for most parties and most countries but is problematic in two situations: parties that are so tightly twinned that they look more like one party than two and, conversely, parties that are so factionalized that they look more like two or more parties than one. The former problem is less difficult to solve than the latter. Let me turn to the relatively easier issue first.

The cases in point are the following five closely allied parties: the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) in Germany, the Liberal and National parties in Australia, and, in Belgium, the two Christian Democratic parties that resulted from a split along linguistic lines in 1968, the two similarly divided Liberal parties since 1971, and the two Socialist

parties since 1978. In particular, the two German and two Australian parties are often treated as single parties. For instance, Blondel (1968, 185) regards the Liberals and Nationals as one party when he calls the Australian party system a two-party instead of a two-and-a-half party system, and he treats the CDU and CSU as one party when he calls the German system a two-and-a-half instead of a two-and-two-halves party system. Another example is Manfred G. Schmidt's (1996, 95) statement that the three "major established parties" in Germany until the mid-1990s were "the CDU-CSU, the SPD [Socialists] and the Liberals."

Four criteria can be applied to decide whether closely allied parties—which do have different names and separate party organizations—are actually two parties or more like one party. First, political parties normally compete for votes in elections; do the problematic five pairs of parties do so? The CDU and CSU do not compete for votes because they operate in different parts of the country: the CSU in Bavaria and the CDU in the rest of Germany. Neither do the three pairs of Belgian parties because they compete for votes in either Flanders or Wallonia and among either French-speakers or Dutch-speakers in Brussels. In the Australian single-member district elections, the pattern is mixed: Liberals and Nationals usually do not challenge an incumbent representative of the other party, but they may each nominate a candidate in Labor-held districts and in districts without an incumbent.

The second criterion revolves around the degree of cooperation between the parties in parliament and, in particular, whether the two parties form a single parliamentary party group and also caucus together. Only the CDU and CSU do so. Third, do the parties behave like separate parties in cabinet formations: Are they either in the cabinet together or in opposition together, or can one be in the cabinet and the other in the opposition? In this respect, each of the five pairs operates strictly like a single party—with one small exception: the French-speaking Socialists entered the Belgian cabinet without their Flemish counterparts in 2007 (De Winter, Swyngedouw, and Dumont 2009, 89–90). Australia is a

particularly striking example of the more usual pattern because, although the Liberals won clear seat majorities in the 1975, 1977, and 1996 elections, and could therefore have governed by themselves, they nevertheless included the Nationals in all three cabinets that they formed.

The fourth criterion is time: it only makes sense to consider counting tightly allied parties as one party if the close collaboration is of long standing. Both duration and degree of closeness distinguish the above five pairs of parties from other examples of electoral alliances that are mere “marriages of convenience.” Plurality and other majoritarian electoral systems give small and medium-sized parties a strong incentive to form such alliances, but these alliances tend to be ad hoc, temporary, and shifting; examples are France, India, and Mauritius.<sup>5</sup> Electoral alliances also occur in PR systems, such as, in Portugal, the three-party Democratic Alliance that presented a single list of candidates and was highly successful in the 1979 and 1980 elections but that reverted to mutually competitive parties from 1983 on. In Italy, too, after the switch to a less proportional system in 1994, groupings like the Freedom Alliance and Olive Tree Alliance have been, as their names indicate, mere party alliances and not parties.

Unfortunately, the four criteria do not provide an unequivocal answer to the question of how the five problematic pairs of parties in Australia, Belgium, and Germany should be treated. They are all genuinely somewhere in between two parties and one party. Therefore, instead of arbitrarily opting for either the one-party or two-party solution—or by simply flipping a coin!—I propose to

5. Like the Australian alternative vote system, the French two-ballot electoral system actually encourages parties not to merge but to make electoral alliances with like-minded parties (see Chapter 8). However, unlike the Australian Liberal-National alliance, the French Socialist-Communist and Gaullist-Republican alliances fail to meet the criteria for closely allied parties, especially because Socialist cabinets have usually not included the Communists and because Gaullists and Republicans usually challenge each other in presidential elections.

split the difference: calculate two effective numbers of parties, based first on the two-party assumption and next on the one-party assumption, and average these two numbers. This means that each twinned pair of parties is counted like one-and-a-half parties. Like any compromise, it may not be the most elegant solution, but it reflects the reality of these partisan actors better than either of the more extreme options.

#### FACTIONALIZED PARTIES

I propose a similar solution for highly factionalized parties: the Indian Congress party, the Italian Christian Democrats, the Liberal Democratic party in Japan, the Democratic party in the United States, and the Frente Amplio (Broad Front), Colorado, and Blanco parties in Uruguay. These are not the only parties in modern democracies that lack perfect cohesion—in fact, it is generally wrong to view parties as “unitary actors” (Laver and Schofield 1990, 14–28)—but they are the most extreme cases in which analysts have tended to conclude that the party factions are very similar to separate parties. For instance, Japan experts generally view the factions of the Liberal Democratic party as “parties within the party” (Reed and Bolland 1999); Junichiro Wada (1996, 28) writes that the Liberal Democrats are “not a single party but a coalition of factions”; and Raymond D. Gastil (1991, 25) pointedly states the “the ‘real’ party system in Japan is the factional system within the Liberal Democratic party.” In spite of the 1994 electoral reform, which reduced the incentives for factionalism, the Liberal Democrats continue to be a clearly factionalized party (Krauss and Pekkanen 2004). Until their demise in the early 1990s, the Italian Christian Democrats, too, were “more a collection of factions than a unified party” (Goodman 1991, 341).

The Congress party in India was another highly factionalized party and also a dominant party for a major part of its history. Paul R. Brass (1990, 97) argues that for this reason it was more accurate to speak of the Indian “factional system” than the Indian party system. However, the Congress party has become gradually

less divided as several factions have split off, making the party smaller and more unified. The last important split occurred in 1999. The American Democrats, according to Klaus von Beyme (1985, 229), “generally act as two parties in Congress,” the southern Dixiecrats and the northern liberals. This split has continued in the form of the conservative Blue Dog Democrats versus the liberal northern wing of the party. Finally, the Uruguayan parties have traditionally all been extremely faction-ridden. The listing of party factions on the ballot for the presidential race was eliminated by the 1997 constitutional reform, but it was left unchanged for legislative elections, and factions have continued to be very strong and important (Cason 2002).

These kinds of strong intraparty factions also tend to operate much like political parties during cabinet formations and in coalition cabinets. As mentioned earlier, coalition cabinets tend to be less durable than one-party cabinets. If factions behave like parties, we would also expect cabinets composed of factionalized parties to be less durable than cabinets with more cohesive parties. In an eight-nation comparative study, James N. Druckman (1996) found that this was indeed the case.

The big challenge in finding a compromise solution for counting factionalized parties is that the two numbers to be compromised are not immediately obvious: At one end, there is the one-party alternative, but what is the number of parties at the other end? In Italy and Japan, where the intraparty factions have been highly distinct and identifiable, the number of factions has been quite large: if these factions are counted as parties, measured in terms of the effective number of parties discussed earlier, both the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Democrats would have to be counted as five to six parties. This is clearly excessive, since it would make the overall party systems of these two countries the most extreme multiparty systems in the world. My proposal for the alternative at the multiparty end is much more modest: treat each factionalized party as two parties of equal size. The compromise is then to average the effective number of parties based on

the one-party assumption and the effective number based on the two-equal-parties assumption.

The upshot is that factionalized parties are counted as one-and-a-half parties—exactly the same solution that I proposed for closely allied parties. Of course, my solution for factionalized parties is both a rougher approximation and more unconventional—and therefore likely to be more controversial. However, especially because this book focuses on the degree of multipartism as one of the elements of concentration versus fragmentation of power, it is absolutely necessary that severe intraparty fragmentation be taken into account. My own only doubt is not whether an adjustment is necessary and justified, but whether the proposed adjustment is substantial enough.<sup>6</sup>

#### THE PARTY SYSTEMS OF THIRTY-SIX DEMOCRACIES

Table 5.2 shows the effective numbers of parties in thirty-six democracies—based on the partisan composition of the lower, and generally most important, house of bicameral legislatures or the only chamber of unicameral legislatures<sup>7</sup>—averaged over all

6. Whether closely allied parties and factionalized parties are counted as one-and-a-half parties, or more conventionally as, respectively, two parties and one party also affects how cabinets are classified (one-party versus coalition cabinets and minimal winning versus other types of cabinets), and it affects the calculation of electoral disproportionality.

7. The effective number of parties is based on the parties in the legislature when it first meets after an election. In most cases, there is no difference between the seats won by parties in an election and the seats they occupy in the legislature. However, several minor changes have occurred in two countries. In Japan since the 1950s, several successful independent candidates have joined the Liberal Democrats after their election. In the Botswana lower house, four “specially” elected legislators are coopted by the popularly elected ones; this has increased the legislative majorities of the ruling Botswana Democratic party by four seats (Holm 1989, 197)—and it has necessarily also slightly decreased the effective number of parliamentary parties. Two other minor measurement questions: (1) The two instances of elections boycotted by a major party—in Trinidad in 1971 and in Jamaica in 1983—resulted in the election of one-party legislatures; I dis-

elections between 1945 and the middle of 2010. They are listed in decreasing order of effective party numbers. The range is wide: from a high of 5.20 in Switzerland to a low of 1.38 in Botswana. The mean for the thirty-six democracies is 3.19 and the median 2.99 parties.

Toward the bottom of the list, as expected, we also find our prototypical majoritarian cases of the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Barbados. The average of 2.16 parties in the British House of Commons reflects the numerous small parties in this still basically two-party system. New Zealand's average is a relatively high 2.28 as a result of the increase in the number of parties after the introduction of proportional representation in 1996. In the five PR elections from 1996 on, the average was 3.35—much higher than the average of 1.96 in the seventeen prior elections under plurality rules when there were fewer third parties and where the winning party's seat share tended to be large. Similarly, the average effective number for Barbados is below 2.00. At the other end of the range, Switzerland is at the top, but Belgium has only the seventh highest multipartism over the entire period. However, in the ten elections since 1978, after all of the major parties had split along linguistic lines, the average effective number was 6.05, and it grew to 6.36 parties in the five elections after the adoption of federalism in 1993. Both of these numbers exceed Switzerland's average of 5.20.

Table 5.2 also indicates the range of variation within each of the thirty-six democracies by showing the lowest and the highest effective numbers of parties in all of their elections (the number of which is given in the last column). The Maltese pure two-party system with two, and only two, highly equal parliamentary par-

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regarded these election results because they are quite atypical. (2) Any independent members of the legislatures were counted as tiny one-member parties—which means, of course, that they are virtually ignored in the calculation of the effective number of parties, which weights parties by their seat shares.

TABLE 5.2

Average, lowest, and highest effective numbers of parliamentary parties resulting from elections in thirty-six democracies and the number of elections on which these averages are based, 1945–2010

	Mean	Lowest	Highest	Number of elections
Switzerland	5.20	4.71	6.70	16
Israel	5.18	3.12	8.68	18
Finland	5.04	4.54	5.58	18
Netherlands	4.87	3.49	6.74	20
Italy	4.84	3.08	6.97	17
India	4.80	2.51	6.53	10
Belgium	4.72	2.45	7.03	21
Denmark	4.57	3.50	6.86	25
Uruguay	4.40	3.61	4.92	6
Iceland	3.72	3.20	5.34	20
Norway	3.64	2.67	5.35	17
Japan	3.62	2.17	5.76	19
Luxembourg	3.48	2.68	4.34	14
Sweden	3.47	2.87	4.29	19
France	3.26	2.15	4.52	13
Argentina	3.15	2.54	5.32	13
Portugal	3.13	2.23	4.26	12
Germany	3.09	2.48	4.40	17
Ireland	2.89	2.38	3.63	18
Korea	2.85	2.39	3.54	6
Mauritius	2.85	2.07	3.48	9
Austria	2.68	2.09	4.27	20
Costa Rica	2.67	1.96	3.90	15
Spain	2.66	2.34	3.02	10
Canada	2.52	1.54	3.22	21
United States	2.39	2.20	2.44	32
New Zealand	2.28	1.74	3.76	22



TABLE 5.2 *continued*

	Mean	Lowest	Highest	Number of elections
Greece	2.27	1.72	2.62	13
Australia	2.22	2.08	2.30	25
United Kingdom	2.16	1.99	2.57	18
Malta	1.99	1.97	2.00	10
Trinidad	1.87	1.18	2.23	12
Bahamas	1.69	1.34	1.97	8
Barbados	1.68	1.15	2.18	10
Jamaica	1.67	1.30	1.99	10
Botswana	1.38	1.17	1.71	10

*Source:* Based on data in Mackie and Rose 1991; Bale and Caramani 2010 and earlier volumes of the “Political Data Yearbook”; Nohlen 2005; Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001; Nohlen, Krennerich, and Thibaut 1999; Nohlen and Stöver 2010; official election websites; and data provided by Royce Carroll, Mark P. Jones, Dieter Nohlen, Ralph Premdas, and Nadarajen Sivaramen

ties shows the least variation: between 1.97 and 2.00 in ten elections. The largest differences between the lowest and highest numbers can be seen among the countries with the greatest multipartism at the top of the table. The biggest gap is Israel’s 5.56, followed in descending order by Belgium, India, Italy, Japan, and Denmark. Four countries have experienced major increases in multipartism: Belgium and New Zealand, as already noted, and also India and Israel. Portugal is the only example of a clear trend toward fewer parties. In most of the other countries, there is either little variation over time or fluctuation without any clear long-term trend. Nevertheless, the overall tendency is toward greater multipartism: in twenty-eight of the thirty-six countries, the highest numbers of parties were recorded in elections held later than those in which the lowest numbers occurred.

## ADDENDUM: ISSUE DIMENSIONS OF PARTISAN CONFLICT

The descriptions of the prototypical majoritarian and consensus party systems in Chapters 2 and 3 showed that they differ not only in terms of numbers of parties but also in the numbers of programmatic differences among them. The major parties in the British, New Zealand, and Barbadian two-party systems are mainly divided by a single issue dimension—socioeconomic or left-right issues—whereas additional issues, like religious and linguistic matters, divide the Swiss and Belgian parties. These two variables mutually influence each other. On one hand, when there are several lines of political conflict in a society, one would expect that a relatively large number of parties is needed to express all of these, unless they happen to coincide. On the other hand, an established two-party system cannot easily accommodate as many issue dimensions as a multiparty system.

There are seven issue dimensions that can be observed in our thirty-six democracies between 1945 and 2010: socioeconomic, religious, cultural-ethnic, urban-rural, regime support, foreign policy, and postmaterialist issues. The socioeconomic issue dimension has been important in all thirty-six countries and is often the most salient dimension. Differences between religious and secular parties and sometimes between different religions—as in the Netherlands before 1977 between Catholics and Protestants and in India between Hindus and Muslims—constitute the second most important issue dimension. The cultural-ethnic-linguistic dimension has been especially salient in the countries described as plural societies in Chapter 4. Differences between rural and urban areas and interests occur in all democracies, but they constitute the source of partisan conflict in only a few and only with medium salience; for instance, the old agrarian parties in the Nordic countries became less exclusively rural and changed their names to “Center party” around 1960, and the Australian National party, the traditional defender of rural and farming concerns, used to be called the “Country party.” The dimension of

support versus opposition to the democratic regime has become rare in recent decades but used to be salient in countries with strong Communist parties in southern Europe, India, and Japan. The Flemish separatist parties are more recent examples. A great variety of foreign policy issues have divided the parties of many of our countries, such as membership in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the EU in several European countries and the relationship with the United States in Japan. Finally, the postmaterialist dimension is most clearly seen in the emergence of many Green parties in recent decades (Inglehart 1977; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

Earlier research has found a strong empirical relationship between the effective number of parties and the number of issue dimensions (Lijphart 1999, 78–89), roughly in line with the equation suggested by Rein Taagepera and Bernard Grofman (1985):

$$N = I + 1$$

in which  $N$  stands for the effective number of parties and  $I$  for the number of issue dimensions. In abstract terms, the typical single-issue two-party Westminster system fits this formula perfectly. Concretely, the fit is also very close: the single-issue party systems of Britain, New Zealand (before 1996), and Barbados have 2.11, 1.96, and 1.68 effective parties, respectively—close to the predicted 2.00. At the other end of the spectrum, Switzerland with its four issue dimensions—clear left-right, religious, and environmentalist dimensions, as well as weaker urban-rural and linguistic differences that must be given only half-weight—should be expected to have about five parties; the actual number is 5.20. For the post-1977 Belgian party system with five issue dimensions (all seven potential dimensions except urban-rural and foreign policy), about six parties can be predicted; the actual number is 6.05. The empirical fit is quite close for the in-between moderately multiparty systems, too.

Unlike the effective number of parties, and unlike the four

variables discussed in the next four chapters, the number of issue dimensions is not an institutional variable and should therefore not be used as one of the components of the overall executives-parties dimension. However, because it is so closely related to the number of parties, it would fit this dimension very closely and, if it were included, would barely affect the shape of this dimension.