

## *How to Study the Party Systems in the Plural Societies?*

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### **Abstract:**

*The study of party systems in various societies is a complex task that goes beyond a simple numerical classification based on the number of parties represented in parliament. Instead, it requires a nuanced understanding of the competitive dynamics between political parties, including factors such as polarization, fragmentation, and the mechanisms of party competition. This includes determining whether the competition is driven by centripetal or centrifugal forces. Additionally, the relative size and strength of political parties are not solely quantitative measures, but also depend on their ability to form coalitions and negotiate for power. In this paper, we aim to explore the key determinants that shape party systems in diverse societies, taking into account their lack of social homogeneity. By examining these factors, we can gain a deeper understanding of how party systems emerge and operate in different contexts, and how they shape the political landscape of various societies.*

**Keywords:** *Party System, Plural Societies, Fragmentation, Polarization, Ethnicity.*

### **ملخص:**

يعد تصنيف النظم الحزبية ودراستها في المجتمعات المتعددة من المسائل المعقدة لأنها ليست مسألة حسابية بالاقترار على عدد الأحزاب الممثلة في البرلمان فقط، بل لابد من دراسة طبيعة العلاقة التنافسية بين الأحزاب السياسية، من حيث وجود حالة استقطاب من غيرها، ودرجة التجزئة في النظام الحزبي، وبالنظر إلى آلية التنافس الحزبي، هل هي آلية نابذة أو جاذبة أي دراسة الحجم النسبي للأحزاب داخل النظام الحزبي، والحجم النسبي والقوة النسبية للأحزاب ليست مسألة كمية فحسب، بل قدرة الحزب على الدخول في الائتلافات الحكومية وقدرته على المناورة، نحاول من خلال المقال مناقشة أهم المحددات المؤثرة في دراسة النظم الحزبية في المجتمعات المتعددة وأصل تكوينها كونها تفتقد إلى التجانس الاجتماعي في تركيبها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** *النظام الحزبي - المجتمعات المتعددة - التجزئة - الاستقطاب - الإثنية.*

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## **I- Introduction:**

The social structure plays a crucial role in the political process, making it a fundamental aspect of political science research. Social divisions have been studied since Aristotle's time, with a focus on the horizontal divisions present in society. In modern times, social characteristics such as ethnicity, class, religion, geography, identity, and race have been identified as major determinants of voting trends in Western Europe. These factors shape an individual's political thoughts and preferences, making social affiliation a crucial factor in electoral behavior.

In African countries, the construction of social identity is a significant issue, particularly in societies with prominent ethnic differences, leading to problems of integration, lack of participation in governance, low living standards, and economic resources. Therefore, sociologists and polemicists emphasize the association between social characteristics and the construction of party systems and electoral behavior within the sociological approach.

This research paper aims to investigate the party system as an effective procedural determinant in the study of political institutions, with fragmentation and polarization as key elements. These factors describe the type, degree, and strength of social division in society and its impact on political institutions. Consequently, this paper aims to answer the question: What are the theoretical determinants controlling the classification of party systems in plural societies

## **II. Fragmentation:**

The study of fragmentation is closely related to the prevalence of small political parties and the willingness of voters to support them. Previous research has established a link between the degree of fragmentation and the voting system. Duvergé (1954) argued that a proportional representation system is a prerequisite for high fragmentation in the provinces. To analyze the patterns of change, researchers typically use quantitative methods to measure the degree of fragmentation and describe the differences. They also test the hypothesis of party and party system evolution. The degree of fragmentation is measured by examining the distribution of votes among political parties, the number of competing parties in the elections, and the extent to which voters are willing to vote for these parties. The degree of fragmentation serves as an indicator of the social divisions that exist within a country. (Cited in, Ishiyama, 2003, p. 206).

Many variables may affect the degree of fragmentation within the party system. In the following, the researcher will give an overview about its maximum degree, what can encourage the fragmentation of the party system? And how could the party systems be protected from excessive fragmentation? The Duvergier hypothesis (1954), assumes that the voting system affects the number of political parties, especially in countries with proportional representation in their electoral system. They tend to have many parties compared to systems that adopt the winner-take-all rule. In this respect, Duvergé (1954) placed two factors linking the holding of elections and the number of the parties:

*The first factor* link the size of the party's votes converted to seats in the elected councils. In this case, even parties with a low number of votes are concerned. As a result, the degree of fragmentation is greater in systems with a high degree of proportional representation.

*The second factor* is the behavioral psychological factor of voters, who predict that their parties, so they give their votes to others. This voting strategy discourages the excessive formation of small parties, resulting in the emergence of less relative systems.

According to this theory, the degree of fragmentation within the party system is a result of the interaction between political party and voter strategies, which are influenced by electoral procedures. Duvergier (1954) highlighted the role of the psychological factor in party formation, particularly in pluralistic systems with proportional representation. Lijphart (1977) also asserted that both mechanistic and psychological factors play a role in determining the number of parties across different voting systems. As a result, controlling and reducing fragmentation between different systems is challenging due to the distinct ethnic and social interest groups and regional divisions in modern society.

Reed developed an evolutionary model to study political parties in Japan, which has distinct characteristics compared to other cases, particularly in terms of party fragmentation theories. This model examines how parties in Japan learn from previous election results to develop successful election strategies. According to the evolutionary model, voters and parties must adjust their behavior in response to election outcomes, which contributes to changing the party system towards equilibrium. The mathematical model suggests that current election fragmentation is partially influenced by the degree of fragmentation in previous elections. The rate of adjustment is also dependent on how close the fragmentation level is to the equilibrium level. (Cited in, Coleman 1995).

In this respect, fragmentation refers to the degree to which the political system is divided into different political parties or factions. This fragmentation can occur due to several factors, such as differences in ideology, social class, or regional interests. A highly fragmented party system can lead to instability in the government, as it becomes difficult for any single party to gain a clear majority and form a stable government coalition.

There are various ways to measure the degree of fragmentation within a party system. One such measure is the political value held by each party. According to Sartori, only a limited number of parties have a significant impact on the formation of the government, regardless of their size.

Another common measure of fragmentation is the strength criteria proposed by Laakso and Taagepera. This measure takes into account both the size and strength of each party within the parliament. The segmentation index is calculated by squaring the proportion of votes received by each party ( $h$ ), adding them together, and then taking the inverse of the result:  $M = 1/\sum h^2$ . This index increases as the party distribution becomes more fragmented.

Overall, measuring fragmentation within a party system is important for understanding the stability of the political system and the likelihood of forming a stable government. It can

also provide insight into the factors that contribute to the formation of different political parties and their impact on the political process (Cited in Pascale & Emilie, 2008).

### **III- Polarization:**

Polarization is a global concept used in different fields, such as, politics, sociology, and economics. Political polarization can refer to the divergence of political attitudes to ideological extremes. Philpott & Stephen (2002) investigate it in the following words: *'Almost all discussions of polarization in political science consider polarization in the context of political parties and democratic systems of government. In most two-party systems, political polarization embodies the tension of its binary political ideologies and partisan identities.* (p, 16).

There are a number of socio-economic criteria that control the degree of polarization, such as the social structure including social class, ethnicity or religious groups. Other factors are of a paramount importance in the polarization process, which can cause tribal and ethnic conflicts, as well as discriminatory preferences between individuals. By the end, polarization is increased due to this disharmony among societies and individuals, (ibid).

Homogeneous societies with common denominations are less polarized and are not prone to severe polarization that leads to ethnic conflicts. The idea of polarization, according to Esteban and Ray (1993-1994), is a deliberate attempt to seize and control the potential and underlying conflict in a society as a result of the distribution process. In fact, most sociologists agree that the political factors controlling the distribution process are likely for one part of society over another. This distribution is based on differences in the size of the groups, the presence of different political opinions and tending towards extremism in some societies in which sharp ethnic differentiation prevails. As a result, inequality will appear and drives towards social and political disharmony.

Many societies lack homogeneity and can be described as a mixture of differentiated groups. Esteban and Ray (ibid) claimed that polarization depends on a set of basic features which are:

- 1- Polarization is generally a matter of groups, and the isolation of individuals should be in groups based on particular characteristics.
- 2- There should be a high degree of homogeneity within each group.
- 3- There should be a minimum distinction across groups.
- 4- There should be a small number of large-size groups.

The former elements form a positive social tension which drives towards social competition and polarization. The existence of isolated individuals with a different set of characteristics and backgrounds plays a central role in the development of a social conflict. The group is made up of shared social characteristics, which often involve the unification of

the group's objectives. This is what makes it difficult to draw its members outside the group. Hence, identity has a significant role in increasing the Polarization group formation (J. Esteban, 2002, p.03). The ideological polarization model hinges on the competition between groups, as each group wants to gain support for the group's ideology by marketing a system of intellectual values. This increases the numbers of group members adopting these ideas and principles.

The polarization process takes place on several grounds defined by the norms and values of society, whether political, social or economic means, as well as ideological attraction. Polarization increases more among parties in the regimes that are fragmented, less homogeneous along ethnic and ideological foundations. Furthermore, polarization is linked to the process of political competition that increases from the degree of institutionalization.

#### **IV- Social Approach to the Establishment of the Party System**

The sociological approach is based on the concept of the social fracture introduced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). It is derived from the historical Western European realities, reflecting the social conflicting dichotomy of central and marginal cultures, the secularization of the state versus the church, the countryside versus the urban areas, and the owners of capital versus workers.

Fracture is defined as division in society resulted from religious grounds in terms of beliefs, or political ideological tendencies expressed in electoral behavior, in addition to ethno-social causes (Rae & Taylor, 1970). However, Lipst and Rokan (1960) suggested a different view. According to them, the existence of conflict does not automatically imply mobilization and identification of voters. Effective mobilization of parties depends on a number of other factors that are not based only on social divisions, but also on elite political strategies". There are a number of economic, social and cultural conditions that support or impede mobilization efforts based on social fracture (Erdmann, 2007). There is no single link or inevitable relationship between the social division and the formation of parties. Hence the rift along with other institutional factors, such as the electoral system, is the main factors of mobilization and party formation.

Most of those who study the social crackdowns associated this concept with the history of Western societies. This historical extension goes back to Marx's work on class conflict since the feudal era; in addition to Weber's work on social and cultural status. According to Ibn Khaldoun's theory, political rifts may also result from social structures that are characterized by disparities and differentiation in age (Abdel Ali, 2010).

The social approach has become one of the most important approaches in the study of party phenomenon and electoral behavior. According to Inghart the concept of rift is linked to the concept of permanent group polarization between opposing parties. It is also defined as "a long-life political division at the electoral level between factions of voters and parties that reflects a widespread economic and social division (Abdel Ali, 2010).

There is a range of different sources of social fractures, the first and the foremost is the

class struggle that Lipset (1960) mentioned in his book entitled "The Politician". In all economically developed countries, a general manifestation is that low-income groups usually vote for left-wing parties, while high-income groups vote mainly for right-wing parties. Which made a political struggle appear, especially in the elections on an economist basis Martin Lips called "The democratic class struggle" (Symour M Lipset, 1959-1960, pp.222 223).

During the 19th century, many scholars focused on Alex de Tocqueville's idea that there was an inherent conflict between the aristocrats and the property-less poor. Tocqueville's book, "Democracy in America," argued that the disenfranchised rejected the class system and inequality. Tocqueville predicted that the poor would ultimately triumph, but he also acknowledged that there would always be tension between those who sought to limit individual freedoms and those who wanted to expand them. Tocqueville's proposal aligned with Karl Marx's views and stressed that the ongoing class conflict was due to the "false consciousness" produced by the cultural hegemony of the upper class, and the oppressed derived their values from the privileges of the oppressors (Lauri Karvonen & Stein Kuhnle, 2001, p. 04).

According to Stein Rokan, there were three types of social divides present in Western societies. Apart from class change as the main cause of conflict and social disparity, national and industrial revolutions also contributed to social struggles that impacted the formation of political parties and voters' behavior. The political revolution was a result of the clash between the central system and peripheral units based on status, ethnicity, language, or religion. Furthermore, there was also a conflict between the church and the state, where the state aimed to increase its power at the expense of the church that wanted to sustain its historical rights and interests. The industrial revolution led to two conflicts, one between the landowners from the elite class and the rising bourgeoisie who sought to acquire more power and compete with the elite, and the other between capitalists and workers, as previously highlighted by Karl Marx (Lauri Karvonen & Stein Kuhnle, 2001, p. 05).

Martin Lipst and Stein Rokan's ideas center around the concept of social division, which is based on Western imperial experiences. They suggest that there is a separation between community groups, which is determined by their social characteristics, including their religious, ethnic, linguistic, and caste affiliations. This division leads to the emergence of new correlations within the groups, which become the basis for their collective identity and attitudes towards other groups. Additionally, this division has an organizational aspect, as people within these groups engage in parties that serve as frameworks for political demands and actions, often representing certain ethnicities and expressed as Ethnic Parties (Abdel Kader Abdel Ali, 2010, p.57).

Gero Erdmann's analysis of social division and political conflict highlights several dimensions. Firstly, he suggests that a single social structure based on a particular social division can lead to unified interests among the group. Additionally, the existence of shared values and guiding principles within the group can further strengthen their collective identity. Furthermore, Erdmann notes that single-faction voters with similar orientations can contribute to the institutionalization of social divides. To promote political identities and enhance voter

participation, political elites utilize political institutions like political parties to frame societal interests and form alliances with convergent parties. This institutionalization of social divides is a crucial aspect of the private party system (Gero Erdmann, 2007, p. 08).

Hanspeter Kriesi's analysis of social division and conflict identifies three main dimensions that signify a defect in the sociological structure. The first and most significant dimension is the structural one, which refers to conflicts that have a more enduring and continuous nature, distinguishing them from transient conflicts, regardless of the level of conflict. The second dimension is the conflict identity that forms when conflicting groups become acutely aware of the factors that cause conflict with other groups. Finally, the third dimension is organizational, where groups create a system of actions based on permanent and regular division lines, utilizing specific organizational formulas unique to each group (Abdel Kader Abdel Ali, 2010, p.58-59).

#### **V- The institutional approach to build a party system:**

In the institutional approach to building a party system, the electoral system is considered the most critical factor, as it determines the rules of the electoral process that shape the party system. Maurice Devargé identified M. Dufferger as the most important researcher on the relationship between the electoral system and the party system. Some countries with similar political determinants have a plurality of parties, while others have a dual-party system. Anglo-Saxon countries like Britain and the United States of America tend to adopt bipartisanship, whereas the binary model has failed in most other European countries.

The electoral system translates votes obtained in general elections into parliamentary seats won by candidates and competing political parties. The legal framework defined by the electoral system determines the rules of the competition, including proportional representation, majority, or chosen system, which ultimately determine the outcome of elections (Lawrence et al., 2002, pp. 40-41). The details of the electoral law, such as the electoral district, voter registration, calculation of votes, and ballot design, also have an impact on both the electoral process and the party system.

The impact of electoral systems on government and politics cannot be overstated, and it is influenced by various factors such as social, economic, geographical, constitutional, and political culture. The design of the electoral system is a result of political agreements reached by parties involved in the political process, based on social backgrounds. Studies have primarily focused on the outcomes and effects of electoral systems, particularly their implications for the formation of party systems and the composition of Parliament. The key procedures include proportionality in the relationship between votes and seats, as well as the number of winning parties representing the electorate (Birch, p. 326). The size of the region is also crucial in determining the allocation of seats in Parliament to reflect the distribution of support for parties among the electorate. However, in political systems like Britain and Canada, where one member is elected from each constituency, there tends to be less proportional equality between districts, even if there is a difference in district sizes.

There is a wide range of electoral systems whose establishment coincided with the

spread of democracy and the formation of political parties. Electoral models were developed through a follow-up time, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; they became the most important electoral systems. First, the representation of regions is across the number of participants. Second, the opened voting system, through which, individuals vote for their candidates without adhering to certain lists or groups. Third, the plurality or majority rule, in which candidates are elected by a largest number of votes. This type of electoral system was able to produce a representative representation, especially in societies with homogeneous social structure, and with the emergence of relatively complex and heterogeneous new voter contexts, The style of consolidated lists of candidates appeared to be voted on by the mass (Colomer, 2011).

In the mid-twentieth century, there were motivating factors to explore new electoral systems that could provide representation to multiple parties using institutional means. These efforts resulted in the creation of new electoral rules and procedures, which could be classified into three institutional groups. These groups played a pivotal role in shaping party systems based on the technical methods identified by Maurice Duvergé, who analyzed various electoral systems

1-The majority voting system is typically utilized by all states that adopt bipartisanship, with few exceptions. One such anomaly occurred in Turkey between 1946 and 1948, when a single ruling party split into two opposing parties - the National Party and the Democratic Party - after over two decades of one-party rule. The split was prompted by a fear of a sudden shift towards excessive pluralism, rather than a direct transition through the majority voting system. The voting system was not a causal variable in the formation of the partisan regime; rather, it was a variable that was influenced by partisan political circumstances,( Duvergé, 1964). The use of individual majority suffrage in a single role tends to promote a bipartisan system. This is because the intense polarization between the two opposing sides of the political spectrum, each with its own distinct positions and programs, tends to marginalize smaller parties. This, in turn, motivates voters to adopt a bipartisan stance and to support one of the two dominant parties that compete for political power. As a result, parliamentary representation is divided between these two major parties, with each party obtaining a significant number of seats. In such a system, the majority party assumes control of the government by forming a responsible government, which is accountable to both the parliamentary majority and the elected head of government. (Leduc et al, 2002)

2 According to Duvergé(1954), the electoral system plays a crucial role in shaping the party system. The use of a two-round majority voting system promotes moderate pluralism by encouraging parties with similar programs or positions to form alliances to achieve their goals. This system has been implemented in only a few countries, with most applying it under restricted suffrage, and the specific rules for the second round of voting vary among these countries. Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands used the two-round majority system earlier without specifying the second round's most qualified candidates. Overall, the technical procedures of the voting system have a systemic impact on the party system, especially in the two-tier system. Switzerland used a single majority vote in three rounds, requiring an absolute majority in the second round before 1883. However, the electoral law procedures in different



countries that use this system are not the same, resulting in an asymmetry in the system's effects. According to Duvergé, all countries that adopt the two-round majority voting system experience a conversion to pluralism in their party system. This is achieved through party alliances in the first round and heightened competition in the second round due to increased polarization, which is more pronounced when there are only a few options. Most countries that have adopted this system have had more than six parties, except for Italy, which had small, inconsistent groups that did not form parties. However, Switzerland is an exception, with four large parties in the federal parliament. (Maurice, 2007, p.248).

3-Duvergé (1954) argues that the proportional representation system promotes excessive party pluralism, but this does not always lead to political pluralism and instability, especially if the system is compatible with regional divides. When parties can participate in elections without forming alliances, the proportional representation system has been successful, as seen in Belgium's multiparty system. However, the system also encourages party fragmentation by promoting the emergence of new parties that result from divisions within larger parties. This fragmentation can reflect new political and ideological trends, such as the Popular Republic movement in France in 1945 and the National Front during the 1984 elections. The proportional representation system can result in excessive pluralism by creating small parties that play a crucial role in forming coalition governments with larger parties. However, the influence of these small parties in government alliances often does not reflect their actual weight in the elections. For example, the German Liberal Party has played a significant role in determining which party will form a majority government by deciding with whom to ally. This was evident in the case of the Christian Democratic Party and the Socialist Democratic Party, where the German Liberal Party weighed in on the decision, even though they did not have as many votes as the larger parties. (Maurice, p.285).

## **VI- Interaction of institutional and sociological approaches:**

In his analysis of the electoral system and its impact on political parties and the party system, Duvergé primarily relied on the institutional approach, which examines the mechanisms of the electoral system. In contrast, scholars such as Roccan and Libset (1960) emphasized social factors. However, Lijphart (1977) argued that the institutional approach alone is insufficient and that social factors are essential to understanding the electoral system's implications. According to Lijphart, the number and size of social groups are crucial in interpreting parliamentary majorities, and ignoring these factors can lead to an incomplete understanding of the party system's development. Therefore, both institutional and social factors must be considered to achieve a comprehensive interpretation of how parties and the party system are formed (Cited in Park, 2010).

Lijphart (1977) argued that the institutional approach, which primarily focuses on the electoral system, is insufficient on its own, and social factors are crucial in explaining the party system. Thus, a combination of both approaches is necessary to fully understand how parties and the party system are formed. Lijphart specifically highlighted the importance of considering the number and size of social groups when interpreting parliamentary majorities. He argued that ignoring these factors can lead to an incomplete understanding of the party system's development. Moreover, Lijphart emphasized that both institutional and social

factors must be taken into account to provide a comprehensive explanation of the party system's construction. Neglecting either approach would result in a flawed interpretation (Cited in Park, 2010, p.03)

The interactive model proposed by scholars suggests that the interaction between institutional factors and heterogeneous ethnic divisions leads to a pluralist party system, which is based on multiple ethnic divisions. The electoral system plays a crucial role in allowing political actors to establish parties that align with social rifts within society. However, in cases where there are strong social divisions but a weak electoral system, there may be obstacles to creating sufficient party pluralism, resulting in a limited number of parties based on social cracks, even with an effective electoral system.

### **Conclusion:**

To summarize, the study of party systems in plural societies encompasses a set of crucial criteria that determine the dynamics of political competition and representation. Among these criteria, the degree of social and political polarization among different groups stands out as a key factor that shapes the landscape of party politics. The extent to which parties collaborate or oppose each other is also critical, as it directly affects the level of polarization in society. Moreover, ethnicity plays a pivotal role in shaping electoral behavior, given that political preferences are often based on socio-ethnic identities. Therefore, understanding the interplay between ethnicity, party competition, and polarization is essential for analyzing party systems in plural societies.

Another critical aspect to consider is the level of fragmentation within society and its impact on political representation. By examining its degree, we can gain insights into the distribution of political power and representation among different groups. In this respect, we can examine whether votes are concentrated in dominant parties or spread out among smaller ones. This examination is crucial for understanding the representation of diverse interests and identities in plural societies.

In conclusion, the study of party systems in plural societies is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between a range of factors, including polarization, party competition, ethnicity, and fragmentation. By analyzing these factors, we can gain insights into the nature of political representation and power distribution in plural societies, and develop more nuanced and effective strategies for addressing the challenges of democratic governance in diverse and complex societies.

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