

Lecture notes for
WEEK 7

**The Political
Process**

- **Cleavages**
- **Political parties and elections**
- **Electoral systems**

Society – cleavages:

- *We may say that politics is located in the society...*
- *Political science is quite interested in the main divisions in a society – i.e. in social divisions – or “cleavages”*
- *within one country (state), society might be divided by many social characteristics...*
- we call these divisions **social “cleavages”**

Society – cleavages:

- **Social cleavage =**

long-term (structural) division /conflict within a country's society; *examples:*

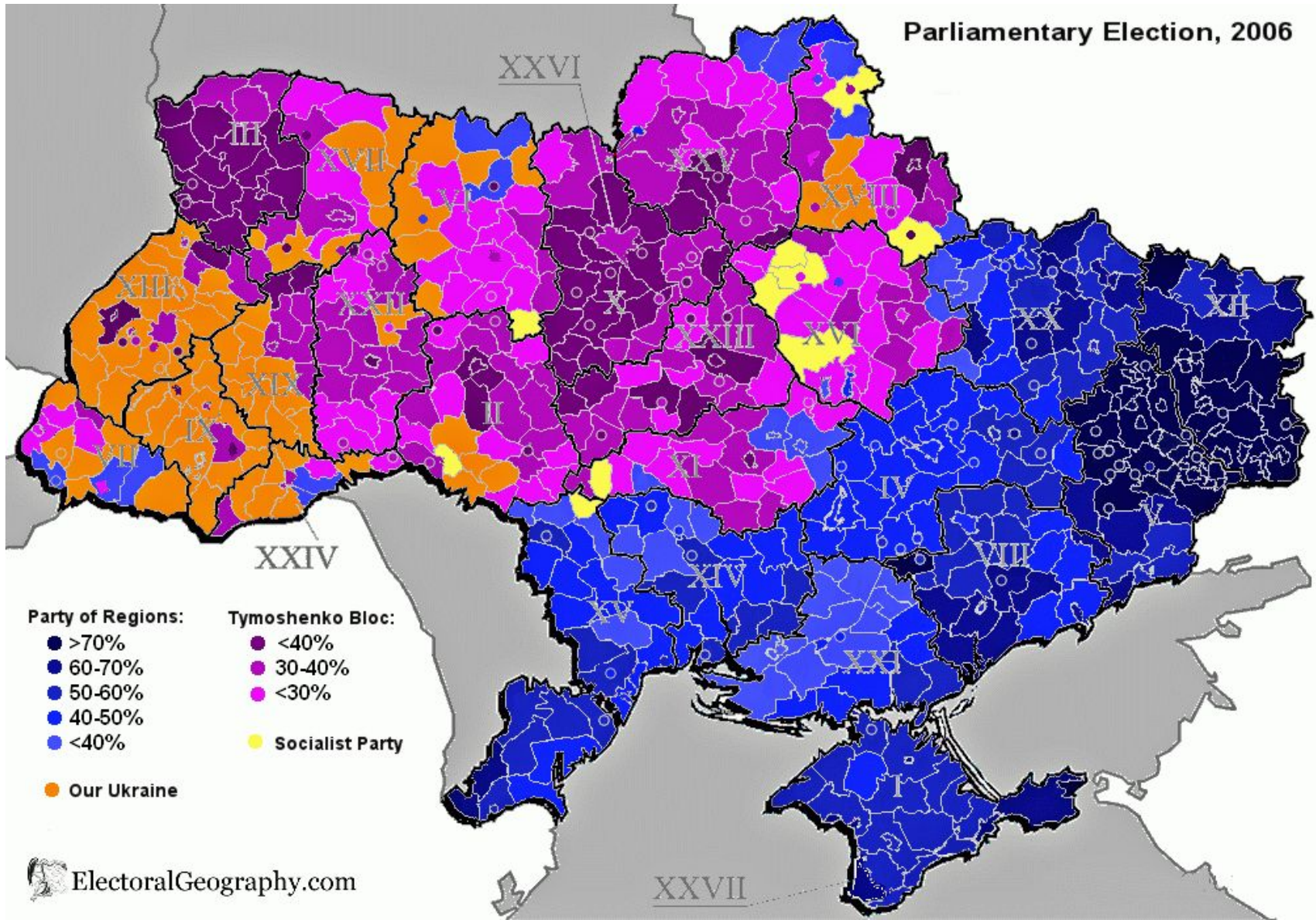
- **between larger ethnic groups**
- **between religions**
- **rural vs. urban; center vs. periphery**
- **between gender or age groups etc.**

– *often: “overlapping” cleavages*

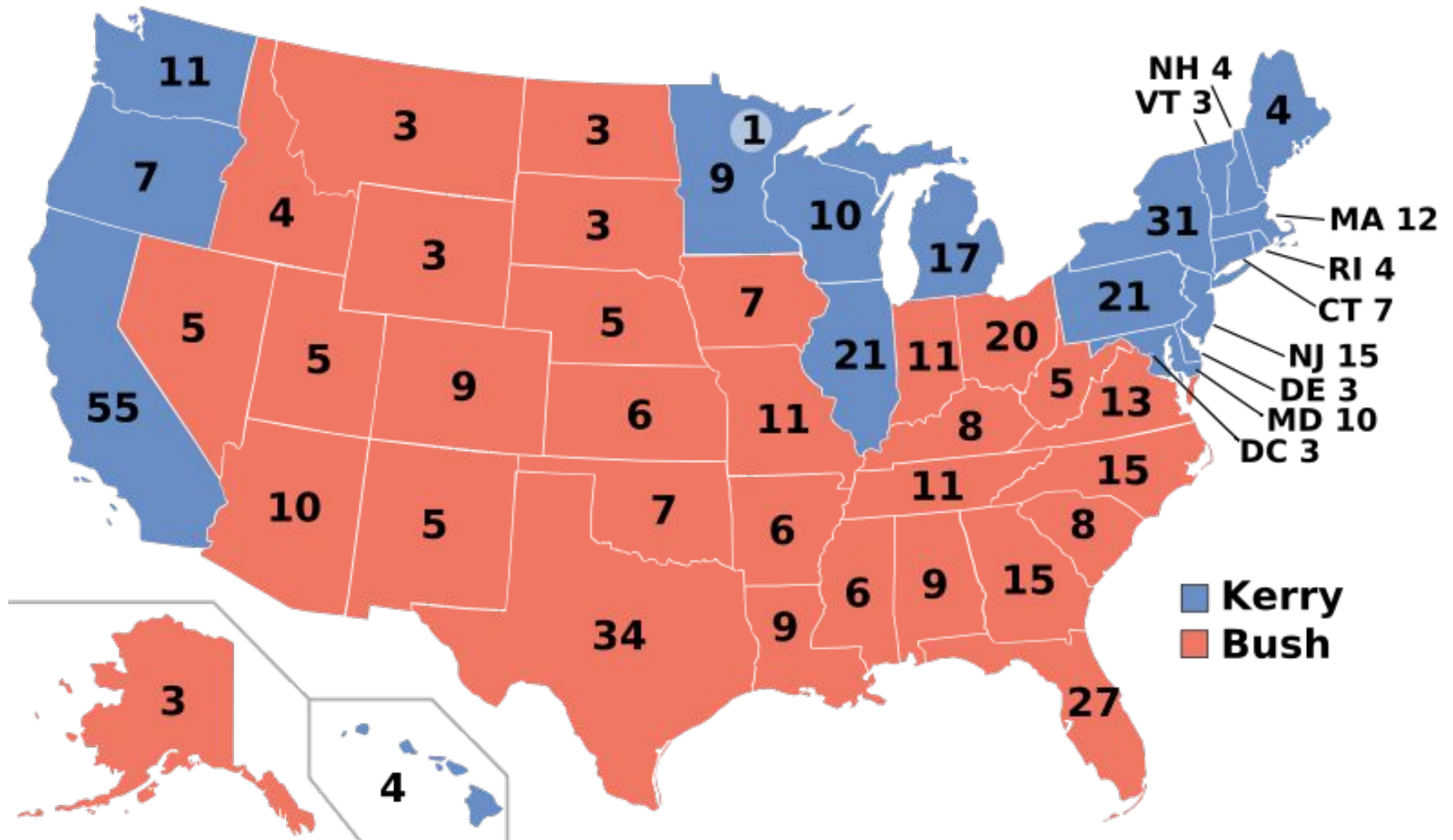
Society – cleavages:

- such social cleavages often “translate” into **political cleavages**
 - *i.e. the different social groups behave differently in the political process, for instance:*
- they have different political interests, demands
- they tend to vote for different political parties and candidates

Cleavages – the case of Ukraine:



Cleavages – the case of the United States:



Political parties:

- *many of such cleavages are reflected in different ideologies and in different **types** of **political parties**...*

Political parties:

- *What are **political parties**?*
- = groups of people /organizations that ***mobilize*** voters around a platform (program) or set of interests, concerns, and goals
- they play a crucial role in the democratic process
- they formulate political and policy programs (agendas), select candidates, conduct election campaigns, compete in elections for seats in legislative bodies and political offices...

Political parties (optional but useful):

- **political party**
- political scientists say that organized political parties serve two major purposes: **interest aggregation** and **interest articulation** - for the purpose of attaining & holding power (i.e. attaining position in the government)
- **interest aggregation** means the process by which a party brings together various perspectives; **interest articulation** means that parties define and express the group's needs /wishes in a way that the public and political system can understand

Political parties:

- *What do political parties do? – a summary:*
- – *in established democracies :*
- compete in elections to win seats in parliament & take part in government
- provide direction in government (when they are there)
- do recruitment into their ranks (= look for new party members)
- formulate & publish their programs & mobilize their voters around it
- – *in authoritarian regimes they especially deal with*
social, economic, and political control

Political parties:

- **Types of political parties:**
- **leftist, rightist, centrist** – i.e. by their position on the left – centre – right axis*
- **ideology-based** (remember our types of ideology)
- **issue-based** (The Party for Higher Pensions, the Beer Party, the Pirate Party)
- **territory-based** (the Northern League in Italy)
- **religious** (in many Arab countries)
- **ethnic; nationalist** (in many Balkan countries)

Political parties:

- *Another possible classification (typology):*
- radical /or extremist/ parties
 - banned in many countries
- vs.
- moderate parties
- “fringe” parties (very small, with no effect on the political system)

Political parties – types (optional):

- Political scientists distinguish 3 different models of party organization:
- **Elite** (= small group of party members, but able to mobilize more people to vote for them in elections)
- **Mass** (large / mass membership)
- **Catch-all** (large parties, usually with large # of members, with general programs where many people can find something for them)

Political parties:

- *an example of a ideology-based political party:*
- **environmental /Green parties**
 - emphasize “post-material” values, esp. the environment
 - developed in the 1970s + 80 in Europe and recently entered “high politics” in many countries

Political parties (optional):

- *populism*
- **populist parties /leaders**
 - offer simple solutions to difficult problems
 - promote policies which are either not in the general interest or not too rational/optimal solution, but which are ‘crowd-pleasing’
 - (populists & demagogues...)

Political party system:

- *In some countries, only one party dominates the political system, in most other countries there are two or more important political parties which have a high / realistic chance to compete for positions in the government...*
- *depending on the number of such parties and the relationship between them, we distinguish several **political “party systems”***

Political party system:

- **Political party systems:**

- There are three basic types of party systems:
 - (1) **multiparty** systems,
 - (2) **two-party** systems, and
 - (3) **one-party** systems
- Parties elected to the parliament but not represented in the government (cabinet) are usually called the **opposition**

Political party systems:

- in the **two-party system** - two significant contenders for power, either is capable of winning any election
- **multiparty system** – 3 or more major contenders for power
- **two-party-plus system** – 2 major contenders for power of approximately equal strength & 1 or more minor parties able to win seats but not to control the government

Political party systems - RKZ (optional):

- *Note: this news is already outdated, but shows well how the political system in Kazakhstan is gradually developing...*
- **Senate amends Law on political parties**
- 15 January 2009
- CA-NEWS (KZ) - Kazakh Senate adopted the Law On introduction of amendments and additions to the Law of the Kazakh Republic On political parties, Kazinform reported. Mukhtar Kul-Mukhamed, Kazakh Culture and Information Minister noted that the main purpose of the bill is liberalization of the law on political parties and further development of party system. Proposed amendments are aimed at simplification of the registration procedures of political parties, regulation of party foundation, adjustment of reorganization procedures of political organizations.

Elections and electoral systems:

- **Elections** = the electorate*
- a political institution (also: decision-making process or mechanism) that serves to select peoples' representatives to the political bodies at different levels
- the most frequent **types: parliamentary** (= “general” elections), presidential; or regional and local elections
 - also: primary (in the U.S.); by-elections**

Elections and electoral systems:

- *Some issues:*
- *Elections* as a political right...
- - suffrage / franchise (= right to vote)*
- *Who can vote in a country's elections?* *This - and the procedure for elections set up in the Constitution and Electoral Laws.*
- *What does the concept of "free & fair" elections mean? ***
- *electoral campaigns*

*Elections and electoral systems /Political
“marketing” /electoral campaigns...*

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Elections and electoral systems:



Electoral systems:

- **Electoral systems**
- *different countries use different types of electoral systems to select their representatives...*
 - *electoral system = the method used to determine the number of elected seats in political institutions that individuals and parties are awarded after elections*
- *we mostly focus here on elections into the legislature (parliament)...*

Electoral systems:

- **1. the plurality /majority** systems
- **the plurality** (or “first-past-the-post” or “winner-takes-all”) is a system composed of a large number of single member constituencies (electoral district); each has its own representative in parliament [used e.g. in the U.K.]
- in a **majority system**, a representative must receive over 50 % to be elected [e.g. in France]

Electoral systems:

- *the plurality /majority systems*
- are an advantage for strong parties
- 2 parties are likely to predominate parliament /government, while small parties will be underrepresented *

Electoral systems:

- **2. the proportional system**
- voters vote for a **party**, seats are allocated to candidates from that party proportional to the number of votes each party gets; usually a threshold applies (5% in KZ) *)
 - examples: party list PR system in Netherlands & of personalized PR in Switzerland

Electoral systems:

- **3. the semi-proportional system**
- **e. g. mixed-member-proportional (MPP)** = system in which voters cast two ballots, one for a local candidate running in a territorial constituency (first-past-the-post) & the other for a list of candidates proposed by a political party (proportional list system)
 - e.g. in Russia (a variant used also in Germany]

Comparative electoral systems (optional) – but remember one example for each “general type”:

Country	electoral system	general type
Albania	parallel: two-round system	semi-proportional
Austria	party list	proportional
Belgium	party list	proportional
Canada	first-past-the-post	plurality
Czech Republic	party list	proportional
France	two-round system	majority
Germany	mixed member	(semi) proportional
Italy	mixed member	proportional

Comparative electoral systems (optional):

Country	electoral system	general type
Macedonia	two-round system	majority
Netherlands	party list	proportional
Poland	party list	proportional
Russia	parallel: first-past-the-post	semi-proportional
Spain	party list	proportional
Sweden	party list	proportional
Turkey	party list	proportional
Ukraine	half plurality; half nationwide party-list PR	semi-proportional
United Kingdom	first-past-the-post	plurality
United States of America	First-past-the-post	plurality



The electoral system in Germany (optional):

Into the lower chamber, the ***Bundestag***, a half of the members are elected in single-seat constituencies according to first-past-the-post, while a further 299 members are allocated from statewide party lists conducted according to a system of proportional representation

The upper chamber, the ***Bundesrat***, represents the Länder,

Elections:







**Touch Here
To Cast
Your Ballot**

Voter turnout:

- **voter turnout =**
- a number of people as %-age of all eligible voters who take part in the elections
- in some countries higher than in others (proportional systems usually have higher v.t.)
- *compulsory /mandatory voting* exists, for instance, in Belgium, Lux., Greece (usually is not enforced, but a relatively high turnout anyway)

Elections and fraud (optional):

- In some countries, elections are often **not free & fair...**
- *What might happen:*
- interference from government
 - Campaign & registration of opposition and /or freedom of speech may be restricted by the government or president
- lack of open political debate
- an uninformed electorate
- intimidation of opposition or voters
- manipulating results (“rigged” elections = with falsified results), etc.

Elections & Political Science:

- *Summary: What we study in political science when we study elections:*
- *electoral systems (& thresholds)*
- *electoral programs and campaigns*
- *electoral results and their*
 - *a) spatial distribution;*
 - *b) patterns of their distribution by social and other factors (age, education, etc.) - see electoral maps*
- *electoral turnout*
- *fairness of elections*

Elections & Political Science (optional):

- **Elections in Kazakhstan**
- *are held on a national level to elect a President and the Parliament (the Majilis and the Senate)*
- *local elections for maslikhats (local representative bodies) are held every five years*
- *Kazakhstan is **a one party dominant state.***

The party system in KZ (optional):

- *The political-party system in KZ – summary:*
- young and undeveloped; i.e. it is developing (crystallizing?)
- weak opposition to Nur-Otan
- in 2002 Kazakhstan acquired a new Law on Political Parties
- currently, there are 2 other parties in the Majilis, apart from Nur Otan
- the weak and limited social basis for individual parties
- Kazakhstan's law on political parties prohibits parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender