

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproduction of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use", that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Citation: Dalton, Russell J. "Political Cleavages, Issues, and Electoral Change," in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, edited by Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 319-342.

© 1996 by Sage Publications, Inc.

CHAPTER

13

Political Cleavages, Issues, and Electoral Change

RUSSELL J. DALTON

Electoral politics is the essence of democratic politics. Elections crystallize the political interests in a society and provide a mechanism for the public to decide between political options. Although elections are one of the essential and relatively constant features of democracies, the most striking conclusion that emerges from current electoral research is that the underlying bases of electoral choice have changed dramatically in the past generation.

This chapter provides an overview of the broad social and political changes that have transformed democratic electorates, and with them the nature of the electoral process in advanced industrial societies. One change involves the social and political cleavages that frame party competition in these systems. Political cleavages such as class and religion historically structured the content of political and electoral discourse in Western democracies, and thereby partisan alignments and voting choices (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Lijphart 1981). Over the past generation, these traditional social cleavages have been transformed and weakened as predictors of electoral choice. We

consider how socioeconomic cleavages responded to the changing social context of advanced industrial democracies and how this has affected the nature of electoral politics. In addition, the development of new party systems in Eastern Europe poses an interesting comparison to the initial development of Western party systems. We will return to this point in the conclusion.

A second transformative force involves the changing bases of ideological conflict in many Western democracies. The publics in these societies have expanded their interests to include noneconomic, quality-of-life issues that represent a new postmaterial agenda. The growth of environmentalism, the emergence of a women's movement, and demands for increased involvement in the decisions affecting one's life have broadened the boundaries of contemporary politics (Inglehart 1977, 1990a). These new controversies have entered the political agenda and created new bases of partisan conflict. In addition, attention to these new issues has been paralleled by a general growth in issue-based voting, even for "old" issues, such as the size of the welfare state and the overall scope of government. The evolution of these new patterns of political competition is a distinguishing feature of contemporary electoral politics.

This chapter considers the implications of these changes for the nature of electoral behavior in the future. Today, a far smaller share of the electorate approaches each election with standing predispositions based on the broad social divisions that once structured electoral competition. Instead, citizens in advanced industrial democracies are using a new calculus to make their electoral decisions. We discuss the role of ideology and issue positions in this calculus and consider how the weight of different issues illustrates the changing nature of electoral competition in contemporary democracies.

The Declining Role of Social Cleavages

Modern electoral research began by observing that party competition and voting decisions were structured around the social divisions existing within a polity. In their seminal study, Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) explained how ideological and partisan divisions sprang from the social cleavages existing in a nation. Differences between competing social groups provided the potential basis for political conflict, furnishing both a possible base of voting support and a set of political interests that parties vied to represent. Given their nature, such cleavages could be expected to persist over

long periods of time. In one of the most often-cited conclusions of comparative politics, Lipset and Rokkan (1967, 50) stated "the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with but few significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s." In other words, Lipset and Rokkan claimed that Western party systems were "frozen" around the cleavages existing during their formative periods.

Social cleavages were so powerful for several reasons. At the core, social cleavages represented the deep ideological divisions that existed within Western democratic societies. The class conflict reflected different ideologies on the nature of politics and economics, and the ideal relationship between these two social systems. Economic conservatives on the right stressed individual initiative, accepted social and economic inequality, and favored a limited role for government. Socialists and social democrats on the left advocated a more egalitarian society and attributed a larger role to government in finding political solutions for the inequalities produced by the social and economic systems. Similarly, the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, or between the secular and religious, represented differences in basic value systems. For much of the past century, these social conflicts defined the primary ideological bases of politics in Western democracies and thus provided the framework for party competition.

In addition to these ideological elements, there were institutional reasons why social groups created a structure of party competition (Zuckerman 1982). Social groups enabled political parties to formalize a basis of support. Social groups could provide a political and an organizational basis for a party, furnishing members, funds, and the necessary votes at election times. Social democratic parties turned to labor for party workers and electoral support; Christian Democrats recruited their supporters at Sunday mass. For the groups themselves, close ties with a party guaranteed some representation within the legislative process and, it was hoped, the government. Moreover, this alliance pattern then provided an important reference structure in orienting citizens and political elites to the world of politics. Once this institutional framework was established, it produced a system of self-reinforcing political alliances.

Early survey research substantiated Lipset and Rokkan's claims on the importance of cleavage-based voting. Survey research found that social cleavages exerted a potent effect on voting, especially class and religious differences. Richard Rose and Derek Urwin's (1969, 1970) research on postwar party systems found striking stability in electoral results (see also Bartolini and Mair 1990).

Yet, as this theme of partisan stability became the conventional wisdom, dramatic changes began to affect these same party systems. The established parties were presented with new demands and new challenges, and the evidence of real partisan change became obvious. Within a decade, the dominant question changed from explaining the persistence of established patterns of electoral politics to explaining electoral change (Dalton et al. 1984; Crewe and Denver 1985).

The Class Cleavage

Social scientists have probably devoted more attention to the class cleavage than to any other social characteristic as a predictor of mass voting behavior. At a theoretical level, the class cleavage involves some of the most basic questions of power and politics that evolve from Marxian and capitalist views of political development. Empirically, the class cleavage represents the economic and material problems of industrial societies: providing for the economic security of all citizens and ensuring a just distribution of economic rewards. Issues such as unemployment, inflation, social services, tax policies, and government management of the economy reinforce class divisions. Consequently, Lipset (1981, 230, italics added) described the class cleavage as one of the most pervasive bases of party support:

Even though many parties renounce the principle of class conflict or loyalty, an analysis of their appeals and their support suggests that they do represent the interests of different classes. On a world scale, the *principal generalization* which can be made is that parties are primarily based on either the lower classes or the middle and upper classes.

Similarly, Arend Lijphart's (1981) overview of modern party systems identified the class cleavage as a major dimension of ideological cleavage in virtually all democracies. Early empirical studies supported these conclusions (Rose 1974a).

As strong and persistent as class voting patterns were, they were not immutable. As the empirical evidence from the first wave of comparative electoral studies was being completed, this frozen cleavage began to defrost. Figure 13.1 displays the longitudinal trend in class voting for an illustrative set of advanced industrial democracies.¹ The general trend in the figure is obvious; class differences are declining. For example, the size of the class

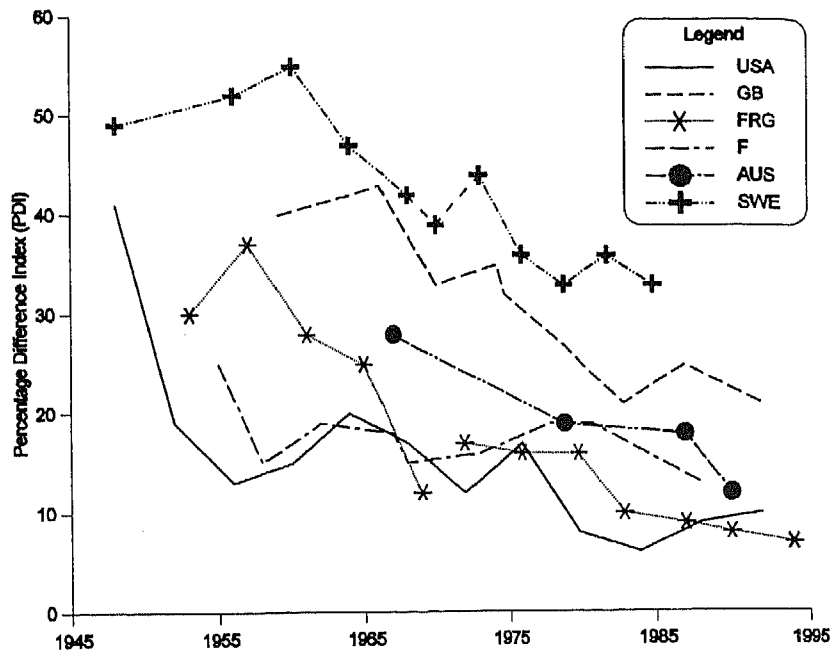


Figure 13.1. Trends in Class Voting

SOURCE: Australia (McAllister 1992, 134); Sweden (Inglehart 1990a, 260); other nations (Dalton 1996, chap. 8). Table entries are the Alford Class Voting index, that is, the percentage of the working class preferring a leftist party minus the percentage of the middle class voting for the left. American data are based on congressional elections, except for 1948, which is presidential vote.

voting index in Sweden, Britain, and Australia has decreased by almost half across post-World War II elections, and in Germany by more than two-thirds. Class voting patterns follow a less regular decline in American congressional elections; the erosion of class voting is more pronounced in presidential elections (Abramson et al. 1994, chap. 5; Stanley and Niemi 1995b).

Evidence from many other nations points to the same downward trajectory for the class cleavage. A decline in class voting is evident for Japan (Watanuki 1991), Scandinavia (Borre 1984), and a host of other nations (Inglehart 1990a; Lane and Errson 1991). Paul Nieuwbeerta (1995) recently completed a detailed study of class voting in 20 advanced industrial democracies. He finds a general erosion in class voting differences for these polities.

This evidence of a decline of the class cleavage has generated a series of new research controversies in the literature. Some scholars argue that the nature of class alignments in advanced industrial societies is changing and that in its new forms the effect of social class is as pervasive as in the past. John Goldthorpe (1980), for example, proposed a new categorization of social class, incorporating notions of job autonomy and authority relationships into traditional class criteria such as income level and manual labor. Some scholars have created an expanded list of class categories to incorporate new social contexts, such as the middle-class *salariat* or affluent blue-collar worker (Robertson 1984; Heath, Jowell, and Curtice 1985, 1991; Pappi 1990). Other researchers have explored criteria other than employment as potential bases of socioeconomic cleavage, such as an education cleavage separating the information rich from the information poor, or conflicts between the public and private sectors (Dunleavy and Husbands 1985). Some of the most innovative recent research tries to define social position by lifestyle characteristics, distinguishing between industrial employees and Yuppies, for example (Gluchowski 1987; Hammond 1986; Delli Carpini and Sigelman 1986).

The reconceptualization of social class implies that social cues now function in more complex and differentiated ways than in the past. Yet the empirical reality remains: Even these complex class frameworks have only a modest value in explaining how citizens vote. Richard Rose and Ian McAllister (1986, 50-1) compared several of these alternative models to British voting behavior in the 1983 election and find that each explained only a very modest share of the vote. The comparative analyses of Mark Franklin and his colleagues (1992) also document a general erosion in the influence of social status measures on party choice.

The diminished electoral role of class position is reaffirmed by the data in Table 13.1, which document the current extent of class polarization in 18 advanced industrial democracies, using an expanded measure of social class.² The strongest correlations are for Scandinavian party systems (Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden), and the weakest correlations are for the United States, Canada, and Japan.³ As Figure 13.1 suggests, these same national rankings may have applied a generation ago—but in all these nations class voting has weakened over time. Present levels of class voting in Sweden, for instance, are a shadow of prior class polarization. In cross-national terms, the overall effect of social class is now quite modest (average Cramér's $V = .15$). Class-based voting, as conceived of from Marx to Lipset and Rokkan, currently has limited influence in structuring voting choices.

TABLE 13.1 Cross-National Levels of Cleavage Voting, 1990-1991

<i>Country</i>	<i>Social Class</i>	<i>Religious Denomination</i>	<i>Church Attendance</i>	<i>Rural/Urban</i>	<i>Region</i>
Austria	.20	.15	.26	.16	.17
Belgium	.16	.18	.30	.25	.33
Britain	.18	.11	.12	.12	.21
Canada	.10	.14	.12	.09	.18
Denmark	.21	.13	.29	.15	—
Finland	.16	.23	.27	—	—
France	.15	.14	.22	.13	.12
Germany (West)	.13	.14	.22	.08	.09
Iceland	.19	.11	.17	—	—
Ireland	.14	.14	.16	.14	—
Italy	.15	.21	.27	.12	.16
Japan	.11	.14	.15	.07	.10
Netherlands	.18	.29	.37	.16	.14
Norway	.22	.14	.27	.15	—
Portugal	.11	.22	.22	.10	.17
Spain	.15	.14	.25	.13	—
Sweden	.16	.15	.20	.12	—
United States	.10	.09	.08	.10	.10
Average	.15	.15	.22	.13	.16

SOURCE: 1990-1991 World Values Survey. Entries are Cramér's *V* correlating social characteristics with the party preference of the respondent. Respondents without a party preference are not included in the analyses.

The Religious Cleavage

The other major basis for social division in Western party systems has been the religious cleavage in its various forms. As was true with the class cleavage, conflicts over religion defined the structure of elite conflict and the political alliances that existed in the late 19th century. The political parties formed with the extension of mass suffrage often allied themselves with specific religious interests—Catholic or Protestant, religious or secular (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Indeed, parties often proclaimed their religious identity by calling themselves Christian or Christian Democratic parties.

Early empirical research on mass voting behavior underscored the continuing importance of the religious cleavage. Richard Rose and Derek Urwin

(1969, 12) examined the social bases of party support in 16 Western democracies. Their often-cited conclusion maintains "religious divisions, not class, are the main social bases of parties in the Western world today." Additional evidence comes from Arend Lijphart's (1979) comparison of the religious, class, and linguistic cleavages in four democracies where all three cleavages existed. He found that religion was the strongest influence on voting choice. Numerous other cross-national and longitudinal studies have documented the persisting importance of the religious cleavage.

① Despite this evidence of a strong relationship between religious values and partisan preferences, the religious cleavage has followed the same pattern of decline as for the class cleavage. Social modernization disrupted religious alignments in the same way that social-class lines have blurred. Changing lifestyles and religious beliefs decreased involvement in church activities and diminished the church as a focus of social activities. Most Western democracies have experienced a steady decline in religious involvement over the past 50 years (Ashford and Timms 1992; Franklin et al. 1992, chap. 1). In the Catholic nations of Europe, for instance, frequent church attendance has decreased by nearly half since the 1950s. Predominantly Protestant countries, such as the United States and the nations of northern Europe, began with lower levels of church involvement, but have followed the same downward trend. By definition, this secularization trend means that fewer voters are integrated into religious networks and exposed to the religious cues that can guide the vote.

Also paralleling the class cleavage, conflict between secular and religious forces apparently has moderated since World War II. Socialists in many European nations reached a rapprochement with religious groups, especially with the Catholic church in countries with a large Catholic population. The churches also sought to normalize political relations if church interests could be guaranteed as part of the process.

Measuring the present effect of religious cues on voting behavior is more complicated than the analyses of the class cleavage. The class composition of most advanced industrial democracies is similar, but their religious composition is quite varied. Some nations, like Britain or the Scandinavian nations, are predominantly Protestant; the nations of Mediterranean Europe are predominantly Catholic; other nations, such as Germany, Holland, and the United States, are characterized by religiously divided publics; and the Japanese case is the most distinct because of its non-Western religious traditions. In addition to the diverse religious composition of these nations, the partisan tendencies

of religious denominations also vary cross-nationally (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In some nations, Catholics have allied with conservative parties; in other nations they are part of a left alliance. This means that the voting cues provided by religious affiliation may differ across national boundaries, in contrast to the consistent working-class/middle-class pattern of the class cleavage.

The special nature of religious cleavages means that it is more difficult to document the cross-temporal and cross-national trends in ways that are comparable to class voting statistics. Table 13.1 describes the current effect of religious denomination and church attendance on partisan preferences.⁴ Where religious voting patterns are uniformly weak, as in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Britain, this reflects an ongoing characteristic of the party system rather than the recent erosion in religious voting (Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin et al. 1992). Significant voting differences between religious denominations have persisted in the Netherlands even as this society has secularized. However, the overall cross-national level of denominational-based voting is fairly modest (average Cramér's $V = .155$).

Table 13.1 shows that the secular/religious divide (average Cramér's $V = .22$) has a greater influence on party preferences than does religious denomination. In Catholic and Protestant nations, this taps the degree of involvement in a religious network and adherence to religious values. The available longitudinal data suggest that secular and religious differences in voting preferences have not followed the same dramatic downward trend as the class cleavage. Despite the paucity of explicitly religious issues and the lack of religious themes in most campaigns, religious attachments often are a strong predictor of party choice.

Christian fundamentalism appears to be a growing cleavage in elections in the United States. Employing television and other means of mass communication, evangelical leaders have mobilized people on the basis of policy issues dealing with matters of morality and traditional family values (e.g., abortion, school prayer, and pornography). Miller and Wattenberg (1984) isolate a fundamentalist subset of the electorate who form a group of such size and voting cohesion that they constitute a significant part of the Republican coalition, as witnessed by their prominence during the 1992 Republican national convention. Still, longitudinal electoral studies fail to find a significant growth in the relationship between religion and vote choice; the effect of the fundamentalist revival is dwarfed by the ebb and flow of other electoral forces (Wald 1987; Abramson et al. 1994, chap. 5).

Although the partisan division between religiously-defined voter groups has persisted, the actual importance of religion as a basis of voting behavior has declined in another sense. Comparisons of voting patterns between religious denominations ignore the compositional change in contemporary electorates because of secularization trends. Voting differences between religious and secular voters have remained fairly constant for the past generation, but secularization is steadily increasing the absolute number of nonreligious citizens. Individuals who attend church regularly (like individuals who are embedded in traditional social class networks) are still well integrated into a religious network and maintain distinct voting patterns, but there are fewer of these individuals today. By definition, the growing number of secular voters are not basing their party preferences on religious cues. Thus, the changing composition of the electorate is lessening the partisan significance of religious cues by decreasing the number of individuals for whom these cues are relevant.

Other Social Divisions

The decline of social-based voting is most apparent for the class and religious cleavages, but a similar erosion of influence has occurred for most other sociological characteristics. In most advanced industrial democracies, urban/rural residence displays only modest differences in voting patterns. The average correlation between the size of place and partisan preference is only .13 (Table 13.1). Furthermore, other studies show that these differences have narrowed as the forces of modernization decreased the gap between urban and rural lifestyles.

Regional differences have occasionally flared up as a basis of political division. Britain, Belgium, Canada, and now the unified Germany have seen regional interests polarize over the past generation. In other societies, such as Spain and Italy, sharp regional differences from the past have persisted to the present. In most nations, however, region exerts only a minor influence on voting preferences (Rose 1982; Clarke et al. 1979). Table 13.1 reaffirms this point; the average correlation between region and party preferences is .16.

One possible exception to the rule of declining social cleavages involves race and ethnicity, such as the link between blacks and the Democratic party in the United States (Tate 1993; Carmines and Stimson 1989) or the voting

patterns of minority immigrant populations in Europe. Ethnicity has the potential to be a highly polarized cleavage, because it may involve sharp social differences and strong feelings of in-group identity. Yet, to the extent that most societies remain ethnically homogeneous or nearly so, the effect of ethnicity as an overall predictor of vote choice is limited.⁵

When all the evidence is assembled, one of the most widely repeated findings of modern electoral research is the declining value of the sociological model of voting behavior. Mark Franklin and his colleagues (1992) have compiled the most comprehensive evidence supporting this conclusion. They tracked the ability of a set of social characteristics (including social class, education, income, religiosity, region, and gender) to explain partisan preferences. Across 14 Western democracies, they find a marked and fairly consistent erosion in the voting effect of social structure. The rate and timing of this decline varies across nations, but the end-product is the same. In party systems like the United States and Canada, where social-group-based voting was initially weak, the decline has occurred slowly. In other electoral systems, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and several Scandinavian nations, where sharp social divisions once structured the vote, the decline has been steady and dramatic. They conclude with the new "conventional wisdom" of comparative electoral research: "One thing that has by now become quite apparent is that almost all of the countries we have studied show a decline . . . in the ability of social cleavages to structure individual voting choice" (Franklin et al. 1992, 385).

Explaining the Decline in Cleavage-Based Voting

Although the evidence of the decline in cleavage-based voting is generally accepted, scholars disagree on how to interpret this finding. Perhaps the most far-reaching explanation has been offered by Mark Franklin and his colleagues (1992, chap. 15). They argue that the goal of democratic politics is to resolve political divisions that exist within societies. To the extent that social cleavages reflect broad-based and long-standing social and economic divisions within advanced industrial democracies, then the declining electoral relevance of these cleavages signals success in resolving these political divisions. A consensus on the welfare state, for instance, presumably

resolved old political conflicts between socioeconomic groups, as an equalization of living conditions may have eroded urban/rural differences, and so forth.⁶

This interpretation is linked to the "end of ideology" literature, which argued that advanced industrial democracies have moved away from ideological politics in the post-World War II era (Kirchheimer 1966; Beer 1978). Analysts argued that parties wanted to broaden their electoral appeals, which led the parties to adopt moderate programs that would attract centrist voters. Socialist parties shed their Marxist programs and adopted more moderate domestic and foreign policy goals. Conservative parties tempered their views and accepted the basic social programs proposed by the left. Socialist parties vied for the votes of the new middle class, and conservative parties sought votes from the working class. Historical analyses of party programs show a general convergence of party positions on socioeconomic issues during the past half century (Thomas 1980; Robertson 1976; Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987). With smaller class-related differences in the parties platforms, it seemed only natural that class and religious cues would become less important in guiding voting behavior.

Although this is an appealing explanation, especially as Western democracies bask in their new-found self-esteem with the collapse of the Soviet empire, it suffers from the same problem as the earlier end-of-ideology thesis. Although Western democracies have made real progress in meeting their long-term social goals, social and political divisions have *not* ended. Recurring global recessions periodically renewed the focus on economic problems in most Western industrial countries, and problems of persisting poverty, the homeless, and mounting crime rates are still with us. Similarly, current political debates over abortion, homosexual rights, and other moral issues reflect the value differences underlying the religious cleavage.

Furthermore, partisan contrasts on these political controversies have not necessarily ended. A recent survey of political experts documents a clear awareness of the continuing party differences on the socioeconomic issues that underlie the class and religious cleavages (Laver and Hunt 1992). Evidence from Germany indicates that the partisan clarity of class cues actually has increased over the same period that class voting has diminished (Dalton 1992). Recent surveys of the German and American publics show that the public still clearly perceives the partisan leanings of unions, business associations, and religious groups (Dalton 1996, chap. 7). In short, it does not appear

that citizens are unclear about the class positions of the parties—rather, these cues are less relevant to today's voters.

I favor an explanation that links the decline in the sociological model to the declining relevance of institutional structures and fixed social characteristics for contemporary electoral politics. Social cues may still be a potent influence on voting behavior for people who are integrated into traditional class or religious networks and who share the values of these milieu, but today there are far fewer people who fit within such clearly defined social categories. This partially reflects a fragmentation of life spaces. Fewer people are integrated into stable and bounded social structures, such as the working-class milieu and religious networks that originally furnished the basis of the class and religious cleavages (also see Putnam 1995). Lifestyles have become more individualized and diverse.

This change in lifestyles has also led to greater diversity within the established political parties. For instance, Robert Huckfeldt and Carole Kohfeld (1989) described how the constituency of the U.S. Democratic party is now split along class, racial, and value lines. It is a monumental task to unite such diverse constituencies at election time, and even more difficult to sustain agreement during the governing process. A similar fragmentation of constituencies has affected both social democratic and conservative parties in Europe (Kitschelt 1993a).

Once these processes of social change began to blur the lines of political cleavage, on which many of the established parties were based, the parties were forced to respond to these developments. Adam Przeworski and John Sprague (1985) showed that the numerical demise of the working class forced social democratic parties to soften their class image and look to new sources of support in the middle class. Similarly, attempts to broaden the sources of political support are occurring among conservative parties as they observe their past social bases of support eroding. In other words, the parties are contributing to the demise of cleavage voting by their need to compensate for the changing social bases of advanced industrial societies.

In summary, it is not that cleavages have become entirely irrelevant. They still shape the partisan loyalties of many voters. Yet many other voters now find themselves without a clear location in the class, religious, or other social groupings. The fragmentation of party images further erodes the value of social cues in guiding behavior. Thus, social change is weakening the structure of political cleavages that once framed party competition and provided voters with a simple framework for making their electoral decisions.

Emergence of New Bases of Political Cleavage

The weakening of party bonds based on traditional cleavages such as class and religion creates the potential for new political cleavages to develop. Indeed, as the old cleavages began to weaken, a new set of postmaterial controversies emerged onto the agenda of advanced industrial societies (Inglehart 1977, 1990a). Environmental protection, women's rights, and quality-of-life issues now attract the attention of a significant number of contemporary voters. These issues expanded the boundary of politics to include areas that were once the prerogative of markets or individual choice.

On the one hand, these new issues benefited from the weakening of traditional party bonds. With fewer citizens bound to the parties by social bonds or party attachments, voters could potentially be mobilized by new issues and innovative programs. A more fluid electorate created the potential for new issues of all forms to influence voting choice. On the other hand, postmaterial issues had characteristics that contributed to the decline of social-cleavage-based alignments (Knutsen 1987). The new issues tended to cut across established cleavage lines, thereby weakening traditional social bonds. For instance, some members of the middle class were drawn to the political program of environmentalists. In addition, the public demanded more opportunities to participate in the decisions affecting their lives and pressed for a further democratization of society and politics. These participatory trends worked to erode the parties' oligarchic control of political representation. Furthermore, New Politics issues attract the attention of the same social groups that are weakly integrated into traditional social cleavages: the young, the new middle class, the better educated, and the nonreligious.

At first, these new issues were simply added to the political agenda of advanced industrial societies, representing a set of discrete concerns. Gradually, however, the advocates of these issues began to articulate a more encompassing view of politics. Environmental issues were framed in terms of a conceptualization of a sustainable society; gender issues and minority programs were part of a larger image of human rights; empowerment became a symbol for expanding participation opportunities. Political alliances also developed between the social groups and citizen interest lobbies that developed to represent these issues.

As these issues have become interlinked, they have formed a new dimension of political cleavage that runs orthogonal to the traditional left/right

framework underlying the class and religious cleavages (Inglehart 1984, 1990a; Weisberg and Rusk 1970).⁷ The old left pitted support for social programs, working-class interests, and the influence of labor unions against an old right that was identified with limited governmental support for middle-class interests and the influence of the business sector. Now there was also a new left that supported a sustainable society and libertarian values, and a new right representing conservative social values and advocacy of more structured life choices (Betz 1994). These political orientations also have their partisan representatives. The new left is represented by Green and left-Libertarian parties, such as the German and French Greens, the Dutch PSP (part of the current Green alliance in Dutch politics), or the Danish SF. The representatives of the new right include the French National Front, the German Republikaner, and the Austrian Freedom party.

Survey research indicates that this new left/new right framework is reshaping the left/right identities of at least some voters. People can use left/right as a reference structure to evaluate political stimuli and guide their political behavior, even if they do not possess a sophisticated abstract framework or theoretical dogma. Furthermore, left/right orientations tap public perceptions of the major lines of political conflict in a society (Inglehart 1979; Fuchs and Klingemann 1989). When citizens reorient their left/right framework to reflect their new values and issue interests, a potential new base of political cleavage is established. A change in the content of left/right orientations therefore involves a more fundamental transformation of mass politics than a simple change in issue interests, because it affects how citizens evaluate politics and orient themselves to the political process.

To illustrate the changing political orientations of contemporary publics, Table 13.2 displays the correlations between left/right attitudes and three broad issue areas: the government's role in the economy (class issues), attitudes toward abortion (religious issues), and postmaterial values.⁸ Despite some claims of the end of economic conflict, we find evidence that the traditional economic issues of the welfare state are still alive and present among Western publics. The average relationship between economic attitudes and left/right orientations is fairly strong (Pearson's r is .32, and in several Scandinavian nations the relationship exceeds .50). The development of advanced industrial societies has not, as of yet, brought an end to the issues formed in the industrial era. When political parties and social groups reinforce these divisions, they can still strongly structure the public's political orientations.

TABLE 13.2 Issue Correlates of Left/Right Attitudes, 1990-1991

Country	Economic Issues	Abortion Attitudes	Postmaterial Values
Austria	.06	.03	.03
Belgium	.23	.11	.18
Britain	.36	.02	.30
Canada	.19	.12	.21
Denmark	.50	.09	.39
Finland	.54	.05	.16
France	.41	.11	.27
Germany (West)	.35	.20	.38
Iceland	.52	.03	.19
Ireland	.15	.15	.16
Italy	.28	.17	.24
Japan	.19	.06	.23
Netherlands	.43	.22	.39
Norway	.44	.05	.25
Portugal	.13	.02	.18
Spain	.36	.37	.25
Sweden	.52	.04	.24
United States	.15	.18	.22
Average	.32	.11	.24

SOURCE: 1990-1991 World Values Survey. Entries are Pearson's r correlating issues with the party preference of the respondent. Respondents without a party preference are not included in the analyses.

We chose abortion as an example of a religious issue, and Table 13.2 indicates that this issue has relevance only in a subset of nations. In religiously divided nations (Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States) and in predominantly Catholic nations (Ireland, Italy, and Spain), this issue is still part of voters' core political identity. In most Protestant nations, however, abortion has been removed from the political agenda or no longer captures public interest. The average correlation with left/right attitudes is quite weak (.11).

The final column of Table 13.3 indicates that the postmaterial agenda has substantial importance in shaping political identities. Inglehart's postmaterial value measure is strongly related to left/right attitudes in most nations, and in at least five nations it exceeds the effect of economic issues. To the extent that environmental attitudes, the women's movement, and other postmaterial

issues represent a new political agenda, this signifies a major change in the content of electoral politics compared to earlier periods.

In summary, the issues of political controversy are not fading away in advanced industrial democracies. We are not reaching an end of ideology. Instead, empirical research suggests just the opposite. Concerns with non-economic and quality-of-life issues have not replaced traditional economic issues, but rather have been added to the political framework of contemporary democracies.

A New Electoral Behavior

It is at this point in the research process that scholars often call on Gramsci's ghost: The old order is passing, but the form of the new order is not yet apparent. We should be able to say more. Our knowledge about the mechanisms of electoral choice and the dynamics of public opinion should provide a basis for describing the new electoral order.

One immediate implication is that the decline of long-term partisan predispositions based on social position should shift the basis of electoral behavior to short-term factors, such as candidate image and issue opinions. Another possibility is that performance-based voting increases, such as judging the government by the performance of the economy (see Norpoth, chap. 12 in this volume). There is evidence that the new electoral order includes a shift toward candidate-centered politics. Martin Wattenberg (1991) has documented the growing importance of candidate image in Americans' electoral choices, and comparable data are available for other Western democracies (Bean and Mughan 1989; Kaase 1994). This is an important development that has potentially far-reaching implications for the nature of contemporary electoral politics, but it lies outside of this chapter's coverage (see chap. 11 in this volume).

The decline in long-term forces shaping the vote also has increased the potential for issue voting. In fact, Franklin (1985) showed that the decreasing influence of long-term forces on British voting decisions was counterbalanced by an increased effect of issues on the vote (see also Baker et al. 1981, chap. 10; van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983). In reviewing the evidence from their comparative study of voting behavior, Mark Franklin (1992, 400) supports this point, concluding: "If all the issues of importance to voters had been

measured and given their due weight, then the rise of issue voting would have compensated more or less precisely for the decline in cleavage politics.”

There is, of course, a long and very distinguished literature that discusses the capability of modern electorates to fulfill the requirements of rational issue voting. We will not engage in this discussion because it is a point that has been addressed elsewhere (Dalton and Wattenberg 1993). Even if we place the question of the rationality of issue voting aside, it seems that issue voting *per se* should increase to fill in some of the decline in the ability of stable social characteristics to guide electoral choice.

However, one problem hampering the comparative study of issue voting, either across time or across nations, is the variability of issues across elections and across voters. One campaign might emphasize economic conflicts, and the next might stress questions of candidate competence. Furthermore, elections are seldom dominated by a single issue. Thus, the effect of any one issue often appears modest because not all the informed voters will be interested in all issues. Instead, the contemporary electorates are comprised of partially overlapping issue publics.

Although the issues of each specific election campaign are different, we use two methods to assess the general effect of policy preferences on voting behavior (Table 13.3). The first method examines the overall relationship between left/right attitudes and the vote. As we have just argued, such ideological positions summarize the voters’ preferences on the various issues that concern them. In addition, we correlated each of the issue items from Table 13.2 with party preferences to assess the weight of each at one specific time point. Obviously, this is only a single snapshot of the ebb and flow of issues across specific elections. But snapshots can still illuminate the general cross-national pattern that might transcend specific elections.

The correlation between left/right attitudes and party preferences is much higher than for social characteristics (average Cramér’s *V* is .27). The strength of these correlations is partially because left/right attitudes are more psychologically proximate to the voting choice (and thus is an intervening variable) and partially because the effect of social cleavages has weakened, which allows for attitudinal factors to increase in importance. Only in a few nations—notably in two cases where social cleavages are also weak (the United States and Canada)—does the correlation fall below .20.

There are two possible explanations of how issues have maintained (or even increased) their effect on vote choice in contemporary democracies. To an extent, we think both explanations are partially correct. First, even though

TABLE 13.3 Correlation Between Attitudes and Party Preference, 1990-1991

<i>Country</i>	<i>Left/Right</i>	<i>Economic Issues</i>	<i>Abortion Attitudes</i>	<i>Postmaterial Values</i>
Austria	.23	.10	.14	.21
Belgium	.21	.17	.17	.13
Britain	.24	.21	.07	.16
Canada	.15	.13	.09	.14
Denmark	.29	.29	.18	.21
Finland	.33	.25	.19	.25
France	.36	.24	.13	.16
Germany (West)	.24	.16	.12	.18
Iceland	.34	.24	.12	.20
Ireland	.24	.15	.14	.12
Italy	.30	.15	.20	.15
Japan	.24	.15	.10	.21
Netherlands	.31	.24	.20	.22
Norway	.26	.22	.19	.16
Portugal	.30	.15	.14	.13
Spain	.31	.19	.22	.18
Sweden	.29	.19	.22	.14
United States	.13	.15	.06	.11
Average	.27	.19	.14	.17

SOURCE: 1990-1991 World Values Survey. Entries are Cramér's V correlating left/right attitudes and the issues from Table 13.2 with the party preference of the respondent. Respondents without a party preference are not included in the analyses.

the social bases of political cleavage have diminished in importance, the issues derived from these cleavages are still influencing voting choices. For instance, economic issues are strongly related to party preferences in many nations. Often, the effect of economic issues is strongest when social groups and the parties remain oriented toward this dimension, such as in Scandinavia, Britain, and Australia. But even in nations where class divisions are weak, such as the United States, Canada, and Japan, economic issues have a significant effect on party preferences. Similarly, the abortion issue is significantly related to partisanship in Mediterranean Europe and in several nations with a religiously divided electorate (such as Belgium). Despite the long-term erosion of the group bases of both issue conflicts, these long-standing political controversies

remain a significant influence on the vote in many advanced industrial democracies.

Second, postmaterial issues have been added to the electoral equation. Table 13.3 indicates that postmaterialism is related to partisanship (average correlation is .17) at almost the same level as economic issues (average .19). In several nations—Germany, Austria, and Japan—postmaterial values is the strongest single correlate of partisanship. Research has noted that the development of a new basis of partisan cleavage is a long and difficult process (Dalton et al. 1984, chap. 15). Groups must organize to represent New Politics voters and mobilize their support. The parties also must develop clear policy images on these issues. Initially, many established parties were hesitant to identify themselves with these issues because the stakes are still unclear and many parties are internally divided on the issues (Rohrschneider 1993; Dalton 1994, chap. 9). Yet the data presented in Table 13.3, and the longitudinal trends that are available, suggest that the postmaterial issues *are* being integrated in the calculus of issue voting. Indeed, the additional influence of these new issue interests may explain the general increase in issue voting over time.

Conclusion

If party systems were ever frozen (Bartolini and Mair 1990), it is clear that they are no longer so. Contemporary electoral politics is now characterized by a greater fluidity in the vote, greater volatility in electoral outcomes, and even a growing turnover in the number and types of parties being represented. The gathering winds of electoral change that first appeared in the early 1980s have now grown in force.

We have traced these changes to two broad trends in the electoral politics of advanced industrial societies. First, there has been an erosion in the ability of social cleavages (and the social characteristics derived from these cleavage) to explain electoral choice. The weakening of class and religious alignments has been accompanied by an apparent erosion in long-term partisan commitments and enduring feelings of party identification (Dalton 1996, chap. 9; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995; Holmberg 1994; cf. van Deth and Janssen 1994 for an opposing view). Second, concomitant with this trend has been the growth of short-term factors, such as issues and candidate images, as a basis of electoral choice. Indeed, we should consider these as complementary trends and not just coincidental; the erosion of social cleavages created more "free-

really?

floating" voters who might be mobilized on the basis of candidate images or issue appeals, and the changing nature of citizen issue interests spurred the erosion of fixed social cleavages.

For the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and Asia, there is an apparent similarity to the portrait of voting choice we have just described. Emerging party systems are unlikely to be based on stable group-based cleavages, especially when the democratic transition has occurred quite rapidly.⁹ Similarly, new electorates are also unlikely to hold long-term party attachments that might guide their behavior. Thus, the patterns of electoral choice in many new democracies may be based on the same short-term factors—candidate images and issue positions—that have recently gained prominence in the electoral politics of advanced industrial democracies.

These similarities are only superficial, however. They do not reach below the surface of the electoral process. Advanced industrial democracies are experiencing an evolution in the patterns of electoral choice that flow from the breakdown of long-standing alignments and party attachments, the development of a more sophisticated electorate, and efforts to move beyond the restrictions of representative democracy. The new electoral forces in Western democracies also are developing within an electoral setting in which traditional group-based and partisan cues still exert a significant, albeit diminishing, influence.

Newly democratic party systems face the task of developing the basic structure of electoral choice—the political frameworks that Lipset and Rokkan examined historically for the West. This presents the unique opportunity to study this process scientifically: to examine how new party attachments take root, the relationships between social groups and parties are formed, party images are created, these images are transmitted to new voters, and citizens learn the process of electoral choice and representative democracy. The venerable Lipset and Rokkan framework may provide a valuable starting point for this research, and the Michigan model of party identification may provide a framework for studying how new political identities may form. However, now we can study these processes with the scientific tools of empirical research. In addition, the creation of party systems in the world of global television, greater knowledge about electoral politics (from the elite and public levels), and fundamentally different electorates is unlikely to follow the pattern of Western Europe in the 1920s.

If we return to the case of advanced industrial democracies, our findings lead to several predictions about the changing nature of electoral behavior in

these democracies. An increased weight of short-term factors as predictors of voting choice means that electoral volatility is likely to be a continuing characteristic of contemporary electoral systems. For a time, issues and candidate images may create an equilibrium that endures across a set of elections. By their very nature, these factors are more labile and susceptible to exogenous forces. Thus, some U.S. commentators foresaw a new democratic era following Clinton's victory in 1992, and then a new era of Republican ascendancy in 1994. John Major and Helmut Kohl appeared to face certain defeat in 1992 and 1994, respectively, only to emerge from these elections with their majorities intact. Rather than the failures of survey research, one might cite these cases as illustrations of the inherent volatility of contemporary electoral politics. As electoral research has developed in its scientific skill, the phenomenon we are trying to predict has become less predictable. Elsewhere I have argued that the issue-based cleavages we are describing are intrinsically less stable than the group-based cleavages of the past (Dalton et al. 1984, chap. 14; Dalton 1991).

The shift to issue and candidate voting is likely to increase the evaluative content of elections. Parties will be judged by their leadership and the policies they advocate. On the one hand, this might be a welcomed trend because it suggests an increase in democratic responsiveness, or implies that electorates are developing some of the characteristics identified with theories of rational democratic choice. Issues and candidates, not party identifications and life-long social traits, are becoming more important as predictors of voting. On the other hand, we cannot be certain that the content of these evaluations will necessarily be more rational. Some voters will be drawn to candidates or issue positions for well-reasoned principles; others might be drawn by superficial media campaigns and oversimplified electioneering. Indeed, the political framework of the group-based party systems provided a method for ensuring electoral responsiveness and accountability that is lacking in an electorate with only short-term considerations (Kirchheimer 1966).

The proliferation of issue interests also raises questions about how to develop coherent government programs in a fragmented political context. At one level, this involves the potential tension between the economic issues of the traditional left/right cleavage and the new political themes of postmaterialism. The tensions between old left and new left have created considerable instability in many Western party systems over the past two decades; now this is being amplified by heightened tensions between old right/new right con-

stituencies. The ultimate resolution of these ideological divisions remains one of the major research questions facing political scientists.

More generally, governments that function in a multidimensional political space with shifting emphases on each dimension face major difficulties in finding any political equilibrium. The fixed system of cleavage structures and party alignments solved this paradox by constraining electoral choice. Modern governments thus should face increasing difficulty in generating a political consensus in favor of any policy in this new context of electoral politics. For instance, even if Americans agree to make the federal budget deficit a priority, they cannot agree how to resolve this problem.

In the end, the degree of change in electoral politics will be dependent on the choices that parties and candidates make in responding to these new electoral forces. How democracies choose will determine whether these new forces of electoral change ultimately enrich or weaken the democratic process.

Notes

1. The figure presents the Alford index of class voting. To maximize the comparability of these analyses, we focus on the left/right voting patterns of the working class versus the combined middle class (old and new). The Alford index measures class voting as the simple difference between the percentage of the working class voting for the left and the percentage of the middle class voting left. The partisan measure is based on a question about voting choice: "If there were a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?"

2. The source of these data are the 1990-1991 World Values Survey. The World Values Survey was conducted in more than 40 nations under the direction of the European Values Group. These data are available from the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan. We based the class measure on the occupation of the head of the household coded into five categories: old middle class, new middle class, working class, agriculture, and other occupation.

3. One important anomaly to note involves class voting in eastern Germany. The Alford index for the 1990 and 1994 federal elections shows a *reversal* of the normal class alignment. That is, the eastern middle class supports parties of the left, and the eastern working class supports the conservative CDU (Dalton and Bürklin 1996). This may be a general legacy of post-Communist party systems in Eastern Europe.

4. Religious denomination used the codes as provided in the World Values Survey; church attendance was collapsed to (1) weekly or more often, (2) monthly or several times a year, (3) less often, and (4) never or no religion.

5. The Cramér's V correlations for ethnicity were United States = .14, Canada = .12.

6. Supporting this position, Nieuwebeerta (1995) finds that the strength of class polarization in voting is inversely related to the extent of the welfare state in a nation.

7. We should note that compared to the structured ideologies that underlie the class cleavage or religious values, the postmaterial framework is still diffuse and imprecise. One can speak of an

ecologist ideology, but the literature and the movement disagree on the exact principles and goals of the environmental movement. Thus, it is probably inaccurate to speak of a postmaterial ideology. This said, the individual issues advocated by postmaterial groups are being interconnected by social movements and their partisan supporters.

8. The economic measure is a simple additive combination of positions on four issue dimensions: income inequality, government ownership of economic enterprises, state responsibility for individual well-being, and government responsibility for providing jobs. The abortion issue measures support for abortion under four different conditions. The postmaterial values index is based on Inglehart's 12-item battery.

9. The exception may be the party systems of Latin America and East Asia (Taiwan and South Korea), which might be able to integrate existing social cleavages because of the different nature of these democratic transitions (e.g., Remmer 1991; Chu 1992).