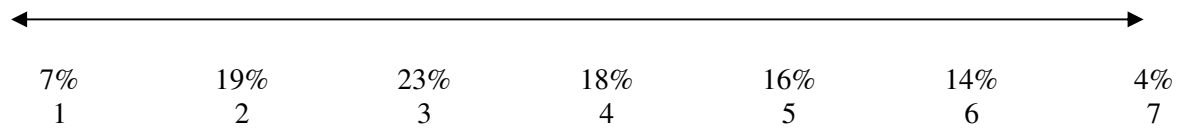


PS 140 Intro to Comparative Politics
Party Systems, Electoral Systems, and the Median Voter Theorem

As anyone who lived through the 2000 American Presidential election knows, electoral institutions and party systems strongly influence how citizen preferences in the form of votes are translated into legislative seats and executive power. This exercise explores the influence of electoral institutions on both voter and party behavior and on electoral outcomes in the mythical country of Slobovia.

1. Let's assume for now that Slobovia is a populous democratic state whose leader (or leader's party, it makes no difference) is directly elected by the citizens without any intervening mechanisms like the Electoral College. Assume too that all eligible Slobovians vote. A random poll of the Slobovian electorate, asking them to place themselves on a left-right scale, recently produced the distribution below. (1 = far left, 7 = far right; use this distribution, and the full voting assumption for all parts unless directed otherwise.)



Does the Slobovian electorate display the same preference distribution as 'normal' developed democracies? What's that 'normal' distribution called?

If you were running for President in Slobovia, and you cared about winning more than upholding any personal policy preferences of your own, where would you locate your platform to have the best chance of winning? Indicate it on the line above the preference chart, then briefly explain your logic below.

If Slobovia has two major political groupings, both of which are rather amorphous and personal (office-seeking) rather than programmatic, where will your opponent's platform be? Why?

2. Time to tinker a bit. Imagine that there are two programmatic parties, located at points 2 and 5, whose heads contest the election. Who wins? Why?

If the voter preference distribution remains the same, will both parties retain their same ideological positions in the next election? Who, of anyone, would shift, and why?

3. Slobovia adopted a French-style SMR system for its presidential elections, and the first round was contested by parties located at the ideological points labeled 1 (the Left Party, LP), 3 (Centrists for Slobovia, CS), and 6 (Rightward National Party, RNP). What are the results of the first round? Give the percent of the vote won by each party contesting the first-round elections. Circle the parties contesting the second round.

Assuming full voting again and that candidates can't shift their positions between elections, what are the results of the second round of voting? Which party's candidate wins?

What happens to the winning candidate's vote totals between the first and second rounds? Why? What effect does the third party have on its (ideologically) nearest competitor's vote share? Which ideological group's (or groups') vote shifts between the rounds?

Compare the results under this electoral system to the results from part 1. What happens under the new electoral system? Why? Relate this to the distribution of popular preferences.

What if seven parties, one at each ideological point, contested the first round? How does that change the results at each stage (if at all)?

4. Well, the Slobovians changed the electoral system again. They've decided to elect their legislature via PR, using a single nationwide district. All 7 parties contest the elections. What party is most likely to be asked to form the Government? Who are the most likely coalition partners? Why?

Assume the country is divided into 5 districts of equal population and magnitude. If the support for party 1 is concentrated in one district, and party 4's support is dispersed across the districts, will the redistricting affect the outcome? If so, how? If not, why not?

If Slobovia introduces a 5% national threshold and reverts to the single national district, what happens to the electoral results? If the support percentages and the threshold are common knowledge, will any voters change their behavior? If so, why?

Challenge: Concoct an electoral/party system that results in a win for a candidate located at point 6. Do not change the voter preference distribution. (5 pts)