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# Dominant Parties, Economic Trends And West European Election Behavior

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Analysis of comparative voting trends generally focuses on ideological waves,<sup>1</sup> electoral adjustments to new issues,<sup>2</sup> reaction to incumbent parties,<sup>3</sup> or economic manipulation.<sup>4</sup> But since the first two causes have failed to prove determinant, most attention is now directed to either of two approaches: the incumbency factors identified in *The American Voter*<sup>5</sup> or the financially oriented research of Tufte,<sup>6</sup> and others.

These two perspectives, combined with empirical data from West European elections of the 1950s to the 1970s,<sup>7</sup> provide the foundation for this article; indicating that in cross-national voting analysis questions of ideology, candidate personality, and party program are less important than the identification of dominant parties and the effect of international economic trends on those parties. The fortunes of secondary parties, however, are determined by factors that diverge significantly from those affecting dominant parties.<sup>8</sup>

## *Dominant Parties*

The dominant parties, that are the subject of this article, are those parties that are most consistent in winning a plurality of the vote for national parliaments. In Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, they have clearly been the first party for the most recent quarter century. In Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and West Germany they are the parties that have most consistently held power between 1950 and 1970. Though occasionally out of power, they usually rule alone or prevail over government coalitions, and they have never been reduced to less than second place. From 1950 to 1970 they each received between 30 and 51 percent of the vote in each election, and with few exceptions they continue to do so.<sup>9</sup>

Only Finland, of the western European nations with continuous constitutions since 1950, lacks such a party. Elsewhere the prevalence of a dominant party is itself notable: it signifies both continuity and the iden-

tification of authority with a single unit. It also facilitates comparative investigation of the effects of incumbency or dominance.

The most obvious observation is that Europe is not dominated by one ideological stance; for the leading parties in Scandinavian nations and in Switzerland are Socialist or Labour, while in the other continental countries they are "conservative" or Catholic."

### *The Trends*

Except in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland these dominant parties have had similar electoral histories during the third quarter of the century. At the end of the fifties, and again from 1965 to 1971 each increased its portion of electoral support over that of the previous elections. From 1959 to 1968, and also in the early seventies they all suffered noticeable losses. In addition, of the nine dominant parties, only the Swedish Social Democrats and the Austrian People's Party did not lose a portion of their overall share of the electorate during the sixties.

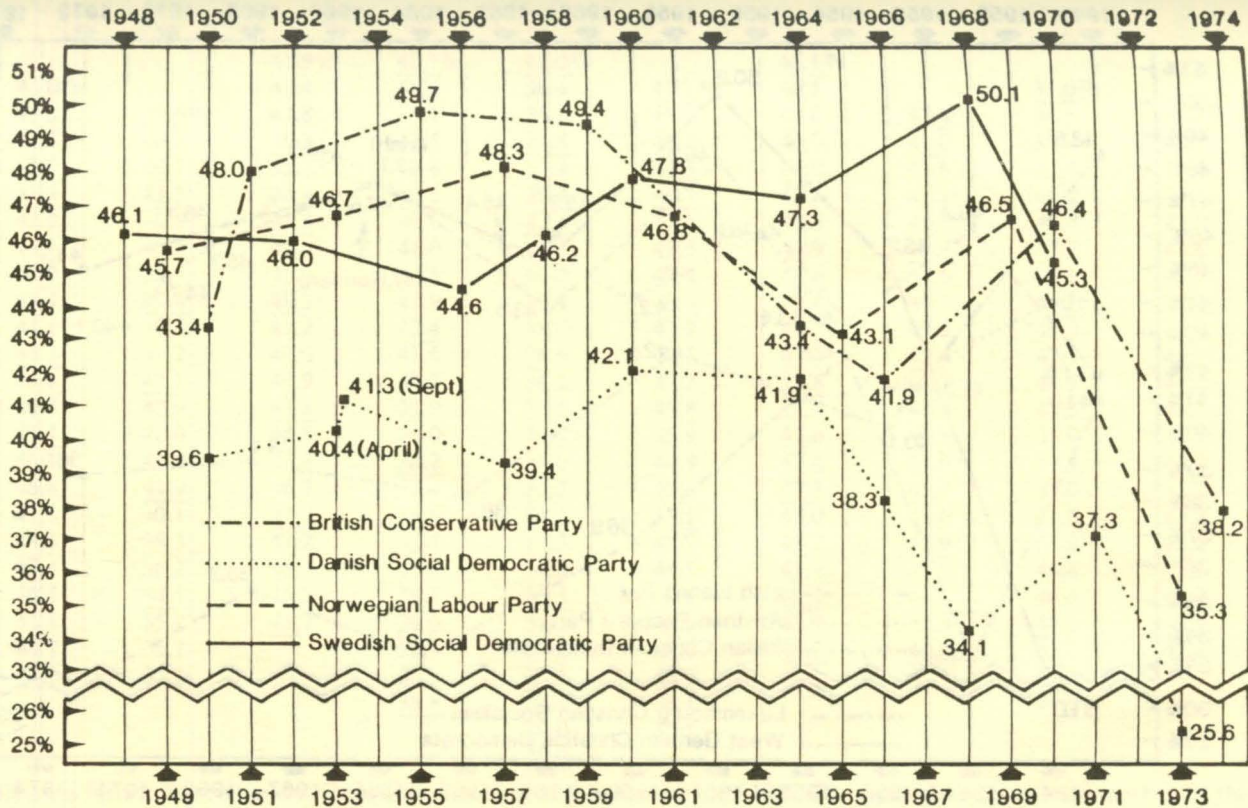
That these are correlative trends is evident in the nature of the similarities, the timing, and the fact that election by election surges do not occur within any of the downward or upward movements. The trends cannot be ascribed to pendulum movements since each dominant party's direction continues even where there are two or more elections in a period of downwardness or upwardness: thus substantiating the Rose and Unwin observation negating assumptions about pendulum tendencies.<sup>10</sup>

The logic of significance factors also highlights the relationships, though strict application of statistical techniques is limited by the small number of nations considered. For the trends of the dominant parties correlate closely while the trends of parties in the excepted nations and most of the secondary parties exhibit singular patterns that do not correlate with each other.

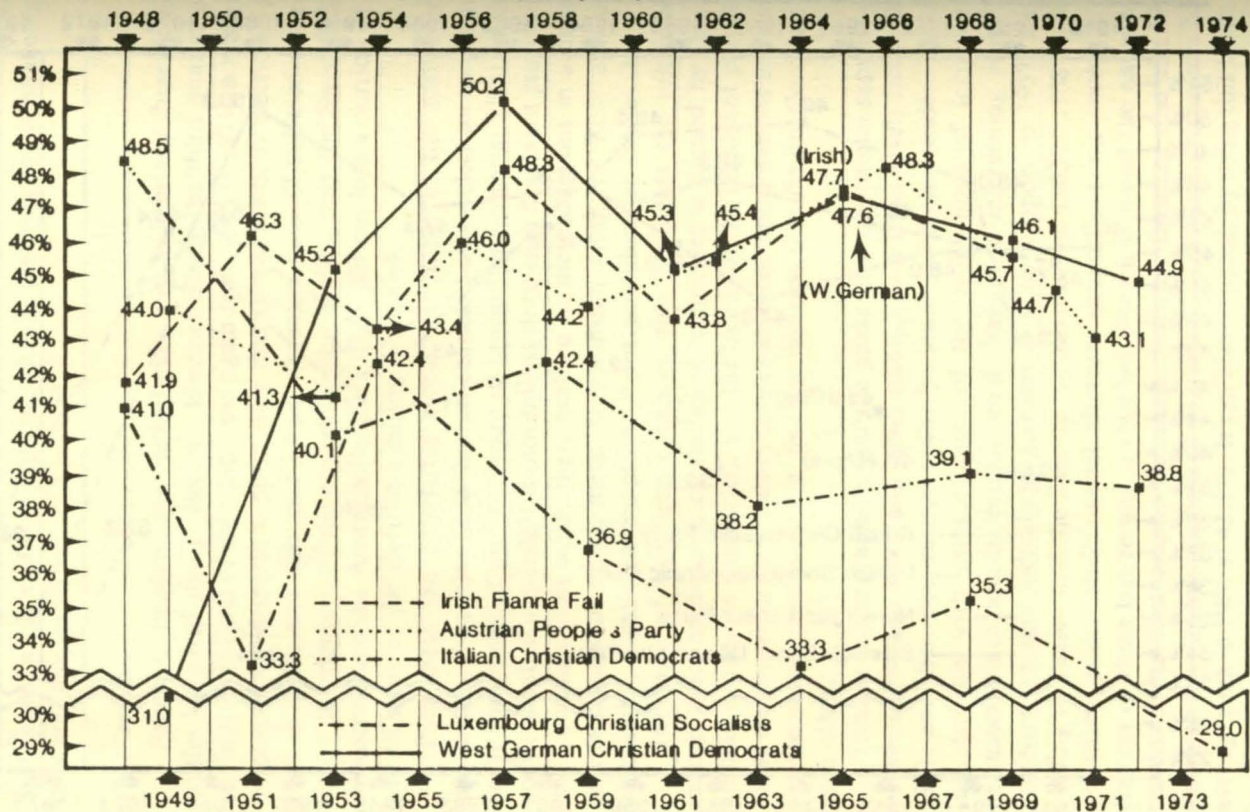
Evident in the graphs is that the peaks of proportional support occur between 1954 and 1960, and again (though at a lesser level) from 1965 to 1971, and there are troughs at the beginning of both decades. Table I illustrates this with extrapolations of the proportions of increases and decreases which ascribe proportional changes to intervening years. This provides averages indicating increases in voter support to 1957, the succeeding decreases, and the flattened decreases from 1963 to 1968 caused by offsetting peaks while overall electoral proportions are receding. The flatness of these last results is clarified when it is noted the nations portrayed in the first graph, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have an average peak of 43.6% in 1969, while the remainder had an average peak in 1966 of 43.1%. It can also be noted, by using this table, that in 1961 only the Austrian Peoples Party increased its share of the electorate. By 1965 most dominant parties were increasing their shares, and in 1970 they are losing again.<sup>11</sup>



Graph I - SCANDINAVIAN & BRITISH DOMINANT PARTIES



GRAPH II - DOMINANT PARTIES IN IRELAND & ON MAIN LANDMASS OF EUROPE



	Austrian Peoples Party	Danish Social Demo- crats	Irish Fianna Fail	Italian Chris- tian Demo- crats	Lux. Chris- tian Social- ists	Norwe- gian Labour Party	Swedish Social Demo- crats	West <sup>1</sup> Conser- vative Party	AVERAGE German Chris- tian Demo- crats	
1948			41.9%	48.5%	41.0%		46.1%			
1949	44.0%		43.4	46.8	38.4	45.7%	46.1		31.0%	
1950	43.3	39.6%	44.8	45.1	35.9	45.9	46.0	43.4%	34.5	42.0%
1951	42.6	40.2	46.3	43.5	33.3	46.2	46.0	48.0	38.1	42.7
1952	42.0	40.7	45.3	41.8	36.3	46.4	46.0	47.6	41.6	43.1
1953	41.3	41.3 <sup>1</sup>	44.4	40.1	39.4	46.7	45.6	47.1	45.2	43.4
1954	42.9	40.8	43.4	40.6	42.4	47.1	45.3	46.7	46.4	43.9
1955	44.4	40.3	45.0	41.0	41.3	47.5	44.9	49.7	47.7	44.6
1956	46.0	39.9	46.7	41.5	40.2	47.9	44.6	49.6	48.9	45.0
1957	45.4	39.4	48.3	41.9	39.1	48.3	45.4	49.5	50.2	45.3
1958	44.8	40.3	47.2	42.4	38.0	47.9	46.2	49.5	49.0	45.0
1959	44.2	41.2	46.0	41.6	36.9	47.5	47.0	49.4	47.7	44.6
1960	44.6	42.1	44.9	40.7	36.2	47.2	47.8	48.2	46.5	44.2
1961	45.0	42.0	43.8	39.9	35.5	46.8	47.7	47.0	45.3	43.7
1962	45.4	42.0	44.8	39.0	34.7	45.9	47.6	45.8	45.9	43.4
1963	46.1	41.9	45.8	38.2	34.0	44.9	47.4	44.6	46.4	43.2
1964	46.8	41.9	46.7	38.4	33.3	44.0	47.3	43.4	47.0	43.2
1965	47.6	40.1	47.7	38.6	33.8	43.1	48.0	42.6	47.6	43.2
1966	48.3	38.3	47.2	38.7	34.3	43.9	48.7	41.9	47.2	43.2
1967	47.4	36.2	46.7	38.9	34.8	44.8	49.4	43.0	46.8	43.1
1968	46.5	34.1	46.2	39.1	35.3	45.6	50.1	44.1	46.5	43.0
1969	45.6	35.2	45.7	39.0	34.2	46.5	47.7	45.3	46.1	42.8
1970	44.7	36.2		38.9	33.2	43.7	45.3	46.4	45.7	42.2
1971	43.1	37.3		38.9	32.1	40.9			45.3	
1972				38.8	31.1	38.1			44.9	
1973					30.0	35.3				
1974					29.0					

<sup>1</sup>The 1953 figure is for the September election which sustained the government until 1957. The April election, which is marked on the graph, was part of the upward trend.

<sup>2</sup>Figures for CDU/CSU.

<sup>3</sup>Date taken from Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (London; 1974).



Recognition of the European-wide trends first suggests a rejection of theories on ideological "waves" determining votes across the continent. Then it points out that the personnel and organization of political parties in specific nations is probably not determinant at the polls, at least not for dominant parties. Thirdly, the analysis of voting trends in purely national terms of class differentials, issues, or interest representativeness can be diminished. In the study of election trends, the historical role of the dominant party should first be identified.

Continental responses, this article indicates, are responses to dominant parties, or the results for dominant parties reflect behavioral reactions to other continental trends. No matter what their persuasion, interest coalition, or experience, dominant parties are parties to be evaluated in their role as rulers. They are a stable force toward or against which voters can easily react. No matter what core of voters consistently supports each party the dominant party is most susceptible to swings in the independent vote; even if the long term direction of its support is stable, increasing, or decreasing, short term gains or losses are influenced by factors independent of its core strength. The dominant parties are, after all, the units subject to the "deviating elections" described so aptly by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes;<sup>12</sup> it is from their stable control that there is deviation. When it occurs in European politics, deviation is a continuing expression of historical trends: it is a modest extension of the currents that crossed national boundaries to threaten regime in 1848 and change them in 1933. Though torn ballots continue to signify opposition to the system, support lost by the major party simply indicates disenchantment with the way the nation is governed. Even where "immobilism" has taken hold, partial rejection of the dominant party puts all of the nation's authority structure on notice that there is an interest in change.

But why voters of European nations should simultaneously feel similar about authority, or at least the dominant party, is a difficult question. Did violence, student dissatisfactions, and union demands encourage an amalgamation of support for established regimes by the voters of the sixties? Was Krushchev's saber rattling, appreciation of an economic upsurge, or the realization that post war borders should remain stable among the reasons these same parties gained support in the late fifties? Were the frustrations of "rising expectations" or the instability symbolized by American assassinations the cause for the downturn of the early sixties? Or are there natural cycles that occur every eight or twelve years?

Answers cannot be found by looking at the dates the tides change; not 1959, nor 1962, nor 1969 contain events which sufficiently explain the shifts. Nor do the range of years over which peaks and dips occur provide conclusive clues. Those believing in the influence of personalities may point at discomfort with the hegemony of DeGaulle, trust in the humanitarianism of Kennedy, or ambivalence at the election of Nixon as reasons for changing support for the dominant parties: but none of these explain why the up-

turns or downturns last so long, and why they influence elections so divorced from significant events.

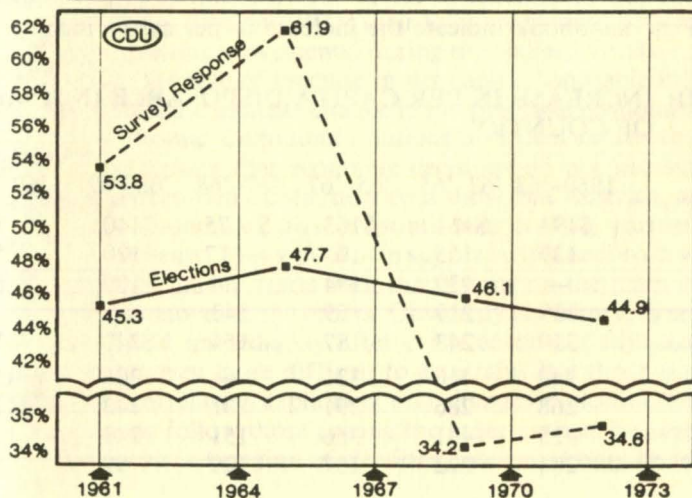
### Political Economic Trends?

A source for explanatory hints on the causes of these political trends is in survey data: especially where questions on economic, social, or psychological attitudes have been administered, there are suggestions of casual factors. For instance in the longitudinal materials available at the *Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung* at the University of Cologne there are hints.

The rise and fall in trust of the dominant parties' guidance of the economy, the data indicates, correlates with that parties' results at the polls. In 1961 and 1965 the German researchers asked, What party can best improve the economic situation? ("Welche Partei kann am besten die wirtschaftliche Lage Verbessern?"). In 1969 the question was worded similarly with the words "and social" added after the word "economic." In 1972 they asked, What party is best qualified to hold prices stable? ("Welche Partei ist best qualifiziert die Preise stabil zu halten?"). The results in Graph III are compared to the voting results for the dominant party the CDU/CSU.

Graph III

	1961		1965		1969		1972	
	Baumert, Scheuch, Wildemann		Kaase, Wildemann		Klingemann, Pappi		Berger, Gibowski	
	055 V-91		556 V-61		426 V-167		635 V-92	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
CDU	912	53.8	872	61.9	396	34.2	674	34.6
SPD	486	28.6	418	29.7	490	42.3	619	31.7
NA/DK	298	17.6	118	8.4	251	21.7	222	11.4





Unfortunately the indicated linkage between economic affairs, public attitudes and election outcomes is limited\*by the lack of available comparison with surveys in other countries; but it does provide longitudinal data for further research into the import of attitudes on economic currents for results at the polls.

Where such connections have been investigated previously they have generally been considered in terms of national economic policy, rather than international trends; for there has been little data for correlating any economic trends with electoral trends. As a result Edward Tufte, in *Political Control of the Economy*<sup>13</sup> only points up how properly timed expansionary policies have aided incumbent parties, and in an earlier article Assar Lindbeck describes what cycles of restrictive policy followed by expansionistic policy will be most productive at the polls.<sup>14</sup> However, this highly focused research provides one of the clues for correlating international economic currents and electoral trends. Tufte's suggestion that improved availability of disposable income improves the incumbent parties opportunity to win is especially valuable.

Close comparative examination demonstrates that there is a correlation between disposable income and the success of dominant parties. But it is not a correlations with how much disposable income is available to each member of the population, rather it is a correlation with the rate of growth of that disposable income. For instance, if correlated with the German elections and survey results pictured on Graph III, we find that the estimated per capita increase in national disposable income for West Germany was 243 dollars in the two years preceding the 1965 election when the Christian Democrats increased their share of the electorate. But in the following two years, when their success at the polls shrank, the increase was only 87 dollars.

By using one of the few sources for comparable estimates of per capita disposable income, *The Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics, 1970*, similar data can be established for the other countries in this study. The figures in the handbook indicate the increase in per capita income is the following:

TABLE II: INCREASE IN PER CAPITA DISPOSABLE INCOME OF COUNTRY

	1960-'63	'63-'65	'65-'67	'67-'68	'68-'69	Average/yr. '60-'69
Austria	\$191	\$181	\$163	\$ - 75	\$140	\$ 83
Ireland	139	155	103	- 17	120	55
Italy	—	139	184	84	109	86
Luxembourg	119	219	79	143	—	70
W. Germany	310	243	87	154	242	115
Denmark	349	410	331	—	306	155
Norway	268	286	291	101	143	121
Sweden	425	441	366	151	241	180
U. K.	204	222	137	129	99	88

When combined with the election results and years of elections noted in our preceding tables and graphs there are indications that:

1. Where, since the previous election or in the previous three years there has been an increase in per capita disposable income over that of the nations' average for the decade the proportion of the vote gained by the dominant party increases.
2. Where the increase has been less than the average increase for the decade the dominant party has lost a share of the electorate, with the one exception of the 1968 Swedish election.
3. If in the previous three years the increase in the per capita disposable income in any one year has fallen below the average increase for that nation the dominant party has lost ground at the polls even through the disposable income may have increased greatly in the other two years, with the exception of the Austrian election of 1962 and the Norwegian election of 1969.

Altogether this suggests that insecurity in the continuation of economic fortunes leads to reduced confidence for the dominant party. Whether national policy and economic organization provides for a "trickle down" or a "bubble up" changes in per capita disposable income result in changes in the perceptions of economic fortunes by a sufficient share of the population to affect election results.

In addition the data on disposable income provides explanations for another facet of the unfolding of upsurges and downsurges in election outcomes as they are graphed at the beginning of this article. For the timing of the peaks and valleys on the two graphs do not quite fit with one another. The first graph only includes nations in the European Free Trade Association which primarily trade with each other and with non-European nations, while the second pictures voting returns for nations in the European Economic Community plus two nations that primarily trade with the Community and the United States. The dominant parties in this second group are Christian or "conservative" and gained their peaks of support between 1954 and 1958, and again 1965 and 1968, their low occurred between 1959 and 1964. The nations on the first graph, on the other hand, are Social Democratic or Labour Parties dominating Scandinavia and the Conservative Party of Great Britain, which reached their peaks between 1955 and 1960, and between 1968 and 1971; their lows are evident between 1964 and 1968. These offsetting movements, during the sixties, correlate with offsetting changes in the rate of increase in per capita disposable income.

The results could indicate change in international economic trends first affects the Economic Community nations and then moves to the others. Lag theory, indicating that economic decisions do not necessarily follow from immediate economic data, may even show that America, as the engine of the western economies, first imprints near trading partners with any financial adjustments. This would help support explanation on why support for the dominant parties starts with the nations on the main continent of Europe and then moves to the others. Obviously lag theory, in so far as elections are not held immediately after every economic adjustment, makes such correlation even more difficult to ascertain. But those who are skeptical about the correlation explaining why changes in election trends among the outer nations follow those among the inner nations by suggesting that this result is purely a function of elections dates need only be reminded the



outer nations had eight elections compared to six for the period in most of the nations on the continent.

So some interesting research can now follow. Most is related to why economic trends disperse as they do, and why and when election results follow such trends. Taken with the research of Rein Taagapera,<sup>15</sup> it can further be asked why the electorate places so much economic responsibility on a dominant party; for he points out that parties with more than 30% of the vote have even a higher representation in parliament than they deserve by direct proportionality; thus their parliamentary power exaggerates their economic responsibility. Moreover there are questions on whether economic trends affect other psychological variables within the community, if economic results are linked to general support or opposition to "the elite," and to what degree each element of the disposable income affects political judgements.

### *The Potential For Secondary Parties*

But there are now secondary parties which took power from a number of dominant parties during the early seventies. In Austria, Germany, Italy, and Luxembourg there has even been a question whether these parties are becoming dominant; and in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden the Social Democratic Parties lost elections in the seventies to the united secondary parties of their respective nations. Not only were once dominant parties losing support in the seventies, but all nations now have secondary forces strong enough to provide a challenge. Dominance is no longer guaranteed. For even nations that did not have clearly competitive parties in the past, have them now. Moreover those parties are ready to succeed as the bearers of national power. In Austria, West Germany, and Luxembourg they were victorious throughout the seventies, and they continued to dominate the government in succeeding elections. In the remaining nations their victories were not substantiated further and may have been more ephemeral. But there is evidence some dominant parties of the fifties and sixties, having lost support as the seventies approached, were on the verge of being replaced as the bearers of authority.

If authority, along with economic and social leadership, are the qualities voters expect of dominant parties, a major role change is demanded of secondary parties as they become dominant parties. Having expanded their support base by emphasizing the attractiveness of their ideologies, gaining voters from other secondary parties, redesigning their policy positions to attract a greater range of interests and occasionally becoming known as the alternate to established dominance; they have not become recognized as the parties to beat, the representatives of national goals or the party to blame when economic conditions decline. As secondary parties they have been measured with the analytical standards which guide traditional analysis of electoral behavior: expanding their electoral base has been the primary goal.

Though they could win an occasional election while still in a secondary category, second parties do not become dominant until they win a number of successive elections. For their former victories may be the function of a loss of support for dominant authority rather than their own increase in a share of the electorate. They may just happen to be close enough at the right



time; for instance, in Austria the Socialist victory of 1959 did not occur because the party share at the polls increased 1.8%. Even if they had made no gains at all they would have won due to the loss of 5% of the vote by the dominant People's Party. A similar situation occurred in Luxembourg in 1964. Which indicates the effort of a second party is one of challenge rather than one of confidence and experience in government; among voters the second party is not yet perceived as the normal guardian of power. Of the second parties only the Labourites in Great Britain alternated authority with the Conservatives often enough to lay some claim to being a dominant party.<sup>16</sup>

But other second parties made systematic gains. In West Germany the Social Democrats increased their share of the electorate by three to four percent in each visit to the polls from 1953 to 1972 until they won the latter election with 45.8% of the vote. Their early gains were primarily from the supporters of the minor parties; then, with the 1969 election, it became evident they were gaining votes from the dominant Christian Democrats. By that time they had shared power for three years in a conscious attempt at becoming perceived as legitimate holders of power. After forming the governing coalition following the next two elections they established their authority, until at least part of the reaction to dominance was reaction to them.<sup>17</sup> This is the goal the Communist Party of Italy also sought. It made notable increases in most elections from 1968 through the sharp upsurge of 1976: its aspiration to dominance even sanctified by the support of defecting Christian Democratic politicians who recognized the party success, rather than party ideology, would be the impetus to changed votes. But they failed.

The second parties in Austria and Luxembourg did not have to strive as hard to be in a position to win if the support for the established groups should decline: they have been in contention throughout the period. And after 1968 they reversed fortunes with the once dominant parties. They both became first parties and kept their position in two or more elections as a result of sharp declines in support for the once dominant parties.

In Scandinavian nations it seemed such changes in dominance would take a different form: single parties would not succeed to power. For as subjects of the "Duverger effect" opposition parties acted in a united fashion to establish coalitions with the import of single second parties.<sup>18</sup> So the four parties to the right of the Socialists in Norway could be evaluated as one party even though they compete with each other at the polls. The implied conflict continually raises the question whether these coalitions can be sustained and whether they will ever be perceived as a single dominant force. The test will be in the length of time they hold power and in the way voters react to them. But as long as two parties compete equally at the polls, and no single party establishes dominance, there will be a question as to which party is generally perceived as the authoritative force. One of the complicated evaluations that thus must be made is if the old party of dominance has fallen sufficiently to place the symbols of dominance in new hands.

Only since 1968 has such assessment even been necessary. For only since then have all the nations developed second parties, or second party coalitions, ready to supplant the once singular authority of the traditional dominant parties. It is the first time since World War II that declines in dominant party support may be met by a continental shift of dominance. Then the responsibilities for economic trends will be tied to new organizations.

## *The Exceptions*

Even in the nations that have not been part of this analysis similar realignments have taken place: in France the Communists and Socialists have formed a union that is striving to replace the Gaullists, in the Netherlands the Labour Party has won a number of recent elections over the once dominant Christian Peoples Party, and in Switzerland the party that had winning pluralities without the advantage of governmental dominance gained so much increased authority that the opposition parties coalesced against it in 1983. Only in Belgium is there an absence of indications the voting returns will coincide with European patterns.

All of these nations, however, must be examined independently of recent European trends. Not only are their electoral histories dissimilar, analysis of their social and party structures commonly separate them from assumptions common to other nations.

France has been influenced by the Gaullist phenomena, which produced a new constitution, centered authority in a single leader, and reordered the party structure of the nation during a period where rapid social, economic, and institutional changes were also taking affect. As a result there is increased consensualism among elites,<sup>19</sup> reduced segmentation among voters,<sup>20</sup> and higher continuity of identification with political parties by parliamentary representatives. In time these factors may further French expression of European trends. But for the immediate past they dictate analysis that recognizes the rapid rise of Gaullist Parties since 1958, and the readjustments which followed the leaders demise. Chauvinist and separatist during the reign of DeGaulle, analysis of voting returns may, for some time, indicate French voters are independent of political attitudes sweeping the rest of the continent.

This is not the situation in Belgium and the Netherlands; segmentation still exists there. Illustrative is Seebohm Rowntree's much quoted observation on 1915 Belgium:

There is extraordinarily little social intercourse between Catholics and Liberals, and practically none between Catholics and Socialists. Politics enter into almost every phase of social activity and philanthropic effort, and it is the exception rather than the rule for persons holding different political opinions to co-operate in any other matter. Thus in one town there will be a Catholic, a Liberal, and a Socialist Trade Union, a Catholic, a Liberal, and a Socialist Co-Operative bakery, a Catholic, a Liberal, and a Socialist thrift society, each catering for similar people, but each confining its attention to members of its own political party.<sup>21</sup>

In the Netherlands, but not Belgium, there is now evidence this condition is dissipating to the point where the nation can soon be analysed as other western European nations are.

In Switzerland, however, the changes taking place are different. They are also more difficult to evaluate since Switzerland has been subject to



fewer national voting studies than other democratic polities. This is partly due to the highly federal nature of the Swiss government, certainly due to the traditional lack of change in the composition of the executive council, and, strength of the national elite. Interest in the topic has also been dampened by the lack of change in the electoral results for the three major parties over the last quarter century. The Socialists, Radical Democrats, and Christian Democrats have consistently been within four percentage points of one another and have each consistently earned between 20 and 27% of the electoral support. Placed in "permanent coalition" until 1983 no party dominated the executive or was impelled to overthrow it. As a result the slight edge at the polls, received by the Socialists, has not provided an edge in power: after the recent refusal of the executive council to appoint the Social Democratic candidate for Chairman, the edge seems to auger a change in the Swiss system. In the meantime the most powerful party, due to its connections with the established elite, is probably the Radical Democratic: it has been quite effective in coalescing with the Catholic or Social Democratic parties to gain success for critical issues of direct concern to supporters. But the lack of survey data and academic studies makes it difficult to evaluate if the Swiss people perceive the Radical Democrats or any other political group as dominant. Should they do so their reaction to the Social Democrats may explain their feelings about dominance. The renewed interest in that party may then be explained by the criteria used for other European parties, the current upsurge in Social Democratic votes being similar to those for former second parties elsewhere. But this could also be the result of other factors.

#### *Survey Data, Population Data, And Further Research*

In the absence of additional information on Switzerland there is evidence of the material necessary to corroborate the inferences of this article. For surveys on parties as holders of authority have hardly been applied in the alpine nation or the rest of Europe.

The kind of research that is consistently undertaken equates declining support for the system with declining participation at elections or the increase of purposive negation of ballots.<sup>22</sup> It does not provide effective differentiation between reduced support for the governors, reduced support for the system, and changes in economic conditions.

Studies on partisanship and voter inclinations at the polls usually raise a different series of questions. They emphasize the linkage between social background and policy preferences, with party choice. Yet even in their increasing number there are few genuine cross national surveys or longitudinal projects that compare attitudes of the same population from election to election.<sup>23</sup> In those nations where there is a tradition of election surveys there have been questionnaire items on the popularity or capability of particular regimes, and on the ability of contending parties to govern.<sup>24</sup> But except for the *Civic Culture* project<sup>25</sup> few surveys test respondents at



titudes toward authority or their association of the dominant party with authoritative roles. Were such issues raised a number of questions could be answered: Is dominance and authority an issue by which voters evaluate parties and make voting decisions? Which portions of the population take these factors into account? Do different portions of the population account for such factors at different elections? When do components such as governmental inability to maintain order, the threat of external or internal disruptions, or economic expectations underlie cross national reactions to dominant parties? Why do these reactions coincide across national boundaries?)

Evidence for some of the answers can be found in two kinds of literature, that on persistence and change in party fortunes, and the work on the rise of second parties.

The most traditional assumption of these studies is that the continuity of major parties is due to the established social divisions in a polity and the historical role of the parties in being identified with those divisions.<sup>26</sup> Analysis based on this assumption concludes that the probable party membership and voting decisions of individuals can be ascertained by knowing his or her occupation, ethnic, and religious identity, and family background.<sup>27</sup> Expansion of party fortunes, this infers, will occur from an extension of the franchise, recruitment of interests not previously committed to the party, or a restructured and changed salience in interest attachments. In fact, these are methods secondary parties seem to have used aptly: Liberal and Labour Parties in Great Britain have gained from voting reform acts, the German Social Democrats purposely changed their platform in 1959 to attract middle class and professional voters, and increased urbanism seemingly reduced rural influences on voters and thus aided the turn of the century Democrats in the United States.

But recent studies indicate the assumption, and applicable methods, overlook some explanatory characteristics. Those investigators concentrating on the continuity in the support of major parties find that where cleavages change and voters acquire new occupations there are only limited adjustments in party identification. Where parties are well organized, Rose and Urwin wrote in 1970, the fluctuations in their support are minor even if other social divisions are varying and complex.<sup>28</sup> Four years later Rose added that heterogeneity can define a party as well as identification with particular interests can.<sup>29</sup> This has led to the 1977 analysis by Zuckerman and Lichbach that, once established, party identification rather than interest association determines voting behavior.<sup>30</sup> Thus how a person first identifies with a party, rather than what groups support the unit, is emphasized; leading to generational descriptions of party fortunes. By joining census data to voting results, in their article, "Stability and Change in European Electorates," Lichbach and Zuckerman conclude that once a party dominates an age category it will continue to be the choice of those in the generation as they become older; as a result a party will dominate the elec-

toral scene as long as the generations in which it has sufficient strength prevail at the polls. But if a younger generation aligns with a second party there is a possibility the once dominant party will succumb as that generation becomes a larger share of the electorate.<sup>31</sup> The authors thus explain the ability of the German Social Democrats and Italian Communists to threaten in the seventies. They also provide reasons why formerly dominant parties throughout Europe declined in the seventies: it is the period post war babies became a major portion of the electorate.

But generational, along with organizational, justifications for long term trends do not apply to short term variations. These surges and declines in dominant party support between 1950 and 1970 seem to have taken place while average support of the parties remained steady.<sup>32</sup> If we assume the continuity rests on a bedrock of generational or interest group support we still must ask if variations come from those with weak allegiances to dominant units. After all, the range of fluctuation is only 5% of the voters for the dominant parties on the land mass of Europe, and less than 9% of those in the other five nations. Since these changes do not relate to variations in the proportion of voters going to the polls, or to the proportion negating ballots, it is worth concentrating on dominant parties.

The questions to be asked are: Who are the voters of "weak allegiance," the voters who respond to economic factors? In light of recent research on the correlation between economic policy and electoral results<sup>33</sup> when do international economic activities affect voting and when can domestic policies have an effect? What is the resulting interdependence of incumbent regimes?

Answering clues can be found in a number of sources. For instance analysis of West German voting returns, district by district, for the period of this study indicates that the greatest frustration in Christian Democratic support, generally reflecting the national rises and declines, took place in the north German, non-Catholic, urban centers; with every district in Hamburg displaying it. Similar fluctuation in support can be found in Swedish urban centers. So one can ask, are these the groups most susceptible to economic trends?

Two additional insights are contained in the classic American studies, *Voting* and *The American Voter*. The first is that those unaware of the socio-political allegiances of persons with whom they associate are most likely to have weak party attachments.<sup>34</sup> The second ascribes such behavior to young voters who have not developed stronger loyalties.<sup>35</sup> Applying such conclusions to a European nation, David Butler and Donald Stokes arrived at three classifications of reasons for electoral change; the first is associational, the second is generational, and the third is tied to the information and perceptions they have on issues and leaders. This means, in terms of this paper, that perception on issues and leaders is really in terms of the perception individual voters have on their economic future when judging dominant parties.



## Conclusion

When these various factors are placed in a model that represents the findings of this presentation they indicate that:

1. Where the nation has a dominant party the fluctuations in that party's fortunes at the polls is primarily determined by fluctuations in international economic trends; and the manner in which these fluctuations affect changes in per capita disposable income. (See p. 118 for detail.)

2. Second parties are most likely to be victorious if they are within striking distance of the percentages for the dominant party and if the dominant party is turning downward in the share of the electorate it receives.

3. The primary measures of analysis for secondary parties are the traditional ones of national events, ideology, party organization, and leadership.

4. Secondary parties can become dominant parties if they gain sufficient voters over a period of generational change to have the base of support for a challenge to primary parties.

5. At the point when they become dominant parties the fluctuations in the fortunes of recently second parties will become more correlated with the economic fortunes of their weaker supporters than of the traditional forces that have affected their rise.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Richard Rose and D. W. Unwin, "Persistence and Change in Western Party Systems since 1945," *Political Studies*, V. 18. (1970).

<sup>2</sup>Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds. *Party Systems and Voter Alignment* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), and Richard Rose, *Electoral Behavior*, (New York: The Free Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup>Stein Rokkan and Henry Valen, "The Mobilization of the Periphery," in Stein Rokkan, *Approaches to the Study of Political Participation*, (Bergen: Christian Michelson Institute, 1962).

<sup>4</sup>Assar Lindbeck, "Business Cycles, Politics and International Economic Dependence," *Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken Quarterly*, Vol. 2. (1975), and Edward Tufte, *Political Control of the Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

<sup>5</sup>Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964).

<sup>6</sup>*Op. Cit.*

<sup>7</sup>The time period chosen starts with the point after the Second World War when most nations were able to begin regular elections, and ends in the early seventies because the comparative economic data is difficult apply after the relative float of currencies began.

<sup>8</sup>For the purposes of this article dominance is only defined in terms of parliamentary systems. Applicability of the definition to the United States and similarly organized nations is impossible unless there is a nationally cohesive perception of the roles of each of the major parties.

<sup>9</sup>The approach here is instrumental; in the tradition of Lijphart's work on consociational nations and Lipset's *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960) it examines such factors as responses to economic fluctuations, changes in styles of leadership, incumbency, and the nature of authority held by a single party. This approach reflects the influence of "end of ideology" debates, Dahl's collection on opposition (*Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966]), and the Zuckerman and Lichbach results indicating that interest group support for the respective European parties has been stable since the Second World War. Sufficient time has now passed since the Second World War to all for an identification and application of these factors to simultaneous fluctuations among the dominant parties.

<sup>10</sup>*Op. Cit.* p. 302.

<sup>11</sup>The interim ascription method of the table above does not reflect the actual results if voters were to go to the polls each year. But it does provide pictorialization to the actual results in electoral movement.

<sup>12</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. Cit.*

<sup>14</sup>*Op. Cit.*



- <sup>15</sup>Rein Taagapera, "Proportionality Profiles of West European Elections," prepared for the 1979 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.
- <sup>16</sup>Those who extend the period of examination only a few years in each direction might claim the Labour Party deserves dominance appellation as easily as the Conservative Party. But since dominance is largely a perceptual factor resulting from governmental authority it is legitimate to apply it to the Conservative Party that had and still has the major role in British governance. It is, after all, not just the short term that defines dominance. In Britain "Tories" have ruled through most of this century.
- <sup>17</sup>See Wilhelm Buercklin, "The Greens: Ecology and the New Left," in H. G. Peter Wallach and George Romoser, *West German Politics in the Mid-Eighties: Crisis and Continuity* (forthcoming).
- <sup>18</sup>Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1963).
- <sup>19</sup>G. Lowell Field, *Comparative Political Development*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).
- <sup>20</sup>Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* Vol. XXI (1969).
- <sup>21</sup>R.C.K. Ensor (1915) as quoted by Keith Hill, "Belgium" in Richard Rose, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42.
- <sup>22</sup>Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Op. Cit.*, and Stanley Henig and John Pinder, *European Political Parties*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).
- <sup>23</sup>David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, (New York: 1976).
- <sup>24</sup>Butler and Stokes, *Op. Cit.*
- <sup>25</sup>Almond and Verba, (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1963).
- <sup>26</sup>Lipset and Rokkan, *Op. Cit.*
- <sup>27</sup>Robert Alford, *Party and Society*, (Chicago; Rand McNally, 1963).
- <sup>28</sup>*Op. Cit.*, p. 311.
- <sup>29</sup>*Op. Cit.*, P. 19.
- <sup>30</sup>"Stability and Change in European Electorates," in *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. VII (1977), p. 550.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, pps. 548-551.
- <sup>32</sup>Rose and Unwin, *Op. Cit.*
- <sup>33</sup>Andrew Cowart, "The Economic Policies of European Governments; Part I Monetary Policies," and "The Economic Policies of European Governments; Part II Fiscal Policies," in *British Journal of Politics*, Vol. VIII (1978). Douglas Hibbs, "Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policies," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71 (1977). Assar Lindbeck, *Op. Cit.*
- <sup>34</sup>Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 138.
- <sup>35</sup>*Op. Cit.*, P. 93.