

# The reasoning behind political partisans' choice of supporting a certain party

[Politics](#)



In a democracy the right to vote for political representatives with free elections is essential for the legitimacy of a meaningful democracy. This essay will analyze voting behavior by unfolding party partisan and what influences supporters to align themselves to a particular political party. Major functional approaches such as demographics and rationality will be looked at how these approaches have been proven to be a useful analytical tool in voter behavior. Political issues and candidates give meaning to partisan attachments and social divisions. The process of political dealignment is the process of change in voting behavior that will be explained. This kind of change has various consequences on the political culture of an electoral democracy that will be looked at.

An integral dimensions to citizens political culture is identity, trust and satisfaction. Party identification is an affective and psychological identification that shapes ones preferred political party over a long period of time. Humans identify with collectives such as parties in the same way they identify with religious and ethnic groups as well as with social classes. It has been found that during early childhood life the formation of party identities begin to be influenced by parents that have a central role in the socialization of these values (Dalton 2014: 186- 187). That is why political behavior is generally stable because of lifelong attachments that have been reinforced. This behavior is anticipated to change only under extraordinary circumstances. Early party attachment remains a reference structure for future political learning that guide electorate behavior. Partisan identification serves as a heuristic tool whereby voters go into election season with reinforced attachments that are pre programmed. By this it is suggested that

party identification does have an effect on behavior and on the party candidate choice and also on electoral participation. However, party identification is an important predictor but does not necessarily equal vote decision. (Dalton & Klingemann, 2009: 558-560). The features of a social approach, a socio-psychological approach and rational choice theory for predicating voting behavior will be analyzed.

This theory argues that political voting or thinking is in a social structure and that social identity is a basic aspect of partisanship. This structured approach is based highly on demographics such as age; gender, class, religious association, ethnicity, regional identity, urban and rural divide that act as a catalyst to politics. Over time an individual becomes socially aligned to a party as knowledge is derived from the members of a group along with the emotional significance attached to the member. That is why a high correlation exists between social groups and the stimulus they have on an individual's choice. Therefore, according to this theory values with political identification are transmitted to the individual from the group and its members (Dalton 2012: 156), (Dalton & Klingmann 2009: 558).

The social approach theory is not sufficient because it acts as a shortcut that is a common and easy way to predict which party will influence the interest of the voter. The 1960s and 1970s can be viewed as the birth of modern politics because there was a rise in a new literate middle class. This gave a rift in ideology of old politics with its security, stability and desire for economic wellbeing and Marxism. Marxist thought grew in the 1940s and 1950s that saw the influence of union movements in party politics in places

such as Britain . The old middle class was generally self-employed people while the new middle class was employed by the state as the salariat. This became a vanguard for new politics to emerge(Dalton 2012: 157-158).

Partisan identification is central to the model of the socio-psychological approach. This feature of party identification serves as a guide to how elections and how researchers analyze the voting process (Dalton 2012: 186). The funnel of causality brings together the psychological and sociological model with its relationship of cause and effect. It can be described as one variable having an effect on another and so forth. The vote decision of the individual begins at the wide end on the funnel. The mouth lies on the opposite end and is associated with economic conditions of a society that causes basic conflicts in social division. The funnel displays a structured viewpoint of how voting decisions of individuals are very distant from the start. The economic structure and historical pattern develop values that bond people to a social class. The funnel narrows a bit and identity shapes the party attachments as issue options to what is relevant. Close to the voting decision are media and campaigns that shape attitudes and have a great direct impact. Economic conditions and political conditions will also influence the opinions and the judgments voters make. The external stimulus of the funnel is a conversation and discussions that impact on party beliefs. When this model is statistically applied it has been found to be a highly predictive tool that makes its elements still useful today. Therefore, this model of a socio-psychological approach is a useful analytical tool in predicting behavior of voting outcomes (Dalton 2014: 183-185).

The central assumption of rational choice is that voters act to maximize their efficacy or to exhibit goal-oriented political behavior. The rational citizen is the ideal citizen because he looks at the political parties policies and platforms to evaluate the value of participation in the long run. This is what makes the rational voter sophisticated. He looks at the value of change versus no change against the costs of voting. If the benefits to the potential voter exceed the costs, the person will thoughtfully cast a vote. Some may feel as citizens they are obliged to vote, but instead of rationally considering the issues, they vote for the candidate with the most pleasing smile or because they shook hands with the candidate (Buzzel, Dobratz and Waldner 2012: 228).

Skeptics of this theory claim that this ideal rarely exists in democracy because they are viewed as lacking political knowledge . People generally don't engage with policy or read manifestos. They are often not sure on their own position on complex issues like nuclear issues and are skeptic of mass politics(Dalton 2012: 208).

Rational voters are influenced by parties to be pushing on the issues that resonate with them. The conditions of issue-oriented political behavior have a role in the ultimate partisan choice. There exist three noteworthy conditions that a person bases their vote decision on. Firstly the issue must be cognized in some form; if an issue is to motivate a voter he must be aware of its existence and have an opinion about it. Secondly, the issue must arouse some minimal intensity of feeling; there must be a sense of importance for the issue because involvement cannot be assumed on the

basis of familiarity alone. Lastly the decision must be accompanied by a perception that one party represents the person's own position better than other competing parties. However, majority of voters fail to meet most of the above criteria on policy issues (Cambell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1966: 169-170).

Partisan dealignment is a decline of people declaring that they are close to a political party that starts to weaken voting behavior through the weakening of social group ties. In the USA between the 1950s and 1960s it has been recorded that a 1/4 of the population declared themselves as independent voters with no strong political party bonds. Partisan loyalties weakened after the 1964 election and by the 1980s a 1/3 of voters had no strong political bonds. This new period of partisan realignment has become a continuing feature of contemporary politics among advanced industrial nations. This means that a portion of the public is not developing party attachments and is often critical about political parties. The decrease has been found in younger generations that are better educated. This is a suggestion that there is an increase in the general mistrust of institutionalized politics that led to the rise in the cognitive electorate minus the reliance of long standing attachments. Voters are no longer going in with long standing identification that results in a low voter turn out and other consequences that will be further looked at (Dalton 2012: 194-196), (Dalton & Klingmann 2009: 10).

People are beginning for the first time to choose political parties from scratch. Partisan relations are central to citizen politics and the erosion of these ties has effects on citizen politics. As a consequence partisan-centered

voting has decreased because people are no longer attached to a political party. Rather than choosing a political party based on habitual party loyalties people are more likely to shift their party support between elections. This therefore has a direct consequence of destabilization of the once before stable and predictable partisan voting support.

The increase of non-partisans create potential for new parties to emerge to capture support. Vote switching in presidential elections is highly dependent on whether there is a worthwhile third-party candidate. The increased number of parties competing in elections and winning seats in parliament can be seen as a consequence of vote switching conduction. Split ticket voting is when voters support different parties on the same ballot. About 10% of Germans split their votes in the 1960s and presently it is a third of voters who do this. Split ticketing voting appears to be generally increasing in democracies that have multiple-party choices on the same ballot. That is why split-ticket voting is evidence of a consequence of partisan realignment as voters are uncertain and even confused for whom to vote for.

The declining turnout in elections is parallel to the dealignment people have with political parties because partisanship had formerly mobilized people to partake in politics. Non-partisans are less likely not to vote that generally decreases turnout. Therefore as a consequence less public involvement during election period seen in campaign activities such as attending rallies, meetings or working for candidates. This matters for the legitimacy democracy because of a shrinking mandate. As long term party and social group cues are losing importance, the decision making process shifts

towards the issues and candidates of the campaign. Campaigns are now more likely to matter more because fewer voters base their choices on standing partisan predispositions (Dalton 2012: 197-198).

This essay looked at the Partisan and its attachments to part identification along with analyzing its major features. The features of a social approach, socio-psychological and Rational choice theories have been discussed with its relevance to political behavior today. The erosion of Partisan has been explained along with its consequences.