resents *all* his constituents, not just those who voted him in. But this system makes heavy demands on the loyalty of the constituents: in two-party contests up to 49 per cent of them may have to abide by the decisions of a representative they did not want; in three-cornered fights, as much as 66 per cent.

Such demands are bound to produce strains in ethnically, culturally, or religiously divided communities: the deeper the cleavages the less the likelihood of loyal acceptance of decisions by representatives of the other side. It was no accident that the earliest moves toward proportional representation came in the ethnically most heterogeneous of the European countries.[130] The great historian of electoral systems, Karl Braunias, distinguishes two phases in the spread of PR: the 'minority protection' phase before World War I and the 'anti-socialist' phase in the years immediately after the armistice (Braunias 1932: II, 201–4). In linguistically and religiously divided societies majority elections could clearly threaten the continued existence of the political system. The introduction of some element of minority representation came to be seen as an essential step in a strategy of territorial consolidation.

As the pressures mounted for extensions of the suffrage, demands for proportionality were also heard in the culturally more homogeneous nation-states. In most cases the victory of the new principle of representation came about through a convergence of pressures from below and from above. The rising working class wanted to lower the threshold of representation to gain access to the legislatures, and the most threatened of the long-established parties demanded PR to protect their positions against the new waves of mobilised voters under universal suffrage.

In Belgium the introduction of graduated manhood suffrage in 1893 brought about an increasing polarisation between Labour and Catholics and threatened the continued existence of the Liberals; the introduction of PR restored some equilibrium to the system (see Gilissen 1958: 126–30). The history of the struggles over electoral procedures in Sweden and in Norway tells us a great deal about the consequences of the lowering of one threshold for the bargaining over the level of the next. In Sweden, the Liberals and the Social Democrats fought a long fight for universal and equal suffrage and at first also advocated PR to ensure easier access to the legislature. The remarkable success



of their mobilisation efforts made them change their strategy, however. From 1904 onward they advocated majority elections in single-member constituencies. This aroused fears among the farmers and the urban conservatives, and to protect their interests they made the introduction of PR a condition for their acceptance of manhood suffrage. As a result the two barriers fell together: it became easier to enter the electorate and easier to gain representation.[131] In Norway there was a much longer lag between the waves of mobilisation. The franchise was much wider from the outset, and the first wave of peasant mobilisation brought down the old regime as early as 1884. As a result the suffrage was extended well before the final mobilisation of the rural proletariat and the industrial workers under the impact of rapid economic change. The victorious radical–agrarian 'Left' felt no need to lower the threshold of representation and in fact helped to increase it through the introduction of a two-ballot system of the French type in 1906. There is little doubt that this contributed heavily to the radicalisation and the alienation of the Norwegian Labour Party. By 1915 it had gained 32 per cent of all the votes cast but was given barely 15 per cent of the seats. The 'Left' did not give in until 1921. The decisive motive was clearly not just a sense of equalitarian justice but the fear of rapid decline with further advances of the Labour Party across the majority threshold.

In all these cases high thresholds might have been kept up if the parties of the property-owning classes had been able to make common cause against the rising working-class movements. But the inheritance of hostility and distrust was too strong. The Belgian Liberals could not face the possibility of a merger with the Catholics, and the cleavages between the rural and the urban interests went too deep in the Nordic countries to make it possible to build up any joint anti-socialist front. By contrast, the higher level of industrialisation and the progressive merger of rural and urban interests in Britain made it possible to withstand the demand for a change in the system of representation. Labour was seriously underrepresented only during a brief initial period, and the Conservatives were able to establish broad enough alliances in the counties and the suburbs to keep their votes well above the critical point.

This review of the conditions for the translation of socio-cultural cleavages into political oppositions suggests three conclusions:

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1. The constitutive contrasts in the national system of party constellations generally tended to manifest themselves *before* any lowering of the threshold of representation. The decisive sequences of party formation took place at the early stage of competitive politics, in some cases well before the extension of the franchise, in other cases on the very eve of the rush to mobilise the finally enfranchised masses.

2. The high thresholds of representation during the phase of mass politicisation set severe tests for the rising political organisations. The surviving formations tended to be firmly entrenched in the inherited social structure and could not easily be dislodged through changes in the rules of the electoral game.

3. The decisive moves to lower the threshold of representation reflected divisions among the established *régime censitaire* parties rather than pressures from the new mass movements. The introduction of PR added a few additional splinters but essentially served to ensure the separate survival of parties unable to come together in common defence against the rising contenders for majority power.

What happened at the decisive party-forming phase in each national society? Which of the many contrasts and conflicts were translated into party oppositions, and how were these oppositions built into stable systems?

# 2

# Critical Junctures, Alliances, and Oppositions

Our aim is to reduce to the smallest possible number the range of explanatory variables required to account for the variations in electoral alternatives among our countries:

- Why did some polities develop party oppositions over issues of *ethnic/cultural identity* while others left such issues to be settled *within* broader party fronts?
- Why did some polities develop strong parties for the defence of the rights of *organised churches and religious movements*, while some developed only small or short-lived parties of this type, and others were able to keep religious divisions completely out of politics?
- Why did the *peasantry* organise their own parties in some countries or regions, while in others they never found this necessary?
- Why did the *working classes* develop strong and unified political movements in some countries, much weaker ones in other countries, and deeply divided organisations in still others?

It is easy enough to spin out strings of explanations for one country at a time: the task is to develop a unified scheme of accounting that will hold up across a maximum of empirically extant cases. In our attempt at accounting for the marked variations in the timing, the speed, and the scope of the measures taken to institutionalise competitive mass politics we started out from a typology of the *initial conditions of nation-building*: the character of the medieval organisation of the given territory, the exposure to absolutist centralisation, the final definition of the territorial nation-state through the processes of secession and consolidation after the Napoleonic upheavals, and, finally, the size of each resultant polity and its position in the international interaction system [see Rokkan no. 107].