THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM
AND
THE 2014 MIDTERM ELECTION

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THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM AND THE 2014 MIDTERM ELECTION

1. The U.S. System and the U.K. System
2. What is at Stake?
3. Elections from a Political Science Perspective
   • A prediction
THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM FROM THE U.K. PERSPECTIVE
**ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

SMD vs. PR

USA: SMD
UK: SMD

**GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM**

presidential vs. parliamentary

USA: Presidential
UK: Parliamentary

Number of parties

Separation of Powers
GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM
SEPARATION OF POWERS

CONGRESS
(Legislative)

PRESIDENCY
(Executive)

SUPREME COURT
(Judicial)
**House of Commons**
- 650 members
- Directly elected by FPTP in constituencies
- Primary legislative power

**House of Lords**
- Currently 793 members
- Appointed, inherited, by virtue of other office
- Limited legislative power

**Prime Minister**
- Sovereign appoints
- Support by House of Commons
- Head of Government

**House of Representatives**
- 435 members
- Directly elected by FPTP in districts
- Shared legislative power

**Senate**
- 100 members
- Directly elected FPTP in states
- Shared legislative power

**President**
- Separate election
- “Indirect” Electoral College
- Head of Government+State
**HOUSE**
- Representation by population
- 2-year terms
- 435 members
- Majoritarian
- Strong leadership
- Strong parties
- Committees important
- **Currently Republican**
  - 234 to 201

**SENATE**
- Representation by state
- Staggered 6-year terms
- 100 members
- Minority rights
  - Filibuster and holds
  - Consensus
- Weaker committees
  - No germaneness
- **Currently Democratic**
  - 45 to 55
ELECTORAL SYSTEM
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>FIRST PAST THE POST</strong></th>
<th><strong>PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>single-member districts</td>
<td>multi-member districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plurality winner</td>
<td>allocated by proportion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct representation</td>
<td>30% of vote $\approx$ 30% of seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by district</td>
<td>indirect representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two-parties</td>
<td>by party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>multiple parties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DUVERGER’S LAW

“The simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system”

Single-Member Districts with Plurality Rule → Two-Party Systems

Proportional Representation → Multiparty Systems

More disproportional → Fewer parties

"The simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system"
Duverger’s Law:
“The simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system”

Lijphart 1999, Vatter 2009
U.S. DISPROPORTIONALITY

First Past the Post
Disproportionality at the aggregate level

Electoral College
Exaggerates Disproportionality
- Single-member “district” (the presidency)
- Winner-take-all for each state

Top Two Parties’ Performance in U.S. House Elections

Top Two Candidate’s Performance in U.S. Presidential Elections

Aggregate Popular Vote Share

Popular Vote Share

Electoral Vote Share
DEMOCRATIC PARTY
Liberal (Left)

REPUBLICAN PARTY
Conservative (Right)

ECONOMICS
Liberal, intervention
Business, free market

SOCIAL ISSUES
Non-traditional, secular
Traditional, religious

RACE
Pro-ethnic minorities
Color-blind

FOREIGN POLICY
Multilateral
Unilateral
WHAT IS AT STAKE?
Possible to have divided government
President and Congress need to coordinate
Gridlock
Separation of Powers exacerbates conflict
AGENDA SETTERS VS VETO PLAYERS

AGENDA SETTER

VETO

AGENDA SETTER

NOT AN AGENDA SETTER
GOVERNORS

Republican
Republican
Retiring
Democrat
Democrat
Retiring
No election
ELECTIONS FROM
A POLITICAL SCIENCE
PERSPECTIVE
PREDICTIONS

SCIENCE

COBE mission. See also http://xkcd.com/54/, or http://store.xkcd.com/xkcd/#Science
WHAT EXPLAINS VOTER BEHAVIOR?

1. Midterms are tied to the President
2. Economic performance matters
PRESIDENTS’ PARTIES LOSE
President's Approval over Labor Day
PRESIDENT’S APPROVAL

President's Approval over Labor Day

President's Party's Seat Gain

-60 -40 -20 0 2014

President's Approval over Labor Day

THE MONKEY CAGE FORECAST

191DEMOCRATS 244REPUBLICANS
(218NEEDED FOR MAJORITY)
THE MONKEY CAGE FORECAST

- Seats expected to flip party
- Seats not expected to flip party

191 DEMOCRATS | 244 REPUBLICANS
(218 NEEDED FOR MAJORITY)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>House</th>
<th>Senate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status Quo</td>
<td>234 to 201, 45 to 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>100% probability R, Dems lose 25 seats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Monkey Cage</td>
<td>99% probability R, Dems lose 6 seats</td>
<td>53% probability R, 51 to 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Upshot</td>
<td>61% probability R, 52 to 48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate Silver</td>
<td>64% probability R, 52 to 48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>16 tossup seats, 241 to 204</td>
<td>9 tossup seats, 43 to 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>257 to 188, 52 to 48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THANK YOU

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