## Comparative National Election Project

## Memo on Macro Information

Country: United States

Date of Election: November 5, 2012

Election Type (Presidential, Legislative- two chambers or one): Presidential

**Part I: Data Pertinent to the Election at which the Survey was Administered**

**1. Political Parties (Receiving at least 3% of the vote, OR electing one MP):**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Party NameIn English and Own Language and Party Label | IdeologicalFamily | European Parliament Political Group(where applicable) | International Organizational Membership |
| A. Democratic | Liberal  |  |  |
| B. Republican | Conservative |  |  |

Ideological Party Families: (These are suggestions only. If a party does not fit well into this classification scheme, please provide an alternative and some explanation).

(A) Ecology Parties (G) Liberal Parties (M) Agrarian Parties

(B) Communist Parties (H) Right Liberal Parties (N) Ethnic Parties

(C) Socialist Parties (I) Christian Democratic Parties (O) Regional Parties

(D) Social Democratic Parties (J) National Parties (P) Other Parties

(E) Conservative Parties (K) Independents

(F) Left Liberal Parties (L) Single Issue Parties

**2. Please place the parties that you have characterized according to the Gunther and Diamond 2001 typology. Please see the documents attached which include the article by Gunther and Diamond, as well as the tables, references and figure. Please note that in the figure, the lines connecting party species to their respective genus are missing.**

[**Gunther, and Diamond, (2003), “Species of Political Parties: A New Typology”, in *Party Politics*,**  **vol.9, no.2., pp. 167-199]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Party NameIn English and Own Language and Party Label | Party Type |
| A. Democratic | Catch-all |
| B. Republican | Catch-all |

**3. Please give the complete election results for the most recent election and the previous election of the type you are analyzing.**

NOTE: The CNEP US12 survey focused on the presidential contest and contains little content about the races for Congress.

MOST RECENT ELECTION: 2012

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Party Name | Percentage of Votes | Parliamentary Seats | % | Seats |
| A.Democratic | 51% 🡪 332 electoral votes |  |  |  |
| B. Republican | 47% 🡪 206 electoral votes |  |  |  |

PREVIOUS ELECTION OF THE SAME TYPE: 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Party Name | Percentage of Votes | Parliamentary Seats | % | Seats |
| A.Democratic | 53% 🡪 365 electoral votes |  |  |  |
| B.Republican  | 46% 🡪 173 electoral votes |  |  |  |

**4. Ideological Positions of Parties:**

Please indicate Parties A-F's positions on a left-right dimension (in the expert judgment of the CNEP Principal Investigator.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Party Name in English /Label** | **Left Right**  |
|  | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** |
| A. Democratic |  |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B. Republican |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |

**4.1. Do you believe there would be general consensus on these placements among informed observers in your country?**

Probably

**4.2. Would you agree that the “Left-Right” cleavage is a meaningful concept in your country?**

Left-Right cleavage has been an increasingly meaningful concept in the U.S.

**4.3. Are there any other relevant cleavages in your country? Where would you place each party regarding that/ those cleavages? (For each cleavage fill out a table below, indicate the cleavage name, and what values 0 and 10 represent as well as each party’s position along the cleavage)**

Biggest cleavages are between whites and minorities (blacks, Latinos, Asian-Americans) and between religious and secular voters.

**CLEAVAGE NAME:**

**0 = secular**

**10 = religious**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Party Name in English /Label** |  |
|  | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** |
| A. Democratic |  |  |  X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B. Republican |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |

**CLEAVAGE NAME:**

**0 = minority**

**10 = white**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Party Name in English /Label** |  |
|  | **0** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** |
| A. Democratic |  |  |  X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| B. Republican |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X |  |  |

**5. In your view, what are the five most salient factors that affected the outcome of the election (e.g. major scandals; economic events; the presence of an independent actor; specific issues)?**

State of the economy, health care and health insurance, terrorism, conflicts in the Middle East, inequality

**6. Do you believe there would be general consensus about the importance of these factors among informed observers in your country?**

Probably, though might disagree about their ordering

**7. Electoral Alliances:**

Documenting who is allied with whom, and how, in each constituency is a large task and we do not expect you to do more than make some general reference to the existence of constituency-level alliances. **Sometimes, electoral alliances among parties are made at the national level -- these are the alliances that we would like you to identify. Information is sought on who is allied with whom and on the nature of the electoral alliance.**

**a) Were electoral alliances permitted during the election campaign?**

****No, not relevant in US 2-party system

* Yes

**8. Party Leaders, Prime Ministerial and Presidential Candidates:**

In legislative elections, please report the leader of each party, as well as the PM candidate.

In presidential elections, list presidential candidates and their parties. If candidates were endorsed by more than one party, please indicate this below.

Party Name English and Label Name of Party Leader Presidential / PM Candidate

A. Democratic Barack Obama Presidential

B. Republican Mitt Romney Presidential

**Part II: The Media and Secondary Organisations**

In order to contextualise the information which is provided by the surveys on media use, as well as organizational memberships, we would like to ask you to provide some details concerning these intermediary organizations.

**TV**

1. **Please list the major TV networks in your country. Indicate whether these are private or publicly owned.**

Private: ABC, CBS, and NBC broadcast networks; numerous cable networks with Fox and CNN attracting largest audiences

Public: PBS, with a combination of local and national programming

1. **Please indicate whether you consider them to be politically neutral or politically biased. If they are biased, please indicate whether you consider them biased towards a specific party or generically left- or right-leaning.**

In 2012, Fox was considered to be Republican and right leaning, decidedly so; cable network MSNBC was considered to be Democratic and left leaning. Others sometimes were criticized by ideologues for their biases, but objectively were neutral.

1. **Is the political information that the networks provide high or low quality information?**

News broadcasts are increasingly low quality, but many networks, especially cable networks, provide considerable political coverage in both straight reporting and opinion. PBS news is in depth, others less so, though some devote considerable air time to opinion, biased but in depth.

**RADIO**

1. **Please list the major Radio channels in your country. Indicate whether these are private or publicly owned.**

Private: except for some satellite channels with small audiences, almost all radio channels are local – though there is increasing ownership of multiple stations by national corporations. There are thousands of them. Programming even for them is mostly locally-produced, with the exception of some syndicated talk shows – the most popular of which is Rush Limbaugh’s.

Public: Public Broadcasting System, with a combination of local and national programming and local stations buying programming from each other and from the national corporation.

1. **Please indicate whether you consider them to be politically neutral or politically biased. If they are biased, please indicate whether you consider them biased towards a specific party or generically left- or right-leaning.**

Generally, radio news reporting is politically neutral. Where the bias appears, it is through the talk shows, most of them nationally syndicated like Rush Limbaugh’s (2014 audience of about 13 million weekly) and conservative on the private channels. Though criticized by conservatives as liberal leaning, the public network PBS (its National Public Radio network) is balanced by objective measures and attracts an audience for its morning news program of about 13 million weekly.

1. **Is the political information that the radio channels provide high or low quality information?**

Except for PBS, which provides high quality, in-depth information about politics and government and little opinion, radio reporting typically focuses on headlines and short reports. Radio talk shows contain considerable political information, though much of it is opinion, on the private channels.

**NEWSPAPERS**

1. **Please list the major Newspapers in your country. Indicate whether these are private or publicly owned.**

U.S. has no publicly owned newspapers and no truly national paper. No paper has an average daily circulation of more than 2.5 million print and digital in a nation of 314 million people in 2012. The largest circulation papers were in order the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *USA Today*); no others exceed total circulations of 700,000 in 2012. The top three are available through home delivery in many cities across the country, and almost all are available on digitally.

1. **Please indicate whether you consider them to be politically neutral or politically biased. If they are biased, please indicate whether you consider them biased towards a specific party or generically left- or right-leaning.**

It is important to differentiate between the editorial pages, where bias is commonly exhibited, and the “reporting” pages where the professionalism of reporters limits it. *The New York Times* has left-leaning editorial page, while the *Wall Street Journal* is decidedly right-leaning. Their reporting, however, is more neutral. Many local papers are politically biased on their editorial pages, more right-leaning than left-leaning, but for only a few does this bias carry over to reporting.

1. **Is the political information that the newspapers provide high or low quality information?**

*The New York Times* provides high quality, in-depth information and often is regarded as the US’s “paper of record”. Only the *Washington Post* matches it in covering politics and government in a high-quality way, especially in concentrating on the federal government. *Wall Street Journal* content is often high quality, especially in covering business and the economy, but does not focus as much as the above-mentioned others on politics. Most “local” papers will carry wire service stories on national politics, but focus more on local politics, sometimes with high-quality information. The financial decline of newspapers in the US has led to reduced newsroom staffs, which affects particularly their coverage of local politics and government.

**SECONDARY ORGANISATIONS**

**TRADE UNIONS**

1. **Please identify the major Trade Unions in your country. Describe their internal characteristics, including whether they function as closed/open shop; how the members are elected; their approximate size vis-à-vis the labour force, as well as other relevant information.**

Union membership in the US has fallen from about 20% of the workforce in 1983 to 11% in 2013. Only 7% of private sector workers are unionized vs. 36% of public sector workers, a number which has been growing. Half of the American states prohibit closed shops, and that number is growing as closed shops and public unionization has been under attack since 2010. The major unions, order of size, are the National Education Association (teachers); the Service Employees International Union; the American Federation of Teachers; the Teamsters; the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Many US unions are confederated into the AFL-CIO, which represents over 50 different national and international American unions. While most US unions have politically active national offices, there is a tradition of local chapter control, especially in certain industries such as the trades.

1. **Please indicate for each Trade Union above whether it is linked to a specific party, and state its name.**

Since the 1930s, unions have been an important part of the Democratic party coalition and are among the most generous funders of Democratic candidates for office. The Teamsters are the only one of the large unions that has given noticeable support to Republicans. Republicans generally view the unions as Democratic stalwarts.

**RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS**

1. **Please identify the major Religious organizations /Churches in your country. Describe their approximate size vis-à-vis the population, as well as other relevant information.**

In religious preferences, Americans have been divided in recent years into Catholics (21% in a 2014 Pew Survey), Evangelical Protestants (25%), Mainline Protestants (15%), unaffiliated (23%), Black Protestants (7%) and non-Christians (6%) and a scattering who do not fit into any of the aforementioned categories. The %s of religious people, including Catholics and Protestants, have been declining, while the unaffiliated group has risen across the past decade. The Catholic Church is hierarchical, while most of the Protestant churches are decentralized, some Evangelical to the point of having been created by someone without ministerial training who simply desires to build a congregation.

1. **Please indicate for each Religious organization/Church above whether it is linked to a specific party, and state its name.**

To retain their tax-free status, churches cannot formally endorse candidates for office, but many of them send clear signals about who they support. Evangelical Protestants are an important part of the Republican base, in some states constituting a majority of voters in that

party’s nomination process. Catholics used to be an important part of the Democratic base, but now split almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans based largely on ideology. Black Protestants are heavily Democratic, and a clear majority of Jews are Democrats as well.

**OTHER RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS**

**14. Please give details of any other relevant secondary organizations. Describe its internal characteristics, where relevant, as well as its size, and state its political links.**

The US probably has more secondary organizations than any society in the world (close to 40,000 by some estimates), and it is well known as a nation of joiners. Some of them, especially labor unions, business organizations, and a growing number of ideological organizations, have created separate Political Action Committees or what are called 403c4’s (which do not have to report donors) under the tax code to be able to provide support for political candidates and/or take positions on policy issues.

**Part III: Data on Electoral Institutions**

**Definitions**: Whenever a country’s electoral system includes **only one** electoral formula, it is said to have one segment. Increasingly, electoral systems around the world use more than one electoral formula. In these cases, the number of segments that exist depend on whether the formulas are related for the purposes of seat allocation or not. If they are, then there is still only one segment since the formulas are integrated to some extent. That is the case in Germany. If they are not related, then each electoral formula and the districts it is applied in counts as one segment. This is the case in Lithuania, for example: there are 71 single-member districts that operate under a majority runoff system, and also a single nationwide district that operates under proportional representation (the largest remainders method with the Hare quota).

An electoral district is defined as a geographic area within which votes are counted and seats allocated. If a district cannot be partitioned into smaller districts within which votes are counted and seats allocated, it is called primary. If it can be partitioned into primary districts, and during the counting processthere is some transfer of votes and/or seats from the primary districts to the larger district, then the larger district is called secondary. If a district can be partitioned into secondary districts (again with some transfer of votes and/or seats), it is called tertiary.

1. **How many segments are there, as defined above, in your electoral system?**

For presidential elections, the US uses the 50 states and the District of Columbia as its electoral districts, with the number of “electors” in the Electoral College (which elects the President by majority vote) determined by the number of Senators (2 in each) and Representatives (from 1 to 53 based on population) in each state in 2012. All but two states in 2012 allocated all of their electoral votes to the plurality winner in the state’s popular vote. In two states, electoral votes are allocated to the plurality winner in each of the state’s congressional districts.

For congressional elections, the US is divided into 435 districts of about equal size, though the smallest states are guaranteed at least one district. And, each state also elects two Senators.

**Please answer the following questions (questions 2 through 7) for each segment of each directly elected house of the legislature:**

1. **How many primary electoral districts are there?**

For the US Senate, each of the 50 states elects two Senators. For the House, there are 435 districts. The District of Columbia has no representation in either the Senate or the House.

1. **For each primary electoral district, how many members are elected from each district? If district variation exists please state the average district dimension as well as its range.**

The state’s US Senators are elected in different years, except when there are vacancies. The state’s US Representatives are elected in single-member districts. Except in a few states, the winner is the candidate who receives the plurality of the votes; a few require a run-off between the top two is no one wins a majority.

1. **Please explain in detail how votes are cast by voters. First, indicate how many votes can be cast. If more than one vote can be cast, can they be cumulated? Are votes cast for candidates, lists, or both? Finally, state whether votes are transferable.**

Each voter can cast one vote for in each House and Senate contest. If there is a vacancy in the Senate, both Senators can be elected in the same year, in different contests, but this is a rare occurrence.

1. **We would like you to explain exactly how votes are converted into seats. Please state the electoral formula(s) which are used. Indicate whether there is a legally mandated threshold that a party must exceed before it is eligible to receive seats, and state what the threshold is. If there are lists, please explain their characteristics, namely whether they are open, closed or flexible.**

For the US Congress, the candidate with the plurality wins the seat, except in a handful of states that require a runoff if a majority is not achieved in the first round. In several states, candidates from all parties run in the first round, with the two top vote-getters in the runoff is there is no first-round majority.

**Definitions**: A list is closed if the seats that are awarded to that list are always occupied by the candidates in order of their appearance on the list (i.e., if the list gets x seats then necessarily the top x names on the list get the seats). A list is open if the question of which candidates on the list get the seats that are awarded to the list is determined solely by the votes that each candidate receives. A list is flexible if parties place their candidates in the order they would like to see them elected, but voters can, with varying degrees of ease, change this order through votes they cast for individual candidates.

Party lists are not used in the US.

**Part III: Data on Regime Type**

Below are various questions about the type of regime—presidential, parliamentary, semi-presidential—in your country. There are two potential problems with these questions that should be noted at the outset. First, in some countries there may be a discrepancy between the *de jure* (or legal) situation and the *de facto* (or practical) situation. For example, in Great Britain the Queen still possesses a legal right to veto legislation, but this right has not been exercised since 1707. In the case of such obviously obsolete powers, please answer according to the de facto situation. Otherwise, describe the *de jure* situation. A second potential problem is that the questions may not be phrased optimally for the situation in your particular country. In such cases, please answer as best you can, providing some indication of the difficulties as you see them.

**Definitions:** The **Head of State** is typically the highest ranking official in the executive branch of government. Often, this position is held by a president or a monarch, and may be more ceremonial than effective. The Head of Government is usually the highest ranking official in the legislative branch of government. In some systems, this may be someone other than the Head of State (i.e. the prime minister in the Westminster systems), while in other cases, the roles of the Head of State and Head of Government are combined (i.e. in the United States, the president serves as both the Head of State and the Head of Government).

1. **Please indicate who the Head of State is and how s/he is selected. If the Head of State is elected, please indicate in detail the election system. Is it a direct or indirect election? If the election is direct, how many rounds of voting are there? If there is a second round of voting how are candidates chosen for this second round? If the Head of State is elected indirectly please state the procedure involved. How is the electoral college formed? Does it deliberate? What voting procedure is used by the electoral college?**

The President is the head of state, elected indirectly by a majority vote of the Electoral College, which gives the plurality winner in each of 50 states and the District of Columbia all of its votes, except in two small states where votes go to the plurality winner of the congressional district. The Electoral College never meets as a body, so the process operates automatically.

In some countries, the **Head of Government** is directly elected, in elections that may or may not occur concurrently with legislative elections. In these cases, the Head of Government is said to be elected independently of the legislature. In others, the Head of Government is the leader of the governing party or governing coalition in the legislature, and so, the selection of the Head of Government depends upon the distribution of seats in the legislature. In these cases, the Head of Government is not elected independently of the legislature.

President is head of government, elected independently from the national legislature, though at the same election every four years.

1. **Please indicate who the Head of Government is and how s/he is selected. If the Head of Government is elected independently of the legislature, please indicate in detail the election system. If the Head of Government is selected after legislative elections, please indicate how it happens.**

The US has separation of powers, with independent elections for its President and its legislature. This allows one party to control the presidency while another may control one or both houses of the national legislature. The 2012 produced a divided government, with the lower house of the legislature controlled by the Republicans, while Democrats held the presidency and the upper house. The US has had divided government for about 2/3rds of the years since World War II.

1. **Indicate the way(s) in which the government can be dismissed, and the Legislature can be dissolved, if at all.**

There are no provisions in the US for dismissing or dissolving a government.

In some countries, the Legislature has two Chambers. We would like to obtain the following information regarding the organization of the Legislature in your country:

**4. Please indicate whether there is a second chamber in your country, and explain briefly the way it is formed, i.e. whether through direct or indirect election.**

US Congress has 2 chambers, with members of both selected through direct elections.

**5. How would you describe the actual legislative powers of the Second Chamber:**

1. **More or less, equal to those of the first Chamber overall.**

The upper chamber (the Senate) has the sole power to confirm (or not) presidential nominations for top executive branch positions and life-time positions on the federal courts and to ratify (or not) treaties, though treaties are rarely used these days for agreements with other countries. Budgets appropriations must originate in the lower chamber (the House), but the upper house can exercise its own preferences, though both chambers must pass a spending bill in identical form for it to become law.

**8. Please indicate if there is a constitutionally guaranteed division of power between the central government and regional and/or local governments? Does the central government have the power to remove elected officials of regional and/or local governments?**

The U.S. is a federal system, with a constitutionally guaranteed (though often frequently) division of power between the 50 states and the national government. There are no regional governments between the states and the national government. Local governments are “creatures of the states,” which means that they exercise only the authority that the state gives them. Sometimes they have considerable authority through state-granted “home rule” provisions but states can rescind “home rule” at their will.

 **Part VI: References**.

**Please list any resources that were consulted in the preparation of this report, or that the CNEP community may find especially helpful in understanding the political system described here.**

Any American government textbook would describe the architecture of the political system. Other information can be found by Googling the particular topic.