

Intermediaries in the Consolidation of neo-Democracies: The Role of Parties, Associations and Movements

Philippe C. SCHMITTER

European University Institute

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Economists were no better prepared to understand and guide the course of the unexpected transitions from command to market economies than were political scientists to understand and guide the even more numerous transitions from autocracy to democracy, but they did have one major advantage. They had a *Leitmotif* which -if followed assiduously enough- seemed to guarantee success: **Get The Prices Right!**

Political scientists also had a potential slogan to peddle, but they were less assertive (and, perhaps, less self-convinced) than their economist brethren that it would work in all settings, times and places: **Get The Parties Right!** For there is hardly a serious student of democracy who does not seem to believe that political parties provide by far the most important linkage between citizens and the political process **and** that party platforms provide the best possible means for aggregating diverse interests and passions into a coherent, system-wide mix of public policies **and** that competition between these parties provides the most reliable mechanism for ensuring the accountability of rulers **and** that cooperation within and between these parties provides the only feasible way of forming viable governments¹. However, and unfortunately for the prestige of their discipline, political scientists are not so sure that they know what to do in order to get the parties right. Economists, especially those of the hegemonic neo-liberal persuasion, are very confident that they understand what it takes to get the prices right -and free trade in the international market conveniently tells them when they have reached their goal. Alas, there is no perfect market in political parties operating across national boundaries!

In this essay, I shall explore critically this orthodoxy with respect to the leading role of political parties and ask whether or not other types of organized intermediaries might have their significant role to play in promoting the consolidation of democracy -at least, in the contemporary period. But, first, a brief *excursus* into the meaning of some of the key concepts.

CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

Theoretically, the notion of consolidating democracy sounds puzzling and even oxymoronic. Intuitively, however, its meaning seems rather obvious. After a period of considerable uncertainty and unknown duration during which the previous autocracy “transits” to some other form of political domination, it becomes necessary to transform its improvisations into stable rules and alliances under which actors can compete and cooperate on predictable terms. From a

“war of movement” in which many have high expectations (and some have great fears) about the magnitude of change, the democratic struggle should settle into a “war of positions” along established lines of cleavage for mutually agreed upon advantage². *Consolidation could be defined as the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectivities, i.e. politicians and citizens, that participate in democratic governance.* If it sets in, the democratic regime will have institutionalized uncertainty in certain roles and policy areas, but it will also have reassured its citizens that the competition to occupy office and/or to exercise influence will be fair and circumscribed to a predictable range of outcomes. Modern, representative, political democracy rests on this “bounded uncertainty” and the “contingent consent” of actors to respect the outcomes it produces³.

Nothing ensures that consolidation will be successful in all cases -unless one assumes (as very few analysts do these days) that democracy is either a functional requisite or an ethical imperative. Neither the level of economic development, the stage of capitalist accumulation nor the hegemony of the bourgeoisie can automatically guarantee the advent, much less the persistence of democracy. Nor is this regime outcome the inevitable product of some previously attained level of “civilization”, literacy, educational attainment or distinctive political culture. This is not to deny that affluence, a relatively equal distribution of wealth, an internationally competitive economy, a well-schooled population, a large middle-class and a willingness to tolerate diversity, to trust adversaries and to settle conflicts by compromise are not advantageous; just that democracy still has to be chosen, implemented and perpetuated by “agents”, real live political actors with their distinctive interests, passions, memories and, why not, *fortuna* and *virtù*. No doubt, they will be constrained by the above developmental and cultural factors, but there is still plenty of room for making right or wrong choices. Even the most inauspicious setting can still give rise to an attempt to democratize, *vide* Haiti, Mongolia, Benin and Albania and, who knows, some of them may succeed -*vide* India, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Portugal and Papua-New Guinea, none of which seemed to stand much of a chance when they began changing regimes.

Let us not, however, be misled by all this emphasis on choice and voluntaristic action. *The core of the consolidation dilemma lies in coming up with a set of concrete institutions that politicians can agree upon and citizens are willing to support in a specific context.* Arriving at a stable solution, especially in the climate of exaggerated expectations that tends to characterize the transition,

is no easy matter. Not only are the choices **intrinsically conflictual** -with different parties of politicians preferring rules that will ensure their own re-election or eventual access to power, and different groups of citizens wanting rules that will ensure the accountability of their professional agents- but they are also **extrinsically consequential**. Once they are translated *via* electoral uncertainty into governments that begin to produce public policies, they will affect rates of economic growth, willingness to invest, competitiveness in foreign markets, distributions of income and wealth, access to education, perceptions of cultural deprivation, racial balance, and even national identity. To a certain extent, these substantive matters are anticipated by actors and incorporated in the compromises they make with regard to procedures, but there is lots of room for error and unintended consequence. In the short run, the consolidation of democracy depends on actors' and citizens' ability to come up with a solution to their intrinsic conflicts over rules; in the long run, it will depend upon the extrinsic impact that policies made under these rules will have upon social groups. Here is where the "objective structural realities" of levels of development, positions in the world economy, conflicts over sectoral product and distributions of welfare, and the "subjective preferences" of classes, generations, genders, *ethnies*, status groups and situses re-enter the picture with a vengeance. Given the likelihood that some time must elapse before the new rules of cooperation and competition produce observable results, it seems safe to assume that the process of consolidation will be a great deal lengthier than that of transition.

REPRESENTATION AND TYPES OF INTERMEDIARIES

Whatever institutions are chosen and implemented in a given context, it is very likely that the solution will involve a central role for mechanisms of representation. Modern democracy -at least, in all polities above a certain scale- relies heavily on the indirect, not to say, vicarious participation of its citizens. Rulers are held accountable -if at all- by competition and cooperation among intermediary agents who "re-present" the interests and passions of citizens, grouped in various categories and levels of aggregation, before public officials. Moreover, these intermediaries have become more organized, specialized and professionalized over time in the roles they perform. And, as we shall see, they have recourse to a greater variety of channels of representation and levels of aggregation than in the past.

Which is one of the major reasons why it may not be so prudent to assume that most, if not all, of the work of representation will be performed by political parties

-especially when it comes to accomplishing the very complicated task of consolidating a viable democratic regime. Just a moment's glance at any Established Liberal Democracy (ELD) would reveal how many of these multiple channels between citizens/firms and authorities/agencies are filled with organizations other than parties. Even more disturbing is the observation that much of this activity by intermediaries has little or no relation to what parties supposedly do best, i.e. structure electoral choices and form governments.

Hence, consolidating contemporary democracy may be a more differentiated and variegated process than in the past. My suspicion is that many students of Fledgling Neo-Democracies (FNDs) are committing one or both of two potential fallacies of anachronism:

(1) either they are ignoring the very substantial changes that have taken place in the nature and role of parties in ELDs; or

(2) they are presuming that parties in today's FLDs will have to go through all the stages and perform all the functions of their predecessors.

I believe that it is preferable to assume that today's citizens -even in polities that have long suffered under authoritarian rule- have quite different organizational skills, are less likely to identify so closely with partisan symbols or programs, and more likely to defend a much more variegated set of interests than in the past. Moreover, the new regimes are emerging in an international environment virtually saturated with different models of successful collective action. All this may not strictly preclude a hegemonic role for parties in the consolidation process, but it does suggest that they will be facing more competition from interest associations and social movements than their predecessors, and that we should revise our thinking about democratization accordingly.

For simplicity sake, let us delineate three generic types of intermediaries: **political parties** (PPs), **interest associations** (IAs) and **social movements** (SMs). All are organizations; all attempt to link the preferences of persons, families and firms to various agents and agencies of government; all seek to aggregate the individual preferences of their members or categories into collective demands; all are protected by formal political rights of assembly and petition in democracies; all have some degree of autonomy in their internal processes; all wish to influence the form and content of public policy. Within each type, needless to say, there are major differences in organizational structure,

material resources, size of membership, degree of loyalty, extent of encompassingness, strategies of influence, likelihood of success, and so forth - but what interests us most are the differences between these three types of intermediaries and how these differences might influence the consolidation of democracy.

The distinguishing characteristic of PPs is their role in the conduct of territorially-based elections. They nominate candidates to compete in these periodic events who, if they win, occupy specified positions of authority, form a government and accept responsibility for the conduct of public policy. IAs seek to influence the direction of policy so that it will benefit particularly (and, if possible, exclusively) their own members without competing in elections or being publicly accountable for these policies. SMs are also in the business of trying to exert influence over policy without competing in elections or becoming accountable to the public as a whole, but the benefits which they typically seek would accrue, not specifically to their own members, but to a broad spectrum of the citizenry -even to foreigners, plants, animals, fishes, reptiles and prospective beings from other planets. These different foci of activity tend to imply other modal differences in organizational structure, relations between followers and leaders, motives for participation, level and type of resource mobilization, dependence upon allies and external sources of support, capacity to incite loyalty or hatred, etc.

Needless to say, the three categories are not airtight; mutants and hybrids are being born all the time. Nor is it the case that every organization that calls itself a party, an association or a movement really deserves the label. Lots of parties inscribed on the electoral lists never stand any realistic chance of winning and are therefore associations or movements "in disguise". Some IAs can become so influential that they determine the occupants of specific government roles and are even "credited" by the public with direct responsibility for public policies; some SMs pretend to speak for broad social categories, but are really interested in promoting the welfare of their own members -even only the welfare of their own staffs. The only claim that I am advancing for this trilogy, beyond its obvious utility in reducing a wide range of variance, is that there tends to exist greater variation in organizational characteristics across these categories than within them.

On the basis of this descriptive claim, I will advance the hypothesis that **these three types of intermediaries all play a significant role in the consolidation of FNDs** and, moreover, **there is no longer any *a priori* reason to suppose that PPs should be privileged or predominant in this regard.**

Contemporary democratizers are the beneficiaries-*cum*-victims of a worldwide process of diffusion of organizational forms and techniques. Once their transitions from autocracy have begun and minimal rights of assembly and petition have been established, they are likely to be literally invaded by parties, associations and movements of extraordinary variety -some of which had no previous experience or objective basis in the country. This is the exotic “flora and fauna” that FNDs must simultaneously deal with if they are to consolidate their regime changes, not the gradually shifting and usually sequenced emergence of intermediaries that populated the earlier cases of democratization in the ELDs. Political parties may have played that leading role in the past, but not necessarily in the present or future.

THE (CONSOLIDATING) FUNCTIONS OF PARTIES

One way of exploring this rather unorthodox assertion is to take a (critical) look at the “functions” which political parties are supposed to perform, especially in the light of what it is supposed to take to consolidate a democratic polity. The list of benevolent tasks (“eufunctions”) that PPs are capable of performing is very extensive. If one is to believe the literature, there seems to be almost nothing that political parties have not done, at one time or another. However, if one attempts to separate out those tasks which are only performed by some “super-party” (the German SPD or the Swedish SAP have often been exploited to illustrate how many things PPs are capable of doing), the number of “functions of partisanship” shrinks considerably.

1. Political parties, first and foremost, should structure the electoral process by nominating candidates for office, by recruiting persons to participate actively in campaigns and, thereby, by offering to citizens aggregated in territorial constituencies a choice between alternative sets of leaders. The successful performance of this function becomes considerably more difficult if one adds the caveat, proposed by Norberto Bobbio, that the alternative products offered to the “electoral consumer” should be real and significant in terms of citizen preferences. Let us call this: the function of “electoral structuration”.

2. Political parties should provide most citizens with a stable and distinctive set of ideas and goals (symbols) which anchor their expectations about democracy, orient them in a general way toward policy options and

make them feel part of the process of collective choice. Needless to say, this function of “symbolic integration” makes a significant contribution to success in performing the function of electoral structuration, although there is reason to believe that party identification can only be acquired gradually across several political generations⁴.

3. Political parties, once they have competed in the electoral process, should be capable of forming a government and of providing an internal structure to the legislative process -whether they do so alone or in alliance with other parties and whether the executive and legislative posts are independently or concurrently filled. *Nota bene* that, in order to do this well, PPs should be capable of maintaining a consistently high level of internal discipline during their terms in office, although to make this a strict functional requisite would surely disqualify many electoral groupings from acquiring the label of parties. We will call this: the “governing function”.

4. Underlying all of the above functions is a single assumption: **political parties must be capable of aggregating the interests and passions of a significant proportion of the citizenry by channelling the expectations of these individuals, families, firms, associations and movements through their internal processes and producing a program that mixes public policies in such a way as to satisfy the general demands of their constituents.** It should be noted that it is not required (or even expected) the PPs will monopolize the “aggregative function” and, hence, force all individuals and collectivities to process their expectations through partisan channels. The process of representation is capacious enough than some persons and groups should find room to interact directly with authorities, but it should be the system of PPs that plays the most prominent role in packaging the more discrete and fragmentary demands into more manageable general objectives and proposals.

Not all individual parties perform these functions and some of them may engage in a much broader range of activities: entertainment; civic education; policy analysis; publication of newspapers; ownership or control of broadcasting facilities; provision of social services; staffing of public enterprises; management of cooperatives; recruitment and training of association and movement leaders; maintenance of public order; formation of shadow cabinets; and so forth. But where the system of political parties as an ensemble does not fulfill the above four “core” functions, or even where it finds itself competing heavily with other intermediaries to do so, one can legitimately question whether or not PPs are

really so indispensable for the consolidation or simple perpetuation of democracy⁵.

THE FUNCTION OF STRUCTURING ELECTORAL COMPETITION

This is the primary function for PPs, in the sense that it is this activity that constitutes their strongest claim to a distinctive political role. And there is no question that organizing rival candidacies for office and campaigning for the vote of citizens in territorial constituencies was crucial for their initial prominence in most FNDs. Parties had relatively little to do with the timing and even the content of the transition itself, but once credible elections had been convoked and their outcome was uncertain, they took over center stage from the governing factions, interest associations and social movements that (usually) had contributed more to bringing about a change in regime. Leaders, funds, energies and expectations shifted toward those intermediary organizations that got their names onto the electoral lists. Depending on the party and electoral laws (which the initial parties often had a major role in drafting, hence, the consequent difficulty in deciding whether the electoral law “produced” the party system or *vice-versa*), the number that managed to do so varied considerably: relatively few in Southern Europe where the continuity with past labels was greater; more in Latin American parliamentary elections and fewer due to the polarizing effect of presidential elections; and very much more in Eastern Europe where partisan continuity was lowest and the thresholds for registration of new parties unusually low.

The subsequent “founding elections” were (usually) held in an atmosphere of “civic orgy” with exceptionally high turnouts and the pageantry of a national revival. Only in Hungary did less than 65% go to the polls initially⁶. However, with almost monotonic regularity, the rate of abstention rose with each election thereafter. In Southern Europe where regime consolidation has been greatest, the turnout rate has tended to stabilize within the relatively high range that is characteristic of well-established democracies in the rest of Europe. In Eastern Europe where initial expectations were probably higher, the subsequent disenchantment (*desencanto*) with electoral contests has also been greater. In the Polish local elections of June 1994, the turnout dropped to American levels: 34.1%⁷.

It is in two important regards that PPs do not seem to be capable of performing well their “historic” function of structuring electoral choices in a reliable and relevant fashion:

(1) Politicians without the support of major parties have not only managed to get themselves nominated as candidates for high office and run on “anti-party” programs, but they have been rewarded for doing so by the electorate. Admittedly, this is predominantly a Latin American trait, with Alberto Fujimori of Peru as the prototype, followed by Fernando Color and, subsequently, Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil and Rafael Caldera in Venezuela. All were elected **despite** rather than **because** of the pre-existing party system. In Argentina, Carlos Menem was duly nominated by “his” party, but he subsequently chose to follow policies diametrically opposed to those historically associated with it (and to those under which he had campaigned). Nevertheless, the candidacies of Lech Walesa in Poland and Václav Havel in the Czech Republic have also been distinctly “supra-party”, either in the sense that they were nominated without the manifest effort of a party or that their election did not depend on the support of a particular party or alliance of parties.

More-and-more one gains the impression that it is independent political entrepreneurs who are buying an existing “party brand” or creating a new one exclusively for their own purposes rather than *vice-versa* as is presumed by the party literature. And even when an established one selects “its” candidate, the campaign and subsequent process of forming a government depends more upon that candidate’s personality than on party organization, finance and programs⁸. To North Americans, this may sound like a familiar story, but to Europeans (from whence most of the theorizing about the generic types and roles of parties has tended to come) this must seem like a perversion of the norm -not to say, a threat to democracy itself.

(2) Citizens in the FNDs seem aware of these “loose couplings” between parties, their candidates and their platforms, and have responded opportunistically by switching their voting preferences from one election to another. According to data gathered by Maurizio Cotta on electoral volatility between successive elections, four of the new democracies after the Second World War had aggregate percentage shifts of 23% (Italy), 21% (Germany), 12% (Austria) and 6% (France) -roughly comparable to the length of their preceding autocracies⁹. In Southern Europe, the comparable figures between the first and second elections were 22% (Greece), 11% (Portugal) and 11% (Spain). But the biggest differences came between the second and third elections: 27% for Greece, 10% for Portugal and a phenomenal 42% for Spain, while three of the post-1945 democracies had markedly lower volatility in the second round (France is the exception). In Latin America, the volatility has been even greater¹⁰, and in

Eastern Europe it has broken all records. For example in Poland, 70% of the electorate switched parties from the first to the second elections -admittedly, the latter were held under different rules- and another 35% from the second to the third. In Slovakia, the aggregate percentage shift was 41%. It was a bit more stable in the Czech Republic at 28%. The only Eastern European country with an electorate that came even close to mimicking what Western European party systems had displayed almost 50 years previously was Bulgaria with only a 20% shift between the first and second elections, but that increased to 36% between the second and third rounds)¹¹.

All this is not to deny that PPs are unbeatable as intermediaries when it comes to organizing territorial constituencies and simplifying voter choices -and all FNDs need a competitive system of parties if they are to fulfill the formal requisites for democratic status. What supra-party candidacies and elector volatility do suggest, however, is that informal elite arrangements and independent citizen reactions are bypassing these channels and, presumably, decreasing the subsequent importance of party-structured legislatures and party-identified voters. Even the elections themselves seem less-and-less capable of providing citizens with a convincing link to the political process, as is witnessed by falling rates of voter turnout.

THE FUNCTION OF PROVIDING SYMBOLIC IDENTITY

The primary weapon that PPs have in their effort to “fix” the electoral preferences of the citizenry is their capacity to manipulate symbols and memories in such a way that, over time, individuals come to identify with them. Regardless of the candidate(s) they choose or the program(s) they espouse for a specific contest, their core identifiers will vote for them as the party that “naturally” represents them. Philip Converse has advanced a very elegant argument that this necessarily involves the intergenerational transmission of norms and, hence, is likely to take something on the order of 40+ years before the electorate as a whole has acquired this “anchor” for their political/electoral expectations¹².

Except in the rare case where the autocracy had been short-lived and PPs from the former period could be easily revived, e.g. Greece, most contemporary FNDs had to create a system of parties *ex novo* -often by borrowing names, symbols, slogans and platforms from abroad or from the country’s very remote

past¹³. It quickly became apparent that these new PPs were not going to be capable of replicating the heroic role that parties played in early democratizations.

For one thing, they have attracted very few card-carrying and dues-paying members -even when one compares them only with the post-1945 democracies. Italy probably represents the most "party-centric" case of consolidation during that period and, appropriately, it has (or, better, had) one of the highest coefficients of party membership among ELDs -about 14%. Greece with ca. 8% is the only FND in Southern Europe that comes even close. Only 4 to 5% of Portuguese and Spaniards admit to being members in any PP¹⁴. South Korea, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland all report comparable or lower figures¹⁵. Only Bulgaria (22%), Ukraine (15%), Czechoslovakia (11%, before the separation) and Romania (9%) had higher proportions of the national sample in parties -and one suspects that this is to be explained mainly by the larger number of "hangers-over" from the previously dominant communist party.

For another, they did not seem even to be providing much of a diffuse political identity for citizens. When asked whether they felt close to any political party, national sample surveys reported as few agreeing as 19% in Poland, 36% in South Korea and 37% in the Ukraine with most of the countries hovering around the 50% mark (Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Spain). Only in Bulgaria and Romania did it approach 2/3 of the adult population -and that presumably reflects greater continuity with the cadres of their respective Communist Parties. Part of the reason for this can be gleaned from responses to another question which asked whether parties offered different policies. In all of the above countries (except for Poland and the Ukraine) between 65% and 75% of those surveyed said that parties did not differ much from each other¹⁶.

So low are these figures for membership and identification that they call into question one of the central tenets of party advocates, namely, that only PPs are capable of "aggregating" the largest number of potential citizens and, therefore, of representing the broadest, i.e. most public-regarding, range of interests. In many FNDs, sports clubs, neighborhood groups, religious associations and trade unions have much larger actual memberships than do political parties -and one suspects they might even have a more socially heterogeneous and committed membership. What is more to the point, however, are the perceptions of citizens of the "representativeness" of these different intermediaries. To my knowledge, no survey data on this issue exists for Southern Europe and Latin America, but there is apposite research on four Eastern

European countries, thanks to the Central European University's data files on "The Development of Party Systems and Electoral Alignments in East-Central Europe". As reported by Gábor Tóka, the rankings on a 1 to 7 scale show that political parties **as a whole** do worse than most types of associations and movements, with environmentalist groups getting a particularly high rating. On the other hand, the respondents tended to give a higher ranking to the party they liked most than to any of the associations or movements. For example, those giving an equal or better rating to non-party representatives than to their preferred party were 46% in Slovakia, 41% in the Czech Republic, 37% in Poland and 30% in Hungary. However, in Slovakia only 14% of the sample gave an absolutely better score to some association or movement than to any of the major parties. The proportion was 17% in the Czech Republic, 18% in Hungary and 31% in Poland¹⁷. Without comparable figures, it is hard to judge whether this represents a significant shift away from parties as the "natural" representative organization for citizens.

There are other less obtrusive indicators of the declining capacity of PPs in FNDs to provide a stable and valued political identity: the absence or virtual disappearance of party newspapers; the substitution of voluntary by paid labor in campaigns; the decline in attendance at party congresses (if and when they are held at all); the failure of parties to penetrate, much less to control, associations and movements as they often did in the past (especially on the Left); and, as the operational culmination of all these micro-level trends -the much higher levels of volatility in electoral outcomes and the much greater frequency with which ruling/governing parties are thrown out of office!

THE FUNCTION OF FORMING GOVERNMENTS

Electoral structuration may be the most distinctive function of PPs, but the most important when it comes to regime consolidation is their capacity to make (and unmake) governments. Regardless of how parties do in presenting alternative candidates and providing attractive political identities, if they are incapable of playing a leading role in filling top political offices and supporting the policies of a subsequent government, then, they are in deep trouble as agents of democratization.

We have already hinted at one difficulty in performing this role: relatively rapid turnover in power due to electoral volatility (or, in some parliamentary cases, factional defections that result in premature elections). Historically -that is to say,

in the waves of democratization that accompanied World Wars One and Two- one party tended to emerge as predominant because of its identification with the change in regime and to remain in power for ten to twelve continuous years, e.g., Ireland, Finland, West Germany, Italy and Japan. In the post-1974 FNDs, the opposite has occurred. In all but two cases (Chile and the Czech Republic) the initially victorious party has been defeated in the first or second subsequent election -and, often, by a large margin. This rapid turnover in power is not just an unobtrusive indicator of the malperformance of the first two generic party functions, but it is also a manifest sign that the new parties are having a difficult time forming and, especially, retaining effective governments.

Also, part of the responsibility lies with the distinctive type of party that often emerged as the winner of the founding elections. They have been dubbed "Forum Parties" in that they provided a common platform for resistance against the previous autocracy by grouping together a wide range of disparate political formations. Initially, they were much closer to being social movements and some were reluctant to transform themselves into parties. The Spanish UCD of Adolfo Suárez was the prototype and, like its successors, it collapsed into a multitude of factions once electoral competition really took hold -suffering the worst electoral defeat (a loss of 29.3% points between the elections of 1979 and 1982) in the history of modern democracy. Solidarity in Poland, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence in Czechoslovakia, Popular Front in Estonia, Democratic Russia in Russia and the UDF in Bulgaria had similar fates.

But this "birth defect" of some party systems is not enough to explain the pervasive pattern of ineffectual party government. Granted that the winners in today's FNDs seem not to have enjoyed the same initial margins of victory as their predecessors after 1918 or 1945 (although I admit that this is just an impression since I have not yet gathered the requisite data), and granted that the subsequent development of public opinion has made all elected governments more susceptible to being rejected for their association with poor economic performance (and I suspect, but cannot prove, that living standards, growth rates and levels of employment declined more after democratization than previously - especially, in Eastern Europe and the successor republics of the former Soviet Union). Still, something has changed in the way that winning parties or coalitions relate to the selection and control of leading government personnel.

Ironically, this cannot be due to any reluctance on the part of the winners to assume the prerogatives of governing -occasional protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. Quite the contrary! The "political class" that is forming in

contemporary FNDs is much more likely to be composed of aspirant professional politicians, i.e. of persons who intend to live **from** and not just **for** politics. The “founding fathers” of most ELDs consisted of relative amateurs who had other professions and relatively little interest in perpetuating themselves in power. FND *políticos* need continuous access to public authority (and even more specifically to public money) since they often have no independent source of income to rely upon and since their parties alone are incapable of rewarding them materially or spiritually. Moreover, precisely because they have so few loyal dues-paying members, contemporary PPs themselves have become much more reliant on public funding. There has also been a tendency for the new constitutions to refer more explicitly than in the past to the role of parties and even to attempt to ensure them monopolistic access to specific funds and forums. The irony arises because, despite these efforts, parties are less capable of exercising a monopoly over elite selection, of disciplining the subsequent behavior of those who are selected or of ensuring that their program gets implemented when “they” are in power. Patronage in the sense of favoritism in appointments to government jobs and awards of government contracts continues to be a mainstay of PPs and may even have increased in importance under conditions of weak economic performance, but effective control over the macro-aspects of public policy has declined.

The most obvious development limiting the government-forming and policy-making role of parties in FNDs is “globalization/ regionalization”. Greater and more complex forms of economic interdependence, reaching beyond the traditional spheres of foreign trade and overseas fixed investment into the productive structure of multi-national enterprises and the instantaneous flows of speculative capital, have narrowed the range of “permissible” policies. Coupled with this has come the formation of so-called “intergovernmental organizations” (IGOs) such as the IMF and the IBRD at the global level or “supranational organizations” such as the EC/EU and its various policy agencies at the regional level. Their leverage is all the greater since most FNDs inherited economies misdeveloped, devastated and/or deeply indebted by preceding autocracies and since the approval of an apposite functional IGO or membership in an appropriate regional organization has become a virtually *sine qua non* for attracting badly needed foreign investment. One of the most salient ways in which an FND can obtain such a certificate of good conduct is place its macro-economic management in the hands of technical experts whose competence is recognized by these very same organizations. Needless to say, relatively few of these technocrats have any stable party affiliations and their preferred solutions frequently clash head on with the programs of parties, especially those on the Left. Given the declining mobilizational capacity of these very same parties, it is

decreasingly likely that they will be able to contest the policies of their own technocrats!

But my hunch is that the decline in the viability of the party government function is not just the result of globalization or regionalization. Its deeper roots lie in the combination of greater professionalization of the role of politician and greater dependence upon the state for revenues and recognition. These, obviously interrelated political factors, are driving PPs away from their earlier functions of structuration and identification and that, in turn, makes it more difficult for them to control the behavior of governing elites on the grounds that they “represent” the interests and passions of civil society and individual citizens. In the corporatist version, the shift is toward organizations -mostly recognized and monopolistic interest associations- that do not so much represent as intermediate between members and authorities and, in so doing, play a key role in forming the preferences of their members and in collaborating with authorities in the implementation of policies. In the (more common) pluralist version, the shift is toward weaker and less “identifiable” political parties and stronger and more “insistent” social movements -with less visible and highly specialized associations (and even individual firms) working unobtrusively in the background, exploiting direct contacts with public officials that circumvent partisan channels as much as possible. Not an encouraging picture for PPs no matter which direction one looks!

THE FUNCTION OF AGGREGATING INTERESTS AND PASSIONS

Most of the normative case for the superiority of PPs as intermediaries seems to hinge on the good performance of this function. **Because** parties are the only institutions capable of aggregating a broad spectrum of interests and passions, **therefore** they are the only ones legitimately entitled to rule in the name of the society as a whole. Even though, by their etymological origin (if nothing else), they are bound to represent only a “part” of the citizenry, the competition between parties and/or the cooperation among parties when they form governments is supposed to compel them to offer general programs designed to appeal beyond their core militants and constituencies in ways that are denied to interest associations and social movements -no matter how hard the latter work at “catching” as many members as possible. Even if -as now seems often the case- PPs have less members and -as sometimes seems the case- less reputable images than IAs or SMs, the process of competition in which they are engaged should force them to address larger issues and aspirations.

In earlier periods, the primary weapon of PPs as aggregators was their articulation (one is tempted to say, their embodiment) of a distinctive ideology. By offering to citizens a comprehensive vision of how much better the society might look if they were given responsibility for governing, parties seemed to ensure that the political process would attend to “the will of the public as a whole” and not just the specialized interests of associations or momentary passions of movements¹⁸. With the decline in credibility of most of these partisan ideologies and the convergence toward a relatively narrow range of general policy objectives, PPs tended to shift towards a “catch-all” strategy after World War Two that aimed at appealing to as many voters as possible, i.e. to those closest to the median position on most issues¹⁹. Not only did this weaken their symbolic capacity, but it tended to encourage more opportunistic behavior on the part of the voters. Rather than aggregate “actively” by asserting a higher public purpose, PPs aggregated “passively” by assembling a multitude of private purposes. This helped some of them, no doubt, to escape from their class or regional “ghettos” and to win general elections, but only at the expense of their functional performance.

Parties in the post-1974 FNDs (with a few marginal exceptions) are the beneficiaries-*cum*-victims of this prior decline in credible ideologies and constriction in feasible policy alternatives. Not only have they a less differentiated product to peddle, but most of them have virtually no accumulated “ideological capital” to draw upon²⁰. Moreover, they have to cope with three additional difficulties in their contemporary efforts at aggregating interests and passions:

(1) Ideology was rarely the only aggregative device deployed by PPs. They also tended to rely heavily on inter-organizational linkages with other types of intermediaries. While this was particularly important for progressive parties in their allegedly “organic” connection with the workers’ movement, trade unions, producer and consumer cooperatives, etc., conservative parties also tended to have stable alliances with business and professional associations, lodges and fraternal societies. Where they existed, Farmers’ Parties were literally the electoral expression of agrarian associations.

In FNDs, these linkages have proven much weaker -either because the entire realm of civil society is less developed or because, thanks to the belated timing of “free and fair” elections, newly emergent movements and associations are much more concerned with protecting their organizational autonomy. Moreover, in those cases where these units of civil society are being promoted by outside actors, i.e. those famous NGOs, they are being advised (even compelled) not to have any connection with PPs. In Southern Europe where there did exist

strong and resilient ties between movements, associations and parties at the beginning of the transition, these weakened when the latter were forced by international constraints to resort to restrictive policies that conflicted with the specific interests of workers, retirees and other “policy-takers”²¹.

(2) The technology of electoral competition and, one is tempted to say, politics in general has changed dramatically with developments in the mass media. Parties no longer own or control their own media. And they have only very limited channels of direct access to their members or potential voters (rallies, caucuses, conventions, etc.). So, they must increasingly rely upon media owned and controlled by others to send out their message. And where that media is privately owned, competition among firms for audience shares and revenues tends to bias not only the access that different parties have to their respective publics, but also the content of their messages. State ownership of the media - with a few honorable exceptions- virtually guarantees bias in favor of the governing party.

Effective aggregation of interests and passions, if it takes place at all, occurs not directly through channels internal to parties and their “sister” organizations but indirectly through the media before undifferentiated mass audiences. Especially when the message is transmitted *via* television, its form and content must be tailored to fit parameters imposed by this medium -which seems to have opened up the electoral process to “telegenic” candidates with little or no party experience or loyalty.

(3) Closely coupled with the growing reliance on mass media has come another shift in the technology of contemporary electoral politics: the development and increased reliance upon opinion surveys and other polling devices to capture the expectations of mass publics. Candidates, even those who go through the ranks and are nominated by some regular party process, have tended to develop their own apparatus for sounding out public opinion. They do not need to rely upon partisan channels for guidance; indeed, in their quest for vote maximization, they may become quite wary of such “biased” sources. Witness the enormous rise in the importance of political consultants -most of whom are proud of their ability to work across party lines. Not only has this already affected the electoral process in FNDs, but the consultants they employ (at least, initially) are often recruited from outside the country!²².

My hunch is that this ready availability of public opinion data has undermined the aggregative role of PPs *per se*. Not only does the information

come to candidates independent from partisan channels, but they use it “passively” to position themselves as closely as possible to the median voter on each issue -irrespective of the compatibility of the positions they take. Parties abandon all pretense of “actively” intervening to form and direct the opinions of their members/followers toward some higher and more general set of goals. And, once “their” candidate has won, he or she is saddled with a mish-mash of incompatible (if popular) promises that cannot be satisfied simultaneously, thereby, generating further disenchantment with the vacuousness of party platforms and the perfidy of party politicians.

CONCLUSION

I would be the first to admit that what I have attempted above is what the French call a *réquisitoire* -a selective and, therefore, biased assemblage of observations intended to place the PPs of FNDs in the worst possible light. No doubt, had I compiled more systematic data and evaluated them more objectively, I would have uncovered greater evidence that political parties in the fifty or so countries that have changed their regimes since 1974 have performed some critical functions during the subsequent attempts to consolidate their respective democratic regimes.

Nevertheless, one of the major reasons that I am so convinced of the basic weakness of PPs in these FNDs is that **virtually all the difficulties that they have been experiencing are also being experienced by contemporary PPs in the ELDs**. The crisis of representation/intermediation through partisan channels seems to be generic, not specific to neo-democracies.

This has been partially disguised by the fact that the older parties are still drawing on political capital accumulated during their “heroic age” when they did provide strong identities, offer dramatically different alternative programs, produce major realignments in voter preferences, and form epochal governments that appealed to a broad range of citizen interests and resolved major social, economic or military crises. At least since the mid-1970s they have been spending down this precious principal with each successive election. Only by substituting state funds for the decline in symbolic identifications and voluntary contributions and only by relying increasingly on the personal appeal of individual candidates (many of whom have little or no prior party experience) instead of on the compellingness of their programs have they managed to sustain their nominal prominence in the minds of most citizens²³.

Students of political parties are fond of using the metaphor of the “gatekeeper” to describe their subject matter²⁴. It seems to appeal to them to think of political parties as if they constituted a select and disciplined corps of actors, resplendent in their symbolic trappings, who effectively guard the Citadel of Government by keeping the “special interests” articulated by individuals, firms, localities, associations and movements from disturbing the rulers, and only letting through the gates those that have been aggregated into broader, and possibly more other-regarding “public interests”. Moreover, for most of these students, the fewer the number of gatekeepers the better since that should ensure a more encompassing process of aggregation.

But what if the gatekeepers were no longer guarding the “real” points of access to political power? What if, inside the Citadel, there were an increasing variety of specialized redoubts staffed by “guardians” recruited for their technical expertise and their non-partisanship -each with its own secret passages?²⁵ And what if there were more-and-more political agents within the walls leaking information to the *hoi-polloi* outside and letting them inside the Citadel discretely through a proliferation of side-entrances? And what if the resplendent trappings of those gatekeepers were increasingly paid for from public funds rather than voluntary contributions, and their meager salaries were increasingly supplemented by money and status coming from the more affluent individuals and groups among the *hoi-pollo*? Would students of democratic politics then spend so much of their time and effort studying political parties?

So, ironically and retrospectively, it may be fortunate that political scientists did not rely so heavily on that “**Get the Parties Right**” slogan. For, under contemporary conditions, there may be no way to get them right -if, by right, one means that they should be capable of performing well all those four functions and, thereby, a role comparable to that which they played in earlier processes of democratization.

Which is not to say that any of the other forms of organized intermediation between citizens and public authorities are likely to do much better! Interest associations and social movements are certainly more numerous and prominent than during previous waves of democratization, but that does not imply that either of them or both of them together can provide their members/followers with overarching collective identities, structure political competition in meaningful ways, form (and accept responsibility for) governing the polity and aggregate a diversity of social interests and passions into a coherent program of government.

Contrary to the more organic versions of Functionalism (with a capital F), there is no reason to expect that simply because these tasks are not being adequately performed by PPs in most FNDs some other organization must take them over. Nor do I see any *a priori* reason for assuming that all forms of intermediation are locked into a zero-sum struggle for attention, loyalty, funds, or whatever. Some democracies have strong parties, associations and movements; others are weak in all of them; most have varied mixes of them.

What seems more probable (to me) is that FNDs, like many ELDs, are going to have to survive with a lot less intermediation than in the past. Their PPs will inevitably produce a great deal less electoral structuration, symbolic identification, party governance and interest aggregation than did their forerunners. What this implies for the “quality” of these neo-democracies is another issue!

NOTES

1. So "instinctual" is this faith in parties that it is sometimes inserted on top of what an author explicitly states. Samuel HUNTINGTON's status as a disciplinary guru is such that the following quote of his is frequently cited by contemporary students of democratization: "The vacuum of power and authority which exists in so many modernizing countries (and, allegedly, in so many democratizing polities -PCS) may be temporarily filled by charismatic leadership or by military force. But it can only be filled permanently by political organization. Either the established elites compete among themselves to organize the masses through the existing system, or dissident elites organize themselves to overthrow that system. In the modernizing world, he (*sic*) who controls the future is who organizes its politics", *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 461 -as cited in PRIDHAM, G. and LEWIS, P.G.: "Introduction: Stabilising fragile democracies and party system development" in PRIDHAM, G. and LEWIS, P.G. (eds.): *Stabilising Fragile Democracies. Comparing new party systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*. London, Routledge, 1996, p. 5. Although Huntington said "political organizations", those who cite him presume (probably correctly) that he was exclusively referring to political parties -as if elites could not possibly organize and compete in other forms and forums.
2. The distinction between these two generic types of political struggle comes from GRAMSCI, Antonio: *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by HOARE, Q. and SMITH, G.N. New York, International Publishers, 1971, p. 108-110, 229-239.
3. For this emphasis on uncertainty as "the" characteristic of democracy, see PRZEWORSKI, Adam: "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy" in O'DONNELL, Guillermo and SCHMITTER, Philippe C. (eds.): *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, vol. III. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 57-61. For the emphasis on the limited scope of uncertainty and its link to contingent consent, see SCHMITTER, Philippe C. and LYNN KARL, Terry: "What Democracy is ... and is not", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. III, n° 3/Summer 1991, p. 75-88.
4. CONVERSE, Philip: "Of Time and Partisan Stability", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 2/July, 1969, p. 139-171.
5. For some reason, scholars working on the "generics" of political parties seem to keep coming up with four functions, even if the four are almost never defined in exactly the same fashion. Two recent examples of "quadri-functionalism" are VON BEYME, Klaus: "Party Leadership and Change in Party Systems: Towards a Post-Modern Party State?", *Government and Opposition*, vol. 31, n° 2/1994, p. 135-159 and WESOLOWSKI, Włodzimierz: "The Formation of Political Parties in post-communist Poland" in PRIDHAM, G. and LEWIS, P.G. (eds.): *op. cit.*, p. 229-253.
6. Poland is a confusing case in that its first contested election in 1989 had a 43.2 % turnout, despite the negotiated and limited nature of the competition. In its first "free and fair" elections in October 1991, only 43% of the eligible voters turned out!
7. SABBAT-SVIDLICKA, Anna: "Local Elections Redress Political Imbalance in Poland", *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 3, n° 27 of 8 July 1994, p. 1-8.
8. Consider the following unobtrusive indicator: the proportion of campaign literature (poster, pamphlets, flyers, etc.) that do not mention the party affiliation of the candidate, just his or her picture or slogan. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever gathered this information, but I suspect that it would show a steady tendency to increase over time -discounting, of course, for those countries where illiteracy or the law requires the use of party symbol or name.
9. Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair have calculated the average electoral volatility among European ELDs as less than 8%. See: BARTOLINI, Stefano and MAIR, Peter: *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability. The Stabilisation of European Electorates 1885-1985*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 27-34.
10. Michael Coppedge reports an average volatility score for the FNDs of Latin America of 30%. "Freezing in the Tropics; Explaining Party Volatility in Latin America", paper presented at Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1995.
11. There is a third dimension to the performance of the electoral structuration function about which I have no data, only a suspicion. In the past, repeated elections under a stabilized party system usually had the effect of "nationalizing" the electoral process, i.e. of reproducing more-or-less the same correlates of class, status, gender, religious affiliation, generational differentiation, and so forth with partisan preference across the national territory. My impression is that party systems in post-1974 FNDs have not tended to eliminate initial regional differences, and may even have encouraged their expression. Of course, this could be due more to

the fact that contemporary democratizations have often been accompanied with a decentralization of internal political and administrative *compétences* than to weaknesses in the emergent parties themselves.

12. *Op. cit.*, FN 4.

13. Actually, the Greek case is a puzzling one in that the two major parties did change names, formal organizational structures and many of their leading personnel, but nevertheless managed to reproduce most of the characteristics of the pre-authoritarian party system. For a subtle account, see SPOURDALAKIS, Michalis: "Securing democracy in post-authoritarian Greece: the role of political parties" in PRIDHAM, G. and LEWIS, P.G. (eds.): *op. cit.*, p. 167-185.

14. These data come from MORLINO, Leonardo: "Consolidation and Party Government in Southern Europe", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 16, n° 2/1995, p. 150.

15. Data contained in CHULL SHIN, Doh: "Political Parties and Democratization in South Korea: The Mass Public and the Democratic Consolidation of Political Parties", *Democratization*, vol. 2, n° 2/Summer 1995, p. 35. The data on Eastern European cases comes from a survey conducted by Laszlo Bruszt and Janos Simon.

16. CHULL SHIN, Doh: *op. cit.*, p.33. There is some controversy over the reasons for such low levels of party identification in East Central Europe. Initially, several authors speculated that it stemmed from a general "cultural" antipathy generated by the previous meaning of party membership in a "Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist" system. Laszlo Bruszt and Janos Simon have stressed the importance of "amorphous" or "flattened" societies in which class differentiation does not offer a sufficient anchoring for collective identities and, hence, fails to produce reliable links to PPs. BRUZST, Laszlo and SIMON, Janos: "The Great Transformation in Hungary and Eastern Europe" in SZOBOSZLAI, György (ed.): *Flying Blind. Emerging Democracy in East-Central Europe*. Budapest, Hungarian Political Science Association, 1992, p. 177-203. Also OST, David: "Labor, Class and Democracy: Shaping Political Antagonisms in Post-Communist Society" in CRAWFORD, Beverly (ed.): *Markets, States and Democracy*. Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p. 177-203.

Bernhard Wessels and Hans-Dieter Klingemann confirm the absence of class-related voting, but document that other social differentia are correlated with partisan preferences: age, education, union membership, religiosity. Nevertheless, Wessels and Klingemann conclude that "there is not yet an entirely clear relationship between social structure and the vote, especially not with respect to class. And if a relationship exists, it does not always fulfill the expectations derived from the Western experience". See: BERNHARD, Wessels and KLINGEMANN, Hans-Dieter: "Democratic Transformation and the Prerequisites of Democratic Opposition in East and Central Europe", Veröffentlichung der Abteilung "Institutionen und sozialer Wandel". Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, FS III 94-201, p. 12-15.

17. TÓKA, Gabor: "Parties and electoral choices in east-central Europe" in PRIDHAM, G. and LEWIS, P.G. (eds.): *op. cit.*, p. 103. Tóka concludes, after noting that the ratings for political parties in general tend to be unfavorable, that "the overwhelming majority of citizens tend to find their best political representative in a political party rather than other organizations". p. 104.

18. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan offer a typical (and recent) example of such an assumption: "A consolidated democracy requires that a range of political parties not only **represent** interests but seek by coherent programs and organizational activity to **aggregate** interests". LINZ, Juan and STEPAN, Alfred: *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 274.

19. The *locus classicus* for the identification and (critical) observation of this trend is KIRCHHEIMER, Otto: "The Transformation of the Western European Party System" in LAPALOMBARA, J. and WIENER, M. (eds.): *Political Parties and Political Development*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 177-200.

20. The one obvious exception to this, the Communist Parties of Southern Europe and Latin America -some of which played a sustained role in the resistance against autocracy- saw their electoral strength (and party membership) dwindle with each successive election after the change in regime. It should be noted that in Spain and Portugal this was the case before the collapse of the Soviet Union served to discredit even further their ideological appeal.

21. While, admittedly, I have not examined this systematically, I have not detected in FNDs (nor in other ELDs) the inverse trend which seems to be affecting the party system in the United States where a dramatic increase -not decrease- in interorganizational linkages has been taking place. One party (the Republican) has been virtually taken over by a social movement (the Christian Coalition); the other party (the Democratic) has benefitted from an extraordinary revival in its links to the trade union movement.

22. The one item of new political technology which does not (yet) seem to have affected FNDs (or most European ELDs) is the computerized mailing list of potential contributors. Whether it is because of higher mail costs or less reliable delivery or the absence of relevant data files or the presence of laws protecting data

confidentiality, they have been spared this innovation -which, if I am to judge by the daily volume of appeals in my mail, have become a major source of funding for candidates (and, occasionally, for parties) in the United States.

23. One of the most extreme manifestations of this decline is *partitocrazia*, i.e. an extreme inflation of the role of PPs, both with regard to the staffing of public positions and the profiting from public policies. The term was invented in Italy, but has been applied to other polities such as Belgium. See for this: De Winter, Lieven; Donatella Della Porta; Kris Deschouwer 1996. Comparing Similar Countries: Italy and Belgium in: DESCHOUWER, Kris; DE WINTER, Lieven; DELLA PORTA, Donatella (eds.): "Partitocracies Between Crisis and Reform: The Cases of Italy and Belgium", Special Issue of *Res Publica* (the Belgian Journal of Political Science), vol. XXVIII, n° 2/1996, p. 215-235, and DE WINTER, Lieven: *The Italo-Belgian partitocratic type compared to fourteen West-European countries*. Paper presented at the 1996 Annual APSA Meeting; San Francisco, September 1996.

According to my interpretation, party-ocracy is a product of weakness, not strength. The more that a given party loses its traditional stock of voluntarily supplied symbolic resources and fails to control major areas of policy-making due to trans-national and technocratic forces, the more dependent it becomes upon resources provided directly or indirectly by the state. As a result, the advantages of partisanship become more concentrated in the higher echelons of party organization and the temptation to profit personally increase correspondingly -hence, the strong odor of corruption that accompanies the term.

24. David EASTON seems to have originated it: *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. New York, Knopf, 1971.

25. See Robert Dahl on guardians in: DAHL, Robert A.: *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press; p. 52-64.