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PARTIES AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION: AN INITIAL MAPPING.

by

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Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to provide a tentative inventory of problems subsumed under the term political mobilization which is one of the three major themes pursued in the European University Institute project on The Future of Party Government initiated by Professor Rudolf Wildenmann. It takes the use of the words "political mobilization" for granted, although certain queries have rightly been raised about the use of the term "mobilization". Thus one could note: the allegation that it has been uncritically transferred from the literature on totalitarianism to the study of open democratic political systems (Sartori[1]); the objection raised by Gunnar Sjöblom that it is conceptually and grammatically mistaken to speak of a person mobilizing him- or herself, instead of being mobilized by others; or the view that the term political mobilization should really be used only for the process of induction of new groups into a political system in the processes of mass democratization (as analyzed above all by the late Stein Rokkan[2]).

The concept of political mobilization is treated in three companion papers, presented to the June 1982 Conference by Samuel Barnes, Max Kaase and Birgitta Nedelmann. For this very general paper a few elementary notions should suffice. We shall conceive political mobilization in terms of linkage processes between different elites groups on the one hand, and citizens on the other. Action can be taken from either side. One of the major, and in a democratic era undoubtedly most legitimate, linkages is provided by what is usually termed the "partisan-electoral channel". In systems with responsible government, universal suffrage, and open, competitive elections, parties put up candidates and programmes in a competitive struggle for representation and office. This is held to ensure democratic accountability, and allows citizens to express definite preferences for persons and policies.

Obviously, parties do not provide the only, exclusive channels in the interation between leaders and followers. There are a host of other intermediate actors, including the bureaucracy, organized interest groups, ad hoc action groups and the mass media. Both leaders and individual citizens can seek to short-cut party by more direct forms of contact, as in plebiscitary stances of leaders, or the seeking of direct access on the part of citizens. Moreover, neither citizens nor leaders come to their interaction tabula rasa. Leaders inevitably have other links, i.e. with other parties, and the various other intermediate actors just mentioned. Holding offices also demands the fulfillment of specific roles and responsibilities. Citizens, on the other hand, are socialized into political life by numerous agencies beyond party, including the family, educational institutions, churches, recreational associations and the work-place; they are affected by experiences with alternative agencies like the bureaucracy or interest groups, and also undergo life-cycle effects.

Yet for reasons of clarity it seems useful to proceed in the following analysis in three successive steps:

1. We shall first treat the role of parties as agencies of political mobilization in abstracto, assuming that one can consider the problem of linkages between parties and citizens in isolation from other intermediate agencies. Section III will explore problems raised in the relation between citizen and party (in the singular), Section IV in his relation to the party system (or parties in the plural);

2. We shall then consider the role of parties as agencies of mobilization, taking into account the interaction of parties with other possible agencies of political mobilization, including interest groups, action groups, the media

and the bureaucracy. Given that this problem has very different aspects, whether one views it from the perspective of rulers, or from that of the citizens, the analysis will again be split in two sections: Section V traces the problems from the top downwards, and Section VI looks from the citizen upwards;

3. Finally, we shall present a few general propositions on trends towards a possible displacement of parties by other agencies of political mobilization.

But before we go into the analysis, some remarks will be made on historical mobilization processes (Section II). It might be argued that such a subject hardly has a real place in a project which deals with The Future of Party Government. Yet, we shall seek to show that current analytical approaches, normative discussions and even political problems have their roots in experiences over a much longer time-span than of the post-war period alone.

This paper is exploratory in nature. At this stage it cannot but show a somewhat uncertain mixture between normative concerns (as expressed in the general project on The Future of Party Government), analytical statements (based on logical and conjectural reasoning), and empirical illustrations taken eclectically from different European countries.

II. PARTIES AND HISTORICAL MOBILIZATION PROCESSES

We tend to regard the development of political parties as the natural and inevitable concomitant of mass democratization processes. Yet, a closer inspection of the record reveals that the manner of democratization left a legacy which has had an impact on discussions of the role of parties, as well as on the functioning of parties themselves, to this day.[3] We shall order our remarks in this section along the following themes: the lingering impact of anti-party sentiment; the view that parties are essentially a transient, because transitional phenomenon; assumptions that at one time "a golden age of party" existed; the impact for better or worse of developmental perspectives in the drawing up of typologies in the field of party analysis; the Rokkan freezing proposition; and the general issue on whether parties are dependent or independent variables in relation to social changes.

1. Lingering anti-party sentiment

From at least two sides the legitimacy of parties has been contested in the period of mass democratization, from that of traditionalist-aristocratic doctrines on the one hand, and ultra-democratic reasoning on the other. In the first perspective there was no place for the lower orders of society to tinker with the precious institutions of authority. When parties did eventually arise, they were at most assigned a highly restricted sphere for political action - a view long buttressed by legal doctrines which resisted the very idea of a Parteienstaat. A denial of party from a very different perspective derived from the teachings of Rousseau and his disciples. Starting from egalitarian premises, they emphasized the need for immediate and total participation of each individual, not mediated by partial associations or delegated representatives. Hence, neither parts, nor parties or partisans, were really

compatible with the expression of popular sovereignty in a volonté générale. The first (authoritarian) tradition and the second (ultrademocratic) tradition are curiously married in populist doctrines which emphasize the need to tie leaders and followers directly together through plebiscitary devices which are not meant to divide political society but to cement the bonds between a leader and a people postulated to be fundamentally at one.

Clearly, these varied doctrines have been unable to stem the growth of parties in all stable, competitive democracies. Yet, it is as well to remember that they often exert an influence on contemporary "critical" discussions of the role of party in modern society.

2. Parties as a transient phenomenon?

A number of authors have argued that parties should really be regarded as a historically specific phenomenon thrown up by a transition from a mainly "traditional" to a more "rational-legal" social order in the Weberian sense. Parties were necessary instruments to bring new social strata into the political process, so it is argued, but once "parochials" have turned into "subjects" and better, into "citizens" in the Almond-Verba sense, parties have outlived their usefulness. Instead citizens can act directly in different social groups according to specific issues at stake, while simultaneously bureaucratic agencies and the legal system allow adequate direct action for specific goals in which party may be a hindrance rather than a help. It is as well to remember that such sentiments were already voiced by classical authors like Ostrogorski[4] and Michels[5] who turned increasingly negative towards the very idea of party, and to recognize similarities on the other hand between such views and current anti-party sentiment of neo-democratic ideologues. A useful subject for study would be to probe such similarities, and to investigate to what degree they spring from particular political situations, in partic-

ular countries and social groups.

3. Was there ever a 'golden age of party'?

The view that parties were essentially historically-specific agencies of initial mass mobilization, allowed yet another opinion to grow up which colours many of our present-day discussions, i.e. the idea that at one time in the history of mass democratization parties could rightfully claim to be spokesmen par excellence for clear principles and distinct social groups which they organized and mobilized in effective social action. Yet, in the very act of their achieving success parties could not help being corrupted, by the opportunism of office, by a blurring of social cleavage-lines which inevitably followed successful social integration of their clienteles, by internal bureaucratic sclerosis, etc. However, the idea of a "golden age" of party is likely to be myth, rather than reality - called forth by post hoc idealization more than by a clear inspection of actual records. At a minimum, one should again emphasize that the actual role of parties in processes of political mobilization and emancipation were very different as between parties and countries. In some countries parties which predated the processes of mass democracy adapted in forms which were often very effective for all their being far from heroic (e.g. the US party system in the time of machine politics). In yet other cases, universal suffrage was imposed from above with the clear intention to integrate voters in the state rather than in parties regarded with little sympathy (e.g., in Bismarckian Germany, and in a very different manner in a Bonapartist or Gaullist France). Again, in countries where parties did play an important role in mobilizing new groups into political life, not all parties were equally effective in different time periods, in different regions, or in relation to different social groups. At least one disadvantage of looking at parties with historicist-ideological blinkers is that it leads one to exag-

gerate the degree of mass participation and mobilization, or even the salience of party and party politics, for the citizenry at large even in the time of an expanding suffrage - a factor which cannot but lead to exaggerated and prejudicial views on contemporary developments.

4. Developmental typologies: Duverger and Neumann

Maurice Duverger derived both his distinction between cadre parties and mass parties, and that between internally and externally created parties, from a developmental perspective - relating them to the very different positions that notables on the one hand, and lower orders in society on the other occupied during the time of mass democratization.[6] Duverger posited a contagion from the left: mass parties were the result of a successful organizational effort of left-wing parties; once such parties had penetrated fully into the representative system, the need for competition would force other parties willy-nilly to follow suit. The argument is not very much different from that of Sigmund Neumann, who saw a trend towards evolution from parties of individual representation into parties of social, or even parties of total integration.[7] Paradoxically, there has been very little empirical testing of such assumed developmental "laws" towards ever increasing mass organization. But at least since Otto Kirchheimer[8] launched his alternative forecast about the inevitable development of catch-all parties, prevailing reasoning has tended to go into the direction of a relative weakening, rather than strengthening of parties as agencies of political mobilization. Again, the Kirchheimer proposition itself has come under fire for being a postulate rather than an empirical reality.[9] Clearly, we can only solve the problem whether such unilinear trends exist or not, by comparative analysis of a longitudinal nature.

5. The Rokkan freezing-proposition

If one speaks of the continuing impact of past mobilization processes on present-day politics, the Rokkan-freezing proposition[10] provides undoubtedly the most famous

example. Rokkan, too, analyzed the establishment of parties in Western Europe in terms of successive waves of mobilization of new groups in societies in which the suffrage expanded. Once parties had successfully integrated such new groups in the political system, party systems froze along the alignments which had given rise to them initially. As political conversion of voters from one party to another is a much more difficult task than the encadrement of new arrivals in a political market, party systems became relatively stabilized. Rokkan's analytical approach has been confirmed by a variety of studies (e.g. Rose-Urwin;[11] see also Pedersen on Party Lifespans[12] who indicated that the infant mortality of new parties is much greater than the death rate of more mature parties). Yet, there are a number of caveats. In the first place, different systems differ markedly in their aggregate volatility, with some systems becoming more and others less stable over time (see data in Pedersen[13] and Maguire[14]). Secondly, the present world of competitive party systems shows a substantial number of cases which did have marked regime changes. In some of them the party system has indeed changed drastically as compared with earlier periods of history (e.g., post-1949 Germany, post-1958 France; to a different degree all political systems in Southern Europe). Thirdly, recent research suggests that once frozen-alignments are thawing increasingly in a large number of countries, albeit at a very different rate (Maguire)[15]. Finally, it is one thing to suggest that the format and alignments of party systems show considerable continuity over time - this does not necessarily imply that parties within such systems are really a replica of their ancestors. Continuity may be the result as much of intelligent adaptation of parties as of a sclerosis of which they are sometimes uncritically accused.

6. Parties as dependent or independent variables

The point just made may be generalized. The literature knows two approaches which seem at first sight to lead to very

opposite conclusions. In one view, parties are above all historical-sociological phenomena; being the product of past political and social history they are thought to be mainly a dependent variable, then as now. In another view parties are very much the independent variable. Thus approaches analyzing party strategies in terms of formal models, as well as theories about rational voting, assume that both parties and voters are free to move, and in that process to determine actual outcomes. It is suggested that this apparent dichotomy runs very much into the danger of being a superficial simplification.[16] Even the most frozen of Rokkan's party systems have clearly survived only not because they were simply the products of happy history, but because their parties showed a remarkable capacity to heed - not to say: to meet - new challenges. "Stable" party systems have survived major challenges, including World Wars, a long depression, a period of reconstruction and unwonted affluence, sometimes losses of colonial empires, new international alliances, processes of political integration, and a variety of domestic societal changes (see the listing in the Wildenmann project proposal which rightly distinguishes between changes in governmental systems, societal changes and policy problems, l.c. pp. 7-9). Clearly, then, "old" parties have indeed proved a remarkable capacity to cope, which is something rather different from saying that they are dependent variables only.

On the other hand, the formal theories of parties and voting have had to recognize many limitations in practice, including ideological positions, inertia and familiarity considerations, permissible and non-permissible coalitions, policy distances, etc. which all seem to suggest that parties are not as "independent" as earlier theories confidently held. In The Future of Party Government project, the focus is therefore rightly on the combination of parties as being normatively as well as factually independent actors having to face new political and societal problems which are themselves not easily controllable, yet also are not forces of unstoppable doom.

III. PARTY AND CITIZENS IN ABSTRACTO

We now turn to an analysis of the relation between party and citizens, each seen in abstracto without taking into account the simultaneous existence of more than one party on the one hand, or the presence of alternative agencies of political mobilization on the other. Our concern is with the relationship of at least the following actors: party voters, party members, party militants, and holders of representative or executive office. We shall group our (inevitably eclectic) remarks around four headings: the problem of the electoral mandate which is supposed to bind voters, party members, party activists and leaders together in one agreed party position; the role of party militants; the conflicting trends towards party bureaucratization and a new amateur politics; and the possible conflict between parties as policy-setting and mere plebiscitary agencies.

1. The problem of the electoral mandate

In any discussion about the linkages between elected leaders and followers, the problem of what in England is called "the electoral mandate" looms large. The specific party platform which a party offers in elections, is the basis of its electoral legitimation, and it also forms the bond between elected representatives and their parties. But it is precisely at this point that problems emerge. For to whom are elected representatives accountable, to voters who choose them, or to party members who nominate them?

To Duverger the problem was inextricably bound up with his view about the natural development of parties: whereas cadre parties and internally created parties could easily emphasize a trustee concept of representation, mass parties and externally created parties inevitably came closer to politico and delegate conceptions of representation.[17] As his developmental "laws" lack genuine empirical validation, they can hardly solve our problem, however.

A contrary, equally simple explanation has been put forward by Robert McKenzie.[18] In his view, the force of parliamentary institutions cannot but shift the centre of actual power to the parliamentary leaders of a party, whatever the rules of a party say about its internal decision-making processes. His analysis has come under fire from Labour party critics like Miliband,[19] and seems increasingly unrealistic given contemporary developments of the British party system, where power seems to move increasingly towards extra-parliamentary actors, particularly in the case of the Labour Party.[20] Yet, explanation is complicated by the fact, that not only very different situations prevail in different parties, but also in different countries, and that we have very little really reliable information about the actual relations between elected representatives and extra-parliamentary party organs, at any one time, let alone over time.

A realistic analysis of the problem of the electoral mandate must begin from a realization, that its importance cannot be but relative. Any electoral programme, however well prepared, inevitably faces unforeseen circumstances which may cause havoc in the best intentions. Also, electoral promises find an unavoidable restraint in the realities of bureaucratic implementation and the restrictions of available resources. Moreover, whenever parties do not gain an independent majority, electoral promises will have to be adjusted to conflicting demands of coalition partners.

However, such logical relativizations do not really solve the dilemma - not least because party militants active in extra-parliamentary party organs are not likely to be passive spectators when they see an electoral platform for which they may have fought hard, being compromised. The dilemma is perhaps most easily illustrated by iuxtaposing a <u>party government</u> and a <u>party democracy model</u> (see table I).

Table I

THE PARTY GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY DEMOCRACY MODEL

I The party government model	II The party democracy model
Party leaders in office and/or representative positions should have freedom, because	Party leaders in office and/or representative positions should be accountable to extra-parliamentary party organs, because
- they owe their constitutional mandate to the voters	- they owe their selection, nomination and election to party
- office holders and representatives have a responsibility for continuous government and the national interest, beyond party	- office holders and representatives have a responsibility to enact policies, which were the basis of their program, as established by party
- no party can adequately foresee changing circumstances	- if policies must be changed, this is not only the concern of leaders, but also of the entire party
- it is impossible and undesirable to refer all decisions back to the party; this is particularly true in case of coalition government	- leaders have a tendency easily to identify their desire to stay in office, even at the expense of explicit compromises on party programmes, with party interest. It is the task of party to make sure that policy choices take precedence over leaders' interests
- there must be clear, individual responsibilities for political leaders themselves, if electoral accountability has to have any real substance	- democracy requires participatory procedures, not only periodical plebiscitary assent

In the first model, the emphasis is on the need to preserve freedom for elected representatives to act in the parliamentary arena. In the second model, the focus is on the contrary on the need for the leaders to remain accountable to those who nominated them. Neither model is by itself "right"; jointly they illustrate the conflicting cues to which political leaders are inevitably exposed. Any realistic analysis of political mobilization should therefore take the possibility of conflict between leader appeals to voters and to party activists into account.

2. Leaders, militants, members and voters

Parties differ greatly, not only in the number of their members, but also in the degree of membership activity and mobilization. Yet even in parties with a large and relatively active membership, true militants form at most a relatively small minority. Until the full results of the Reif study on Middle-Level Elites are in, we have as yet scanty evidence, and even that study will only give us one time-point in the life of each party covered, centred on one particular activity. May's "law" of curvilinearity[21] which concludes that activists tend towards relatively extreme ideological positions, compared to both leaders and ordinary party members and voters, has intuitive appeal and some evidence going for it. Yet much more comparative research in this area is necessary before unambiguous conclusions may be drawn. Assuming the "law" holds, how to explain the May-phenomenon? Is it because militants are by definition exclusively oriented towards party, while both leaders and ordinary members or voters are subject to greater cross-pressures? Should explanations be sought in the particular milieus and occupations from which activists tend to be recruited, i.e. those who have a relatively great control over their working hours, so that they enjoy differential advantage in spending time on political action, e.g., teachers, students,

employees in social organizations? Or should one rather think in terms of different positions and responsibilities, allowing for the fact that the ideologues of to-day are often aspirants for real power who once they attain their goal are likely to develop very different political orientations (in a process reminiscent of the Paretian theory about a natural circulation of elites, with lions turning into foxes)?

Whatever the possible explanation, we again lack reliable evidence on whether the role of party activists within parties has of late increased, or not. It is tempting to reason in terms of a wide-spread effect of the sixties, when a new generation (or rather a minority within it) was seized by ideological hopes and beliefs, and a willingness to resort to new types of political action, multiplied in its effect by (passing) media attention and (temporary) successes. It is also possible to argue in terms of new cleavages becoming salient in political perceptions, e.g.: international preoccupations veering from Cold War to North-South conflicts, the susceptibility of new affluent groups for post-materialist values; new concerns about the environment; renewed debates about the nature of capitalism; or conflicts about armaments and peace policies. It is perfectly possible to argue that on the one hand the real participation of rank-and-file members has declined in numbers and volume, and yet to insist that militants within parties have exerted an increasing pressure. But again, we have no real data, which must clearly differentiate between different parties and countries to be at all realistic.

For a proper view on the role of party militants, we should, moreover, have much more information on internal party decision-making. We have in fact remarkable little insight on a comparative basis on crucial questions such as: who appoints party leaders? How often do party congresses meet? What regulations exist on the degree of freedom for elected representatives? Who draws up, and decides on, party manifestoes? How binding are such manifestoes for

candidates offering themselves for election? Who nominates parliamentary candidates? What conditions exist for re-nomination? Do procedures exist for recall? How binding are decisions of party congresses? Which groups in the party decide on the formation or ending of political coalitions? Obviously statutory provisions can tell us something about such matters, but if anywhere the gap between actual behaviour and institutional prescription in the field of actual party politics is large indeed.

3. Party bureaucratization or a new amateur politics?

The (as yet scanty) literature on party organization and participation suggests two possible trends: on the one hand a growing professionalization and bureaucratization of party organizations, and an increased role for party-controlled personnel in government employ; and on the other hand a new tendency towards selective amateur politics.

The trend towards increased professionalization could be illustrated by the following developments:

a. elected representatives are becoming engaged full-time; the burden of parliamentary work has become such as to make a genuine combination with other employment increasingly difficult, if not impossible; a similar tendency is now also at work at sub-national levels;

b. members of representative bodies tend to receive increased staff support, whether from parliamentary services or from increased personal staffs;

c. the number of party-controlled executive positions tends to increase, as more "political advisers" are appointed, "ministerial cabinets" grow in numbers, advisory agencies expand greatly, and more generally there is increasing scope for patronage appointments;

d. in many countries there is increasing state financing of parties (whether through general grants or specific subsidies, e.g., for campaigning costs, research offices, cadre

training, youth work, etc.). To the extent that parties become less dependent on membership income, this factor may cause party elites to be less interested and concerned with membership activities and sensitivities;

e. there is an increased reliance on experts in such matters as research, relation to the media, professional campaigning, etc.

Until the findings of the Recent Changes-project are in, these five points are merely suggestive of possible trends. As yet we cannot substantiate two other trends suggested by Kirchheimer: the increased role of interest group representatives in parliamentary representation; and the considerably increased entry of former civil servants into politics. To the extent that Parliaments are becoming assemblies of organization men, their representative role may well become more selective, if not biased. Should one argue that politics, even in its party-controlled activities, tends to provide greater scope for political careers, in that there are more positions which demand full-time engagement, and which are increasingly attractive in terms of future prospects, providing a relatively open and fast channel for social climbers? If so, what do such developments imply for political representation and continuity?

As against such presumed trends towards increased professionalization, there is also an alleged increase in amateur politics. Notably the great expansion of the tertiary and quarterny sectors has resulted in increased numbers of persons who have relatively free control of their own working-time. Leisure time has increased for the population generally. But whereas a great majority chooses other ways to spend it than politics, certain categories are disproportionately represented in party activities: e.g., students, journalists, university staffs and others engaged in teaching, social workers, staff personnel of interest

groups, civil servants, to some degree women and retired persons. Some of these categories relate to the political process in a rather special manner (i.e., a more ideological one?). In as far as within-party activities become increasingly time-consuming, the role of those who indeed can match this development with an investment of their own time, may become even more selective. Could one, then, argue that internal party politics is increasingly being monopolized by a dialogue between the politically-employed and those whose employment or freedom from employment permit an equal amount of political effort - with the remainder of party members being reduced to spectator roles?

A true validation of such speculations is only possible through a close analysis of actual decision-making in parties. But some information can be had from other sources: e.g., a census of positions appointments to which are clearly controlled by party; a careful inventory of the cursus honorum of party elites; survey data as provided in the Middle-Level Elites-project; analysis of changes in the social background of members of Parliament and other representative bodies over time, etc.

4. Principles, platforms and plebiscitary stratagems

Parties derive their legitimation in democratic politics from their unique role of seeking voter approval for political programmes offered in elections. In the history of many parties, programmes of principles have been major documents in political thought and development. In as far there is a new upsurge of ideological politics, such programmes might regain high symbolic importance. The same is true for more specific election programmes. Presumably, the Manifestoes-project is likely to show a tendency for such programmes to increase in length over time, and to cover increasingly varied subjects. This is, on the one hand, a natural corollary of the widening of state intervention which potentially politicizes an ever-widening variety of social actions. But it also mirrors a desire on

the part of party to provide a place for sectional groups in its midst, as well as outside it (whether of organized interest groups, ad hoc action groups, or even simple categorical "groups" thought to need attention or wooing).

On the other hand, a variety of forces presses in the opposite direction. Thus, Budge and Farlie have argued that parties tend to "compete" not on the same issues, but on only those issues which they regard as comparatively favourable to themselves.[22] Modern electioneering emphasizes a clear selectivity of issues, as well as a strong personalization of a few, if not one, party leader(s). Also, modern politics is often also characterized by a shortening of horizons: attention goes out less to long-term policies and general principles, than to winning the next election, manning particular political offices, settling pressing political issues. If this diagnosis is true, it implies that there is an inherent conflict between the perspectives of ad hoc electioneers and office holders, and party activists who have pressed for long statements of principles and platforms exactly as a "guarantee" for desired action. It also illustrates again the dubious value of the concept of a definite "mandate", of which party activists tend to regard themselves as the chosen guardians, but which to leaders may be no more than tactical ploys or promises.

IV. PARTY SYSTEMS AND CITIZENS IN ABSTRACTO

So far, our review has been carried on, as if one political party, complete with its voters, members, militants, and leaders in different political roles, existed in isolation only. We must now shift our attention to the level of the party system, to do justice to the fact that in the actual world of politics voters and party leaders are faced with the simultaneous existence of more than one party actor. We shall divide our quick survey again into four points: the impact of the electoral system on the manner in which parties and voters

interact; the extent to which citizens can use their vote to affect the political system in a decisive manner; the comparative 'hold' of parties and the party system on the voters; and the possible dynamics of the party system over time.

1. The debate on the electoral system: constraint or not?

Since many decades two rival views have dominated the debate on the impact of electoral systems. Put succinctly: in one view, advocated above all by Hermens[23] and Duverger[24], electoral systems create parties. In his famous indictment Hermens attributed to PR ideologization of politics, fragmentation of political will, ineffective government, and a likely plebiscitary breakthrough of extremist movements. In contrast, a single-member plurality system forced a two-party system, with moderate parties contesting the middle ground between them. Duverger further elaborated on this view, by adding a third option in run-off systems also causing a gravitation towards the centre, but retaining a multi-party system. Again such views of the decisive impact of electoral systems, Rokkan suggested[25] that as a matter of actual record it was much more a question of party systems creating electoral systems, as parties which had crystallized around the time of the advent of universal suffrage, chose electoral systems which at a minimum were likely to consolidate their position.

At least two footnotes should be placed in connection with this debate. Sartori[26] has rightly made a distinction between "strong" and "feeble" electoral systems, the first forcing a certain organization of electoral forces, and the other mainly registrating passively whatever alignments and realignments (including possibly split-offs) occur in any particular party system. In the second place, there is little doubt that electoral reforms introduced after a clear discontinuity in political regimes did have a causal effect on the later development of party systems, as was amply

illustrated in post-war Germany where the 5% rule greatly assisted the growth of what Wildenmann and others have called a 2 1/2-party system. Similarly, institutional reforms including the electoral system, but also since 1962 the institution of a directly-elected President under a run-off second ballot system, was to have a large-scale effect on the eventual restoration and simplification of the French party system in the French Fifth Republic.[27]

In fact, the debate on the role of electoral systems has been renewed in the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, the increased polarization in two-party Britain caused many British political scientists to challenge the Hermens-Duverger-Downs assumptions about a natural tendency of two-party systems towards centrist government and moderation.[28] On the other hand, the record of coalition government was clearly upgraded, not least by Arend Lijphart's vivid challenge[29] of the Almond concept of a "continental-European system"[30] which did not really fit the case of what Lijphart himself was to call consociational democracy systems, and also by a more general awareness through studies of European cabinets that single-party government tended to be a relatively rare phenomenon in European parliamentary systems.[31]

Such developments have caused a remarkable mirror-game among reformist writers. Those familiar with a two-party system began to reject what S.E. Finer has called "the adversary model of politics" - witness the eager rush among present-day British political scientists, otherwise of very different persuasion, to reverse the traditional statement that "England does not love coalitions". On the other hand, the bi-polar model retains its attraction for reformists in multi-party systems. In addition to drawing on Downs' indictment of the basically irrationalist features of multi-party systems,[32] the dated belief in the merit of moderate swings of the pendulum, and the new impact of a post-Gaullist, and in particular Mitterand France, such reformers

also find solace in a simplistic reading of Sartori's typologizing of polarized pluralism.

Surely, the confusion and general self-righteousness of such debates make it a matter of urgent priority for political scientists and political leaders alike to spell out their hidden norms. Or should we really accept that one should simultaneously embrace such at first sight conflicting criteria as: the wish to have both alternation in government and continuity in policy; the view that political action should bring out differences and bridge cleavages; the desire to honour electoral mandates and the recognition that government presupposes the possibility to adjust declared intentions in the light of changing circumstances; the wish to retain "liberal" elite values and also to honour the sovereign will of the mass electorate, and so on?

Turning towards a more mundane level, we now have a fair number of studies which give us rather complete information on the manner in which votes are translated into seats (e.g., Wildenmann/Kaltefleiter[33], Douglas Rae[34]) under different institutional arrangements, including the major variable of size of district. Less satisfactory, however, is our knowledge on how different systems really affect parties and voters in the choices they must make. Speculation and simulation are all we can go on. But there, again, we are likely to run across Rokkan's argument that parties and voters do not act in a pristine world, unaffected by historical developments, but are in fact very much determined by the manner in which party systems grew out of particular cleavages, salient at a particular historical period.

2. The effect of voter choice: how decisive?

European parliamentary systems do not offer the same degree of voter choice, for reasons both institutional and relating to the format of party systems.

Practically in all countries, voters choose members to the Lower House, and to various regional and local representative bodies. But even on this score countries differ in the frequency of elections, as they do also in the degree to which the voter can influence the actual composition of the Second Chamber. The importance of the Second Chamber itself in different systems shows great variation, while such a body is absent in some countries. More important is the issue whether voters have a direct say in the election of the Head of State or the Premier - a variable which in very different ways has proved of substantial importance in Weimar Germany, Finland, or post 1962 France. Yet another difference lies in the extent to which systems have allowed referenda (binding or consultative). The greater the degree direct voting is allowed, the greater the potential challenge for parties. Can and should they seek to enter all contests on whatever level? Are referenda a way to short-cut parties (in a manner which may not be unwelcome to them whenever they are faced with untractable and divisive issues?). And to what degree do forms of a direct election of supreme executives strengthen a plebiscitary element in voter choice, so that parties may be becoming more dependent on leaders than leaders on parties?

At the level of the party system, the major variable is, of course, the degree to which voters are likely to bring about single-party majority governments, or at a more modest level, are able to force a substantial change in the composition of governments. We do have a somewhat sophisticated terminology to characterize the manner in which governments can change under the impact of elections, ranging from alternation, two-bloc parliamentarism, semi- and peripheral turnover, to Proporz-arrangements and Grand Coalitions.[35] We also have full inventories of the parliamentary base and party composition of Cabinets over a long time-span, as well as sophisticated theories about coalition-formation.[36] But what we do not have is clear and reliable information on a comparative basis what different institutional and party

arrangements imply for voter perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, let alone the general legitimacy of different democratic political systems. In that sense, the generally wide gap existing between scholars interested in institutions and overall political configurations of political systems on the one hand, and specialists on voting behaviour on the other, is regrettable and should be bridged.

One study we do have, which throws some light on the relation between voters and governments, is the study of Rose and Mackie prepared within the Recent Changes-project on whether incumbency in government pays or not.[37] "Common sense" confidently suggests two opposite conclusions. On the one hand, it is argued, that each government is bound to take unpopular decisions, and eventually to alienate some of its supporters; one would therefore expect government parties not to do well in elections. On the other hand, there is the assumption that governments work in the glare of publicity, that they can manipulate the economy once election time approaches, that they can choose a moment for elections which to them seems favourable (at least in those systems which permit such tactical dissolutions); from such propositions one would expect government parties to do well. In fact, Rose and Mackie show that the available evidence does not permit either conclusion - the electoral record of governments being too chequered. One overriding difficulty is, of course, that in many cases coalition governments fall apart at election time, with each participating party going its own way. The Rose-Mackie data suggest that coalition parties suffer rather different electoral fortunes, some winning and some loosing. At a minimum, this greatly complicates a systematic analysis, because one should then be able to explain why voters for parties in one common coalition do react so differently.

3. The "hold" of party systems

The general debate on The Future of Party Government is greatly affected by the assumption that there are clear signs

of a weakening of the hold of parties on the loyalties, sympathies, or even simple interest of ordinary voters. Reliable statements on actual trends can only be made by studies of developments over time in single countries, and comparative studies between them. Certain attempts to do so have been made in the Recent Changes-project, using both aggregate and survey data. Many data must still be analyzed and reported in a comparative perspective, possibly in the planned volume on Political Mobilization. Among the indicators desired are:

A. Aggregate data

1. data on turn-out (as assembled by Dittrich and Johansen[38]). A first inspection of overtime graphs hardly confirms a clear relation between the size of turnout and a presumed well- or malfunctioning of particular systems (let alone, that there are rival propositions which would see in low turnout and which would see in high turnout a reason for concern).

2. data on aggregate electoral volatility (as collected by Mogens N. Pedersen[39]). Here again, trends are far from clear, because widely differing between countries over time. At the same time, however, different studies by Pedersen, Maguire, Borre, Mayer and others do suggest an increased aggregate mobility in the 1970s in most European countries.[40]

3. data on traditional system parties versus new parties. Such data could provide a relatively easy indicator, at least for systems which traditionally had clearly-marked system parties. But to my knowledge no conclusive data have yet come out on a comparative basis.[41]

4. data on political fragmentation. The Rae-index has been widely used, and also severely criticized (e.g., Pedersen, Sartori).[42] Different authors have collected over-time data on a comparative basis; their studies again show substantial differences between countries, and not one linear, but a fluctuating trend for European countries as a whole (see

Wolinetz and Ersson-Lane[43]).

5. membership trends. An overtime study by Stefano Bartolini is now available for all Socialist parties.[44] Comparable analyses for other parties meet with considerable difficulty, not least because of unclear membership criteria and the greater difficulty of comparing non-Socialist parties across countries. The Recent Changes-project tends to prove that there is no such thing as a universal and massive decline of party memberships (although there have been drastic changes for some countries, and/or some parties).

B. Survey data

Both the wide spread of electoral surveys (often modelled in one form or another on the Michigan model), and extensive comparative projects like the Verba-Nie-Kim[45] and the Eight-Nation studies,[46] allow close scrutiny on a comparative basis on a variety of data relevant for the study of mobilization. It will be a major goal of the project to probe available data for suitable measures, e.g. on individual volatility, party identification, political competence, political cynicism, and allegiance and legitimacy generally. But at least one major problem is that we are unlikely to find longitudinal data of sufficient sophistication to allow diagnoses of systemic import.

4. The possible dynamics of party systems

There have been only few attempts to chart possible regularities in the dynamics of party systems. We have the long-standing assumption about a natural swing of the pendulum for two-party systems (and possibly also for what Sartori calls moderate pluralist systems?). Duverger once constructed, on the basis of his interpretation of French experience, a "law" about a natural slide of parties towards the right, with new parties springing up on the left to fill the vacuum left by such movement. By far the most elaborate propositions have been worked out by Sartori,

however.[47] Even then we must realize that Sartori spoke only of mechanical dispositions, rather than actual "laws". A major point at issue is the degree to which (polarized) party systems are subject to centrifugation or not.[48] More generally, there is a rarely made explicit view about the importance of a "center" in party systems, and the extent to which the existence of one or more center parties is likely to make for centripetal or centrifugal drives.[49] Yet, is there not a curious discrepancy between the large number of elections which provide a considerable body of data for analysis, the flourishing of a large body of abstract coalition theories, and the only very limited literature on the actual dynamics of European party systems, informed by both substantive knowledge of the party configurations of countries concerned and the high analytical skills of an author like Sartori, or Downs? More systematic work along their line, in the light of actual over-time developments of European party systems, should have a high priority in any realistic study on The Future of Party Government.

V. PARTIES, CITIZENS AND OTHER INTERMEDIATE AGENTS

Whereas in sections III and IV we dealt with the relation between party, c.q. the party system on the one hand and citizens on the other, as if these relations existed in vacuo, we must now turn to a consideration of both parties and citizens in relation to other intermediate agencies. We speak of "intermediate", because here, too, we conceive of mobilization processes as providing vertical links between the ultimate, legitimate decision-makers at the top, and the ordinary citizen at the bottom. A proper analysis will take these two different perspectives: from the top downwards (Section V), from the bottom upwards (Section VI), duly into account. We shall assume as one major hypothesis that in all countries there is a general process of increasing social differentiation, leading to a greater assortment of linkages as well as to a multiplication of sites of decision-making.

1. Parties and group mobilization

In an ideal-type party of social integration as described by Sigmund Neumann, parties direct themselves to specific social groups, which they seek to mobilize and incorporate in the life of the party. The characteristic form of organization is the ancillary association, which under party auspices seeks to meet the interests of specific categories of citizens: women, youth, trade unionists, those in search of specific forms of recreation, like sports, singing or other music, etc. Parties also try to strengthen their hold on communications media, by not only providing specialized party information bulletins, but by seeking to control general newspapers and if at all possible, also radio and television. In the same way, parties have engaged in insurance activities, in elaborate education programmes, and more generally as brokers in obtaining specific government services. As we said earlier, there are many indications that such closed worlds are breaking down, as specific party-bound organizations and media could in the long run not com-

pete with more specialized media in an increasingly mobile and open society. But here again, one must sound a word of warning before too general a conclusion is drawn. For countries and parties again differ greatly, with forms of party "colonization" being much stronger and persistent in some countries (Italy, Austria, Ireland, Finland?) than in others.

Assuming such closed networks of party-controlled organizations are weakening, or even disappearing, what does this mean? Does it imply an over-all weakening of parties, as they become less socially "rooted" and have fewer dependable resources for mobilization? Or should one argue, that it also frees parties from historically-transient "ghetto positions", which could threaten their very existence in a period of new issues and concerns?

2. Parties and formal interest groups

The relation of parties to major interest groups represents one aspect of the general problem just mentioned. In a Neumann-type party of social integration, but paradoxically also in the Kirchheimer-type of "catch-all" party, stress is laid on the reciprocal advantages of network relations between parties and major interest groups. Again, we have little systematic, longitudinal information on this point - let alone that we are in a clear position to state who is "colonizing" whom, and what possible changes may have taken place in such forms of interaction. Certain over-time data can be derived from systematic studies of changes in the composition of parliamentary personnel; at one time-point, the Middle-Level Elites project will conceivably offer cross-country and cross-party information. Yet, at first sight, one might venture the hypothesis that many important interest groups are finding party a less important actor with whom and through whom to work than are ministers of whatever persuasion, as well as permanent bureaucrats.

3. Parties and "action groups"

Self-styled advocates of the "New Politics" of action groups have adduced two patently false arguments to account for the salience of new political groups in the 1960s and 1970s.[50] One false argument is that they are a new phenomenon, as if the history of social mobilization is not replete with examples of action groups in addition to parties (which in certain cases even originated in the forms of looser voluntary societies - note as one example the emphasis on the "counter-cultural" or "peripheral" protest movements in the mobilization of the Old Left in Scandinavia). A second false argument is the presumed closed, oligarchical nature of many existing political parties, as if their history does not reveal an exceedingly low threshold for the successful entry of conscious minority groups. A number of recent studies have pointed out, that many activists in action groups are also disproportionately active within parties, often to the regret of existing power holders and believers in the merit of institutionalized politics generally. Whereas some party politicians have sought to embrace action groups warmly ("to remain in touch with the young", "to take note of the issues which clearly mobilize new groups", or even simply "to be with it"), there is little evidence that such tactics have durably strengthened parties organizationally or electorally. For parties face at a minimum two dilemmas: they must aggregate as well as articulate, and given the often extreme positions of forces demanding to be "articulated", the task of aggregation is neither easy, nor lasting, nor always electorally rewarding; and given the low cost-benefit ratios for minority groups engaged in flamboyant actions, for as long as they obtain privilaged access to the political agenda, they are not likely to forfeit such benefits for the sake of party loyalties or convenience. Clearly, the relations between parties and (many) ad hoc action groups is therefore likely to be a thorny one, as compared towards links with more established and stable interest groups, let alone the ancillary organizations under party control discussed before.

4. Parties and mass media

The subject of this paragraph is one of the most complicated ones, not least because the heading covers a variety of possible relationships. On the most general level, there is the social impact of changes in the modern communications system, including not only the ever-increasing variety of printed publications, but above all radio and television. On a somewhat lower level of abstraction, there is the issue what the effects of modern media developments are on the life of parties, both in their external presentation and their internal functioning. And finally, there is the more mundane matter of the extent of actual party control over the various media and their content. The subject is sufficiently complicated to demand treatment in the future Political Mobilization volume by an acknowledged expert.

The Recent Changes-project will provide basic information on the extent to which parties have held on, or lost, their control over specific media (dailies, radio and television). On the basis of impressionistic evidence, parties would seem to have been unable to retain the control they once may have had over parts of the daily press: post-war history is replete with financial failures of one-time strong Socialist and other Weltanschauung-newspapers. Control over radio and television offers a much more varied picture, with situations differing greatly between countries. But even here, the competition from alternative broadcasts seems to have seriously weakened the force of such controls as parties may have maintained or established. As compared to earlier times, few must be the groups which are still exposed mainly to a closed communications network (if ever they were).

As for the second problem, of the impact of the media on the external and internal relations of parties, again speculation must take over where concrete, detailed studies fail. One could submit the following three conjectures: First, the role of the modern media has strengthened the

tendency to personalize top leaders, to give greater scope to the manipulation of issues in a selective manner, and to engage above all in short-term tactical politics. Second, the natural tendency to regard conflict rather than consensus as news is likely to be to some degree a self-fulfilling prophesy, as ardent minorities seek media attention for particularist goals. Third, the general distraction which modern mass media provide, may unfavourably affect participation by rank-and-file members, thus eroding many of the characteristics which a parti de masse was traditionally (and probably ideally) thought to represent. To the extent this is true, this factor strengthens the role of select groups of activists in the manner analyzed earlier in this paper.
(For a sophisticated attempt to relate media developments as one major variable in changes occurring in party systems to some other crucial ones, in the light of concerns about political accountability, see Sjöblom.[51]

5. Parties and bureaucracies

In view of the joint weight of parties and bureaucracies on actual decision-making, this relationship is probably the most crucial one. From the point of view of party leaders, the functioning of bureaucracies poses at least three challenges: a. parties must be able to ensure effective political control and democratic accountability; b. control over the bureaucracy can be a valuable resource, for the elaboration of specific services; c. the bureaucracy, like other agents mentioned earlier, provides an alternative linkage mechanism between government at the top and citizens at the bottom. Seen from the point of individual citizens, the bureaucracy is one major part of "government", which to them is not always easily distinguished from parties in control. Empirical study (in the Verba-Nie tradition)[52] have emphasized direct contacting of officials as one major form of participation in political

systems. The degree of satisfaction with bureaucratic responses can therefore be a major factor in the creation and maintenance of legitimacy, from which paradoxically also individual parties, the party system and the constitutional order generally can profit.

Yet, the very term bureaucracy covers in fact an ever widening number of offices, authorities and apparatuses, which are split more and more along functional as well as regional lines. Both absolutely, and relatively in relation to all other actors, the "weight" of different bureaucracies in relation to other political actors must have increased most in the post-war world.

In the actual relation between parties and bureaucracies, one major variable, of continuing importance, consists of past state-building and nation-building processes. There is a world of difference between countries in which these processes developed largely without the prior or simultaneous establishment of powerful bureaucratic structures, and those in which such structures did play an indispensable, or at least relatively powerful, role. In countries with a consociational tradition, or one in which centralization was as much the result of judicial, aristocratic and representative processes (as in England), bureaucracies developed late and generally fell in easily with the assumptions of accountability to legitimate political authorities. A very different situation prevailed in countries like France, or Prussia, or in yet another manner Italy where the bureaucracy remained in many ways a corpus alienum superimposed on a highly localized society. To the extent, that bureaucracies live out of pre- or non-democratic traditions, the problem of partisan control and political accountability is a much greater one than elsewhere.

At the same time, the processes of wide-spread diversification cannot but make havoc with earlier assumptions about one homogeneous bureaucracy, as presupposed in such different viewpoints as the Weber ideal-type, the British Civil Service,

or the French Haute Administration. A true analysis of actual relations between parties and bureaucratic agencies must go beyond a general statement about relations existing at the top echelons of government, to lower levels both along regional and functional lines. In either case very different relations may prevail, with also rather different party actors being concerned. (Is not Italy a major illustration of this case, as the system does not depend, as so often argued, on the control over the central government by the DC-cum-minor-partners alone, but also on at least four subordinate levels of government, not to speak of the remaining sottogoverno, in which often other parties have a very real share?).

One might hypothesize that in toto the role of bureaucratic agencies and individual bureaucrats has substantially grown as compared with those in the partisan-electoral channel. One might also point to the very substantial role that bureaucrats rather than politicians play in what are often too easily and generically called corporate channels. One could then suggest that parties have to some extent tried to "compensate" by a variety of devices to strengthen control over and above their formal powers in government and parliament: e.g., by the multiplication of ministerial personnel; by the addition of political advisers, by a strengthening of parliamentary staffs, by the formation in some countries of ever more numerous ministerial cabinets, by conscious political appointments in established bureaucratic positions, by setting up new bodies outside normal hierarchical official channels, etc.

To the extent that such posited developments do indeed occur, it is a moot point whether they indeed strengthen party as an institution or not. Of old patronage has served to cement certain loyalties. But at the same time, diversification at the political level mirrors that on the bureaucratic level. Party may be a necessary channel for coveted appointments. But once arrived, political appointees need not necessarily care much about party life and tasks.

VI. CITIZENS, PARTIES AND ALTERNATIVE AGENCIES OF MOBILIZATION

1. Citizens, active or not?

So far we have focused on the interaction between political actors, who are by definition active in some form or other: top elites, party militants, interest groups, action groups, the media, bureaucrats. When we now direct our attention to the citizens, activity cannot be taken for granted, as indeed the very concept of political mobilization suggests. In fact, there is the very fundamental issue whether citizens should always be active. On the one hand, there is the widespread assumption that citizen activity is by nature a "good". Is the history of democratic development not written in terms of the activation of ever new strata in political decision-making? Do we not have the whole weight of the participatory democracy literature, even since Rousseau, resting on us? Is not equality of participation a must, for the citizen and the system both - because the equalities of input, the fairness of the political agenda, and of the "authoritative allocation of values" depend on citizen activity? Yet, it is as well to remember that there is also a widespread counter-literature: fears from Mill to Kornhauser[53] about a "mass society"; the proposition ever since the study on The Authoritarian Personality that lower class entry might hazard liberal elite values (e.g. Berelson[54], Lipset[55]); the traumatic experiences of enforced political mobilization by totalitarian regimes, etc.

At a minimum therefore there is a fundamental problem of the amount or degree of political mobilization which a political system can sustain, the nature of demands, the methods used - problems rightly posed by different models of politics, as one can note on the stress on gate-keeping and support in systems theory, on the danger of overload in communications approaches, on the need for adequate institutionalization if political system is not to fall into political decay (Huntington), etc.

This implies no less than that our subject raises issues which at the more fundamental level of analysis brings the entire armory of empirical democratic theory into play: e.g., discussions of pluralism, in developmental and contemporary perspectives, the Eckstein-theory on congruency of authority patterns[56], the entire literature on political legitimacy. And the same holds true, on only a slightly less general level, for the literature on political socialization, participation, the voting literature, empirical studies of political legitimacy, and so forth and so on.

2. The potential for action

The literature on historical mobilization in Western democracies provides some data and more general speculations on the circumstances under which citizens act - or perhaps on a more general level on how people change from parochials and subjects to citizens in the Almond-Verba sense. Handbooks with time-series data provide a number of relevant social indicators. For our contemporary understanding the most important data are undoubtedly in the Eight-Nation studies, which have made the problem of dispositions to act, and to act in different manner, the core of their theoretical and empirical concerns.

3. The modes of action

The Project can draw on what is by now a large-scale debate on the modes of political participation. In view of the Project's specific concerns about the role of party in political participation, the Verba-Nie-Kim analysis with its emphasis on at least four independent dimensions of participation: voting, party and campaigning activities, communal action, and direct contacting - which are theoretically and empirically distinct - would seem immediately relevant. While confirming a strong bias in participation by the higher-educated, higher social status and higher income groups, they also introduce many nuances, depending on

the type of issue or kind of political action required. Such findings must be weighed in the light on the findings of the Eight-Nation study, and possibly different research results on the basis of additional survey research questions, notably on the independence of a separate protest dimension in addition to the four singled out by Verba c.s. Also of great importance is the general conclusion by Verba c.s. that well-institutionalized forms of social organization (as provided by strong parties, interest groups and bureaucratic agencies) can do much to redress the inequalities of participation as far as actual policy outputs are concerned.[57]

4. The channels used

Survey evidence reveals again and again that voting and direct contacting of administrative agencies are the most wide-spread kinds of citizen actions. On the other hand, real participation in parties is low, by whatever measure taken - even though party membership figures in relation to party voting reveal very substantial different situations, according to country or party. Measures of constancy of voting for the same party, and of party identification, can tell us something further on the degree to which parties are salient for individual citizens; to the degree that reliable longitudinal data are available we can form some impression on the degree of hold of parties on citizens.

"Groups" are much more immediately manifest to citizens than are parties. All citizens experience the influence of various primary groups, which the literature on political socialization and voting have singled out as being of the utmost important. Many citizens are members of associations, some of which are deliberately, some only incidentally politically active. The Verba-Nie-Kim studies have attempted to inventorize to what extent leaders and citizens perceive different groups as being actually politically relevant. Even if citizens do not, the presence of such groups, as well as their presence in them, have a substantial importance for policy-making and political attitudes.

We have earlier discussed the interaction between parties and action groups, and challenged the stereotyped view that citizens "must" turn towards the latter, because parties are insufficiently open and responsive. Verba c.s. did, of course, find communal action to be a relatively independent dimension from party activities. Yet one should remember that what we conceive above all as action groups represent only a small degree of the wide range of spontaneous citizen activities studied by Verba c.s.. Especially, when our focus is on the most visible, most directly "political" type of action groups, we should emphasize that participation in them is highly skewed towards particular, higher-educated groups in society, who are also disproportionately active in parties. We have also data on some countries on the degree of legitimacy accorded to action groups, and to different modes of protest behaviour. Such data will need close study, if we are to have a clear view of the relative legitimacy accorded to different kinds of institutionalized actors (including party) as against less-structured ones. Just as we should not a priori regard parties and action groups as alternative modes of political action, so we should also not confuse all types of ad hoc actions with protest behaviour.

5. Mobilization and policies

The Project aims to spend a major part of its attention on the role of parties in policy-making. From the perspective of the citizen some substantial problems arise. Although individual citizens may mobilize on behalf of particular policies, much the larger part of policies devised or implemented are not the result of any obvious behaviour on their part. In voting, citizens may have a correct or very incorrect view on actual responsibilities for policies they might wish to reward or penalize. Citizens may or may not have particular views about how effective alternative agencies of mobilization for pressure on policy-makers may be.

The current debate on whether voters vote in the light of their own economic prospects, or their view on how those in power handle economic policy, or neither,[58] should be a reminder that the feedback of policies on citizen attitudes and behaviour may be very different from what policy-makers expect. Again, there is substantial evidence from the Eurobarometer studies that many citizens are becoming more satisfied with their own situation, as the outlook for the future darkens. Clearly, levels of expectation exert a powerful independent role on the extent to which people are likely to hold politicians really accountable for policies, or their absence. What these short remarks simply re-affirm, is the urgent need to relate findings from survey research on citizen perspectives and attitudes to the policy outputs and the general functioning of political systems, over time and across countries.

VII. PARTIES AND OTHER LINKAGE ACTORS: DISPLACEMENT OR CHANGING ROLES?

1. The dangers of evolutionary reasoning

In the very term The Future of Party Government there is more than a hint that parties may be on their way out, along a foredoomed trajectory. Quite apart from the fact that the findings of the project are not in, it is as well to remember at least the following points made in earlier sections:

a. It is too readily assumed, without much evidence, that there was a golden age of party which is now being moaned. Should one not, at a minimum, take into account that different countries had very different degrees of party government in the past?

b. Similarly, there is substantial evidence that parties in different countries have, if anything, been strengthened in the last quarter of a century or so. Both in France and in Germany, parties have made an impressive comeback, and parties clearly remain exceedingly important actors in many other countries.

c. There is considerable danger in reasoning in zero-sum terms. Even when other intermediate actors increase in importance, it does not necessarily follow that such developments go to the detriment of party, let alone that power is actually taken away from them. In as far as the overall role of government increases, one should allow for the possibility that all actors, including parties, play an increasingly important role.

d. It may well be that the role of parties increases in some areas, while it decreases in other. One cannot really speak of "the" power of parties, without specifying power in relation to what or whom.

2. Some tentative generalizations

With that very substantial proviso, one might suggest that the following developments affect, at a minimum, the role of parties:

a. there is a clear increase in the number of groups - both institutionalized and non-institutionalized ones. Most of these operate independently in the political arena, in that they attempt to influence other political actors directly - as much as they may, or may not, seek to influence party;

b. the number of arena's for political decision-making has increased, notably in connection with what had been called "sectoral" politics;

c. the media play probably an increased role in articulating political demands, as well as in the manner in which demands are being articulated. Parties seek to adjust to this fact as much as some other political actors, yet the immediacy of newspaper attention gives relatively small groups new opportunities for direct approaches to power holders, without the intermediate channel of party;

d. there is an increased element of plebiscitary politics - both in the exposure of particular leaders, as in recourse to referenda and opinion polls. Leaders and voters are therefore, to some degree at least, more directly accessible to one another,

without regular control from procedural party politics;

e. the complexities of modern government increase the need to call on experts - a development which parties cannot balance fully by building up party research bureaus, increasing the number of parliamentary staffs at the disposal of party, or attempts to mobilize friendly experts;

f. the increased mass of routinized decision-making, whether in bureaucratic agencies, or in relatively closed circuits of a semi-corporatist nature, inevitably escapes party control, while its aggregate effect may yet limit the freedom of parties to set priorities, as old commitments and sectoral politics dominate over new demands;

g. there is also a tendency for other actors to play an increasing role in political decision-making: one should note the role of the Judiciary and Central Banks;

h. international decision-making exerts an increasing influence, which even a more intense movement towards the building up of party cooperation across frontiers than exists at present, cannot hope to control;

i. given the possible weakening of party as the major agency in articulation and actual policy decisions, their main importance could well be in leadership selection and the long-term formulation of policy perspectives. These tasks put heavy demands on internal party mechanisms, which do not seem to be very well suited to them for the present. However, they are at least clearly within the uncontested control of parties themselves.

FOOTNOTES

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