

# Contents

---

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	x
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiv
1 Introduction: Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies <i>Paul Webb</i>	1
2 Political Parties in Britain: Secular Decline or Adaptive Resilience? <i>Paul Webb</i>	16
3 Italian Parties: Change and Functionality <i>Luciano Bardi</i>	46
4 Party Decline in the Parties State? The Changing Environment of German Politics <i>Susan E. Scarrow</i>	77
5 France: Never a Golden Age <i>Andrew Knapp</i>	107
6 The Colour Purple: The End of Predictable Politics in the Low Countries <i>Kris Deschouwer</i>	151
7 The Scandinavian Party Model at the Crossroads <i>Jan Sundberg</i>	181
8 Party Politics in Ireland: Regularizing a Volatile System <i>R. J. Murphy and David M. Farrell</i>	217
9 Spain: Building a Parties State in a New Democracy <i>Ian Holliday</i>	248
10 Parties at the European Level <i>Simon Hix</i>	280

11	Still Functional After All These Years: Parties in the United States, 1960–2000 <i>John C. Green</i>	310
12	Canada’s Nineteenth-Century Cadre Parties at the Millennium <i>R. Kenneth Carty</i>	345
13	Political Parties in Australia: Party Stability in a Utilitarian Society <i>Ian McAllister</i>	379
14	Parties and Society in New Zealand <i>Jack Vowles</i>	409
15	Conclusion: Political Parties and Democratic Control in Advanced Industrial Societies <i>Paul Webb</i>	438
	<i>Index</i>	461

## Introduction

### Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies

*Paul Webb*

How relevant and vital are political parties in contemporary democracies? Do they fulfil the functions that any stable and effective democracy might expect of them? Do they represent citizens effectively? Do they help translate wants and needs into effective governmental outputs? Do they foster democratic involvement and support on the part of the citizen body? Or are they little more than moribund anachronisms, relics of a past age of political life, now superseded by other mechanisms of linkage between state and society? These are the central questions which this book aims to address through a rigorous comparative analysis of political parties operating in the world's advanced industrial democracies.

Parties have long since figured prominently in the canon of Western political science. Sartori (1976: 23) sees Max Weber as founder of the modern tradition of party scholarship, though reviews of the literature on parties generally tend to cite a well-known litany of studies which go back to the classic works of Ostrogorski (1902) and Michels (1915). It is equally evident that, while scholars have often expressed high hopes for the central roles played in democratic society by parties, they have just as frequently been perplexed by the realities of party politics. Indeed, this is apparent in the work of both Ostrogorski and Michels. More than half a century ago, the American Political Science Association felt parties were so vital to the US political system that a special committee was established to investigate and make recommendations on (the lack of) 'responsible' two-party politics in the country. Taking their cue from the well-known claims of previous authors like Bryce (1921: 119) and Schattschneider (1942: 1) that the operation of modern democracy was virtually inconceivable without parties, this committee emphasized the need for more clearly defined party programmes which would confront voters with clear choices (American Political Science Association 1950: 22–3).

Concern about the performance and popular standing of parties grew in the 1960s; for instance, a landmark review of individual-level attitudes towards parties

at this time argued that ‘anti-party norms and images are present as a living part of the political culture’ in many Western political systems (Dennis 1966: 613). Towards the end of that decade, King (1969: 140), in reviewing party functions in Western democracies, concluded that ‘we are entitled, at the very least, to a certain scepticism . . . concerning the great importance attached to parties in large segments of the political science literature’. He echoed the words of Kirchheimer (1966: 200), whose own seminal contribution to comparative scholarship suggested that ‘the political party’s role in Western industrial society today is more limited than it would appear from its position of formal preeminence’. Subsequently, propelled largely by evidence of partisan dealignment and electoral instability across Western democracies in the 1970s, concern developed into a fully-fledged debate about the alleged ‘decline of party’. The epicentre of much of this debate lay in American political science, though it was by no means restricted exclusively to interpretation of the US case. A number of loosely connected arguments emerged, some normative, some empirical, categorized by Daalder (1992: 269–70) in the following terms:

1. A persistent body of thought which denied a legitimate role for party and saw parties as a threat to the good society (the normative *denial of party*).
2. The selective *rejection of certain parties* that were regarded as bad (on normative grounds), but not of party *per se*.
3. The selective rejection of certain party *systems* which were regarded as pathological.
4. A contention that parties were becoming increasingly irrelevant in democratic politics as other actors and institutions took over the major functions which they had once performed (an empirically based assertion of the *redundancy of party*).

While the academic literature on party decline has tended to be framed in terms of the last of these categories, political actors and critics have often expressed a normative rejection of parties or party systems. By the early 1990s, developments in a number of countries were stimulating a fresh round of speculation about the decline of party. For instance, in Germany, it became commonplace to refer to the phenomenon of *parteiverdrossenheit*, or a crisis of party legitimacy. Survey data in that country produced much evidence to suggest that citizens were disillusioned with the motivations, true concerns, and effectiveness of the parties (Poguntke 1996). This attitudinal trend reflected a mixture of the sentiments outlined above: while some citizens reacted against particular parties (typically the major established players in the system such as the SPD, CDU, or FPD), others took against the role and nature of parties in general. Even the President of the Federal Republic openly criticized the parties on some of these counts (Scarrow 1996). Some commentators conflated analytical statements of functional redundancy with a clear normative accusation against party.

This was implicit, for instance, in the position of the cultural critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger (cited in Giddens 1998: 51), who argued that the country's true political innovators now lay outside the orthodox domain of the governing parties, and claimed that Germany could 'afford an incompetent government, because ultimately the people who bore us in the daily news really do not matter'. At the same time, a similar, though far more intense, rejection of party was apparent in Italy. The roots of this ran deep, stemming from longstanding public scepticism about the immobilism that had characterized postwar governments in the country, but it was transformed into a fully-fledged systemic crisis by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the widespread corruption among party elites which the *tangentopoli* (bribesville) scandals of the early 1990s brought to light (Ginsborg 1996).

However, criticism of party was by no means the exclusive preserve of countries experiencing overt crises. In most other advanced industrial democracies, parties were subject to allegations of weak performance, often from a left-wing or radical democratic perspective. Such observers of party life brought with them two major accusations in respect of party politics. First, parties were deemed to be failing when it came to fostering democratic political participation. Typically, the decline of participation in and through parties would be contrasted with burgeoning non-partisan forms of associative life through single-issue groups and new social movements (Lawson and Merkl 1988; Jacques 1993; Mulgan 1994*a,b*). Second, the prominence of neo-liberal political economy in the 1980s and a growing consciousness of the alleged effects of economic globalization in the 1990s served to convince some on the left that a political convergence was developing which undermined the ideological distinctiveness of party governments (Ahmin 1997). This effectively denied voters the clear policy choices for which the APSA Committee had so strongly indicated a need nearly half a century earlier.

Yet by no means all observers of party life have been so forcibly struck by signs of 'decline'. Although some focused on evidence of weakening party links with society (manifest in developments such as partisan dealignment, electoral instability, and membership decline (Dalton *et al.* 1984)), others asserted the resilience and adaptability of party organizations. This was initially apparent in studies of party organizational development in the USA (Cotter and Bibby 1980; Bibby 1998), and eventually an exhaustive comparative survey of three decades' worth of organizational material confirmed that in many other instances modern parties had succeeded in enhancing the supply of resources at their disposal in spite of weakening social linkages (Katz and Mair 1992, 1994, 1995). This suggests that we need to consider more than one dimension of the world of political parties in order to provide convincing answers to questions about their relevance and centrality for modern democratic politics. It also suggests that things are unlikely to be straightforward, which renders assertions of overall party decline in advanced western democracies simplistic.

## THE AIMS OF THIS BOOK

Over thirty years ago, King (1969: 141) lamented the fact that scholars were inclined to be unsystematic about investigating the key questions relating to party performance: too often, he claimed, they relied on impressions and hunches when attempting to summarize the situation, and ‘hunches are no substitute for disciplined inquiry’. To be sure, this judgement does not remain entirely valid today since a good deal of high-quality research has been conducted on voters’ attitudes towards parties, party organizational development, parties’ roles in governments, legislatures, political communications, and so on. However, as this knowledge has begun to accumulate there is a growing need for it to be reviewed and integrated. Hence, the central objective of this book is to meet the need for a rigorous, systematic, multi-dimensional comparison of the evidence concerning party performance, legitimacy, and organizational strength across the Western world.

It should be said that an important volume with a similar purpose to ours has been published recently; indeed, *Parties Without Partisans* (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000) is the result of a project whose timing and personnel have in part overlapped with our own. We welcome this and believe that to the extent that there is agreement between the conclusions of the two studies, it will be of obvious value to contemporary political science. When independent research projects arrive at similar conclusions, each corroborates the other and an accumulation of knowledge vital to the progression of the discipline is achieved. That said, it should also be stressed that a number of features distinguish this volume from *Parties Without Partisans*. First, while there are substantial areas of agreement between the two books, our conclusions differ in certain respects. For instance, we feel it is an exaggeration to imply that parties are ‘no longer loyal to their policy commitments’ (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000: 267), and neither do we feel that the parties’ role has declined in respect of political recruitment (ibid: 276). We also doubt that parties have been as unresponsive to the challenges of dealigned politics as Dalton and Wattenberg claim (p. 284). Second, in the Conclusion of this book we seek to show how evaluations of party functioning today depend, in no small part, on the democratic vision of the beholder. In particular, we demonstrate that parties remain absolutely central in the view of those who feel that democracy is principally a means of facilitating popular control and choice over public affairs. For this reason, we are perhaps generally less critical of party performance than Dalton and Wattenberg. Finally, this book proceeds somewhat differently to *Parties Without Partisans* in a methodological sense. Whereas Dalton and Wattenberg’s volume is organized thematically, ours provides a set of case studies which assess the standing and performance of parties in national contexts; general comparative inferences are only attempted in the final chapter. We hope that this will serve the needs of readers with special interests in particular systems, as well as those who wish to focus on the overall comparative picture.

## THE SCOPE AND FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

There is no intrinsic reason why the systematic comparative assessment of party status and performance should be restricted to long-established democracies in advanced industrial societies. The world has many less stable and recently transitional democracies which can be evaluated by the same criteria, even if the 'party decline' question makes little or no sense in the context of such regimes. So, although the perspective from which we ask the key questions would have to alter slightly in respect of parties in parts of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, the overarching themes of the role, popular standing, organizational development, and functional relevance to democracy of political parties remain pertinent. Indeed, this book is to be understood as the first of two volumes of comparative scholarship addressing these themes and deploying a similar analytical framework: while we concentrate here on parties in established advanced industrial democracies,<sup>1</sup> a companion volume (Webb *et al.* forthcoming) will focus on recently transitional democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America. The methodological purpose of such a division is to pursue a 'most similar systems design', thereby constraining extraneous sources of variance in the dependent variable (Peters 1998: 57). Ultimately, many readers may hone in on one volume while ignoring the other, according to their own interests, and indeed, each book can be read as a separate item in its own right. Equally, however, it should be understood that the books form twin components of an integrated package.

The analytical framework which our contributors have worked on challenges them to cover a considerable amount of ground. The chapters in this book are therefore necessarily long, at least by the usual standards of edited volumes of comparative scholarship. Given the inevitable space constraints within which we must operate, it has not been possible to devote a chapter to every case that might fall under the broad categorization of 'advanced industrial society'. However, the book presents a wide selection of relevant systems from Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. We believe that this array of cases offers a representative survey of the contemporary experience of political parties in the advanced industrial democratic world.

Two cases that are included in this collection—Spain and the European Union (EU)—require special explanation. In a sense, it might be argued that both could be more properly located in the companion volume on transitional democracies, since Spain only democratized after the death of General Franco in the

<sup>1</sup> 'Established' advanced industrial democracy is a term which we define operationally as any country which has enjoyed unbroken competitive democratic rule since 1945, or which has made a successful transition since then in so far as few would suggest any foreseeable prospect of authoritarian rule. In addition, each such country is a member of the OECD enjoying a high per capita income; such countries are often referred to as 'advanced industrial', 'post-industrial' (see, for instance, Dalton 1996), or even 'post-modern' in nature (Inglehart 1997).

mid-1970s, and the EU remains an inchoate transnational political actor, widely regarded to be suffering from the problem of ‘democratic deficit’. On reflection, however, we feel that both are interesting cases worthy of inclusion in this book. Since the abortive coup attempt of 1981, Spain has consolidated its democratic status and has undoubtedly developed into an affluent industrial society; relevant to both these developments is the country’s membership of the EU. Moreover, Spain’s inclusion has some utility in terms of comparative logic. Further, while we are broadly adopting a most similar systems design, the inclusion of Spain also enables us to see if there are any resemblances between the status and role of parties there and in Latin America or Eastern Europe. If there are, this would strongly suggest a connection between party development and the stage of democratic development; if there are not, it would imply that the ‘contagious’ political impact of Spain’s West European neighbours counts for more. This in itself is a significant point, though we will not be able to make the assessment until the companion volume on transitional democracies is complete. We would not justify the inclusion of the EU on precisely the same grounds; rather, we simply believe that it has become such a self-evidently important actor in European politics, and the role of parties is potentially and actually so significant for the democratic development of its institutions and processes, that it would be remiss to overlook it. In the European context it is no longer enough to focus on the politics of the nation state.

In order to achieve our stated objectives, an effective framework for comparative analysis is a paramount requirement. The one we have developed requires our contributors to produce an original synthesis of secondary material, new research, and critical comment. Two preliminary points are worth making about the way in which they have applied the framework. First, throughout, we are hoping to emphasize *change* over time. This raises the question of the date of reference against which to evaluate change; for long-established democracies, we focus on developments since 1960. As we have seen, it was in the 1960s that concerns about party performance (re)surfaced and the term ‘party decline’ emerged soon after. Moreover, much of the relevant source material dates from 1960 or thereabouts (for instance, on party organization, public opinion data, and so on).<sup>2</sup> Second, the precise indicators which authors discuss vary from case to case, mainly because of differences in what is available from each country. This is perhaps most obvious in the context of mass attitudes towards parties, since there is little or no consistency in the questions regarding parties which national election surveys pose of respondents. Nevertheless, we believe that our authors have managed to uncover evidence that taps the same underlying dimensions of analysis.

What are these dimensions? Implicit in the brief review of the literature outlined above is a distinction between three broad types of research inquiry into the

<sup>2</sup> For Spain, whose transition to democracy occurred more recently, we focus on the story since the initial year of democratization.

performance and standing of political parties:

1. Studies which focus on *party connections with the electorate* (by considering, for instance, partisan dealignment, electoral volatility, and membership change).
2. Studies which examine the *development of party organizations* over time.
3. Studies which investigate aspects of *party performance* on behalf of the wider political system.

To some extent, these different approaches give the impression of rather divergent perspectives on the decline of party controversy. Thus, while studies of 'parties-in-the-electorate' have often uncovered evidence of partisan dealignment or even anti-party sentiment, and taken this to signify party decline (Dalton *et al.* 1984), party organizational studies have tended to reveal ways in which parties have adapted and survived despite their weakening social linkages (Katz and Mair 1995). Then again, studies focusing on party performance have been somewhat mixed in their conclusions, some focusing on the perceived weaknesses (for instance, King 1969; Lawson 1980; Lawson and Merkl 1988), while others have offered notably more positive interpretations (Klingemann *et al.* 1994). It is curious to observe that most commentators, irrespective of their assessment, concur in the view that parties somehow remain important (Shonfeld 1983: 480). In any case, this threefold categorization of research on parties provides a cue for systematic comparative analysis.

Accordingly, each of the case studies which follows is divided into three sections, plus an introduction, and a conclusion. Our authors seek to use their *introductions* for two purposes. First, they draw a brief outline of the most notable features of the party system under consideration (emphasizing recent developments); this should provide readers who may lack country-expertise with a basic grasp of important contextual features such as the major actors in the party system and the prevailing pattern of party competition. For this reason, chapters routinely start with tables reporting national election results and the complexion of party governments. Where possible, authors will also use their introductions to summarize the main themes in the country-specific literature. Although there will not be space for an in-depth critique of such literature at this point, this introduction will serve both to outline key sources and references, and to raise themes to which authors may return in their chapter conclusions.

Following this, there are three major sections of empirical analysis, each dedicated to one of the dimensions implicit in the parties literature. The first is concerned with what we call the *popular legitimacy of parties*. This focuses on the vibrancy and health of linkages between parties and society at large. The central questions are: How stable and deep are links between party and society? And to what extent are parties generally held in esteem by citizens? These questions raise the issue of how one measures the popular legitimacy of political parties. We have taken our cue primarily from work on the theme of mass-level *anti-party sentiment* conducted by Poguntke and Scarrow (1996). In particular,

we accept that Poguntke's behavioural indicators are as good as any available for gauging party–society linkages. These indicators comprise survey-based evidence of popular disaffection with parties in general, the erosion of partisan identification and affinity, declining electoral turnout, the growth of 'uncertainty' or 'hesitancy' within the electorate (in practice, a direct counterpart of the decline of partisan affinity), and declining party membership (Poguntke 1996: 325–38).<sup>3</sup> While these indicators do not necessarily constitute evidence of overt generalized mass-level antipathy towards parties, they are all consistent with a weakened sense of 'partyiness' in society.

This is not to ignore the fact of a certain ambiguity in some of the measures. For instance, falling turnout, the erosion of partisanship, and the growth of voter 'hesitancy' could all be explained by temporary processes of ideological convergence between the major parties in a political system. Under such circumstances, deciding between the alternatives on offer becomes a more difficult but less consequential task for many citizens; equally, partisan loyalty and voting simply do not matter so much when the perceived differences between parties are not so great. Should the perception of ideological convergence prove a purely transient phenomenon, it is possible that partisanship and turnout would increase once more, while voter uncertainty could be expected to decline. Nevertheless, it is important to examine these indicators, for if we do find consistent developments across a number of them, and if we further discover that such developments persist over time, then it would surely be reasonable to conclude that party penetration of society had indeed eroded in a multifaceted and enduring fashion. In short, one could speak of the declining popular legitimacy of party.

Thus, each author has sought wherever possible to report and discuss the following indicators: survey evidence of antipathy, indifference, or cynicism towards political parties in general; survey evidence of levels of partisan identity; survey evidence of electoral uncertainty; individual party membership levels (both raw figures and membership/electorate ratios (Katz *et al.* 1992)); and national election turnout rates. In addition, these data will be set in the context of developments in national electoral behaviour and party competition in so far as we report rates of electoral volatility (Pedersen's (1979) well-known index of 'total net volatility' (TNV))<sup>4</sup> and party system fragmentation (Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) measure

<sup>3</sup> Poguntke includes one other indicator, support for 'anti-party parties'. We have decided to exclude this, however, on the grounds that it is questionable as to whether the existence of these organizations really represents any kind of retreat from party politics. In the final analysis, they remain parties themselves, and while they certainly stand against established parties, they could equally be interpreted as evidence of the adaptability and resilience of party politics.

<sup>4</sup> Note that some of our authors also refer to Bartolini and Mair's (1990) alternative measure of Bloc Volatility in discussing the evolution of party systems. However, we are primarily interested in the overall level of stability of electoral behaviour from one election to another, and thus focus on Pedersen's index of Total Net Volatility when summarizing the evidence in the Conclusion to this book.

of the ‘effective number of parties’<sup>5</sup>). Though less unambiguous than some of the other measures, perhaps, indices of electoral volatility and party system fragmentation are aggregate-level indicators which could be expected to increase over the long term in line with the declining partyness of society. That is, the erosion of definite partisan orientations among voters should logically coincide with a greater likelihood of their switching party preferences from one election to another, while, though one would predict this with less confidence, it could also correlate with the emergence of new parties and/or the growth of support for small parties, both of which would generate a higher effective number of parties in a system. Although we suspect that it may be the least valid of our measures of overall party legitimacy, it is nevertheless interesting to examine how far there are consistent trends in the effective number of parties.

The second major dimension of analysis our authors investigate relates to *party organizational strength*. The central question here is: are parties persisting and developing as organizations? Are there signs of decay or might parties be adapting to changing social and political environments? As already mentioned, researchers focusing on this aspect of party life have often drawn rather different conclusions to those concentrating on the popular legitimacy dimension. The concept of organizational strength should be understood to imply both the quantity of resources at the disposal of a party, and the capacity to deploy those resources in a way that achieves the party’s purposes. The latter criterion is important, for it is conceivable that the quantity of resources available to a party may decline without necessarily weakening its capacity to achieve its primary objectives (such as winning elections). Parties, like other organizations, change the way that they use resources over time; a *sine qua non* of party life thirty or forty years ago may now be regarded as virtually obsolete. The key thing, therefore, is whether or not a party has the resources it needs for its intended purposes; our country experts have

<sup>5</sup> This is probably the most widely used measure of party system fragmentation. Laakso and Taagepera’s formula for counting the effective number of parties takes account of both the number of parties in the system and their relative strength. This is a very intuitive and useful technique of measurement since it tells us, for instance, that in any system comprised of just two equally strong parties, the effective number will indeed be 2.0, while a system consisting of three equally strong parties will generate an effective number of 3.0, and so on. This measure can be calculated either on the basis of party shares of the popular vote (the effective number of *electoral* parties (ENEP)), or on the basis of shares of seats won in parliament (the effective number of *parliamentary* parties (ENPP)). In this volume we are interested primarily in the former since it is the ENEP which is most likely to tap party penetration of society; by contrast, the ENPP can be quite heavily mediated by institutional factors like electoral systems. This is well illustrated by the case of the UK, where an increase in third-party support has produced a notable increase in the effective number of parties in the electorate since 1974. However, the Single-Member Plurality electoral system has prevented this surge in third-party support translating into a commensurate increase in parliamentary representation: consequently, the ENPP has not increased (Webb 2000: 6). So, while some of our authors find it useful to refer to the ENPP in introducing readers to the nature of a party system, we focus only on the effective number of electoral parties in the book’s Conclusion.

therefore taken care to assess quantitative changes in resourcing in the light of this consideration.

Although the precise indications of party organizational development and strength may vary in significance from case to case, each chapter attempts to focus on a definite set of key measures of party organizational development. It should be said that the data in question are by no means universally and readily available, but our authors generally explain when this is the case. Specifically, each chapter seeks to uncover evidence of four aspects of organizational resourcing. The first is perhaps the most obvious: *party finance*. Specifically, overall changes in patterns of income and expenditure have been traced, and—wherever possible—the sources of funding (members, donors, or the state) identified. Second, *party staffing* has been examined where data are available in order to uncover changes in the number, type, and location of party employees. Third, *party membership* has been taken into consideration. Note, however, that here we are not so interested in simple trends in the sheer number of members, given that it may not be necessary for a party to recruit an especially high number in order for the organizational activities of the membership to be conducted. Rather, country experts discuss the implications of quantitative trends in party membership for organizational capacity; for instance, they may consider whether membership has fallen so far that local party organizations have become moribund and ineffectual, or whether parties have managed to adapt to membership losses by conducting activities in other ways. Finally, each chapter seeks to address the issue of party access to and/or control of the *media* (including publications and broadcast media).

The final dimension of analysis is in many ways the most challenging. It is concerned with *the systemic functionality of political parties*. What might the empirical indicators of party legitimacy and organizational strength imply about the broader utility of political parties for the political system? Where we find evidence of weakened legitimacy or organizational presence, does this reflect weak party functionality for the wider system? Conversely, where the indicators are more positive, could this reflect the resilience and continuing relevance of parties? In general, we would argue that it is hard to see how any serious attempt to consider the relevance of parties for modern democratic politics can avoid reflecting on how effectively they function. Although functional approaches to parties have sometimes been criticized (see, for instance, Shonfeld 1983), there is a very long tradition of paying attention to ‘what parties do, what function, what role, or what purpose is served’ by them (Scarrow 1957: 770). It is intuitive to ask these questions, and certainly very hard to overlook them when trying to assess the question of party decline. If parties really are in decline, then must it not reflect their failure to perform adequately some or all of the key tasks normally imputed to them? Perhaps, though it should be noted that sceptics have long doubted whether parties have really dominated the functions claimed for them (Sorauf 1964). This suggests that the sense of party decline which some observers experience might

derive from the misperception that there was once a 'Golden Age' in which parties monopolized these systemic exigencies. Even if this is so, however, we still need to investigate party performance in order to assess whether it has really changed over time as much as some would have us believe.

But which functions should we examine? While Lowi (1963: 571) counsels against assuming an inventory of agreed functions of party 'as though these were as regularly a part of the political process as stages in the passage of a bill', it is clear from the considerable overlap between writers that something very like an 'agreed inventory' does in fact exist. True, they do not always use the same terminology, but frequently they are interested in the same phenomena. In view of the space constraints which must operate, the case studies in this volume do not address the most extensive list of party functions imaginable, but they do nevertheless engage with the following activities which we regard as central to modern democratic systems, all of which are explicit in the classic account of structural–functionalism articulated by Almond *et al.* (1993: Part 2).

#### *Governance and political recruitment*

While most of our authors choose to discuss these twin functions in separation from each other, it should be acknowledged that they are intimately connected. The central question around which the governing function revolves is: how far is government *party* government? Close consideration of this suggests that there are broadly two aspects to the governing function: personnel and policy. This is implicit, for instance, in Richard Katz's widely cited criteria for the 'party-ness' of government: first, Katz suggests, all government decisions should be taken by individuals chosen in elections which are conducted along *party* lines; second, policy must clearly emanate from within parties (or definite coalitions of parties); and thirdly, 'positions in government must flow from support within the party rather than party positions flowing from electoral success' (Katz 1986: 43). While the first and third criteria prompt us to look at the personnel involved in the governing process, the second criterion points us towards the substance of policy. The recruitment function is intimately bound up with governance because, although it entails consideration of all kinds of elective and appointive political personnel, those who operate at the various levels of government lie at its heart. Hence, our contributors examine the extent to which recruitment to public—and especially governmental—office is channelled through political parties.

With respect to the policy aspect of governance, we have sought to address the question of how far public policy emanates from parties. There are a number of factors to bear in mind when discussing this question. One is the cohesion of legislative parties, for without this it can become impossible for 'governing' parties to leave their mark on public policy. A second issue is whether there are any significant alternatives to parties when it comes to shaping public policy. The most likely such alternatives would seem to be bureaucratic power, interest groups, and

'candidate-centred' forms of political agency. A further consideration is whether impersonal and structural constraints such as demographic developments, social trends, or economic forces can prevent parties from 'making a difference' to public policy (Rose 1980).

### *Interest articulation and aggregation*

These functions require parties (among other political agents) to act as mechanisms of representative linkage between state and society. The articulation of interests refers to the role played by parties and other institutions (typically single-interest groups or social movements) in publicly expressing and pursuing the political demands of particular social groups. The aggregation of interests refers to a related but broader process by which parties bundle together the demands of a variety of social groups. This task is not quite so straightforward as the articulation of a narrower set of interests, since it requires the prioritization of demands and the maintenance of coalitions of support whose component elements may be in tension with each other.

A number of issues related to articulation and aggregation fall within the remit of our case studies. In particular, authors consider whether evidence of single-issue group and social movement activity suggests that parties are being challenged as articulators of social group interests, and in broad terms whether parties succeed in bundling together the demands of their various support constituencies in a coherent and stable fashion. One of the main questions to consider in relation to aggregation concerns the challenge posed by social change: where new cleavages emerge and society becomes more heterogeneous, does it become more difficult to aggregate incompatible demands from different components of a party's desired support base?

### *Political participation*

As Almond *et al.* show (1993: ch. 4), this function overlaps with that of political recruitment, since holding elective public office is clearly a form of participation in politics. However, here we are more interested in the capacity of political parties to foster mass political participation through their members' activities and/or through mobilizing electoral turnout. Although it is true that we have already referred to party membership as an aspect of both party legitimacy and party organizational resourcing, now our primary focus switches to the activism levels of party members; this takes in the question of members' rights and powers within their parties. Some of our contributors also refer to the sociological profile of members here, where this bears upon party strategies to mobilize certain sectors of society.

*Political communication and education*

Political parties in democratic societies have traditionally played a significant role in helping to inform and educate citizens about public affairs. Prior to the era of widespread public access to television, this was accomplished largely through the activities of party members and through direct control of parts of the print media. Since then, parties have helped shape the agenda and substance of current affairs coverage by the broadcast media. Here our contributors consider how parties interpret their roles in political education, and the extent to which they have ceded agenda-setting and communication functions to non-partisan sources of political information.

It is apparent that there are points at which the three dimensions of our analytical framework overlap, most obviously perhaps, in the case of the party membership, which we have mentioned in the context of party legitimacy, organizational strength, and political participation. However, particular indicators have different meanings in different contexts and, where relevant, authors emphasize different aspects of indicators according to the dimension they are discussing. Thus, with respect to party membership, on the legitimacy dimension, the focus is primarily on trends in the *number* of party members; whereas on the organizational strength dimension, emphasis is placed on the *revenues and campaign work* flowing from party members (thus revealing something about how the party organization derives resource benefits from members); and in terms of the functionality dimension, authors focus on aspects such as the *number, sociology, and rights and activism* of party members, in order to say something about the degree to which parties succeed in fostering political participation.

## CONCLUSION

Through the careful application of this framework, this book offers an insight into the changing nature and performance of modern political parties across the world's advanced industrial democracies. In the Conclusion to the book, we summarize the evidence and reflect on overall questions of party vitality and relevance. Moreover, we seek to draw attention to the links between perceptions of party legitimacy and performance and the observer's normative vision of democracy. There can be little real doubt that parties are here to stay for the foreseeable future, warts and all, yet it is equally evident that their nature and functioning has changed in a number of respects over the course of the past 40 years or so. Whether one looks at this and sees the glass half-empty (party decline) or half-full (party adaptation) ultimately depends on what one understands by, and expects of, the term 'democracy'.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmin, S. (1997) *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* (London: Zed Press).
- Almond, G. A., Powell, G. B., and Mundt, R. J. (1993) *Comparative Politics: A Theoretical Framework* (New York: Harper Collins).
- American Political Science Association (1950) 'Toward a more responsible two-party system'. *American Political Science Review* 44 (Suppl.).
- Bartolini, S. and Mair, P. (1990) *Identity, Competition, and Electoral Availability: The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885–1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Bibby, J. F. (1998) 'Party organizations, 1946–1996', in Bryon E. Shafer (ed.) *Partisan Approaches to Postwar American Politics* (New York: Chatham House), pp. 142–85.
- Bryce, J. (1921) *Modern Democracies* (London: Macmillan).
- Cotter, C. P. and Bibby, J. F. (1980) 'Institutional development of parties and the thesis of party decline'. *Political Science Quarterly* 95: 1–27.
- Daalder, H. (1992) 'A crisis of party?' *Scandinavian Political Studies* 15(4).
- Dalton, R. (1996) 'A divided electorate', in G. Smith et al. (eds) *Developments in German Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).
- Dalton, R. J. and Wattenberg, M. P. (2000) *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Dennis, J. (1966) 'Support for the party system by the mass public'. *American Political Science Review* 60.
- Giddens, G. (1998) *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Ginsborg, P. (1996) 'Explaining Italy's crisis', in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds) *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi* (London: Routledge), pp. 19–39.
- Inglehart, R. (1997) *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Jacques, M. (1993) *The Amazing Case of the Shrinking Politicians* BBC2 Television, Broadcast 25th October.
- Katz, R. S. (1986) 'Party government: a rationalistic conception', in Francis G. Castles and Rudolf Wildenmann (eds) *The Future of Party Government: Visions and Realities of Party Government*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), pp. 31–71.
- and Mair, P. (1992) *Party Organizations: A Data Handbook on Party Organizations in Western Democracies, 1960–1990* (London: Sage Publications).
- (1994) *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies* (London: Sage Publications).
- (1995) 'Changing models of party organization and party democracy: the emergence of the cartel party'. *Party Politics* 1: 5–28.
- King, A. (1969) 'Political parties in Western democracies: some sceptical reflections'. *Polity* 2: 111–41.
- Kirchheimer, O. (1966) 'The transformation of West European party systems', in J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner (eds) *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 177–200.

- Klingemann, H. D., Hofferbert, R., and Budge, I. (1994) *Parties, Policy and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press).
- Laakso, M. and Taagepera, R. (1979) 'Effective number of parties: a measure with application to Western Europe'. *Comparative Political Studies* 12: 3–27.
- Lawson, K. (1980) *Political Parties and Linkage: A Comparative Analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- and Merkl, P. H. (1988) *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press).
- Lowi, T. J. (1963) 'Toward functionalism in political science: the case of innovation in party systems'. *American Political Science Review* 57.
- Michels, R. (1915/1962) *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Free Press).
- Mulgan, G. (1994a) 'Party-free politics?' *New Statesman & Society*, 15 April.
- (1994b) *Politics in an Anti-Political Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
- Ostrogorski, M. (1902) *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan).
- Pedersen, M. (1979) 'The dynamics of European party systems: changing patterns of electoral volatility'. *European Journal of Political Research* 7: 1–26.
- Peters, B. G. (1998) *Comparative Politics: Method and Theory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).
- Poguntke, T. (1996) 'Explorations into a minefield: anti-party sentiment. Conceptual thoughts and empirical evidence'. *European Journal of Political Research* 29: 319–44.
- Poguntke, T. and Scarroo, S. (1996) 'Special issue on the theme of anti-party sentiment'. *European Journal of Political Research*, 29/2.
- Rose, R. (1980) *Do Parties Make a Difference?* (London: Macmillan).
- Sartori, G. (1976) *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Scarow, H. (1957) 'The function of political parties: a critique of the literature and the approach'. *Journal of Politics* 29: 770–90.
- Scarow, S. (1996) *Parties and Their Members* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Schattschneider, E. E. (1942) *Party Government* (New York: Rhinehart).
- Shonfeld, W. R. (1983) 'Political parties: the functional approach and the structural alternative'. *Comparative Politics* 15: 477–99.
- Sorauf, F. J. (1964) *Political Parties in the American System* (Boston: Little Brown).
- Webb, P. D. (2000) *The Modern British Party System* (London: Sage).
- White, S., and Stansfield, D. (Forthcoming) *Political Parties in Transitional Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).