Party System Change

Approaches and Interpretations

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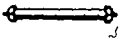
Party Organization, Party Democracy, and the Emergence of the Cartel Party (with Richard S. Katz)



One common thread which has run through the literature on political parties, essentially since the time of Ostrogorski (1902), and which has also run through the vast variety of typologies and analyses (both normative and empirical) that have been presented in that literature, has been the view that parties are to be classified and understood on the basis of their relationship with civil society (see, for example, Duverger, 1954; Neumann, 1956; Panebianco, 1988). This has had two implications. The first has been a tendency to set up the mass party model as the standard against which everything should be judged (Lawson, 1980, 1988; Sainsbury, 1990). The other has been to undervalue the extent to which differences between parties may also be understood by reference to their relations with the state.

It is the contention of this chapter that both of these implications are ill-founded. As will be argued, the mass party model is tied to a conception of democracy (see also Pomper, 1992) and to a particular, and now dated, ideal of social structure, neither of which is characteristic of postindustrial societies. Moreover, the mass party model implies a linear process of party development that, even when elaborated to take account of more recent developments (e.g. Kirchheimer's catch-all party or Panebianco's electoral-professional party), suggests an end-point from which the only options are stability or decay, and which, like all hypotheses of the end of evolution, is inherently suspect. In contrast, it can be argued that the development of parties in western democracies has been reflective of a dialectical process in which each new party type generates a reaction which stimulates further development, thus

leading to yet another new party type, and to another set of reactions, and so on. From this perspective, the mass party is simply one stage in a continuing process.

It is also important to recognize that the factors which facilitate this dialectic are not derived solely from changes in civil society, but also from changes in the relations between parties and the state. In particular, it can be argued that there has been a tendency in recent years towards an ever closer symbiosis between parties and the state, and that this then sets the stage for the emergence of a new party type, 'the cartel party'. Like previous party types, the cartel party implies a particular conception of democracy; moreover, also like previous party types, it stimulates further reactions and sows the seeds for yet further evolution.

THE MASS PARTY AND THE CATCH-ALL PARTY

Emphasis on the mass party as model entails two assumptions, one concerning the essential meaning of and institutional prerequisites for democracy, and the other concerning the organizational prerequisites for electoral success. Both of these have been developed most prominently by Duverger (1954), but are also evident in the model of British democracy described by Beer (1969: chapter 3) under the sobriquet 'Socialist Democracy', as well as in a variety of prescriptions for American democracy generically identified as 'Responsible Party Government' (Ranney, 1962).

In the archetypical mass party model, the fundamental units of political life are pre-defined and well-defined social groups, membership in which is bound up in all aspects of the individual's life (Neumann, 1956: especially 403). Politics is primarily about the competition, conflict, and cooperation of these groups, and political parties are the agencies through which these groups, and thus their members, participate in politics, make demands on the state, and ultimately attempt to capture control of the state by placing their own representatives in key offices. Each of these groups has an interest, which is articulated in the programme of 'its' party. This programme is not just a bundle of policies, however, but a coherent and logically connected whole. Hence, party unity and discipline are not only practically advantageous, but are also normatively legitimate. This legitimacy depends, in turn, on direct popular

involvement in the formulation of the party programme, and, from an organizational perspective, this implies the need for an extensive membership organization of branches or cells in order to provide avenues for mass input into the party's policy-making process, as well as for the supremacy of the extra-parliamentary party, particularly as embodied in the party congress.

Individual electoral choice is constrained by the encapsulation of the mass of the electorate into one of the subcultural groups that the parties represent, so that electoral politics is less about differential rates of conversion than it is about differential rates of mobilization. None the less, at the system level, the socialist/mass party model provides for prospective popular control over policy, in that the voters are supporting one or other party and its well-defined programme, and the party (or coalition of parties) with a majority of the votes gets to rule. Parties, in this view, provide the (not an) essential linkage between citizens and the state (Lawson, 1988: 36). This also involves a particular conception of organizational expediency. Since electoral competition is primarily about mobilization rather than conversion, the key requirement for a successful party is to increase the level of commitment of those who are already predisposed to offer it support—that is, the members of its 'natural' social constituency. For reasons of both legitimacy and expediency, therefore, the expectation was that there would be a 'contagion from the left', whereby parties representing other interests/segments in society would be obliged to adopt the basic features and strategy of the socialist/mass party model, or they would otherwise perish (Duverger, 1954: xxvii). From this perspective, the mass party was seen as the party of the future.

The emergence of what Kirchheimer (1966) called the 'catch-all party' severely challenged this notion of the party as representative of pre-defined sectors of society. In the first place, the beginnings of an erosion of traditional social boundaries in the late 1950s and 1960s implied a weakening of formerly highly distinctive collective identities, making it less easy to identify separate sectors of the electorate and to assume shared long-term interests. Second, economic growth and the increased importance of the welfare state facilitated the elaboration of programmes which were no longer necessarily divisive or partisan, but which could be claimed to serve the interests of all, or almost all. Third, with the development of the mass media, party leaders began to enjoy a capacity to appeal

to the electorate at large, an electorate made up of voters who were learning to behave more like consumers than active participants.

The result was the formulation of both a new model of party and, linked to this, a new conception of democracy, which observers sometimes, albeit unsystematically, identified as an 'Americanization' of European politics. Elections were now seen to revolve around the choice of leaders rather than the choice of policies or programmes, while the formation of those policies or programmes became the prerogative of the party leadership rather than of the party membership. Popular control and accountability were no longer to be ensured prospectively, on the basis of clearly defined alternatives, but rather retrospectively, on the basis of experience and record (e.g. Fiorina, 1981). Electoral behaviour was no longer believed to be moulded by predispositions, but was now based on choice (Rose and McAllister, 1986). The mobilization of voters was no longer emphasized, and nor, indeed, was their conversion, in that both processes assumed a capacity to engender affective loyalty; rather, voters were believed to have become free-floating and uncommitted, available to, and also susceptible to, any and all of the competing parties.

The problem with this new model was that, whereas the earlier conception of parties had seen their role as essential to the functioning of democracy, and had thus taken their organizational survival as given, the new conception of parties and of democracy viewed their role as much more contingent. Thus, although the modality may have changed, party continued to be evaluated primarily in terms of the linkage between party and civil society, and it was precisely this linkage which was being undermined; hence, the voluminous literature on 'the decline of party'; and hence also the variety of different efforts to explain why parties might be able to survive such a change (e.g. Pizzorno, 1981; see also Finer, 1984). If, instead, attention is paid to the linkages between party and the state, then both the survival and the evolution of party organizations become more readily understandable.

STAGES OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT

The models of party which have been discussed assume a sharp distinction between parties and the state. The classic mass party is a

party of civil society, emanating from sectors of the electorate, with the intention of breaking into the state and modifying public policy in the long-term interests of the constituency to which it is accountable. The catch-all party, while not emerging as a party of civil society, but as one which stands between civil society and the state, also seeks to influence the state from outside, seeking temporary custody of public policy in order to satisfy the short-term demands of its pragmatic consumers.[1] In short, despite their obviously contrasting relations with civil society, both parties lie outside the state, which remains, in principle, a neutral, party-free arena.

While the assumption that political parties are neatly separated from the state is quite conventional and commonplace, nevertheless it has been characteristic only of particular periods of history. Just as the clarity of the boundary between party and civil society varies over time (a sharp distinction in the period of the catch-all party and a fusion in the case of the mass party), so the clarity of the boundary between party and the state may also vary. Rather than a simple and static trichotomy (party, state, civil society), we see instead an evolutionary process, running roughly from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, which is driven by a series of stimuli and responses, and which has moved both the relationships among and the clarity of the boundaries between parties, the state, and civil society. This process may be simplified as involving four separate stages.

The first of these four stages is that of the liberal *régime censitaire* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with its restrictive suffrage requirements and other limitations on the political activity of the property-less. While the conceptual distinction between civil society and the state was valid, this was much less so in practical terms. Barring movements that would mobilize the (socially as well as politically) disenfranchised, the people who made up the politically relevant elements of civil society and the people who occupied the positions of power in the state were so closely connected by ties of family and interest that even when the two groups were not simply coterminous, they were heavily interpenetrating. This era was characterized by a conception of politics

[1] The same can be said of Panebianco's (1988) electoral-professional party, which differs from the catch-all party primarily in the sense that its organization is staffed by professionals and consultants rather than by party bureaucrats.

that assumed there to be a single national interest which it was the role of government to find and implement, and, in this context, the political parties that arose naturally claimed to be as Burke described: groups of 'men' in pursuit of the public interest—or perhaps in pursuit of their private interest, as a less charitable reading of history might suggest. There would be little need for formal or highly structured organization in such a context. The resources required for election, which often involved local status or connections as much as anything tangible, would be raised at the local level, and those who were in a position to make demands on the state would not need intermediaries.

Of course, the harmony of interest was more obvious in theory than in practice, and more obvious from the perspective of those in the ruling class than that of those excluded. Similarly, the advantages of organizing in areas with relatively large bourgeois and petty-bourgeois electorates (e.g. the Birmingham caucus of Joseph Chamberlain) and of taking concerted action within the parliament soon became clear, and vitiated the anti-party spirit that generally characterized the age. Still, in this conception, parties remained primarily of the cadre or caucus type, and schematically would have to be portrayed as in Figure 5.1, in the intersection of the state and civil society. That is, parties were basically committees of those people who jointly constituted both the state and civil society.

As industrialization and its attendant urbanization proceeded, the number of people able to meet the suffrage requirements of the *régime censitaire* increased, even while those requirements themselves were being relaxed. Additionally, restrictions on working-

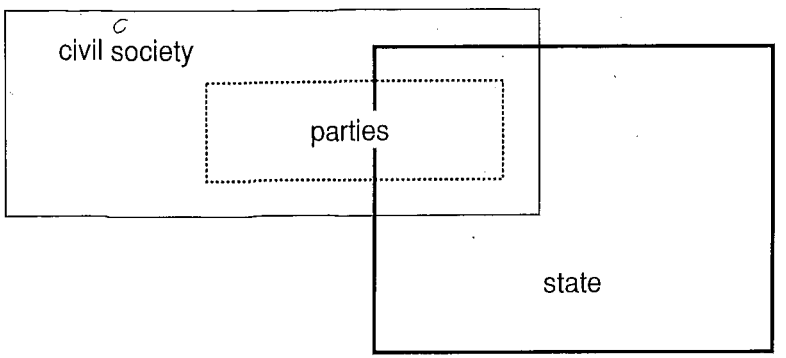


FIG. 5.1 Parties of the cadre or caucus type

class organization were increasingly seen to be incompatible with the liberal rationale of the bourgeois state, and, in any event, were unable to prevent the working class from organizing and taking action in the political as well as in the industrial spheres. Together, these processes created a far clearer separation between the state and the now vastly larger politically relevant portion of civil society, with the latter now growing to include large numbers of people who were not personally connected to those managing the state, and who perceived the state in terms of 'them' rather than 'us'.

The mass party, with its organized membership, formal structures and meetings, and so on, is the characteristic form of this second stage in the relationships among parties, state, and civil society. The mass party arose primarily among the newly activated, and often disenfranchised, elements of civil society as part of their (ultimately successful) struggle to gain a voice in, and eventually control over, the ruling structures of the state. Where the old cadre party had relied on quality of supporters, this new party relied on quantity of supporters, attempting to make up in many small membership subscriptions for what it lacked in large individual patronage; to make up in organized numbers and collective action for what it lacked in individual influence; and to make up through a party press and other party-related channels of communication for what it lacked in access to the commercial press.

As the instruments of the political 'outs', these new parties were naturally dominated by those whose principal base was in the party rather than in government. Because their strength lay in formal organization, this dominance by what would later come to be called the extra-parliamentary party tended to become formalized, and thus survived as a matter of principle even after the new parties succeeded in winning first the vote for their supporters and ultimately power in government as well. Reflecting their far more activist political agenda, the life experiences of their supporters, and an ethos of struggle, these parties naturally were more amenable to the idea of enforced party cohesion and discipline than were the bourgeois caucus parties. Most significantly in this regard, these were the first parties that explicitly claimed to represent the interests of only one segment of society. As a result, the representative's job was less to search for the national interest than it was to act as the agent of 'his' segment of society in pursuit of its own interest. The political party was the forum in which the political interest of the

social group it represented was articulated. Thus, it was not only practically and experientially appropriate that the party be disciplined, but it was also normatively desirable.

In these terms, the rise of the mass party, and ultimately of universal suffrage, was associated with a redefinition of the politically appropriate. Not only was an oligarchic system made democratic by the extension of the suffrage to nearly all adult citizens, but there was also a changed conception of the proper relationship between citizens/voters, whether numerous or not, and the state. Elections became choices of delegates rather than trustees, and thus rather than vehicles by which the voters gave consent to be governed by those elected, they became instead devices by which the government was held accountable to the people. The political party was to be the mechanism that made all this possible. Schematically, the relationships among parties, civil society, and the state in this conception of politics would be as shown in Figure 5.2, with the state and civil society clearly separated, and parties serving as a bridge or linkage between the two. The parties nevertheless remained clearly anchored within civil society, even though penetrating the state through patronage appointments to the state service as well as through the occupation of ministerial office.

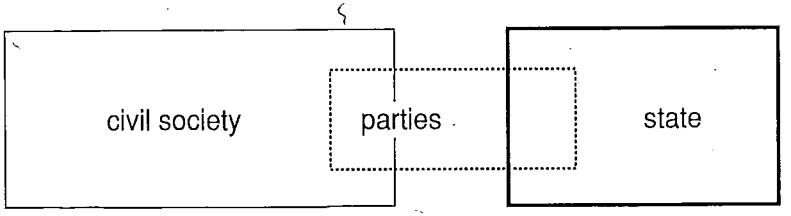


FIG. 5.2 Mass parties linking state and civil society

Both the mass party model of democracy and the mass party as an organizational form presented a challenge to the established parties, to which their organizations, such as they were, had to respond. On one hand, with electorates numbering in the millions rather than in the thousands, the informal networks of the caucus party were inadequate to canvass, mobilize, and organize supporters. On the other hand, growing acceptance of the mass party model of democracy (popular control of government through choice among unified parties) undermined support, even among

their own natural electoral base, for the more traditional organizational and governmental styles practised by the established parties.

This said, one response that clearly was not available to the leaders of the traditional parties was to adopt the mass party ethos root and branch. In particular, they could not accept the idea that parties exist to represent well-defined segments of society, because the segments which would have been left to them (farmers, industrialists, etc.) were obviously and increasingly permanent minorities. Similarly, the idea that the extra-parliamentary organization ought to be dominant was unappealing to those already established in government. Further, while they needed to organize and mobilize electoral supporters, they were not so dependent on them for material resources; as the parties of the upper and middle classes, they could still draw on large individual contributions; as the parties in government, they could deploy many of the resources of the state for their own advantage; as the parties of the establishment, they had privileged and sympathetic access to the 'non-partisan' channels of communication.

As a result, the leaders of the traditional parties tended to establish organizations that looked like mass parties in form (regular members, branches, a party congress, a party press), but which in practice often continued to emphasize the independence of the parliamentary party. Rather than emphasizing the role of the parliamentary party as the agent of the mass organization, they emphasized the role of the mass organization as supporters of the parliamentary party. Equally as significant, while these parties recruited members, they did not, and in practical terms could not, restrict their appeal to particular classes, but rather had to make broader appeals, trying to catch support from all classes, albeit with rates of success that varied markedly across class lines. In ideological terms, then, they could maintain the earlier commitment to an idea of a single national interest that cut across sectional boundaries.

At the same time as these older parties of the right were adopting this new 'catch-all' model, there were also a number of factors emerging which served to undermine the mass party model, both as a normative ideal and as a practical imperative. In many respects, the mass party model became a victim of its own success. The 'big battles' for political and social rights had united the emerging constituencies of the mass parties in a way which could not be

maintained once these rights were won. The need for solidarity was further reduced when the state began to provide on a universal basis the welfare and educational services that before had been the responsibility of the party and its *parentela*. Moreover, the amelioration of social conditions, increased mobility, and the development of mass media all served to reduce the distinctiveness of experience of once well-defined social constituencies (e.g. Einhorn and Logue, 1988). Not only had the social and political prerequisites for the mass party therefore begun to erode, but, once they had gained a taste of office, and especially once they had achieved power on their own, the parliamentary leaders of the original mass parties had also begun to find the catch-all model more attractive. Having enjoyed the fruits of electoral victory—which included the ability to alter policy in ways they thought desirable or beneficial for their electoral supporters—these politicians naturally wanted to continue winning, and so became more interested in broadening their electoral appeal beyond their original *classe gardée*. Moreover, once in office, they found that further compromises were being forced by the constraints and demands of practical government, and by the need to work with groups that were among their erstwhile electoral opponents.

All of this gave rise to a third stage of evolution, with the old mass parties beginning to emulate the response of the old parties to their own rise, and thus with parties from both the traditional left and the traditional right beginning to converge on the catch-all party model. While such parties may (continue to) have members, they no longer seriously attempt to encapsulate them; rather party membership becomes just one of many independent memberships that an individual may or may not maintain. Instead of emphasizing social homogeneity, the party accepts members wherever it finds them, and moreover recruits members on the basis of policy agreement rather than social identity. In place of the defensive electoral strategy of the mass party, which laid most stress on the mobilization and retention of a limited constituency, the party adopts an offensive strategy, exchanging 'effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success' (Kirchheimer, 1966: 184). In making this transition, there is a waning of the ideological and/or policy distinctiveness of the parties, and, with the emergence of a growing policy consensus, the need for and capacity to maintain a distinctive electorate becomes further undermined. Moreover, changes in systems of mass communications, most particularly the rise of television as the most widely used source of political information, enhance the conditions which allow, or indeed compel, parties to make universal appeals directly to voters, rather than communicating principally to and through their core supporters.

Contemporaneously, the relationship between parties and the state also changes, suggesting a new model which is illustrated in Figure 5.3. In this model, parties are less the agents of civil society acting on and penetrating the state, and are rather more like brokers between civil society and the state, with the party in government (i.e. the political ministry) leading an essentially Janus-like existence. On one hand, parties aggregate and present demands from civil society to the state bureaucracy, while on the other they are the agents of that bureaucracy in defending policies to the public.

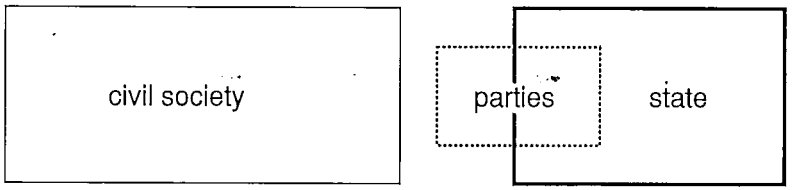


FIG. 5.3 Parties as brokers between state and civil society

Although the mass parties also perform these functions, they are nevertheless fundamentally altered by the loosening of ties between particular parties and particular segments of society as implied by the catch-all model. While there remain differences among parties with regard to their receptiveness to inputs from differing groups, and with regard to the policies they are prepared to defend—that is, while it still makes some difference which party is in office (e.g. Castles, 1982)—most groups expect and are expected to be able to work cooperatively with any party that is in power. Thus, for example, while there may remain some formal links between trade unions and social democratic parties, not only do the unions deal directly with the bourgeois parties when they are in power, but they also deal with the social democratic parties when in power in much the same way. Conversely, social democratic parties may find

themselves defending anti-union policies apparently made necessary by circumstances beyond their control.

The idea that parties act as brokers is particularly appropriate to the pluralist conception of democracy that, not coincidentally, developed along with it (Truman, 1951; Dahl, 1956). In this view, democracy lies primarily in the bargaining and accommodation of independently organized interests. Parties build constantly shifting coalitions among these interests, and it is vital to their function as facilitators of compromise and guarantors against unreasonable exploitation of one group by another that each party be open to every interest. Elections are properly choices between teams of leaders rather than contests among closed social groupings or fixed ideologies. The old mass party, as Michels (1962) suggested, may well have been dominated by its leadership rather than embodying the true democracy which its ideology implied, but, in this new conception of democracy, party oligarchy actually becomes a virtue rather than a vice. Thus, the catch-all model is not only attractive from the self-interested perspective of party leaders, but proves normatively desirable as well.

The parties-as-brokers model has several potentially important implications regarding the further evolution of the nature and activities of parties. First, the position of parties as brokers between civil society and the state suggests that the parties themselves may have interests which are distinct from those of their clients on either side of the relationship. Moreover, they are in effect able to extract a commission for their services. Although not usually cast in precisely these terms, the role assigned to the personal rewards of office in, for example, the Downsian model of rational politics (Downs, 1957), corresponds to this commission for services rendered.[2] This commission need not be limited to material rewards to individuals (e.g. office and its perquisites), but can also include payments to the party as an organization, as well as deference to policy preferences, whether those of the party or of particular individuals. Second, the capacity of a party to perform the brokerage function depends not only on its ability to appeal to the electorate, but also on its ability to manipulate the state. But if a party can manipulate the state in the interests of its clients in civil society, it should also be able to manipulate the state in its own interests. Thus, as Epstein (1986: 171) noted with regard to his 'parties as public utilities' model of American parties, it is possible to imagine 'that parties, like many regulated business enterprises, [succeed] in using the power of the state to protect their own interests'.

[2] It is just these terms that David Mayhew (1974) employs to describe the personal fewards of leadership positions in the American Congress.

Most important, looking at Figures 5.1 to 5.3 as a dynamic rather than as three isolated snap-shots suggests the possibility that the movement of parties from civil society towards the state could continue to such an extent that parties effectively become part of the state apparatus itself. Indeed, it can be contended that this is precisely the direction in which the political parties in the modern democracies have been heading over the past two decades.

PARTIES AND THE STATE

A variety of social, cultural, and especially political developments may be cited as facilitating or even encouraging this movement towards an anchoring of parties within the state. These include a general decline in the levels of participation and involvement in party activity, with citizens preferring to invest their efforts elsewhere, and particularly in groups where they can play a more active role, where they are more likely to be in full agreement with a narrower range of concerns, and where they feel they can make a difference. The more immediate local arena thus becomes more attractive than the remote and inertial national arena, while open, single-issue groups become more appealing than traditional, hierarchic party organizations (e.g. Lawson and Merkl, 1988*a*; Dalton and Kuechler, 1990). One result of this is that the sheer size and commitment of party memberships have generally failed to keep pace with the growth in electorates on the one hand, and with the rapidly escalating costs of party activity on the other.

Parties have therefore been obliged to look elsewhere for their resources, and in this case their role as governors and law-makers made it easy for them to turn to the state. Principal among the strategies they could pursue was the provision and regulation of state subventions to political parties, which, while varying from country to country, now often constitute one of the major financial and material resources with which the parties can conduct their activities both in parliament and in the wider society (see Katz and Mair, 1992a, and Chapter 6 below).

The growth in state subvention over the past two decades, and the promise of further growth in the coming years, has come to represent one of the most significant changes to the environment within which parties act. At the same time, however, it must be emphasized that this environmental change is far from exogenous to the parties, in that it is the parties, in their role as governors, who are ultimately responsible for both the rules regarding state subventions, as well as for the amounts of money and resources which are made available. Moreover, it is also necessary to underline that precisely because these subventions are often tied to prior party performance or position, whether defined in terms of electoral success or parliamentary representation, they help to ensure the maintenance of existing parties while at the same time posing barriers to the emergence of new groups. In a similar vein, the rules regarding access to the electronic media, which, unlike the earlier printed media, are subject to substantial state control and/or regulation, offer a means by which those in power can acquire privileged access, whereas those on the margins may be neglected. Again, the rules vary from one country to another, and in some cases are clearly less restrictive and less important than others; nevertheless, the combination of the importance of the electronic media as a means of political communication on the one hand, and the fact that these media are regulated by the state, and hence by the parties in the state on the other, offers the parties a resource which was previously inconceivable.

In short, the state, which is invaded by the parties, and the rules of which are determined by the parties, becomes a fount of resources through which these parties not only help to ensure their own survival, but through which they can also enhance their capacity to resist challenges from newly mobilized alternatives. The state, in this sense, becomes an institutionalized structure of support, sustaining insiders while excluding outsiders. No longer simple brokers between civil society and the state, the parties now become absorbed by the state. From having first assumed the role of trustees, and then later of delegates, and then later again, in the heyday of the catch-all party, of entrepreneurs, parties have now become semi-state agencies.

There are risks involved in such a strategy, however, and principal among these is that of the party becoming dependent on continuous access to resources that in principle lie outside its own

control. In particular, there is the danger that a party that is excluded from government will also be excluded from access to resources. With the earlier models of party, winning or losing an election might make a great deal of difference to a party's political objectives but mattered little to its survival, since the resources required for organizational sustenance came from within its own reservoir of support. With this new approach, by contrast, winning or losing may make less difference to a party's political objectives because of the absence of great policy battles, but could make a good deal of difference to its sheer survival, since the resources for its sustenance now come increasingly from the state. But it must be emphasized that parties need not be in competition for survival in the same way that they once competed to determine policy; for while there could be only one policy at a time, all of the parties can survive together. It is in this sense that the conditions become ideal for the formation of a cartel, in which all the parties share in resources, and in which all survive.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CARTEL PARTY

In fact, the differences in the material position of winners and losers have been dramatically reduced. On the one hand, the set of 'governing parties' is no longer as limited as it once was. At the risk of over-generalization, almost all substantial parties may now be regarded as governing parties. All have access to office. There are, to be sure, a variety of extremist minority parties which have always remained on the fringes of power, including the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties; but a full catalogue of such exceptions would simply serve to emphasize how few significant parties are persistently excluded, particularly if regional and other forms of sub-national government are considered. On the other hand, even when a party is excluded from government, or even when, as in the case of the British Labour party, a party languishes for a long period in opposition, this rarely implies a denial of access to the spoils of the state, nor to at least some share of patronage appointments. More often than not, media access is largely unaffected by absence from government. Access to state subventions is also unaffected; indeed, in some systems, such as Ireland and the United Kingdom, parties currently in opposition are actually accorded a

higher level of subvention precisely because they lack the immediate resources of parties currently in government.

Hence we see the emergence of a new type of party, the cartel party, characterized by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by a pattern of inter-party collusion. In this sense, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of the emergence of cartel parties, since this development depends on collusion and cooperation between ostensible competitors, and on agreements which, of necessity, require the consent and cooperation of all, or almost all, relevant participants. Nevertheless, while at one level this development relates to the party system as a whole, it also has important implications for the organizational profile of each individual party within the cartel, and so it is reasonable to speak of a cartel party in the singular.

As yet, however, this process remains at an early stage. Moreover, given the nature of the conditions which facilitate the emergence of cartel parties, it is also uneven, being more evident in those countries in which state aid and support for parties is most pronounced, and in which the opportunities for party patronage, *lottizazione*, and control are most enhanced. Finally, it is also a process which is likely to develop most easily in those political cultures marked by a tradition of inter-party cooperation and accommodation. Pending a closer and more rigorous enquiry, therefore, it can be suggested that the process is likely to be most developed in countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, where a tradition of inter-party cooperation combines with a contemporary abundance of state support for parties, and with a privileging of party in relation to patronage appointments, offices, and so on. Conversely, the process is likely to be least developed in a country such as the United Kingdom, where a tradition of adversary politics combines with relatively limited state support for party organizations, and where the possibilities for patronage, while growing, also remain relatively limited.[3]

[3] The United Kingdom is a curious case in which the behaviour associated with the cartel party model is becoming less prevalent. While the emphasis on the parliamentary party would appear to facilitate the formation of a cartel, this depends on the strong expectation of alternation in office. Labour's apparent inability ever to get back in office, and the Conservative's apparent permanent hold on office, have led both to anti-cartel behaviour. Thus, for example, Labour has become more favourably disposed towards PR which would break the two-party monopoly (now effectively a one-party monopoly) in office, while the Conservatives have become much less willing to share appointments and honours with Labour party members (see Webb, 1994).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CARTEL PARTY

As noted above, the most obvious distinction between the different models of party—the élite or cadre party, the mass party, the catch-all party, and now the cartel party—concerns the particular social and political context within which each of these parties emerged, and which, for reasons of convenience, may be identified with distinctive time-periods (see Table 5.1, where the various characteristics of the four models of party are juxtaposed to one another). At the same time, however, this was far from the only influence on party development, in that particular types of party often outlived the circumstances which had facilitated their initial emergence. Thus mass parties did not displace élite parties *tout court*; rather, both continued to coexist even after the advent of universal suffrage, in much the same way that mass parties continued even after the development of the catch-all party, and, most recently, catch-all parties continue to exist notwithstanding the emergence of cartel parties. Moreover, contemporary parties are not necessarily wholly cartel parties any more than parties of previous generations were wholly élite parties, or wholly mass parties, or wholly catch-all parties. Rather, all of these models represent heuristically convenient polar types, to which individual parties may approximate more or less closely at any given time.

Among the key characteristics of party which have varied with time have been those involving the goals of politics and the basis of inter-party competition. In the period of dominance of the élite party, political goals and conflicts largely revolved around the distribution of privileges, and the parties competed on the basis of the ascribed status of their adherents. As the mass party developed, the key opposition in politics began to revolve around the question of social reform (or opposition to social reform), and the parties competed in terms of their representative capacity. With the emergence of the catch-all party, the goals of politics remained largely purposive, but came to revolve around questions of social amelioration rather than wholesale reform, with parties competing less on the basis of their representative capacities, and rather more on the basis of their effectiveness in policy-making. Finally, with the emergence of the cartel party, comes a period in which the goals of politics, at least for now, become more self-referential, with politics becoming

TABLE 5.1. *The models of party and their characteristics*

Characteristics	Élite party	Mass party	Catch-all party	Cartel party
Time-period:	19th century	1880–1960	1945–	1970–
Degree of social-political inclusion:	restricted suffrage	enfranchisement and mass suffrage	mass suffrage	mass suffrage
Level of distribution of politically relevant resources:	highly restricted	relatively concentrated	less concentrated	relatively diffused
Principal goals of politics:	distribution of privileges	social reformation (or opposition to it)	social amelioration	politics as profession
Basis of party competition:	ascribed status	representative capacity	policy effectiveness	managerial skills, efficiency
Pattern of electoral competition:	managed	mobilization	competitive	contained
Nature of party work and party campaigning:	irrelevant	labour-intensive	both labour-intensive and capital-intensive	capital-intensive
Principal source of party's resources:	personal contacts	members' fees and contributions	contributions from a wide variety of sources	state subventions
Relations between ordinary members and party élite:	the élite are the 'ordinary' members	bottom up (*pace* Michels); élite accountable to members	top down; members are organized cheerleaders for élite	stratarchy; mutual autonomy
Character of membership:	small and élitist	large and homogeneous; actively recruited and encapsulated; membership a logical consequence of identity; emphasis on rights and obligations	membership open to all (heterogeneous) and encouraged; rights emphasized but not obligations; membership marginal to individual's identity	neither rights nor obligations important (distinction between members and non-members blurred); emphasis on members as individuals rather than as an organized body; members valued for contribution to legitimizing myth
Party channels of communication:	inter-personal networks	party provides its own channels of communication	party competes for access to non-party channels of communication	party gains privileged access to state-regulated channels of communication
Position of party between civil society and state:	unclear boundary between state and politically relevant civil society	party belongs to civil society, initially as representative of the newly relevant segment of civil society	parties as competing brokers between civil society and state	party becomes part of state
Representative style:	trustee	delegate	entrepreneur	agent of state

a profession in itself: a skilled profession, to be sure, and one in which the limited inter-party competition which does ensue takes place on the basis of competing claims to efficient and effective management.

Patterns of electoral competition have also therefore differed. Among the élite parties, competition was effectively managed and controlled. This pattern was radically undermined by the extension of the suffrage, and by the emergence of mass parties which sought to gain victory on the basis of popular mobilization. The new style of electoral competition could best, if not always most typically, be seen in the attempts by the mass parties to segment the electorate into a series of exclusive constituencies, and in what Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 51) refer to as the attempts 'to narrow the support market'. With the catch-all party, electoral strategies became more competitive. Voters could be won, and parties found it worth their while to try to win them, even if the basis for this competition had ceased to involve major issues and come instead to revolve around questions of policy effectiveness. Even this pattern, however, can now be said to have been challenged, for, with the emergence of the cartel party, competition is once again contained and managed. Certainly, the parties still compete, but they do so in the knowledge that they share with their competitors a mutual interest in collective organizational survival, and, in some cases, even the limited incentive to compete has actually been replaced by a positive incentive not to compete. Perhaps nowhere was this better exemplified than by the sharing of patronage between the major Italian parties, including sometimes the Communists, who ostensibly were in opposition. Other very obvious examples include the sharing of seats and rotation of the presidency of the Swiss Federal Council among the four main parties; the sharing of mayoral appointments in the Netherlands; and the 'incumbent protection' gerrymander in many American state reapportionment decisions.

This new style of electoral competition also has implications for, and is partly a consequence of, changes in the resource base of the parties and in the type of party work and campaigning which is required. Élite parties, as has been noted, derived much of their resources, whether financial or otherwise, from among personal contacts, and paid little attention to the need for campaigning. Mass parties, on the other hand, built up highly labour-intensive organizations, financing their activities on the basis of membership

fees and subscriptions, and developing their own independent channels of communication. This was less evidently the case with the catch-all party, which, while leaning heavily on its membership base for both finances and campaign work, also began to win contributions from a wider variety of sources, and began to shift towards a more capital-intensive approach to campaigning. These new parties also laid less emphasis on their own independent channels of communication, and spent an increasing effort in competing for access to non-partisan communication networks, devoting more and more resources to the employment of professional publicists and media experts (Panebianco, 1988: especially 220–35). This latter pattern has now been even further pushed forward by the cartel parties, whose campaigns are now almost exclusively capital-intensive, professional, and centralized, and who rely increasingly for their resources on the subventions and other benefits and privileges which are afforded by the state.

All of this also affects the character of party membership and the relations between the party members and the party leadership. For the élite party, of course, the party leaders are the only members, and so these questions do not arise. With the mass party, by contrast, there is a large and homogeneous membership which claims the right to control the party élite, and in whose name the party élite acts. However, while members are actively recruited and enjoy rights and privileges within the party, membership also entails substantial duties and obligations. The catch-all party continues to emphasize membership and to afford its members rights within the organization, but opens its ranks to a wider range of supporters and no longer requires the same level of commitment. Leaders are no longer primarily accountable to the members, but rather to the wider electorate. The members in this sense are more like cheerleaders, and the pattern of authority is more top-down than bottom-up. Finally, although members of a cartel party may have even more rights than those of catch-all parties, their position is sometimes less privileged. The distinction between members and non-members may become blurred, with parties inviting all supporters, whether formally enrolled or not, to participate in party activities and decisions. Even more important, when members do exercise their rights, they are more likely to do so as individuals rather than through delegates, a practice which is most easily typified in the selection of candidates and leaders by postal ballot rather than by

selection meetings or party congresses. This atomistic conception of party membership is further facilitated by allowing people to affiliate directly with the central party, obviating the need for local organizations, and hence also for local organizers. Indeed, it becomes possible to imagine a party which manages all of its business from a single central headquarters, and which simply subdivides its mailing list by constituency, region, or town when particular sets of candidates have to be selected or when subnational policies have to be approved.

The result is a leadership that can legitimize its position both inside and outside the party by pointing to a large and formally empowered membership. At the same time, its autonomy is enhanced, since an atomized membership is less likely to provide the basis for the mobilization of challenges, and since the position of local activists as necessary intermediaries is undercut. Parties do of course still need and want local office-holders, and these might be troublesome for the central party were they to advocate policies or strategies which ran counter to those advanced by the national leadership. That said, these local leaders will always be discouraged from intervening in national affairs by the knowledge that the national leadership, if challenged, can appeal directly to the individual members. As far as local matters are concerned, on the other hand, both sides have an interest in encouraging local autonomy. From the local office-holders' point of view, a relatively free hand is always desirable, while from the central party side an autonomous local party is more likely to encourage involvement and participation, and is more likely to make the party attractive to potential members and supporters. Each side is therefore encouraged to allow the other a free hand. The result is stratarchy.

DEMOCRACY AND THE CARTEL PARTY

Just as each of the models of party organization (élite party, mass party, catch-all party) that preceded it had an associated model of democracy, so the rise of the cartel party model as an empirical phenomenon is also associated with a revision of the normative model of democracy. In this revised model, the essence of democracy lies in the ability of voters to chose from a fixed menu of political parties. Parties are groups of leaders who compete for the

opportunity to occupy government offices and to take responsibility at the next election for government performance. In one sense, this is simply an exaggeration of the catch-all party, or élitist liberal model of democracy, and the significant element is what is missing from this formulation. Democracy lies in the currying of public favour by élites, rather than public involvement in policy-making. Voters should be concerned with results rather than policy, which is the domain of the professional. Parties are partnerships of professionals, not associations of or for the citizens.

In other senses, however, the cartel party model of democracy is fundamentally different. Central to the earlier models was the idea of alternation in office—not only were there some parties that were clearly 'in' while others were clearly 'out', but the fear of being thrown out of office by the voters was also seen as the major incentive for politicians to be responsive to the citizenry. In the cartel model, on the other hand, none of the major parties is ever definitively 'out'. As a result, there is an increased sense in which electoral democracy may be seen as a means by which the rulers control the ruled, rather than the other way around. As party programmes become more similar, and as campaigns are in any case oriented more towards agreed goals rather than contentious means, there is a shrinkage in the degree to which electoral outcomes can determine government actions. Moreover, as the distinction between parties in office and those out of office becomes more blurred, the degree to which voters can punish parties even on the basis of generalized dissatisfaction is reduced. At the same time, participation in the electoral process implicates the voter, and by casting elections as the legitimate channel for political activity, other, potentially more effective channels are made less legitimate. Democracy becomes a means of achieving social stability rather than social change, and elections become 'dignified' parts of the constitution.

To put it another way, democracy ceases to be seen as a process by which limitations or controls are imposed on the state by civil society, and becomes instead a service provided by the state for civil society. Political leadership needs to be renewed, and elections provide a peaceful ritual by which this may be accomplished. Feedback is necessary if rulers are to provide government that is broadly acceptable, and contested elections, which signal public pleasure (or displeasure) with policy and outcomes, provide that feedback. Thus, the state provides contested elections. And since

democratically contested elections, at least as currently understood, require political parties, the state also provides (or guarantees the provision of) political parties. In the end, of course, it is the parties in power that are the state and that provide this service, and it is thus their own existence that they are guaranteeing.

Recognition of party politics as a full-time career entails acceptance, and even encouragement, of a number of tendencies that earlier conceptions of democracy regarded as undesirable. While the relationship of these to the idea of a party cartel, either as preconditions or as likely consequences, is straightforward, they nevertheless imply a fundamental reorientation towards parties and elections. Most important, politicians feel an increasing need to lower the costs of electoral defeat. This is, of course, a universal desire, which has often led to the wholesale suspension of elections in countries without strongly established norms of electoral politics. In the western countries, where this is clearly not a viable option, the alternative is to provide subventions and support for all, allowing different coalitions to be in office at different levels or in different places, and so forth. One result of this is the toning down of competition. Furthermore, as politicians pursue long-term careers, they come to regard their political opponents as fellow professionals, who are driven by the same desire for job security and who confront the same kinds of pressures as themselves, and with whom business will have to be carried on over the long term. Stability becomes more important than triumph, and politics becomes a job rather than a vocation.

CHALLENGES TO THE CARTEL PARTY

But while the cartel parties may be able to limit competition among themselves, they are of course unable to suppress political opposition more generally. This is especially the case as parties, both singly and as a group, become ever more closely connected to the state; and as they cease to be effective channels of communication from civil society to the state. Instead of parties making demands on the state on behalf of particular groups in civil society, these groups find that they themselves need to make demands on the party/state. Increasingly, therefore, demand articulation becomes the province of interest organizations. In some cases, of course, and

particularly as far as the interest organizations of the larger and more established groups (e.g. trade unions, employers' associations) are concerned, these have developed relationships with the state which are not unlike those developed by the parties themselves. This is the phenomenon which has been labelled 'neo-corporatism', and, among other things, involves the granting of a privileged and secure position to certain groups in exchange for 'good behaviour'. But precisely because these established groups have been co-opted into the system, they often prove unwilling or unable to express some demands, and this, in turn, can lead to the rise of alternative organizations, which are often short-lived and strident.

As this suggests, the self-protective mechanisms that the cartel parties have created therefore have their own, internal contradictions. To the extent that cartel parties limit the possibility of intra-organizational dissent, minimize the consequences of competition within the cartel, and protect themselves from the consequences of electoral dissatisfaction, they prevent elections from performing even the minimal feedback function that the new model of democracy assigns to them. This is only furthered if the major interest organizations have also been brought within the self-protective umbrella of neo-corporatist arrangements. At the same time, however, this cannot prevent the emergence of challenges from outside the cartel, even though it might be possible to place barriers in the path of new parties seeking to enter the system, such as, for example, the predication of state subventions on prior electoral performance or the restriction of ballot access. More important, attempts at exclusion may also prove counter-productive, offering to the excluded neophytes a weapon with which to mobilize the support of the disaffected. Thus, in much the same way as the élite parties created the social and political conditions for the emergence and success of mass parties, and as the mass parties, in turn, created the conditions for the emergence and success of catch-all parties, and as the catch-all party led to the conditions that generated the cartel party, so the more recent success of the cartel inevitably generates its own opposition.

New parties seeking to break into the system may, of course, campaign for support on the basis of a wide variety of ideological appeals. Increasingly, however, experience suggests that one particular rallying cry which seems common to many new parties, and which seems particularly effective in mobilizing support, is their

demand to 'break the mould' of established politics (see, for example, Poguntke, 1994b; Scarrow, 1994b). In many cases, this demand is largely rhetorical, and its protagonists, particularly those seeking support among the new middle classes—parties ranging from Democrats 66 in the Netherlands, to the Social Democrats in Britain, and the Progressive Democrats in Ireland—often prove more than willing to join the establishment which they once initially decried. Even in other cases, as with many of the Green parties, where the opposition is more deep-rooted, these demands also prove capable of accommodation and co-optation.

In some cases, however, the protest taps into a more radical disaffection. This is certainly the case for a variety of new extreme-right parties, such as the Vlaams Blok in Belgium, the National Front in France, National Action in Switzerland, and even possibly New Democracy in Sweden, which seems intent on following the path of the Progress parties in neighbouring Denmark and Norway. This is also increasingly true of the established but now increasingly strident and excluded Freedom Party in Austria. All of these parties appear to espouse a profoundly undemocratic and often xenophobic opposition to the consensus which now prevails in most of the western democracies, and this obviously provides a major basis for their support. But what is perhaps more striking is that many of these parties also appear to be gaining great mileage from their assumed capacity to break up what they often refer to as the 'cosy' arrangements which exist between the established political alternatives. In effect, therefore, by operating as a cartel, by attempting to ensure that there are no clear 'winners' and 'losers' among the established alternatives, and by exploiting their control of the state to generate resources which can be shared out among themselves, the cartel parties are often unwittingly providing precisely the ammunition with which the new protesters of the right can more effectively wage their wars. These new protesters do not represent a challenge to party; their protest is, after all, organized by party. But they do see themselves as representing a challenge to the cartel party, a challenge which may well be fuelled by the actions of the cartel parties themselves, and which, in the longer term, may therefore help to legitimate their protest.

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, much of the contemporary literature speaks of the decline or failure of parties, an emphasis which, from this perspective, is largely misconceived. In

fact there is little real evidence to suggest that the age of party has waned. On the contrary, while in some respects parties are less powerful than before—enjoying, in the main, less intense partisan loyalties, lower proportions of adherents, less distinctive political identities—in other respects their position has strengthened, not least as a result of the increased resources which the state (the parties in the state) places at their disposal (see also Chapter 6 below). To be sure, if one takes as the standard the model of the mass party, as much of this literature appears to do, then the mainstream parties are perhaps less powerful than before; that is, they are less powerful mass parties. But this is an inappropriate standard, which fails to take account of the ways in which parties can adapt to ensure their own survival, and which ignores the new strengths that they can acquire in compensation for those weaknesses that have become apparent. They are, in short, different parties. To speak of the *challenge* to party rather than of its decline or failure, is perhaps to be on surer ground, albeit also fundamentally misconceived. For what we now see in western democracies is less a challenge to party in general, and rather more a challenge, inevitably so, to cartel parties in particular.