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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS



Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther, (eds), *Political Parties and Democracy*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. £13.00 (pbk), xxxiv + 356 pp. ISBN 0 8018 6863 7.

Can anything new be said about political parties and democracy? If not, can existing knowledge be reformulated or summarized to improve our understanding of parties and democracy? This volume, edited by Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther, affirms both questions. Their book improves understanding by reformulating arguments about the role of parties in democracies, and by summarizing and updating party politics in particular countries. It also offers important new analyses and insights.

The book comprises 14 selections – 13 chapters plus the editors' extensive and helpful Introduction, which gives a concise but informative preview of every chapter. Seven chapters are truly cross-national analyses, and one analyses a case comparatively. The remaining five are country studies by noted scholars: Leonardo Morlino (Italy), Bradley Richardson (Japan), E. Sridharan and Ashutosh Varshney (India), Ergun Ozbudun (Turkey) and Yun-han Chu (Taiwan). Every chapter in the book reflects the influence of three globally familiar trends: 'The increasing use of mass-media advertising and centralized, professional campaigning, and parties' growing need for large-scale campaign finance, often generated by kickbacks on government licenses and contracts' (p. xxvi).

Four of the five country studies report party system decay or party decline. In Italy, according to Morlino, 'the traditional parties' links with civil society were declining, in qualitative if not always quantitative terms' (pp. 124-5). Speaking of the dominant party in Japan, Richardson says, 'the Liberal Democratic Party's overall organizational structure appears to be weaker and less institutionalized than in the past' (p. 162). Writing about the historically strongest party in India, Sridharan and Varshney describe 'the Congress Party's long-term trend toward organizational decay' (p. 221). Ozbudun sees 'de-institutionalization' in Turkey's political parties and party systems (p. 260). Only Chu's study of Taiwan strikes a different note. After the defeat of the hegemonic Kuomintang in 2000, Chu found 'the new competitive party system

... instantly endowed with established patterns of ubiquitous presence of partisan politics in all organized sectors of the society'. Still, he saw the party system as 'democratically shallow and politically unstable' (p. 268).

Each of these chapters admirably summarizes and updates party politics in an important, mainly non-Western, country and can be profitably read by those not specialists in the country or region. (Morlino's explication of party chaos in Italy since the 1990s will even help most Western scholars.) Each study also describes how socio-economic change and developments in mass communication have disrupted party organization and patterns of social support.

The analytical, cross-national chapters are more varied. Four stand by themselves. Seymour Lipset's comparative case study of 'The Americanization of the European Left' contends that, by emphasizing private over state enterprise, the United States provided a model emulated by European socialist parties. Giovanni Sartori's 'The Party Effects of Electoral Systems' holds that electoral systems *do* affect the numbers of parties in a system but 'have little to say' on whether parties are in decline (p. 102). Hans Daalder's chapter, 'The Rise of Parties in Western Democracies', argues (against the grain of the book) that parties 'often seem to have become stronger, rather than weaker' (p. 50). In contrast, Philippe Schmitter's chapter, 'Parties Are Not What They Once Were', asserts that parties 'are less and less capable of performing the functions that parties have performed historically' (p. 74).

The four remaining cross-national chapters hang together more tightly. 'Types and Functions of Parties', by Gunther and Diamond (the first chapter and the longest), does indeed say something new about parties and democracy. Its contribution is twofold: first (and less importantly), it enumerates seven 'functions' of parties and provides a rationale for each. Second, it presents a well-conceived, multidimensional classification of 15 party types, which is far more complex than most existing typologies. Gunther and Diamond argue that its complexity should help theory-building by accommodating more of the world's parties. The editors apply their typology to assess how well each type of party performs their list of seven functions.

In his creative chapter, 'Political Darwinism in Latin America's Lost Decade', Michael Coppedge commends Gunther and Diamond for unifying 'disparate typologies that were focused on selected characteristics', but nevertheless prefers 'to abandon the search for an adequate typology' (p. 178). Instead, he favours treating party characteristics as variables 'and measuring these characteristics as precisely as possible' (p. 179). He does this for scores of Latin American parties from 1982 to 1995, informing his analysis with data on party system volatility, fragmentation and polarization. Looking at individual parties, Coppedge denies 'a simple answer to broad questions about the decline of parties' in Latin America. Yes, they have changed in the past two decades, but 'they have always been changing' (p. 199). Parties became 'less functional for representation and governability in some countries' (Brazil and Ecuador), but more functional in others (Colombia and Mexico) (p. 200).

In 'Divergent Paths of Post-Communist Democracies', Herbert Kitschelt recasts his innovative theory that, after the Berlin Wall fell, the dominant mode of linkage between citizens and parties in post-communist countries took one

of three different forms – clientelist, charismatic or programmatic – depending on the patterns of political rule between the two world wars and the pattern of rule under communism. In the space available, I cannot summarize his rich argument, but Kitschelt comes to ‘the surprising result’ that the new post-communist polities that ‘have the least chance’ of building mass parties ‘have the best chance’ of forming ‘strong liberal democratic and social democratic parties and of experiencing the best relative economic performance’ (p. 320).

In the book’s final chapter, ‘Challenges to Contemporary Political Parties’, Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair grant that the previous chapters found that ‘problems of performance and legitimacy appear to impact parties in all of these settings with varying degrees of intensity’ (p. 327). But then they concisely synthesize extant observations and arguments to make a case for the continued role of parties in popular government. First, they distinguish between parties’ ‘*representative* functions, including interest articulation, aggregation and policy formulation’ and their ‘*procedural* or *institutional* functions, including the recruitment of political leaders and the organization of parliament and government’ (p. 332). Bartolino and Mair concede that the representative functions of parties have declined, but note ‘the crucial point’ that their procedural or institutional functions have not. ‘Despite an increasingly voluminous literature dealing with the supposed decline of the party, there is scarcely anything to suggest that a viable democratic alternative can be found to substitute for the role of parties in the recruitment of leaders or in the organization of government’ (p. 336). They conclude, ‘Parties may face an increasing number of *competitors*, but as yet they seem to have faced no real *alternatives*’ (p. 342).

As in other edited works, many contributors fail to implement the editors’ analytical framework – in this case, the novel 15-cell typology and the list of 7 party functions that Gunther and Diamond propose in Chapter 1. As noted above, Coppedge rejects classifying parties into types in favour of measuring separate party traits, and every case-study author also strays from the editors’ framework when describing party types in their countries. If this is a burden that editors must accept, they should not need to accept a book design that clutters tables with annoying lines and shaded bars, which are sometimes harmless but occasionally distracting in reading tables (e.g. pp. 42, 134, 241). Having vented my feelings about that, however, I can recommend this volume to party scholars generally and especially to those who seek a text for graduate courses on comparative political parties that sees a future for political parties in democratic government.

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