

Book Reviews. Governance, 11 (April, 1998, Issue 2

Political Parties and Party Systems: Comparative Approaches and the British Experience. By Moshe Maor. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, x, 279 p. \$69.95 hard; \$24.95 paper.

Moshe Maor, a Senior Lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and formerly at the London School of Economics, says this is a "textbook." If so, it is pitched at a level of analysis too high for most undergraduate courses at US colleges. Unlike most undergraduate party texts, this one offers no chapters on "selecting candidates" or "election campaigns." Instead, one of its eight chapters is "Party Institutionalisation" (British spelling throughout), one on "Models of party organisation," and another on "Cohesion and dissent." Indeed, Maor devotes his first chapter to "Classifying party definitions," whereas most textbook authors review definitions in a few paragraphs. Maor expects his students to "satisfy dissertation committees" (p. 236). Clearly, this text is aimed at graduate students, but the book has much to offer for faculty too.

Maor focuses mainly on critiquing the field's scholarship, which he does constructively. For example, his lead chapter organizes party definitions according to three groups of research questions: "What does a party do? What motivations under-ly a party's behavior? and, How does a party operate? and why does it operate the way it does?" (p. 3) Under these categories, he analyzes definitions proposed by more than twenty different scholars. Unfortunately, Maor avoids formulating an explicit definition that guides his own study, but he must embrace the last group--how they operate and why. That conclusion emerges from his concern with parties' modes of "internal management" to explain differences between parties (p. 10). Despite differences among parties and across countries, Maor sees similarities in the types of internal tradeoffs facing leaders and groups within the party. Indeed, he says, "My mission in this book therefore is to explain these trade-offs and their consequences for party organisational strategy and behavior" (p. 14).

Maor does not forget his mission. Discussing institutionalization, he notes that an expanding electorate pushes parties to establish extra-parliamentary organization, which constitutes a threat to parliamentarians and other party members in office. It becomes "a trade-off between the task of organising popular support for themselves among the newly enfranchised voters and the derived consequences in terms of their room for manoeuvre" (p. 66). Analyzing developmental models of party organization, he observes how they "address the trade-off between the need of the party elite to modify the party's electoral strategy, for example, following societal changes, and their need to accommodate their party organisation to these changes" (p. 93). Concerning the trade-off by party leaders to activist for their support, "parties pursue electoralist strategies only as long as leaders can control rank-and-file activists" (p. 134). He later analyzes party factionalism by considering two tradeoffs: loyalty to leaders or joining factions, and leaders' taking action at the cost of cohesion.

Although Maor consistently interprets party phenomena as trade-offs, he never loses sight of the parties' literature and its scholars. In discussing models of party organization, for instance, he skillfully analyzes four varieties of developmental models: Duverger's mass party, Epstein's electoral party, Kirchheimer's catch-all party, and Katz and Mair's cartel party. For exchange models, he considers the work of Downs, Wright, and Schlesinger, but ends up concentrating on Strom. Strom's analysis, Maor says, "suggests that leader of labour-intensive parties are likely to trade office benefits for policy" (p. 98). Graduate students will not only value this book for identifying major frameworks for comparative analysis of parties but also for evaluating their strengths and weaknesses.

Maor does more than summarize and critique the parties' literature. He makes original contributions--especially in discussing government and opposition relationships and analyzing inter-party determinants of coalition bargaining. The traditional argument for bargaining holds: the more centralized the party structure, the easier for it to remain in a coalition. Maor asks, "Why are centralised parties considered to be effective coalition actors if they lack structural mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent?" (p. 169). Turning the traditional argument on its head, he argues that decentralized parties are better able to handle internal opposition without forcing members to leave the party.

This book is unique in integrating "the British Experience," mentioned in its title, within its analytical framework. Excluding the introduction and conclusion, every chapter ends with an extensive section that interprets British party politics using concepts introduced earlier. For example, the chapter on organizational models applies Duverger's

criteria for a mass party to the Labour Party prior to 1945. Citing membership data and party events, Maor concludes that the Labour already had catch-all features and was not the mass party it claimed. Noting that all three British parties experienced similar environmental pressures from the 1960s to the 1990s, Maor contends that only the Liberal Democrats moved toward more democratic organization. "The Labour Party and the Conservative Party have responded largely by increasing the centralisation of decision-making, and enhancing the autonomy of their parliamentary party and their capacity for strategic flexibility" (p. 132). Again, these chapter sections are not for newcomers to British party politics, but they explain a lot about British parties to latecomers.

Maor's book makes a genuine contribution to the comparative study of parties and party systems.

KENNETH JANDA,
Northwestern University