

ASIA TODAY



POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

Contemporary Western Europe and Asia

Edited by

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Conclusion: Toward the Elaboration of a General Theory of Parties—The Cases of Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia

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The aim of this volume is to move in the direction of a general theory of parties by considering jointly the characteristics of these organizations in two regions of the world, Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia. The move is a limited one both because no *general theory* of parties has so far successfully emerged and because many scholars have pointed out that immense problems would have to be overcome in targeting such a goal. Perhaps the main reasons for such a seemingly insurmountable situation are that a precise definition of what constitutes a party still remains elusive and that the characteristics that have to be considered in order to undertake a comprehensive anatomy of parties are too numerous to be taken into account jointly in a study that proposes to be empirical.

Indeed in an endeavor to list these characteristics, in 1976, K. Lawson noted that six different planes of party life would have to be analyzed, these being origins, organization, membership, leadership, issues, and role in government. Meanwhile, it was noted that academic approaches aimed at examining these characteristics of parties fell within five categories, namely “historical, structural, behavioral, functional-systemic, and ideological.”¹

To undertake a comprehensive analysis of the achievement of parties would mean examining systematically a very large, perhaps

impossibly large, number of variables in the process of such an undertaking. However, even assuming that one might be able to locate each party from the point of view of all of these variables, the question would still arise as to how a synthesis could be elaborated from the empirical material collected and thus lead, if obviously not to a “parsimonious” classification of party types, at least to one in which the constitutive elements of the analysis would be sufficiently linked together to provide the basis for a meaningful general theory of parties.

To overcome the difficulties that a comprehensive theory would face, the research would have to be based on a more limited list of characteristics than the one presented by Lawson in 1976.² This was the purpose of the list that was proposed in the introductory chapter of this volume and was described in some detail in the Appendix to that chapter. As the indicators concerned fall into four categories covering “the links between party and society,” “the structure of the parties,” “the goals of the parties,” “leadership” combined with “the relationship between party and government,” the one topic mentioned by Lawson that was left aside was the history of the parties. We return to the question of history, as it is a crucial, although almost an impossible matter to handle when considering, that is to say, attempting to compare, parties that have had a very different historical background and duration. The analysis of the relationship between party and government is difficult to undertake in general, admittedly: but, as the situations to which we are confronted vary appreciably depending on whether the system is or not presidential, it was necessary to examine party-government relations at least in relation to leadership, given that presidentialism has prevailed in four of the ten countries analyzed in this inquiry.

Yet the difficulties arising in the context of the “six” broad aspects of the characteristics of parties proposed by Lawson are not the only ones that have to be overcome.³ There are two others about which not enough attention has been drawn.

These two questions fall under the general rubric of what is to be the geographical scope of the analysis, and which is bound to emerge as a general theory of parties can deserve its name only if it is worldwide. Yet the extension of the analysis to parties found outside the West raises two further matters of major concern. First, as noted in the introductory chapter, the analysis with a limited scope such as this one should include only parties that operate in a competitive context, not in a single-party context.

The second question relates to history: it is indeed not at all clear *prima facie* how one can best compare parties at different points of their “ageing” process, one key difference between Western parties and parties outside the West is that the latter emerged often markedly subsequently, primarily because the countries concerned became independent in the last decades of the twentieth century only. A worldwide analysis would clearly have to consider how far the extent of ageing affects the character of political parties. In this study we specifically examine the general differences that can be found between older and newer parties, specifically on structures, goals, and type of leadership. The extension of the analysis to East and Southeast Asia makes it possible at least to see whether these differences exist even in the context of a region that, with the exception of Japan, has had few or even no older parties at all.

Yet the extension of the analysis to countries in which parties tend to be recent has to be undertaken with care so that one might be able to determine with some degree of precision whether there was any profound difference between the two groups of countries. This is the key reason why the current analysis was devoted to two regions only, Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia. While the case of Japan was special, the other countries of East and Southeast Asia have been undergoing a process of social and economic change that made it intriguing to discover whether they were comparable in political terms and in the present context in terms of the characteristics of their parties, despite the fact that these parties were typically new, indeed even entirely new. One of the questions that needs to be examined in this context is the extent to which the “class cleavage”—so important in the build-up of Western parties in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—appears to have played a similar part in the parties that have been established much later, as has been the case generally in East and Southeast Asia.

As a result, the step that was taken in the present inquiry was an intermediate one: it consisted in comparing parties in countries from two regions that were different in many of their characteristics and yet were not so different that one would feel that they had little in common. This meant that one might be able to move for the first time outside the West and thus break the concentration of the analysis on the West that has characterized what passes for “overall comparative” analyses of parties and party systems so far. In the process, one might be able to begin to assess the part to be allocated to “history.” The question is of importance as it relates directly to the notion of

“party change,” that P. Mair⁴ rightly states as having been replaced by the more limited notion of “party system change,” not because the latter is more important but because it is simpler to handle.

In the course of this conclusion we examine the parties that have emerged and developed to being “relevant” with respect to the five aspects we identified earlier on the basis of the categorization of Lawson,⁵ namely the relationship between parties and citizens, the structure of parties, the programs and possible ideology of parties, and the party leadership patterns together with the relationship of the parties concerned with the government. However, in order to place this analysis in the general context of the ten-targeted countries, we begin by presenting in the most general manner the parties that were in existence prior to the 1990–2010 period or emerged and became relevant during that period (or very few years previously).

Relevant Parties

There were in total 42 relevant parties, 23 older and 19 new, during the 1990–2010 period, in the 10 studied countries. These 42 parties divide almost equally between “old” and “new” (22–20); but, perhaps more significantly, the proportions in which they divide among the Western European and the East and Southeast Asian regions are not very different: there were 9 new relevant parties out of 22 in Western Europe—40 percent—against 50 percent—10 out of 20—in East and Southeast Asia. Given the newness of pluralistic party developments in East and Southeast Asia, one might have expected a higher percentage of new parties in that region.

Relationship between Parties and Citizens

Three matters need to be examined in some detail to achieve a closer understanding of the relationship between parties and citizens in the two analyzed regions. First, one must consider turnout and in particular determine whether it has shown a substantial decline during the 1990–2010 period, as it is often suggested, at any rate in the West, that a decline in turnout constitutes an aspect of party decline in general. Second, we need to compare older and new parties to see whether older parties age and decline and whether new parties come to replace “decaying” older parties. Third, we need to identify the bases, social or economic, that link the electorate to parties. In this context, has

the “class” basis of the vote become insignificant in the West where it was strong and never really emerged in East and Southeast Asia? Overall, is there a profound difference between the two regions or, on the contrary, do variations not have a strong regional basis?

Turnout. Turnout at parliamentary or congressional elections did decline between the early 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century: there are two exceptions, however, both from East and Southeast Asia, Thailand, where turnout increased from 2001 onward, and the Philippines where it remained stable. Moreover, turnout at parliamentary and congressional elections was on average higher in Western Europe (74 percent) than in East and Southeast Asia (66 percent), and the ranking of the countries is such that conclusions from this difference are difficult to draw, although Japan and South Korea are the bottom countries in this study.

There is a contrast in the electoral systems between the two regions, which is majoritarian *or* proportional in the Western European countries, but mixed, in East and Southeast Asia, that is to say, both majoritarian *and* proportional, as in many new pluralist states, in Eastern European countries, for instance. There are exceptions to the rule and the general pattern, but so far it remains unclear whether differences in the electoral system have a systematic effect on turnout.

In presidential elections turnout is higher than at parliamentary or congressional elections in at least three of the four countries that have a presidential system: France, South Korea, and the Philippines.

Old and New Parties

The overall conclusion from developments in the two regions is not that older parties age so much that they disappear but that they come to be challenged, sometimes strongly challenged, as in Japan or Thailand. Yet these older parties are resilient even in the face of dictatorships in the Philippines or even emerge from the dictatorship, as in Indonesia. However, there is genuine decline among older parties on the Left (French Communist party, Japan Socialist and Communist parties), and a decline of the religious party, Komei, in Japan.

New parties have thus many forms. They may emerge because older parties have lost (some of) their capacity to deal with the problems of their society: this seems to have been the case in an extreme manner in Italy and Thailand. Elsewhere, changes may have not taken place at all (Britain) or taken place on a relatively small scale (Germany, the

Netherlands, France, probably Japan despite the DPJ, perhaps even the Philippines). They may occur for somewhat cosmetic reasons (South Korea and to an extent Italy) or because the forced pluralistic system established under a dictatorship continues to remain partly in being under genuine pluralism (Indonesia, but, also, to an extent, Germany because of East Germany with Die Linke). There is, therefore, some doubt as to whether one should conclude that a major difference exists between the two regions over the old/new parties distinction.

Geographical, Social, and Economic Cleavages and the Parties

The socioeconomic impact on voting is geographical, especially in two ways. First, some parties may be ideologically “regional” in character: in this study there is only one relevant example, the Northern League of Bossi that, by and large, has candidates only in the northern part of Italy.

The other reason why parties can be regional is because they obtain enormously different results in some parts of the country by comparison with others, a difference that goes beyond the fact that, for instance, an area has more workers or more middle-class voters than another. In this study, such a situation occurred in South Korea at the time when the “Three Kims” dominated political life and ceased after this period.

The other aspects of the socioeconomic impact on voting tend to be national. Analyses of voting patterns with respect to three key variables—social class, gender, and age—were undertaken in terms of the Left-Right divide in eight of the ten countries, all five Western European countries and Japan, Thailand, and South Korea; in the remaining two countries, Indonesia and the Philippines, an analysis was conducted on the basis of the distinction among socioeconomic voting patterns between the more Liberal and the more Conservative of the 2004 presidential candidates.

In relation to gender, only minor variations were found in Left-Right voting patterns: in Britain, France, and the Netherlands, there was practically no difference in terms of gender between supporters of the Right and those of the Left; elsewhere men did vote more for the Left and women more for the Right, but differences were small, except in South Korea and Thailand. There is thus globally some difference between the two regions in this respect.

Although differences in the distribution of support for the main parties were larger with respect to the other two variables, age and

class, there was no systematic divide between the two regions. With respect to age, among the eight countries in which the distinction is truly meaningful (with one exception only, Thailand), younger voters tended to vote more for Left-leaning parties and older voters for Right-leaning parties. In terms of “class,” in the eight countries for which the Left-Right division is truly meaningful, the parties of the Right are in all cases more supported by voters who belong to the middle class and the parties of the Left are more supported by voters who belong to the working class.

One cannot detect sharp differences between the two regions in types of relationships between parties and electorate, despite differences in the electoral systems, for instance; nor does one detect vast differences between the two regions, surprisingly perhaps, in terms of the extent to which new parties come to take the place of older parties, although the extent of such a replacement varies markedly, but on a country basis.

Structure of Parties

Two questions emerge in the examination of the “modern” or mass party. First, how realistic a picture is the party model when applied to Western Europe? Second, did such a model spread to other regions, in particular to East and Southeast Asia? The answers are found by examining the size and role of the membership, the nature of party finance and the character of party decision-making structures.

The range is substantial in the principles of party membership when one considers both Western European countries and countries of East and Southeast Asia. Membership in Western Europe remains based in theory on the modern type, but it is declining. Membership increased in several countries of East and Southeast Asia, but on a basis in which trust in the leadership is the key substantive part. What is, therefore, emerging is probably a new model, new at least for pluralist polities, a model that might be referred to as “postmodern” and in which the significance of membership is based on allegiance, not on the active role of members in the decision-making process.

Party Finance

In the concept of the “mass party,” party finance is to come from within the organization rather than from outside: hence the emphasis on membership dues. In practice, these have come to be merely a

fraction of the large sums that parties need, except, among the countries examined here, in the Netherlands where they constitute about half the total income. Elsewhere in Western Europe, they provide much smaller proportions—10–25 percent at most. South Korea is the one country of East and Southeast Asia where membership dues constitute a similar proportion of income. In Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, members' contributions are either nonexistent or merely token amounts.

A substantial amount of party income comes from donations, both in Western Europe and in East and Southeast Asia. State subsidies also represent another source of party income. For some Japanese parties, and some French and Italian parties, state subsidies have constituted a major proportion of their income.

Party Decision-Making Processes

We expected to encounter serious difficulties in assessing the nature of party decision-making processes. To obtain a realistic comparative picture, the best approach seems to consist in looking at the role of grassroots membership, the intermediate and upper echelons of the party structure, and the position of leaders in this process.

The role of members at the local level is not insignificant, both in the Western European and in East and Southeast Asian countries. The powers relating to local matters appear to be spread widely in all ten studied countries.

National conferences, national executives, and presidiums constitute the formal party mechanisms of decision making. While these bodies are representative of different opinions in the party in some cases, especially Western European, they are in other cases in the hands of the leader, particularly in newer parties, whether in Western Europe or in East and Southeast Asia. There is also another route in which national decisions can be and are often taken, the parliamentary route. It is through the parliamentary route that local influence filters to the national level: this was so in traditional parties in Western Europe and this appears to be still the case, for instance, in the Philippines. The postmodern parties are unlikely, in contrast, to provide much opportunity for parliamentarians to be involved in the national party decision process.

The question of leadership appointment is one in which, perhaps rather surprisingly, the role of the party decision-making process is perhaps even more unclear. This is so for three reasons. First, who is

the real leader of the party, in which there is a party chair or party president and a party “leader”? Second, in presidential systems, the elected president may not have been the leader of his or her party. Third, even outside presidentialism, someone who launched a new party or significantly transformed an existing party may win the majority for that party at the national election and thus become the leader of the country without having been formally appointed by anyone in the winning elected party. All three of these characteristics alongside the “regular” appointment of the leader are found, at least at some point, in one or more of the ten countries analyzed in this study.

It is, therefore, simply not true that Western European countries and Japan embody the classical modern model of party decision making; nor is it true that East and Southeast Asian countries, even the Philippines, embody fully the traditional “decentralized” model. Not only is the relatively new postmodern model, at least in pluralist polities, playing some part in the political systems of both regions, but also the “traditional” elements continue to play a part even in some Western European parties alongside modern and postmodern ones.

Programmers of Political Parties

One key question is whether policies and programmers are seriously held and pursued; another is whether and, if so, when and under what influence parties change their policies; and the third is whether the policies and programs of parties are sufficiently “compact” to constitute “ideologies.” In all ten countries examined here, there are substantial variations in the extent to which these election programmers, often referred to as “manifestoes,” are fully prepared and debated.

The size of the programmed reveals to an extent how seriously the leadership views this matter, although this is not an entirely reliable indicator: it does give an impression of the extent to which a program is taken seriously by the party concerned. In the Netherlands in 2010, programmers varied between 24,500 words in the Christian Party and 8,400 words in the Liberal Party; in the Philippines, they ranged from 7,000 words in the Liberal Party to 2,000 words in the Nationalist Party. On the whole, there does seem to be a difference between Right and Left with respect to program development, parties of the Right tending to be less specific than those of the Left.

Manifestoes relate to the election that is about to take place: what is also at stake is whether and, if so, when parties alter what can be described as their basic “philosophy of government,” a question that would appear to relate to the age of parties and may be connected to party decline, as well as to the extent that new parties challenge the older ones. This process obviously arises primarily, perhaps even almost exclusively, in the case of this study, in Western European and Japanese parties, as pluralism emerged by and large more recently in the other countries of East and Southeast Asia.

The ways in which these new goals have emerged in the older pluralistic countries are an indication that parties do age with time. While these societies were becoming more Conservative, the Left was unable to put forward truly realistic proposals to replace those that had gradually become out of tune with the mood of even much of their own electorate. On the other hand, in East and Southeast Asia, the changes that have taken place have had a different character: what seems to be occurring is a “recasting” of the parties within a new framework. Not much has happened in the Philippines in that direction; little has occurred so far in Indonesia; but Thailand and South Korea have moved appreciably in that direction from the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Overall, one has to conclude that the extent to which and the direction in which there is ideology may well be subjected to something like a pendulum movement in the context of established pluralistic polities. The move toward the Right combined with the apparent inability of the Left to respond to this move in the majority of Western European polities can thus be an instance of such a pendulum move in countries in which pluralism had lasted for some generations and in which many of the parties have come to be rather old. A different movement may be taking place in political parties in East and Southeast Asia where parties did not have the time in the past to give programmers and ideologies the possibility to mature and subsequently to age. Perhaps what occurred in Thailand without the presidency but under the mantle of the monarchy and what occurred in South Korea with the presidency have been mechanisms by which political parties began to “gel” in these two countries. One has, therefore, to wait and see whether, in Indonesia and in the Philippines, the presidency will help to develop parties to mature and to propose programmers and ideologies within a pluralistic framework that will gradually result in these parties ageing.

Party Leadership, Personalized or Not, Populist or Not

It is difficult to disentangle in a convincing manner allegiance to a party from allegiance to the leader of that party. One conclusion though is that, the stronger and the better established the parties are, the more it is likely that the party, rather than the leader, will be the key element in the equation. This may indeed explain why newer parties in Western Europe appear more likely to have routinely personalized leaders at the top. The fact that parties are in a sense “cushioned” by the presidency may also account for personalized leadership having developed rather more strongly where the political system is presidential.

Of the ten country studies, only in the South Korean chapter is it categorically stated that personalized leadership had declined since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In Thailand, perhaps political life before Thaksin could be described as being based on a “traditional” and clientelistic form of personalized leadership: the arrival of Thaksin on the scene did not mean the end of personalized leadership, however, but the emergence of a new form that was in no way “traditional” but was on the contrary postmodern. Meanwhile, developments that have taken place in Indonesia and the Philippines, especially in the context of presidential elections, suggest that there is also at least a move in these countries toward postmodern personalized leadership and away from the “traditional” that which had typically characterized at least the Philippines.

The question of personalized leadership is often closely associated with the extent to which these leaders are adopting a “populist” discourse. Admittedly, what a populist approach to programmers consists of is imprecise and indeed very different, despite the fact that many studies have been devoted to the subject especially since the 1990s.⁶

Although populist programs and a populist discourse were not put forward in Western Europe in the older larger parties, they were associated with the new radical right parties as well as, to an extent, with some parties of the Far Left.

Populism does play a part in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, but on the basis of a different kind of discourse from the one that has prevailed currently in Western Europe. Alongside what might be regarded as the “defensive” populist discourse of Western

Europe, Thaksin's populist appeal in Thailand is associated with an attempt to provide advantages to parts of the population.

It is, therefore, difficult to expect to obtain a single comprehensive definition of populism on a worldwide basis. This is indeed perhaps the reason why there is a tendency to equate populism with personalized leadership: apart from personalization, there is in reality little that can bring under the same general umbrella the "populist" positions held by Le Pen or by Bossi and the positions held by Thaksin or by Megawati: what brings them together is the fact that all of them appeal to the people and, except perhaps in the case of the last one mentioned, that the people respond positively to that appeal. There is thus little basis on which, in pluralist systems, one can bring under the same rubric the "opposition" populism of the new small parties of Western Europe and the "governmental" populism of the leaders of large parties in power.

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At the end of a study that intended to go beyond classical regional boundaries, it is worthwhile examining the extent to which both substantive and methodological goals suggested at the beginning were achieved. To do so, we follow the sequence adopted throughout, in particular in this conclusion, and examine five aspects of party development. This means considering first the sociopolitical framework within which parties tend to develop, and referring then to the four key characteristics of parties that were discussed during the analysis, old and new parties, party membership, party programs, changing over time or not and constituting an overall ideology or not, and party leadership, the extent to which it is personalized and/or includes a populist discourse.

The sociopolitical characteristics of party development in the pluralistic and, therefore, competitive context that was the framework of this study were naturally concerned with turnout and the electoral process. Regional distinctions did play some part, but not overwhelmingly; this was the one segment of the study that suffered from the smallness of the sample. A systematic study of patterns of abstention for all pluralistic countries not only would be doable but almost certainly would lead to clearer results; this may not be so to the same extent about the consequences on political parties of electoral systems, and in particular of the recently emerged distinction between mixed proportional-majoritarian systems and systems that

are either majoritarian or proportional on the other: but little could be said here about the effect of this distinction in the context of this ten country study.

The value of the small sample across two regions did emerge, on the contrary, in relation to the other four aspects of party life that were listed earlier. The distinction between old and new parties turned out to be not just important, but complex. What constitutes a new party is not altogether clear: some older parties may only change their names or at most some parts of their program. Meanwhile, some new parties emerge at the margin, in this sample mainly on the Right, while others take over the government by gaining almost instantaneously large majorities. This may be because older parties were ageing, in terms of either structure or programs. There was some difference between the two regions, but there were also cases of interregional similarity.

The distinction between old and new parties was reflected to an extent not so much in the number of members, but in the very notion of what constitutes membership. Political party analysis has tended to be based on the distinction between early localized traditional bodies and modern mass parties, with membership being expected to play a major part in the latter. This part has markedly declined even if, on balance, the political parties themselves have not declined as markedly in terms of their electoral appeal: members have in effect ceased to be truly important, by and large, except at the grassroots, and occasionally, in some parties, through primaries. Hence the view that many parties are now based on rather passive allegiance, an allegiance that entails that there be global support, but not that members should be active or should want to “participate.” While these developments are somewhat more likely to occur in countries where pluralism is recent, the movement toward that kind of postmodern relationship does affect both regions.

The question of the development of party programs is one in which, on the contrary, differences between the two regions are larger, though not overwhelmingly so, partly because party behavior in Japan is similar to party behavior in most though not all Western European countries and partly because there is a range in the extent to which programs are truly specific. Meanwhile, matters of substantial programmatic change tend to arise more in old pluralistic countries while the question as to whether programs should be taken seriously arises most in the Philippines where “traditionalism” is regarded as being prevalent, not in Thailand or South Korea. Nor is it clear that parties are moving away from being concerned with developing an

ideology, as some of the new parties, in both Western Europe and East and Southeast Asia are more ideological than some (though not all) of the older ones.

The matter that probably raises the most controversy in the combined study of the two regions is the nature of leadership and in particular the extent to which it may be becoming more personalized, and, in some cases, may be using a populist discourse. The subject is complex, as there is difficulty even in identifying these concepts, let alone in measuring them. This is indeed where it is particularly important to study jointly old and new (pluralist) countries, as it is probably too easily assumed that new pluralist countries are also likely to be those where personalization and types of populist discourse are more frequently adopted. In such a case, a small sample is indeed a necessity, as only in this way can one hope to discover the extent to which these characteristics do apply and have applied over time more or less.

Detailed empirical studies of parties across two or perhaps three regions are the only way of ensuring that one can truly *perceive*, let alone begin to understand, the developments that are taking place with respect to such a key political institution as parties. Studies of Western European parties alone probably lead too easily to a degree of despondency, perhaps in part justified, but to an extent also based on idealized versions of the past of these parties. The joint examination of the characteristics of parties across regions, if undertaken on the basis of small samples, does reveal an intricate variety of movements that one cannot imagine *a priori* and can simply escape the net of broader surveys, especially so long as these are not guided by directions that studies of small samples had already identified. By using both methods, can one hope to come gradually to what the ultimate goal must be, namely to provide a realistic general theory of parties that has so obviously escaped us so far.

Some readers, judging merely from the title, may find that our book is basically along the rational choice theoretical tradition. The fact is that the book's approach is very much inductive in an endeavor to find out some noted regularities of political parties in the 20-year period in West Europe and East Asia. We must note, however, that the inductive approach adopted in the book is not disharmonious with the rational choice theorization attempt. Also, we must note that rational choice theorization has focused dominantly on American political development. When the number of democracies has gone beyond 100, the urgent need is to dig systematically and empirically the kind

of noted regularities and irregularities of political parties across 100 odd democracies. The sad fact is that for those democracies, systematic and empirical data of political parties are not easy to collect. The book has attempted to do such a job of carefully examining some representative democracies in West Europe and East Asia during the most recent period, between 1990 and 2010. Our hope is that rational choice theorists as well as other kind of theorists of political parties' studies may find our book a useful and productive endeavor even when the direction of theorization might diverge at times.

For other readers who may find the book less theoretically oriented, here is a summary of our bolder propositions based on systematic and empirical findings as found in the text.

1. Political parties are institutionally durable especially in a society where economic activities are voluminous.
2. A society where the tide of globalization is high tends to accommodate smallish political parties of extreme kind.
3. The characteristics of electoral system and political party organization may go side by side. In other words, when both variables are jointly taken into account, the kind of party politics can be relatively easily profiled.
4. The period of great transformations gives rise to new parties and results in old parties declining or even disappearing.
5. The kind of party leadership quality is determined by what political parties desperately need at a time of crisis.

Needless to say, there are other propositions that are to be further explored in more comprehensive studies covering 100 odd democracies.

The prospect for political parties as we see it is as follows. The models of political parties go through three stages: (1) the period when political parties are perceived as being undesirable if perhaps inevitable (from the time of *Federalist Papers* United States to the time of post-World War II Western Europe); (2) the period when political parties are perceived as being desirable and sustainable since the end of World War II till today; (3) a future period when political parties are perceived as being increasingly weak entities sitting with unease between citizens and the state. The resilience of political parties is undeniable. But the political parties will face an increasing degree of uncertainty given a strong civil society and the deepening of forces beyond national borders. The future prospect for political parties in the 100 odd democracies remains to be pondered with another

volume or more. Indeed, political parties' research has just started its new beginning. We can't allow political parties' research to be confined to only one (the United States) or only 27 (the European Union) when 100 odd democracies are about to blossom and possibly thrive in other regions!

Notes

1. Kay Lawson, *Comparative Study of Political Parties* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1976)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Peter Mair, *Party System Change: Approaches and Interpretations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
5. Lawson, *Comparative Study of Political Parties*.
6. Jean Blondel and Jean-Louis Thiebault, *Political Leadership, Parties and Citizens* (London: Routledge, 2010), 37–38.