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Parties and Representative Government

In September 2010 the voters of Tuvalu went to the polls. Onlookers speculated that Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia's government would be elected for a second term. In the event, a new coalition government emerged with Maatia Toafa as prime minister. The unusual feature in this process is that neither Ielemia nor Toafa are party leaders, for the simple reason that this nation state, a long-established democracy, does not have any political parties.

Tuvalu is one of a tiny number of exceptions—indeed, many of them tiny (Pacific Rim) island states—to the general rule that democracies need political parties to operate their representative institutions. These exceptional cases aside, the general picture is of democracies centered on political parties, of democracies operating representative institutions that are operated by and for parties—a picture of party government as "a synonym for representative democracy."[1] This is the central theme of our study, namely that political parties are vital agencies in the proper functioning of democracies.

By no means is our position unique. It is a well-established position of party theorists that these entities have played a crucial role in the establishment and proper functioning of democracy. James Bryce, for instance, was unequivocal in his view that "parties are inevitable: no free country has been without them; and no one has shown how representative government could work without them."[2] In Max Weber's terms, political parties are "the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses."[3] According to LaPalombara and Weiner they are "the creature[s] of modern and modernizing political systems."[4] In Schattschneider's most memorable refrain, "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties."[5] Schattschneider's perspective is unapologetically normative: he calls for the development of what he refers to as a model of "party government," a term that became quite prominent in political science debates in the 1970s and 1980s. This culminated in a multi-volume project on "the future of party government" directed by the late Rudolf Wildenmann.[6]

Political Parties and Democratic Linkage

Flash forward a few decades and the centrality of political parties is still much discussed. Leading scholars continue to describe political parties as being "at the heart" of the political system, as "endemic to democracy, an unavoidable part of democracy."[7] The centrality of political parties is reflected in the vibrancy of this branch of the political science discipline. For example, by one estimate researchers have published more than 11,500 books and articles on European parties in the postwar era.[8] And since the mid-1990s the journal *Party Politics* has been dedicated solely to the study of political parties. In the words of one of the leading scholars of party politics, this is "a field which is brimming with health and promise."[9]

It is hard to find fault with the perspective that political parties are ubiquitous. On a daily basis, senior party figures dominate the news agendas. The leaderships of those parties in office set the policy agenda and drive the policy process through the parliamentary system. These same leaderships appoint our judges and other important office holders. At local level we have representatives (MPs, Congressmen, Senators) elected to look after our interests, who in virtually all cases are party representatives. Every several years, we vote in general elections to elect candidates for office, the vast bulk of whom have been nominated by a political party. These snapshots indicate how, in so many respects, there remain important areas of linkage between political parties and citizens.

But while parties are—practically and normatively—essential to the operation of representative democracy, there are also frequent claims that they are in decline in the established democracies, or at the very least experiencing significant change.[10] Voters are less inclined to identify with parties than at any time since public opinion polling was developed, and party membership is in precipitous decline in these same nations. Perhaps most tellingly, even in parliamentary systems governments are now routinely named after the party leader, rather than the party. Thus between 1997 and 2007 in Britain the government was usually labeled "the Blair government" rather than the "Labour government." The nature of this evidence of decline and what it means for the future of parties and representative democracy is the subject of this book.

Our research is motivated by two factors. The first is the availability of new research resources that allow us to systematically study the party government model in a way that was not possible in the past. We mainly rely on the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) project data, but we also employ a range of other sources, mainly at the institutional level. These new sources complement one another in valuable ways, permitting us to make new insights into the role of parties and party government in the twenty-first century. Our second motivation in writing this book is to contribute to the vigorous debate about party decline or change. While there is much evidence

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of party change, whether this amounts to decline and what it may presage for parties is as yet unclear. A major part of the puzzle is the unresolved question of how parties are adapting to these new circumstances. These are the questions that we address in this book.

Why Parties?

Susan Scarrow writes of the rise of party-based politics as "one of the transforming inventions" of the nineteenth century.[11] As the first wave of countries in Europe and North America took their cautious steps to democratization—involving in particular the transfer of power to legislatures and the expansion of the electorate—political parties emerged as the primary linkage mechanism for facilitating the representative process. It took some time for scholars to catch up with this development, in part reflecting disquiet over whether parties were necessarily a force for good. For instance, many of the earliest scholarly writings tended to refer to these new entities as "factions," which were the organizational precursors of parties.[12] In part, the lack of scholarly attention was also because political theory lagged behind political practice. Scholars inevitably took time to recognize the emergence of parties as key linkage mechanisms in the day-to-day operation of representative democracies.[13]

From the 1840s onwards, scholarly writings on political parties gathered pace with prominent (if not always entirely favorable) commentaries. Alexis de Tocqueville provided less than rosy coverage of the American party politics of the Jacksonian era. Henry George, in observing the development of British parliamentary democracy, was possibly one of the first to coin the phrase "party government." Walter Bagehot stressed the importance of cohesive parliamentary parties as the unifying element of representative democracy.[14]

It was not until the midpoint of the following century that the scholarly community started to flesh out the roles and functions of political parties in modern representative democracies. A first big step came in the 1950s with the publication of the influential "responsible parties" report issued by the American Political Science Association's (APSA) Committee on Political Parties. The report placed greatest stress on the need for political parties to produce policy programs giving voters clear choices in elections, and for the parties to be sufficiently disciplined and cohesive in the parliamentary assembly to implement these programs. This emphasis on party functions—notably the aggregative and policy-implementation functions—was to presage an important epistemological development in political science, which became known as "structural functionalism."

Political Parties and Democratic Linkage

Gabriel Almond was the first to assign a set of key roles or functions that parties (he also refers to other actors in his classic essay) fulfill in a democracy.[15] There have been countless other studies that have addressed this theme since, perhaps none more prominent than the 1980s' Wildenmann project on "the future of party government."[16] By any standards, the range of functions that parties seek to fulfill—within the mass population, as organizations, and in government—are impressive.[17] Within the mass population, parties simplify the choices that are open to voters, thereby reducing the policy complexity of modern government into a small number of options that voters can easily understand. Parties educate citizens into the advantages and disadvantages of the policy choices that are on offer. Not least among their roles within the mass population is the expectation that political parties will mobilize citizens to actively participate in the political process, thereby creating long-term stability for the political system as a whole.

At the organizational level, parties recruit and train potential political leaders and candidates for political office, socializing them into the norms and values of democratic governance and thereby contributing to long-term political stability. Organizationally, parties also articulate the political interests of their supporters, giving them expression and substance within the political sphere. And in parallel with their role of articulation, parties aggregate political interests, placing them in a comprehensive and coherent form that will guide government policy if and when they are elected to office.

At the government level, parties organize the work of government by seeking to create majorities and thereby win office. Once in government, most parties possess a comprehensive set of policy objectives for which they can claim an electoral mandate. The party in government—or coalition of parties—will then move to implement those policies, and organize the administration of government to that end. The electoral mandate also provides the legitimacy for its policies while in government, and crucially ensures accountability for its decisions to the electorate, who will judge the party's performance against what it had promised. If the party is in opposition, it too can contribute to accountability by evaluating and criticizing government decisions.

One of the more recent descriptions of this model of party government comes from Kay Lawson.[18] Instead of talking about functions, Lawson uses the term "linkage" to distinguish political parties from other organizations, marking them as the primary representative agents between citizens and the state. As she puts it, this is why linkage is often used as a synonym for representation. In practical terms, however, Lawson's linkages are very similar to the functional roles in other party government theories.

In this study we identify five main forms of linkage between parties and voters (Figure 1.1):

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Parties and Representative Government

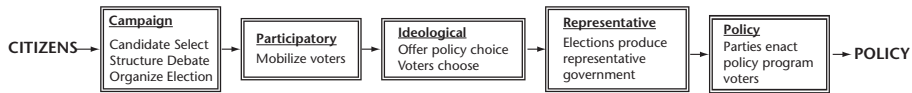| CITIZENS → | **Campaign** Candidate Select Structure Debate Organize Election | → | **Participatory** Mobilize voters | → | **Ideological** Offer policy choice Voters choose | → | **Representative** Elections produce representative government | → | **Policy** Parties enact policy program voters | → POLICY |

Figure 1.1. The Chain of Democratic Linkage

- **Campaign linkage**: parties recruit candidates and set the parameters of the electoral process;
- **Participatory linkage**: parties activate citizens during elections and mobilize them to vote;
- **Ideological linkage**: parties inform voters about policy choices in elections and voters strongly base their voting preference on these policy alternatives;
- **Representative linkage**: elections achieve a good congruence between citizen policy preferences and the policies of the parties represented in parliament and the government; and
- **Policy linkage**: parties deliver on the policies they advocated in the election.

When there is a strong connection between each of these linkages in the chain of party government, then representative government can function well as a means to connect citizen preferences to the outcomes of government. But when one or more of these linkages deteriorates, the model of party government suffers.

Giovanni Sartori encapsulates the first of these linkages in his famous "minimal definition" of a party as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office."[19] Classically this was seen as the main factor separating political parties from interest groups, the latter not fielding candidates, but rather seeking to influence the actions and policies of the former. Thus candidate recruitment (and training) is an initial linkage in the party government model.

Another aspect of the campaign linkage is the parties' dominance of the campaign process. Although political parties must react to changes in social and political conditions, they play a dominant role in defining the agenda of campaigns. Parties are the prime actors in political discourse during elections, through their programs, advertising, and education of the citizenry. In most nations, parties now receive state funding and other subsidies to allow them to spread their message. And in the end, in most parliamentary systems voters face a choice of parties on the ballot—not individual candidates—and even individual candidates stand as party representatives. Thus parties' control of the various aspects of the campaign process is essential to the party linkage model.

7

Political Parties and Democratic Linkage

Parties need votes to survive, which brings us to their participation linkage. The factors that drive each of us to the polling station are many and varied. According to Sidney Verba and his colleagues there are three broad reasons: we can; we want to; and we were encouraged to do so by an individual or organization—primarily by the political parties. In their efforts to organize "the chaotic public will,"[20] parties chase votes, trying to mobilize as many of their supporters as possible to turn out and trying to convert others to their cause.

The next step in the process of party government can be described as the ideological linkage or the aggregation of voter interests into party choices. The APSA Committee on Political Parties viewed this as one of the core functions of parties. Almond similarly maintained that political parties have a core role to play in aggregating voter interests.[21] The aggregation function can come in several ways. From the perspective of the APSA Committee—which privileged the two-party majoritarian form of democracy found in the USA—the aggregation occurs in advance of polling day by the parties setting out their programs for government, guiding the voters in how they might want to direct their votes. In the alternative "proportional representation vision" of democracy that predominates in Europe, the aggregation process more normally occurs in the post-election bartering and negotiations between party leaders seeking to form coalition governments.[22]

Ideological linkage is an essential part of the party linkage model. The model makes three basic presumptions about citizens and their voting choices that are the basis of linkage in representative democracy:[23]

- People possess informed political preferences and policy choices;
- They make judgments about which party best represents these preferences;
- These perceptions guide voting behavior.

Without such content and a programmatic structure, the connection between citizen preferences and electoral outcomes weakens. Elections could become meaningless expressions of opinions or habitual expressions of group loyalties, rather than instrumental acts of governance. The ability of contemporary electorates to fulfill these three criteria is highly debated in the scholarly literature.

The fourth step in the linkage process involves the formation of government. Elections can allocate seats to political parties, but they do this in a representative or a non-representative way. Moreover, in most parliamentary systems the actual composition of the government does not directly depend on election outcomes, but on the coalition negotiations among parties that occur after the election.[24] Consequently, the congruence between seats and

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votes, and between majority opinions and the policy positions of post-election governments, is a crucial step in democratic governance.[25]

The fifth linkage is policy implementation. This is the corollary of voter aggregation: the party or parties that form the government should then implement the policies that they promulgated during the election campaign and/or in the post-election negotiations over government formation. This perspective lies at the heart of the "does politics matter?" argument, where the nature of the party/parties in office is found to have a significant effect on policy output. Cross-national analyses from the Comparative Manifesto Project find striking evidence that parties make a real difference in government policy outputs.[26] Various studies of political representation similarly find strong connections between voter preferences and those of their parties in parliament and government overall.[27] Party government does appear to function quite well.

These steps in the process of party government may seem familiar enough. But they still leave questions to be asked over whether they provide sufficient coverage of parties' role in representative democracy and, indeed, whether they still apply in the contemporary world.

The Challenges to Parties

Not everything is rosy in the garden of political parties. Even though parties appear central to the proper functioning of democracies, there seems little doubt that they are now in some difficulty. Like struggling ducks in an ever faster downstream current, they are working harder just to keep still. As Philippe Schmitter (not one of the most sympathetic of observers of parties at the best of times) opines, "parties are not what they once were."[28] The challenges to parties are even more intense in the newer democracies where parties have sought to consolidate in less than propitious circumstances.[29]

The thesis that political parties are in decline is not new, but there is no doubt that in recent decades it has become a veritable "growth industry."[30] Critics cite several indicators to support this view—many of which were summarized in an earlier volume that the current authors were associated with[31]—that are worth briefly summarizing here. The critics cite several trends that are apparent in contemporary democracies: growing public detachment with political parties; the rise of alternative actors in the electoral process; and the parties' growing reliance on the state apparatus for support instead of their own voters/members. Other observers claim that the increasing fragmentation of political interests has made it more difficult for parties to government, and thus policy performance has deteriorated.

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The first example amounts to what Peter Mair refers to as a failure by parties "in their capacity to engage ordinary citizens."[32] He provides four familiar enough sets of evidence to support his case: declining electoral turnout; the rise of voter volatility; falling levels of party identification; and the monotonic decline in party membership numbers. He draws a stark conclusion: "all over Western Europe, and in all likelihood all over the advanced democracies, citizens are heading for the exits of the national political arena."[33]

AQ2

These trends are problematic if they signal the erosion of parties' ability to perform several of the linkages described in Figure 1.1. Declining turnout, for example, suggests that parties are less effective in mobilizing citizens into the electoral process, and declining party membership implies that participation by activists is also weakening. Indeed, when turnout drops to barely half the electorate, as it did in recent elections in the USA, Switzerland, the UK, and several other nations, this raises questions about the basic legitimacy of election outcomes.

In addition, the weakening of popular identification with a political party—and the concomitant increase in interelection volatility and voter fluidity—may imply that the voting bonds between citizens are parties are eroding. Some analysts argue that parties are losing their programmatic focus in their effort to respond to the policy preferences of the moment, which then change at the next moment. In addition, there is also much debate over whether the rise of candidate-centered voting would strengthen or weaken the system of party-based government.

Another set of trends suggesting that parties are under threat involves the growing competition they face from other actors, particularly at elections. It is not too much of an exaggeration to state that elections are central to the *raison d'être* of political parties. Indeed, as we have seen, this is central to Sartori's "minimal definition" of a party. The signs are that the parties now face stiff competition in this regard. This is shown, for instance, in the rise of "third-party actors" and better-resourced interest groups competing against parties in elections,[34] in the growing prominence of microparties and independents,[35] and in the more assertive role of the mass media during elections.[36]

Certainly there are a growing number of "non-party actors" entering the electoral fray.[37] There are prominent examples of joke parties (such as the Monster Raving Loony Party in Britain, or the Polish Beer Lovers Party). Independent candidates are enjoying greater electoral success in some countries (such as Australia and Ireland). And in parts of Latin America, presidential candidates have benefited from promoting an "antiparty" ticket (Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Fernando Collor and subsequently Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil, and Rafael Caldera in Venezuela).[38] Another challenge to parties' control of candidate recruitment is the decentralization of candidate selection from party elites to the members at large, or even voters in

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general.[39] In addition, there appears to be an increasing tendency for success-
ful individuals in social or economic domains to use these credentials to gain   AQ3
party nomination or positions in government. All of these examples suggest
that parties no longer have an exclusive role in the recruitment of political
leaders.

These developments show how parties are no longer the sole actors articu-
lating and aggregating voter interests. Parties no longer provide the exclusive
route into electoral politics for budding political candidates who seek election.
In addition, parties may have lost their dominant role as gatekeepers in setting
and determining the policy agenda in elections. Information flowing from the
media and interest groups now impinges on a party's role as information
provider. All in all, these changes may weaken the parties' roles in the cam-
paign linkage.

Another factor is the growing connection between parties and the state.
Peter Mair sees this as the corollary (or part cause) of the "popular withdrawal"
of parties from society,[40] and as forming a core feature of the "cartel party"
argument he developed with Richard Katz.[41] The gist of the argument is that
the parties are making ever more use of state resources, both to bolster their
positions in response to declining resources (*inter alia* from less membership
dues), and to shore up their positions as the established cartel of dominant
parties.

One of the concerns about the development of cartel party characteristics is
that it will contribute to the decoupling of parties and the mass public.[42]
When funding comes from the government, the economic contributions of
a mass membership are less central. Similarly, when campaigns shift to media
contests rather than grass-roots contacting, the value of mass memberships
declines. This may decrease turnout in elections, and encourage parties to
mobilize their core voters, especially in a parliamentary system, rather than
convert new supporters to the party.

Another problem with cartel parties is that they may weaken the represen-
tative linkage of the parties. If parties can depend on the institutional support   AQ4
of the government, they may lessen their attention to voter preferences. In
other words, cartel characteristics may partially insulate parties from the mass
public. This leaves parties open to the charge that they are becoming little
more than agents of the state, or public utilities, a point stressed in the
writings of party scholars like Richard Katz[43] and Ingrid van Biezen.[44]

Other factors may also weaken the parties' ability, or interest, in represent-
ing the views of their voters in the electoral process. The fragmentation of
policy interests and interest articulation may make it more difficult for parties
to represent a theoretical median voter. The past era of clear programmatic
differences between the parties, and clear party choices, has evolved into a
more diverse policy agenda with more competing interests. For example, the

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British Liberal Democratic voters supported the party and its liberal agenda in the 2010 election, only to see it partner with the Conservatives and enact major cuts in government programs. These post-election surprises seem to be a more common aspect of contemporary politics especially in developing democracies.[45] The growing alienation from parties in general and from the system of party government is one indicator of this phenomenon.[46] It appears that many members of the public do not feel that their views are being represented in the governing process.

In addition, policy research stresses the constraints that now face parties and governments in enacting desired policies. In particular, the growing interdependence among nation states, the more intrusive role of the courts in the policy process, and the growing complexity of government with the attendant outsourcing of policy to non-government organizations mean that the days of dominant party control over policy are over. These factors combine to raise fundamental challenges for the ability of political parties to perform in terms of representation and policy linkages.

A number of objections can be raised to the various arguments regarding the decline of parties. First, there may be a tendency to overexaggerate recent developments. Yes, voter turnout is dropping, party vote loyalty is decreasing, and fewer of us are inclined to become party members. But in many of these instances the trends are modest.[47] We do not dispute this evidence of a weakening of party loyalties within contemporary electorates. Indeed, in other research we have documented the decline in partisan ties and the increasing fluidity of voting choice in the established democracies.[48] But even an increasing non-partisan public face the choice of parties as they enter the ballot booth, and are heavily dependent on political parties to ensure the representativeness of party government. Thus, this book focuses on the actions of political parties as organizations, realizing that the patterns of partisanship in the electorate may also be changing.

These trends also need to be considered in the wider context of societal change which has affected institutions beyond political parties. Societal change has contributed to a breakdown of collective identities as citizens become increasingly individualized. Rudy Andeweg uses poetic license to illustrate this point succinctly: "religion is increasingly expressed outside churches, interest promotion is taken care of outside interest associations, such as trade unions, physical exercise outside sports clubs . . . work outside permanent employment, love outside marriage, and even gender differences are becoming divorced from sex differences."[49] Little wonder, then, why parties should have fewer members, few loyal followers, and face growing competition from other non-party actors.

We believe that these changes in citizens' attachments to political parties are a real and continuing feature of established democracies, and are even

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apparent in some new democracies. It may be impossible to return to the halcyon days of the past when parties had larger memberships, more people voted, and more people identified with a political party. But changes in the public can be separate from the actions of parties as political institutions. Moreover, we argue that some of the observed changes in modern parties reflect an attempt to adapt to social and political changes in democratic publics. Indeed, to succeed and persist, political parties have to adapt to changing political conditions in order to contribute to the process of representative democracy.

Second, some analysts display a tendency to look back fondly to bygone days, to a Golden Age personified by the "mass party" model whose features were first elaborated in Maurice Duverger's classic study.[50] More specifically, many observers highlight the decline in the mass membership upon which this type of party relies for its organizational strength and from that conclude that parties are in terminal decline.[51] Yet, the mass party was already undergoing change from its earliest years, first to the "catch-all" party first outlined by Otto Kirchheimer, and more recently to the cartel party proposed by Katz and Mair.[52] In this context, focusing mainly on the organizational aspects of parties does not provide any evidence about how well or how badly parties are fulfilling their basic functions.

The mass party model emphasizes a loyal supporter base, the representation of particular social groups, and large mass memberships. That is, the very features that are singled out as evidence in support of the party decline thesis. Furthermore, this party model was arguably more an ideal typical than a widespread political reality.[53] Writing in an American context, John Aldrich makes much the same point, observing that rather than decline, we have witnessed a shift from the "party in control" form of the Van Buren era to a "party in service."[54] In other words, the party has changed, but it is not necessarily any weaker as a consequence. As Michael Saward puts it, "It may be, in the words of Schmitter, that these shifts lead to the conclusion that 'parties are not what they once were', but that does not necessarily mean that they are *less* than they once were."[55]

The corollary of fixating on a particular model of party is a tendency to pay undue homage to a style of democracy that may be well past its sell-by date. Once again, Mair provides a good example. He places Schattschneider's argument about "unthinkable democracies" on its head by suggesting that not only can parties fail but if they do, "so too fails popular democracy."[56] His point is that representative democracy as we know it is under threat, as democracies become "hollowed out," "shorn of their popular component," transforming into "stripped down versions" of Madisonian democracy.[57] However, this sort of perspective fails to recognize the potential for adaptability, in this instance of democratic forms. Michael Saward makes this point

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when he tracks a shift from one ideal typical form of democracy, which he refers to as the "popular mode"—the form of democracy lauded by Mair—to alternative ideal typical modes, such as "statal" or "reflexive" modes. Saward's point is that such a shift "do[es] not necessarily add up to a picture that is less democratic. It can, rather, be differently democratic."[58]

What is missing from many of the accounts of party decline is what is happening in place of the older patterns. The answer to that is obvious: parties are not being replaced; they appear to be adapting to the changed conditions within which they find themselves. This is a process that has been occurring, almost seamlessly, for more than a century. Parties are an essential component of the state, and as such they are in the driving position in altering political institutions if they are inimical to their long-terms interests. Parties are, if nothing else, survivors. An important goal of this book is therefore to balance the party decline argument with the equally compelling evidence concerning how parties are adapting to change.

To sum up, our principal objection to the "decline of parties" thesis—and the principal rationale for this study—is that the evidence of decline is too selective, emphasizes changes in the mass public rather than in party performance, and is arguably too focused on the mass party ideal. As we show in this book, the prospect for parties is far less worrisome. In a large number of areas, political parties continue to have important linkages with citizens and with government. And where those linkages are under stress, parties seek to address the problem.

Our Empirical Base

Our project relies on a set of cross-national datasets to assemble the necessary empirical evidence on the various links of the party government model. We base the core of our analyses on the nations included in the second module of the CSES.[59] The CSES is a collaborative research program among national election studies in over fifty countries around the world. Participating countries include a common module of survey questions in their post-election surveys. All surveys must meet certain quality and comparability standards, and all are conducted as nationally representative surveys. The resulting survey data are combined with district- and macro-level voting, demographic, and institutional variables, providing a unique opportunity to examine how institutional arrangements shape political behavior.

The CSES fielded its second module in national surveys conducted between 2001 and 2006. Table 1.1 lists the 36 module 2 nations and the year of the elections that are the core of our analyses (including two elections in Portugal and Taiwan).[60] The CSES project also compiled ancillary data on the political

Table 1.1. Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Nations in Module 2   AQ5

Nation	Election Year	Sample Size
Albania	2005	1116
Australia	2004	1769
Belgium	2003	2225
Brazil	2002	2514
Bulgaria	2001	1482
Canada	2004	1674
Chile	2005	1200
Czech Republic	2002	948
Denmark	2001	2026
Finland	2003	1196
France	2002	1000
Germany	2002	2000
Hungary	2002	1200
Iceland	2003	1446
Ireland	2002	2367
Israel	2003	1212
Italy	2006	1439
Japan	2004	1977
Korea, South	2004	1500
Mexico	2003	1991
Netherlands	2002	1574
New Zealand	2002	1741
Norway	2001	2052
Peru	2006	2032
Philippines	2004	1200
Poland	2001	1794
Portugal	2002	1303
Portugal	2005	2801
Romania	2004	1913
Russia	2004	1496
Slovenia	2004	1002
Spain	2004	1212
Sweden	2002	1060
Switzerland	2003	1418
Taiwan	2001	2022
Taiwan	2004	1823
UK	2005	860
USA	2004	1066

Note: We do not include Hong Kong or Kyrgyzstan from module 2 because the elections were not free, fair, and authoritative.

systems, electoral systems, and parties in each election that we use in some of our analyses, complemented by institutional data added by the authors.

The CSES project is especially valuable for comparing the workings of party linkage across democratic settings. The survey contains measures of electoral participation to study how parties mobilize citizens to participate. It asks respondents to position themselves and the major political parties in their nation on the Left–Right scale, which is a central variable in our analyses of voting choice and representation. Because all the surveys are conducted following a national election, we measure public opinion with a

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focus on representation through elections, using comparable measures and methodologies.

Most previous comparative research on party linkage has focused on the experience of established democracies in Western Europe and North America. The CSES offers a valuable mix of electoral systems, constitutional structures, and democratic experience that were generally underrepresented in past European-based studies. The CSES is especially valuable for examining political opinions and behaviors in the newly democratized countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The project also includes information on the parties and national characteristics that are available as ancillary datasets. Furthermore, the CSES nations represent a wider range of cultural zones, including West and East Europe, North America, East Asia, and Latin America.

We supplement the CSES data with information from other cross-national research projects in various chapters. Chapter 2, on parties' structuring of electoral campaigns, assembles information from a wide array of projects dealing with party organizational characteristics, party funding, and electoral system design. Chapter 5, on citizens' perceptions of party positions, compares the results from the CSES survey with three other sources: the Benoit and Laver survey of party experts, the Comparative Manifesto Project coding of party Left–Right positions, and surveys of European parliamentary elites conducted in the mid-1990s.[61] Chapter 8, on the policy impact of party governments, utilizes data on social spending provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[62] Indeed, only the relatively recent development of large-scale collaborative cross-national research makes it possible to conduct the type of analyses presented in this volume.

Studying the Linkage between Parties and Citizens

In the chapters that follow we assess the five forms of party linkage in turn, to show how parties continue to play important roles in representative democracy. Figure 1.2 expands on the party linkage framework to highlight the theoretical bases of each step, the chapters that examine each linkage, and the primary empirical resources in each chapter.

Chapter 2 covers the theme of *campaign* linkage by examining the role of parties in the electoral process. This is one of the areas singled out in the party-decline thesis, where there are frequent references to the growing competition political parties face in the electoral arena from other "non-party" actors; declining party memberships, and potentially increasing competition from non-party actors (the media and interest groups). This implies that parties have a tougher battle with less indigenous resources to maintain their dominant position in the electoral process. Moreover, in partial reaction to these

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Forms of linkage	Campaign	Participatory	Ideological			Representative	Policy
Theory	Interest articulation Interest aggregation Cartel party	Mobilization & civic volunteerism model	Downsian left/right spatial analysis of electoral choice			Congruence; coalition theory	Do parties matter?
Chapter	Chapter 2 Parties & electoral institutions	Chapter 3 Parties & political participation	Chapter 4 Citizens & policy preferences	Chapter 5 Party images & party linkage	Chapter 6 Voter choice & partisan representation	Chapter 7 Congruence between voters & government	Chapter 8 Parties & policies
Data	Institutional & aggregate data	Individual-level analysis (CSES)		Individual to party-level analysis (CSES & Benoit/Laver)			Party to state-level analysis (CSES & policy data)

Figure 1.2. A Flowchart of Democratic Linkage

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developments, parties are relying increasingly on the state apparatus to but-tress their positions in a manner consistent with the Katz and Mair "cartel party" thesis.[63]

We review a wide body of evidence to show how parties have responded to changes in the electoral environment in three main respects. First, by the introduction and steady expansion of a wide range of generous state supports (both financial and in-kind). Second, by the implementation of regulatory mechanisms (the quid pro quo of state support) that are, for the most part, light touch and often ineffectual. Third, by the steady evolution of controls over the electoral process which are designed to ensure the primacy of parties. The evidence points clearly and consistently to an electoral process still domi-nated by political parties. The battle for political office remains very much one between candidates selected and promoted by political parties—with the partial exception of the USA. One recent survey of trends across the advanced industrial democracies paraphrased Schattschneider in concluding that the "recruitment of candidates for representative and related governmental func-tions remains virtually inconceivable without political parties."[64] As we shall demonstrate in chapter 2, the hold of parties over the recruitment of candi-dates is even stronger in the new and developing democracies.

Not only do parties still have a tight hold over the apparatus of elections, our analysis of the CSES survey evidence in Chapter 3 provides clear evidence that parties continue to play a key *participatory* role in turning out the vote on polling day. The party-decline argument makes much play of the point that electoral participation has been in decline in recent decades. However, the fact remains that far more people vote than abstain. As we (and others before us) show, political parties bear much of the responsibility for cajoling voters to the polling booths. The evidence in Chapter 3 shows that local campaign activity still features prominently in the activity of political parties and that this has a strong influence in turning out a vote at elections. It may be more difficult, but there is little doubt that the mobilization efforts of parties still "matters" in influencing voters both to turn out and also to decide on which parties to vote for.[65]

A third form of linkage—which we refer to as *ideological*—involves voter choice of parties. Oftentimes voters face a bewildering array of options, partic-ularly in those cases of multi-party systems. Voters have a difficult job to determine their policy preferences, work out how these are best represented by the range of parties and party programs on offer, and then vote for the party that best represents those views. Chapters 4–6 examine this process of ideological linkage in three logical steps. Chapter 4 shows how citizens' political preferences and policy choices can be summarized by their positions on the Left–Right dimension. Many electoral analysts have demonstrated that

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the Left–Right dimension is a suitable summary means of mapping voter orientations cross-nationally.[66]

Having determined their own policy preferences, democratic accountability then requires that citizens have sufficient understanding of the choices available to them from among the range of parties competing for votes in the election. Chapter 5 determines whether most citizens can identify the parties' Left–Right positions, and then verifies these perceptions with evidence from elite surveys, expert analyses of parties, and party election manifestos.

The final stage in this linkage sequence has people voting for the parties that best represent their political preferences; this is the focus of Chapter 6. This produces clear evidence that Left–Right orientations—more specifically, the congruence between the orientations of the voter and the party—are a very strong predictor of the vote. This confirms the continuing strength of ideological linkage between parties and citizens.

Chapter 7 shifts our focus from elections to government, and to the *representative* linkage between parties and citizens that occurs after the votes are counted. We show that the accountability between citizens and the political decision-makers is a dynamic process. The positions of the parties and voters on polling day are taken at one point in time. Once the dust has settled, negotiations ensue and governments (more normally than not, coalition governments) are formed. This may attenuate the link between citizens and their government, especially if the resulting coalitions are not representative of electoral outcomes or are distorted by the outcome of elite negotiations in "smoke-filled" rooms after polling day.[67] This chapter studies this dynamic by comparing voter–government policy congruence before and after polling day. We show how party government functions as a steering mechanism to adjust the course of government based on past government performance and the options available in the election. Thus, elections improve the level of congruence between voters and their government, providing good evidence of healthy representative linkage between parties and citizens.

Chapter 8 draws on OECD data to examine how the constellation of parties in office can impact on the policy outputs of the government. These analyses address the theme of whether "parties matter" in setting policy priorities. If party control of the government does matter, then those who voted for the government have good reason to feel that their policy preferences are being met in a manner consistent with their expressed vote choice. *Policy* linkage is the most complex linkage of the party government model to test. Still, the evidence we unearth is generally supportive.

Finally, in Chapter 9 we draw the main threads of our argument together to examine how parties have survived the storms of time and social change through a strategy of adaptation that focuses on four main dimensions:

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institutional design, policy development, organizational reform, and strategies to maintain a dominant role over the government process.

What Parties Do

The *Madmen* TV series takes us back to the 1960s, to a time when Madison Avenue first entered the fray in providing advertising and marketing campaigns for the presidential races of Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy. This election is often seen as marking an important turning point in US party politics, and thereafter the party politics of other countries (as the process of "Americanization" of election campaigns unfolded).[68] If there ever had been a Golden Age of party politics, then this election supposedly marks its death knell. The 1960s also stand out as the heyday of the era of Network TV. The three TV networks of CBS, NBC, and ABC were at the height of their powers, between them encompassing over 90 percent of the national television market.[69] Indeed, the personification of just how dominant network TV had become was demonstrated in the first-ever TV presidential debates between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960, debates that are seen generally to have played a crucial role in securing Kennedy his narrow electoral victory.

How different things are for the "Big Three" networks today: they have long lost their market dominance; the nature of their operation has changed also, with increasing outsourcing of production to other entities; and there have also been questions raised over the future of television as we know it.

All of this is a very familiar tale to those of us studying party politics, where we can track much the same sorts of trends: growing fragmentation of party systems; dramatic internal organizational changes; questions raised over the future of parties as we know them—issues (among others) that we have been teasing out in this introductory chapter, trends that are seen by some as raising important questions over the future of parties.

As we explain in the following chapters, much of the hand wringing over the state of political parties is predicated on a certain type of party and a certain style of representative politics from bygone days. The detractors also focus their attention on what parties *are*—mass membership, branch-based organizations; their internal structures; their ability to hold on to a loyal following of voters—perhaps more so than what they *do*.

The critics also often ignore how parties are adapting their roles to ensure that they continue to fulfill these functions. It is these latter perspectives that are featured in this book. Party government requires a set of roles (or functions) that parties must perform, a series of "linkages" that they provide between citizens and government. This study seeks to show how, in a large

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number of respects, the political parties of today continue to provide these important linkages through a process of adaption and evolution.

Parties remain central to modern democracy and undertake a wide range of functions. Any consideration of the health of parties must therefore evaluate systematically the panoply of activities that parties engage in, both cross-nationally and longitudinally. Our evidence—necessarily limited in time and coverage—shows that parties remain a crucial link between the citizen and the government. And while there has been a decline in some aspects of partisan politics, there is at least as much evidence of adaptation, as parties transform themselves in order to meet the challenges of ongoing political change.

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