

MODERN POLITICAL PARTIES + Neumann

Modern Political Parties

Approaches to Comparative Politics

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Preface

The issue of the political party has entered, only of late and at last, the sphere of our professional concern; yet its discussion is still lacking in sharp theoretical concepts, historical depth, and the comparative data which alone could assure a substantial delineation of this crucial institution of modern political dynamics. It was out of this realization that the editor invited a number of proven area specialists to pool their substantive findings, which in turn could serve as a basis for a concrete theory and thus fill a long-felt need for an authoritative presentation of diverse political party systems.

The result is the panorama of studies presented in this volume. The separate researchers in the field who engaged in this co-operative enterprise, though they arrived independently at this juncture, found much in common. Viewing dynamic social forces rather than static constitutional structures as the key to an understanding of world affairs, they anticipated that their common study of political parties would yield a more realistic appraisal of comparative politics proper.

Purposely, no preconceived directives or definitions were proposed which would delimit the full flavor and fruitfulness of independent research into the character of contrasting political movements. The underlying expectation, however, was that a wider conceptualization would emerge out of the factual presentation of the various

party systems. The result was a most rewarding experience of co-operation, doubly gratifying as, stretching over a number of years, it overcame the frustrating handicaps of time and space experienced by the contributing authors.

The project itself—the first of its kind—has certain limitations of which the editor is too well aware. It does not try to be up to date (which would be the safest way of being out of date by the time of publication). But the main purpose was, above all, to present in concrete form the persistent patterns and problems of major party systems. For another thing, this study does not claim any comprehensive coverage of its subject. Much as it might be desirable to include studies on less familiar areas like China and Latin America and the exciting developments among the formerly dependent peoples of India, the Philippines, and Indonesia, such an expansion would have made this text unmanageable, and thus it had to be left to the future. In fact, the purpose of this book is not to provide an encyclopedic panorama; it is not meant as a definitive study of political parties but proposes to be simply a preliminary pathfinder. It frankly raises more questions than it answers. It is, above all, an invitation to join in an exciting searching party through a virgin field that calls for inquisitive minds and many helping hands.

SIGMUND NEUMANN

Table of Contents

WHY STUDY POLITICAL PARTIES?	1
<i>Sigmund Neumann</i>	
DEMOCRATIC PARTY SYSTEMS	
GREAT BRITAIN: FROM GOVERNING ELITE TO ORGANIZED MASS PARTIES	9
<i>Samuel H. Beer, Harvard University</i>	
I / British Parties and the Problem of Democratic Leadership	9
II / British Parties before World War I	12
Party Structure: 1832-67	12
Party Structure: 1867-1914	14
III / The Conservative Party of the Interwar Years	16
The Revolt of 1922	16
The Shift of Conservative Policy to Protection	18
The Choice of an Election Issue in 1935	19
The Rise and Fall of Neville Chamberlain	21
The Role of Business Interests	22
IV / The Structure of the Conservative Party Today	24
Constituency Organization	24
The Annual Conference	26
The Central Office and the Parliamentary Party	27
The Process of Making Policy	30
V / The Labour Party before World War II	32
The Foundation of the Party	33
The Adoption of Socialism	35
The Crisis of 1931	37
VI / The Structure of the Labour Party Today	39
Affiliated Membership	39
Constituency Parties	42
The Annual Conference	44
The National Executive Committee	46
Social Bases of British Parties	49
The Process of Making Policy	51
The Role of the Parliamentary Leaders	53
THE COMMONWEALTH OVERSEAS: VARIATIONS ON A BRITISH THEME	58
<i>Gwendolen M. Carter, Smith College</i>	
I / Introduction	58
II / Canada	61
The Golden Age of the Two-Party System	62
The Test of War and the Rise of a Third Party	63
The Liberals Regain Their National Position	65
The Strains of World War II	66
New Third Parties	67

Liberal Strengths and Leadership	69
Party Organization	70
The Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties	70
The CCF	73
III / South Africa	74
The Rise of National Political Parties	75
Hertzog in Power	76
The Rise of "Purified" Nationalism	77
Wartime Divisions and the Search for Afrikaner Unity	78
The Election of 1948	79
Malan's Nationalists in Power	80
The Election of 1953 and New Party Developments	81
The Objectives of Afrikaner Nationalism	82
Party Leaders	83
Party Organization	83
IV / Australia and New Zealand	85
The Australian Pattern	85
The Australian labor movement	85
The non-labor parties	87
Labor leaders	88
The Pattern in New Zealand	89
The rise of modern parties	89
Reform and Liberal parties in power	90
Labor achieves office	91
The National party in office	92
Party Organization	92
The Labor parties	92
The non-labor parties	96
V / Conclusion	99
FRENCH POLITICAL PARTIES: IDEOLOGICAL MYTHS AND SOCIAL REALITIES	106
<i>Charles A. Micaud, University of Virginia</i>	
I / The Bases of the French Party System	107
Ideological	107
The authoritarian ideology	108
The equalitarian ideology	109
The libertarian ideology	111
Economic and Social	112
Political	114
II / The Parties in the Fourth Republic	118
The Electoral Systems of 1946 and 1951	119
The Communist Party (PCF)	120
Historical sketch	121
Strategy and tactics	122
Organization	123
"Militants" and leaders	125
The appeal of communism	127
The Socialist Party (SFIO)	131
Structure	133
Strategy and tactics	135
The "Mouvement républicain populaire" (MRP)	137
The Leftist Union	140
The Radical Socialist party	140

The Union démocratique et sociale de la Résistance (UDSR)	143
The "Modérés"	143
The Parti républicain de la Liberté (PRL)	144
The Independents and the Peasants	145
The Rally of the French People (RPF)	145
III / The Party System in Action	148
Appendix: French Electors and Their Parties	152
BELGIUM: PARTY CLEAVAGE AND COMPROMISE	155
<i>Felix E. Oppenheim, University of Delaware</i>	
I / Ideological Bases of Belgium's Party Divisions	155
Catholics and Freethinkers	155
Flemings and Walloons	156
Conservatives and Progressives	156
Pro- and Anti-democrats	157
II / The Catholics	157
Origins	157
Divergent Opinions	158
Struggle for Party Control	159
Sources of Strength	160
III / The Liberals	161
Ideology	161
Party Strength	161
IV / The Socialists	162
Platform and Alignments	162
Right Wing and Left Wing	163
Socialist Following	163
V / The Communists	164
Phases	164
Numerical Strength	165
VI / The Parties and Foreign Affairs	165
VII / Conclusion	166
SCANDINAVIA: WORKING MULTIPARTY SYSTEMS	169
<i>Dankwart A. Rustow, Princeton University</i>	
I / Party Organization	169
II / The Origins of the Present Party System	173
III / The Present Parties and Their Policies	178
The Liberals	178
The Socialists	180
The Conservatives	181
The Agrarians	182
Other Parties	183
IV / Controversy and Agreement among the Parties	186
UNITED STATES: THE FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO PARTY GOVERNMENT	194
<i>E. E. Schattschneider, Wesleyan University</i>	
I / The Rise of Party Government	194
II / Republican Concepts of Political Organization	198
III / Impact of the Party Alignment of 1896	201
IV / The Revolution of 1932	206

V / The New Democratic Party	209
VI / The Nationalization of Politics	210
THE TOTALITARIAN COUNTERPART	
THE U.S.S.R.: MONOLITHIC CONTROLS AT HOME AND ABROAD	219
<i>Frederick C. Barghoorn, Yale University</i>	
I / Structure and Functions of the Soviet Party-State	219
II / History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union	222
Early Days	222
Stages of Control	224
Leadership of the Party	225
III / Communist Party Structure	228
Central and Local Organizations	228
Organizational Principles	232
Personnel Policy	233
"Democratic Centralism," "Federalism," and the Nationality Problem	234
IV / Sociology and Psychology of the Party	238
Elite Privileges and Controls	238
Economic Controls	241
Formal Political Structure	243
Party Strength	243
Social Composition	246
Education, Age, and Sex	248
Morale and Attitudes	250
V / Techniques of Subversion: Comintern and Cominform	254
Russian Background	254
Export of Leadership and Ideology	258
Communist Fronts in War and Peace	260
Organizational and Cultural Weapons	263
The Comintern	265
The Cominform	269
Revolutionary Doctrine	270
Espionage Rings	271
Chinese Communism	272
VI / Communist Imperialism	273
The Extension of Soviet Power	273
Weapons of Expansion	275
"Peoples' Democracy"	277
Expansion in Asia	280
SATELLITE PARTIES IN EASTERN EUROPE	284
<i>Andrew Gyorgy, Boston University</i>	
I / Prewar and Wartime Characteristics of Political Parties in Eastern Europe	284
II / Postwar Development of Political Parties	288
First Phase: Liberation Fronts, Coalition Governments, and National Elections	288
Second Phase: Communist Access to Power; Emergence of Peoples' Fronts; the Socialist Dilemma	293
Third Phase: The Party Omnipotent; Principal Methods of Communist Control	295
III / The Titoist Challenge to International Communism	299

PARTIES IN TRANSITION

JAPAN: BETWEEN TRADITIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY	305
<i>Robert A. Scalapino, University of California</i>	
I / The Origins of the Japanese Parties	305
II / The Prewar System: An Organic State	315
The Institutional Structure	315
Party Affiliation and Social Classes	321
Party Structure	328
The Demise of the Prewar Parties	329
III / Toward a Democratic Party System?	330
Democratization from the Outside	330
The Formation of the Postwar Parties	334
Trends in Postwar Party Politics	335
IV / An Analysis of the Contemporary Parties	340
Organization and Leadership	340
Membership and Affiliation	345
Programs and Ideology	349
GERMANY: CHANGING PATTERNS AND LASTING PROBLEMS	354
<i>Sigmund Neumann, Wesleyan University</i>	
I / The Basic Pattern	354
Weltanschauung	354
Social Alignments	355
The Emergence of Socialism	357
The Zentrum—a Stranger to the German Party System	357
II / The Weimar Republic	359
Radical-Wing Parties: Left and Right	360
The SPD—the National Liberals of the Republic	361
DNVP—Loyal Opposition or Intransigent Party?	362
Splinter Parties—Ideological and Economic Interest Groups	364
III / The Totalitarian Phase	365
The Lasting Significance of German National Socialism	365
Breaks in German Society and the Rise of the Crisis Strata	365
Strategies of Conquest	367
The One-Party State: Nature and Functions	369
Party Organization	373
Tensions, Breakdown, Aftermath	375
IV / The Second Republic	376
Uncertain Restoration	376
The Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)—the Traditional Party	378
The Christian Democratic Union (CDU)—a New Synthesis of Old Groups?	380
The Free Democrats (FDP)—a “Split Personality”	382
The Bloc of Expellees and Dispossessed/All-German Bloc (BHE/GB)—Successful Newcomer?	384
Where Is the Right Wing?	385
The Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the Eastern Democratic Republic	387

TOWARD A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

TOWARD A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTIES	395
<i>Sigmund Neumann</i>	
I / A Preliminary Definition	395
II / Functions of Political Parties: Democratic and Dictatorial	396
III / Toward a Classification of Parties	400
IV / Sociology of Political Parties	405
V / The Party in a Pluralistic Society	411
VI / The Internationals of Parties	416

FOR FURTHER STUDY

FOR FURTHER STUDY	425
I / Great Britain	426
II / The Commonwealth Overseas	429
III / France	432
IV / Belgium	435
V / Scandinavia	435
VI / United States	436
VII / The U.S.S.R.	437
VIII / Satellite Parties in Eastern Europe	439
IX / Japan	441
X / Germany	442

INDEX

INDEX	449
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Why Study Political Parties?

SIGMUND NEUMANN

Political parties are the lifeline of modern politics, yet they are largely forgotten as the main path to the study of political thought and practice today. Where is there an adequate theory to account for these crucial forces in our political life? More preconceived ideas—most of them essentially negative or naïve evaluations—are spread about these key instruments than about any other institution in politics. They have even been called the “villain” of public affairs and sneered at or ignored completely as unsuitable for serious speculation. In the United States especially, there has prevailed the underlying conviction that “the spirit of American government” can be found only at the grass roots of direct democracy; hence organized parties have been regarded merely as the fever curve in the pathology of politics, charting the growing morbidity of boss rule, “professional” politics, and party machines in the body politic, where the individuality of free citizens is suppressed. The political party, in the popular mind, is defined simply as something which someone else engages in, usually for personal profit and sometimes for graft. In view of this, it is not accidental that the most significant contributions to the theme were made by foreign observers of the American scene, like De Tocqueville, Lord Bryce, Ostrogorski, Max Weber, and Robert Michels, and by American students of foreign governments, like A. M. Lowell.

The interest in political parties now springing up among our political scientists and historians is a reflection of the silent revolution which has taken place in the modern study of politics. It has

something to do with the fact that in our modern mass society, whether at war or at peace, in democracies no less than in dictatorships, the people have become potent participants and protagonists. They are wooed daily through the mass media of radio, television, press, and propaganda. Their actions and reactions, their direction and controls, become more significant for governments at work than constitutional structures and successions of cabinets.

Our concern, therefore, has turned away from a merely formal, legalistic, and constitutional approach to a prime consideration of political dynamics and the processes of decision-making. We want to know where, when, and how politics is made in this constantly changing political scene. Such a new emphasis indicates that the instituted agencies, policies, and procedures must have undergone fundamental changes, too. This calls for reconsideration, reappraisal, and redefinition. The priority lists of the study of public affairs are properly spelled out in terms of the major concerns and critical areas of the body politic.

Political parties are indeed critically significant. In democracy's politics they are fought over not only in election years (and surely there is always an election year somewhere) but daily. Their very existence has been challenged by dictatorship's monolithic controls (though garbed in party disguise) in the Soviet system today, which is far more powerful than yesteryears' fascism and National Socialism. Moreover, in the twilight zones of a two-power world, political parties are being tested in numerous attempts at democratic renewal in areas as far apart as Germany

and Japan, Italy and India, Southeast Asia and Africa, the Near East and South America. It is through the nexus of political parties that the manifold character and dynamic life of the different continents can be constantly revealed. And while the innumerable and ever oscillating variations within the present-day party appearances and practices, in democracies and dictatorships, easily blur the lines of demarcation and rightly forewarn against quick generalizations, the overwhelming conflict between the two giant blocs in the bipolar world may well be epitomized in the two contrasting systems of party organization, the loyalties they command, the relationship they spell out between leaders and followers, and the policies they articulate on a world scale.

Such an extension of the restricted national arena of political parties to include the international scene demands no less the search for implications in our own personal life; for political parties, reaching out as they do into world affairs, still enter man's private existence, as the role of the Third International in the Czech Communist revolution of 1948 so amply proved. It is this simultaneous attack on all sides which gives twentieth-century politics its three-dimensional involvement—personal, national, and international—and its confusing complexity. National parties have become increasingly crucial factors on far-flung international fronts as well as in our more immediate personal activities, apart from their basic articulation of a state's political course. This widening of the political frontier requires continuous cross-referencing and synthesizing, in order to circumscribe the character and course, structure and strategy, of modern political parties. Such a definition by contrast, therefore, points the way to the rewards to be found along the way of a comparative approach to the study of the modern political party.

Within hardly a quarter of a century this nation has seen significant changes in the approach to political science, from political alchemy to political morphology to comparative government proper. The mere collection of haphazard, exotic facts out of curiosity was the stage for the beginner in world affairs only a generation ago. A more serious and systematic consideration of significant data became exciting to a young nation discovering the wide world at the eve of World War II. And now, in its aftermath, a purposeful comparison of alternatives in policy decision—the prerequisite for the maturing protagonists among the great powers—makes the demands on the academic discipline grow and entirely change in character.

If the comparative method is to fulfil its proper functions in this global world, where even internal national decisions are dependent on a continuous awareness of their international implications, it must enlarge its scope in area to include non-Western countries and so-called "primitive" peoples; deepen its attack through meaningful, historical analyses; and focus its evaluation on the dynamic forces within the communities. Moreover, it must constantly interrelate the available data and thus contribute to a genuinely comparative study. Only when reaching beyond a mere political morphology of legislative, executive, and judicial forms can the responsible citizen recognize the different nature, purpose, and direction of the political powers in being and in conflict.

"To know thyself, compare thyself to others." The comparative approach is, above all, an eye opener to a people's self-recognition and to its taking a stand. It is not accidental that the great civilizations, like that of the Renaissance, were developed at the crossroads of mankind and articulated by the meeting with contrasting systems. This

encounter alone made an awakening western Europe fully aware of her own character and quality, apart from being naturally and fruitfully influenced by the impact of the strange, new forces.

We are again living in such a period of opening frontiers, which will force us to recognize the values and concepts we live by and to test them anew against their challenge from abroad. It is in this crisis of our own society that comparative government becomes a must for the mature citizen.

Beyond that, the intensive study of contrasting civilizations offers the necessary equipment for present-day policy decisions. While our planet is continuously shrinking, bringing the politics of far-distant areas into our compass, thoughtful students of public affairs have often been troubled by our limited "knowledge by experience." Its only substitute seems to be "knowledge by learning," which puts a great responsibility on our generation to make comparative government a live issue—comprehensive and contemporary.

Contemporary, indeed, it must be in a deeper sense than headline actuality. In the clash of these fast-changing systems, another fact becomes increasingly obvious: the need for a continuous conceptual housecleaning. One could well argue that a time lag usually exists between historical reality and its conceptualization, especially in a great age of transition when the political vocabulary is quickly outdated and thus full of misnomers. We are still living within an ideological framework of a hundred years back and naturally cannot master our present-day political conflicts with such obsolete and often romantic stereotypes. This is a time when a meaningful historical comparison is called for. More than that: a theoretical clarification becomes a paramount preliminary for appropriate strategies of this revolutionary age. All fundamental political concepts, like nationalism, sovereignty, imperial-

ism, socialism, and statism, must therefore be redefined in the light of a new reality. On this basis alone can theory become, as it should, a guide to proper political action, a compass through chaos.

The issue of the party is a perfect illustration of our changing approach to a meaningful comparative government and of this incessant metamorphosis of its concepts. What better key to an understanding of the vital processes among the great antagonists in world affairs can be found than in the political parties, reaching down to each citizen within each nation, focusing the interplay of national pressure groups, and affecting the international scene through their manifold organizations? What other agency can serve as a more pointed example of the continuously shifting meaning of our social concepts? And what other institutions can thus impress on us equally well the urgency of their ever renewed reappraisal?

Not only has the concept changed through the ages—and, indeed, at an accelerated pace in this twentieth century—but also different types of parties arise concurrently in our times. The loose application of the term to the most divergent phenomena has led to dangerous confusions; and revolutions, like military battles, national and international, have been lost through obsolete strategy. Is it not conceivable that much of the confusion and difficulty in present-day party struggle derives from the use of such an antiquated arsenal, refurbished though it be by the day-dreamers of a glorified past? Yet does the proverbial and powerful "man in the street" recognize this significant shift in the character of modern political parties? Or does even the statesman?

Matters are further complicated on our shrinking planet by the fact that areas which once were worlds apart geographically and historically have

now been pushed together. Now different ages and different party systems have become strange bedfellows; and, as in geological structures, dislocations have occurred in the continuous pattern of our societal structure. This co-existence in time of noncontemporaries has given our political life its complexities, its contrasting stratification, and its conflicting political generations—problems which can be mastered only by a rigorous re-examination of the multifarious mutations in the structure of today's political parties.

It is necessary that all our political science concepts be spelled out in time and space, both in their specific historical situation and in their local representation, for any premature generalization only tends to invalidate the genuine character of political forces.

The question of a proper approach to a meaningful theory of political party structure poses a dilemma because the overwhelming data of our material world fall into a conceivable pattern only if seen through the controlled order of a conceptual framework, which in turn can be conceived only in a full appreciation of the rich texture of reality. The task of attempting to systematize our knowledge, therefore, is confronted by almost overwhelming difficulties and can proceed only by a simultaneous attack on both theory and practice. Social concepts evolve by stages, remaining necessarily fragmentary and tentative, and, at best, present only a useful working hypothesis for a deeper penetration into an ever changing reality. Hence a conceptualization of political parties must be a constantly renewed effort. Most definitely it can never be a one-man job; it must be the work of proved experts, who by pooling their substantive findings in their special areas can contribute to the laying of the foundations for a concrete theory of the modern political party.

Political parties are the main agents

of public affairs. For this very reason they must be seen within the complete settings of their own governmental systems. Only against this background of historical circumstances, institutional traditions, and national characteristics can the specific nature, issues, and contributions of the different party patterns be fully evaluated. Each national analysis, therefore, emphasizes different features (grown out of long-range experiences of the peoples' existence) and adds to the cumulative definition of modern political parties.

Our tour naturally starts out with a view of the British parties which in so many ways have been regarded—like the British political system altogether—as the prototype of democratic government. This inquiry, however, shows two significant facts: the specific conditions under which the British political parties unfolded and the significant changes which they underwent under the impact of ensuing social transformations. Thus from the outset the circumspect student is forewarned against any easy transfer of these indigenous organs of politics into other national patterns. The genius of Britain's unwritten constitution and its ever renewed flexibility is reflected in the successful transformation of its party system from a governing elite to the present-day organized mass parties.

The four selected Dominion states present a global transfer of the two-party theme and, at the same time, significant variations from the island's original pattern in the kaleidoscopic Empire turning Commonwealth.

The succeeding studies of France, Belgium, and Scandinavia introduce the vexing problems of modern multiparty systems. The French political scene illustrates the tensions and liabilities of ideological fronts in a complex social setting, emphasized by the still unfinished political revolution of 1789, the nation's coinciding economic transfor-

mations, and its deep resistance to the prevailing temper of encompassing world forces. The resulting instability of the party system, so often commented on, finds its counterbalance, however, in basic ideological traditions.

The Belgian case shows on a small canvas the cleavage of multifarious political forces of race, religion, and social classes and their eventual compromise in a two-and-a-half-party pattern.

Scandinavia presents probably the happiest solution of a functioning multiparty system. This fact may well be due to the relatively stable social order of a peninsula which, geographically removed from the center of world conflicts today, could preserve politically unambitious parties of representation so characteristic of the nineteenth-century state of balance and peace.

The concluding study on the democratic party systems shows the historical transformations of the United States from the limited political administration of early independence to the intricate responsibilities of a major world power. While this amazing maturing process of our nation can be assumed as a familiar tale and therefore is here drawn in bold strokes, emphasis is laid on the shifting functions of the equally changing political organs and the growth of modern party government. Its unique present-day character becomes increasingly recognizable in the daily encounters of the United States with our partners in world affairs. They in turn are deeply concerned about our ability to articulate clearly the responsible role of the American parties.

Democratic parties find an even more pressing need for self-articulation vis-à-vis the dictatorial challenge. The complex ramifications of the Soviet system demand a full exposition before their impact can be clearly grasped. After the demise of the Third Reich, the U.S.S.R. remains unquestionably the outstanding case of comprehensive controls and

their key instrument, the monolithic party. Its structure and functions, its sociology and psychology, must be understood in order to evaluate its persistent power at home and, even more, its fatal ambitions abroad. The elaborate study of the shifts in techniques of subversion from the Comintern to the Cominform points to the specific and crucial character of the Bolshevik party and its world drive, which transforms Russia's historical imperialism into a new, fierce force. The subsequent comparative analysis of the eastern European countries is a case study in Soviet satellite parties, in the true sense of the word.

The final section of the analytical studies presents two nations which, in the critical development of their parties, have run the gamut of practically all forms of government in the short span of hardly a century. Experimentation and cultural borrowing were the order of Japan's history from Prince Ito's importation of Prussian feudal institutions to the country's quick adaptation to Western democracy, its subsequent submission to militant autocracy and, after a crushing defeat, to military government controls and a new democratic beginning. Those abrupt changes may serve as a warning, however, that the amazing development of the post-dictatorial Japanese system will still have to undergo the test of time.

No less is such a careful consideration and tentative evaluation imperative for a full appreciation of Germany's future. Here, as in other countries, the political parties merely articulate the special features of the national life. No wonder, then, that in this *Land der Mitte* the political forces of the divided Reich reflect the tensions of the people between East and West, torn by lasting and contradictory traditions of the Bismarckian Reich, the Weimar Republic, Hitler's rule, the occupational

interlude, and the competing images of a partitioned Germany—not to mention the more remote and yet ever present liabilities of a thousand years' Holy Roman Empire, heavily mortgaging the young party system even before it began. A full account of the German parties—their ideological intricacies, their sociological constellations, their international implications—is an appropriate forewarning against easygoing generalizations concerning the past, present, and future of political dynamics.

It is against such a colorful background of a wide party panorama that, finally, a tentative sketch of some persistent themes for a comparative analysis may be ventured. The concluding part presents nothing but preliminary propositions for further study, particularly in its attempt at a definition of modern political parties.

If any fundamental thesis evolves from this presentation of past and present analyses, it is the impression of the changing function and consequently shifting role of political parties in this century when politics—on the international, national, and personal plane—has become our fate. Putting it differ-

ently: We are living in a time of crisis and decision which naturally affects each people in different degrees and dimensions and consequently demands diverse party systems to respond to the needs of the nations.

Yet, granted those wide differences, the modern mass society in its global frame may well impose on all peoples a deeper involvement in the public domain, which, in turn, may be illustrated in a visible shift from loose parties of individual representation to powerful parties of social integration. Moreover, accepting such a fateful interpenetration of our personal, national, and international existence, it may be even more important to recognize that the future of the Western world will depend on our ability to conceive a concept of party that, while fulfilling this task of social integration, does not destroy the fundamental traditions of personal freedom and individual responsibilities. It is in the light of these crucial decisions of our time that the world conflict between the totalitarian and democratic societies reaches through the diverse party formations down to the very base of human existence.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY SYSTEMS
