


Book reviews

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Piero Ignazi, *Party and Democracy: The Uneven Road to Party Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017; xvii + 311 pp.: ISBN 9780198735854, £60 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Kenneth Janda, *Northwestern University, USA*
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Piero Ignazi guides scholars of comparative political parties in an erudite journey over centuries of political experience. He seeks not only to understand why political parties in advanced democracies are held in such low esteem today but how they might regain popular appeal.

Ignazi begins by convincingly explaining (in several languages) how the terms “party” and “faction” emerged in political discourse, were confused, became differentiated, and then accepted. Both terms suggested opposition to established authority, based for centuries on a “holist and monist vision” of society. Neither “party” nor “faction” served the “union and harmony, consensus and agreement, concord and cohesion” needed for a good state (p. 1).

Christianity invited rulers to claim divine support against parties. “Dissent and opposition became unfeasible: the sovereign is one, and God is one” (p. 15). Even after parties operated in parliament in the early 18th century, “unity and harmony, monism and holism, still enjoyed a superior status” (p. 26). Although parties were active in prerevolutionary France, post-1815 counterrevolutionaries saw them as threats to “a natural, harmonious, indivisible, and hierarchical order in the social and political body” (p. 44).

Early in the 19th century, parties in the United States “had overcome the disdain and distrust” felt by the Founding Fathers (p. 49), but at the century’s end in Europe, they “had not yet made a decisive step into the realm of full acceptance” (pp. 57–58). They did not gain “full reception” until sociocultural and sociopolitical conditions allowed for “organized expression of pluralism” (p. 90). By World War I, all European countries had party systems. Competitive political parties became accepted as *legitimate* actors in democratic polities.

Claiming that “political scientists have largely ignored the interwar fascist totalitarian type of party” (p. 95), Ignazi

explains how noncompetitive, fascist parties in Germany and Italy claimed legitimacy by reversing the party’s role from an agent of pluralism to an agent of unity, providing “political unity and harmony” through a “sole, totalitarian party” (p. 97).

After World War II, pluralism returned as parties provided “legitimacy to the new government, not the other way around” (p. 110). During this “golden age,” the mass party model gleamed the brightest, reaching its zenith in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Well-suited to industrial society, the model did not fit the postindustrial society that emerged in the mid-1970s. Ignazi details “specific features” of the new environment that worked against it (p. 125). Two general features were secularization and socioeconomic transformations, including television.

Mass parties, which served defined social sectors, evolved into “catch-all” parties appealing across social sectors. Television not only facilitated the evolution but “dramatically altered power relations inside the party,” for it only “provided resources for the leadership” (p. 134). As parties sought to gain power more than to promote policies, they were no longer criticized for divisiveness, “but for the opposite reason: they did not divide enough” (p. 136).

Ignazi summarizes: mass parties “now found themselves in a completely different environment compared to the one in which they had been originally conceived.” Functional “to a mass society,” they had “adapted their structure to the requirements of society in their respective urban-industrial and rural milieu” (p. 159). The new “post-modern” society rejected precise and distinct group loyalties: “the individual is free (and alone) to find his/her role in society and the political arena” (p. 160).

Free (and alone) citizens responded to party leaders on television, and leaders reinforced their autonomy “over the party organization and, of course, “the membership” (p. 162). European parties suffered as a result. “Not a single indicator at the turn of the century is moving upward suggesting a regaining of confidence”—hence, their “loss of legitimacy” (p. 166).

Drawing on an impressive review of empirical data, Ignazi concurs that parties sought refuge in the “cartel model”—a “state-centered” party that depends on state subsidies to replace membership dues, that distributes patronage and government favors, that enshrines itself in

the state's legal framework, and that colludes with other parties to maintain their favored positions. While parties survived, they suffered in public opinion: "The more parties fill their coffers, the more they are disregarded, because a large part of the party's wealth comes from the state, from taxpayers' money" (p. 225).

Ignazi is not against political parties. Needed for "structuring of the vote" in democratic government (p. 261), they are "necessary evils" (p. 264). Ignazi's impressive longitudinal analysis of European party politics also stabs at improving intraparty democracy. In just four pages, he outlines "The Four Knights of Intra-Party Democracy"—*inclusion, pluralism, deliberation, and diffusion*—as basic elements of intraparty democracy. Increasing intraparty democracy, presumably, would pave over their "Uneven Road to Legitimacy" described in the book's subtitle. But is more intraparty democracy the solution? Party leaders often bypass party organizations, using electronic media to exploit an atomized electorate. Can the Four Knights defeat the Dark Knight of Electronic Media?

Ignazi's historical analysis of party modes and models makes a valuable contribution to comparative parties scholarship, but it is confined to the Western European experience. He discusses the Soviet Communist Party as a totalitarian party only in passing, and American parties only in the context of their early acceptance as legitimate. Indeed, both contemporary American parties stunningly refute the cartel party model's characteristics. Restating their original 1995 model (Katz and Mair, 1995) in 2009, Katz and Mair stressed how party politics were *depoliticized*. Narrowing of the ideological divide made it "that much easier for the parties to cooperate and collude"—collusion being "an important element in the cartel argument" (Katz and Mair, 2009: 754, emphasis in original).

Paul Kenny, *Populism and Patronage: Why Populists win Elections in India, Asia and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: ISBN 978-0-198-80787-2, £63 (hbk)

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Literature on populism is a growth industry. However, few scholars have attempted to theorise the rise and fall of periods of populist leadership as a distinctive form of politics in the lower and middle-income countries of Asia. Paul Kenny's *Populism and Patronage* is an ambitious attempt to develop a theory of populism in 'patronage democracies' (Chandra, 2004), those in which party systems are dominated by party-voter linkages that hinge on the distribution of goods, services and access

No one can claim that the cartel model fits American political parties now. First, they are not funded by the government. (Subsidies did begin in 1976, but only for presidential, not congressional, elections. Presidential candidates began to decline public funds in 1996, and no major candidate accepted them in 2012.) Second, American party politics is marked by ideological polarization, not depoliticization. Third, the thought that today's Democratic and Republican parties "cooperate and collude" is untenable.

Indeed, the latest comprehensive study of European parliamentary parties—designed in part to test the cartel party thesis—produced little evidence, chapter after chapter, to support it. The one by Lobo and Razzuoli on "Party Finance and Perceived Party Responsiveness" concluded: "Contrary to the theoretical expectations derived from the cartel party thesis, these findings suggest that electors voting for parties more dependent on the state are not more likely to have low feelings of political efficacy" (Lobo and Razzuoli, 2017: 202).

The quarter-century-old cartel model certainly does not apply to American parties today. Does it even apply to European parties?

References

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- Katz RS and Mair P (1995) Changing models of party organization and party democracy: the emergence of the cartel party. *Party Politics* 1: 5–28.
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in return for votes rather than on programmatic policy platforms.

Kenny's central argument is that patronage democracies become susceptible to the emergence of populist movements or parties when a national system of party-voter linkages breaks down due to decentralisation. As political actors at the subnational level gain autonomy, they are able to capture the credit and political capital from the distribution of patronage, even where resources and revenues come from the central government. As the direct connection between national leaders and voters is severed, it becomes harder for national parties to maintain political support. In such circumstances, Kenny proposes, populists emerge at the helm of national parties seeking to circumvent 'brokers' at the subnational level and appeal directly to the people.

Kenny emphasises the significance of his explanation for developing countries where programmatic parties are