

POLITICAL PARTIES  
AND THE STUDY OF  
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT  
New Insights from the  
Postcommunist Democracies

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Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich Klaus Preuss. *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 350 pp.

Anna Maria Grzymala-Busse. *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 341 pp.

Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gábor Tóka. *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 457 pp.

Tomás Kostelecký. *Political Parties after Communism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, 213 pp.

Robert G. Moser. *Unexpected Outcomes: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Representation in Russia*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, 183 pp.

Hubert Tworzecki. *Learning to Choose: Electoral Politics in East Central Europe*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003, 290 pp.

THERE has long been an intellectual trade imbalance in area studies, one in which advanced industrialized democracies are the net exporters of concepts and theories, while other regions are the net importers. This imbalance has only increased with the spread of liberal democracy since the 1980s, which has made theories that deal with institutions, voters, legislators, parties, or any other component of dem-

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ocratic politics even more exportable. Two decades into the third wave of democratization, however, there are now signs that this imbalance is beginning to diminish. The application of old theories to new contexts, while tremendously enriching non-Western area studies, has forced scholars to take a closer look at the largely overlooked *ceteris paribus* assumptions on which the existing theories rest; such second looks have revealed that only some of the factors that existing theories exogenize are genuinely equal, while others are not. The subsequent attention paid to factors that fail the *ceteris paribus* test have led to reevaluations, respecifications, and ultimately refinement of existing theories. The rapidly growing literature on postcommunist party politics provides a particularly suitable opportunity to illustrate this increasing cross-fertilization. Postcommunist parties have quickly attracted scholarly attention because they are viewed as playing a central role in the overall democratic consolidation process and because they constitute tempting new data points for a wide array of rich and sophisticated theories eager for new export markets.

This article reviews six important works from the literature. We begin with a brief synopsis of the books under review to identify their points of departure from the existing literature, the scope of their empirical analysis, and their major findings.<sup>1</sup> In the main section of the article, we then highlight two issues all six books address and on which the *ceteris paribus* assumptions of the exported theories proved to be problematic. The books all stress the importance of long-term historical legacies and thus confront the relatively short time horizon of most existing theories of voting behavior, interparty competition, and party organization.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the books integrate long-term historical legacies with short-term contingencies in very different ways and thus provide useful insights for both the party literature and the growing number of historical minded comparativists.<sup>3</sup> In addition to their treatment of history, the books also find common ground in emphasizing the disloyalty of postcommunist politicians and the resulting organizational weakness of parties. As a result, they invite a reconsideration of

<sup>1</sup>To keep our analysis more focused, we only selected books that deal with political parties and party systems and excluded books that focus solely on voters, such as election studies. For a good review of this literature, see Joshua A. Tucker, "The First Decade of Post-Communist Elections and Voting: What Have We Studied, and How Have We Studied It?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (June 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Other authors stressing the importance of history include Jeffrey Kopstein, "Post-Communist Democracy: Legacies and Outcomes," *Comparative Politics* 35, no. 2 (2003); and Lucan A. Way, "Understanding the Role of Historical Constraint in Post-Communist Development," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>3</sup>James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschmeyer, eds., *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the literature's central assumption that parties are durable, well-institutionalized organizations comprised of loyal and mutually exclusive members.<sup>4</sup> Paying greater attention to why and when politicians switch parties adds an important but overlooked dimension to the party literature, which mostly studies parties as single unitary actors driven by electoral market forces or as collective organizations driven by factional disputes or pressures from special interest groups. Moreover, party switching is a crucial element in both the institutionalization of new party systems and the realignment of such long-established party systems as those in Japan, Italy, France, or Canada.<sup>5</sup> The efforts of the six books to grapple with the effective incorporation of temporal dimensions and the proper conceptualization of political parties merit closer attention because these endeavors lead to important theoretical refinements within the party literature and help to move the analysis of political development beyond its frequently linear democratization paradigm.<sup>6</sup>

#### INTRODUCING THE BOOKS

The six books diverge and overlap in various ways and accordingly reflect the diversity of the larger party literature, which is arguably one of the most varied subfields in political science. Therefore, we first introduce the works by identifying their theoretical starting points, the empirical scope of their research, and some of their findings. To avoid unnecessary lengthy description of each book, we differentiate these works' empirical scope by whether they focus on parties in the electorate (for example, with regard to voter partisan identification, party members, campaigning methods, electoral systems, and/or candidate selection), parties in the legislature (for example, with regard to legislative voting, patterns of bicameralism, committee assignments, and/or legislative organization), or parties in the executive (for example, with regard to coalition theory, ministerial portfolio allocation, governmental survival, and/or bureaucratic oversight). We also differentiate the extent to which the authors treat parties as organizations with discrete internal governance structures, varying resources, and logistical infra-

<sup>4</sup> The importance of agency formation is stressed by Barbara Geddes, "A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995); Michael McFaul, "Explaining Party Formation and Nonformation in Russia: Actors, Institutions, and Chance," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 10 (2001); and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "The Limited Reach of Russia's Party System: Underinstitutionalization in Dual Transition," *Politics and Society* 29, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>5</sup> Scott Mainwaring, *Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization: The Case of Brazil* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (January 2002).

structures, or whether they instead follow the more recent, Downsian-inspired conceptualization of parties as organizationally uniform, single unitary actors that only differ in terms of their ideologies or policy positions.

*Post-Communist Party Systems*, by Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gábor Tóka, deals both with the formation of party systems and with electoral alignments in the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as well as with their impact on the quality of representation and governance. This work clearly has the most far-reaching empirical scope of any of the six books under review, since it studies parties in the electoral, legislative, and executive arenas, and it treats parties both in terms of their policy dimensions and, to a lesser extent, their organizational characteristics. In examining parties all the way up from the voters that support them to the policy outcomes they produce, the authors extrapolate the implications of the emerging party system formation for democratization with a degree of specificity and sophistication that sets a new standard. This sophistication is partly attributable to their specification of different models of representation, thus grounding their analysis in normative democratic theory; this normative grounding allows the authors to establish far more refined criteria for assessing democratic consolidation than the blunt thumbnail sketch comparisons between established and transitional democracies that define what Thomas Carothers calls the transition paradigm.<sup>7</sup> The authors identify three distinct linkages between voters and politicians—programmatic, clientelistic, and charismatic—which they use to assess the scope of interests represented (whether they are narrow/particularistic interests or broad/collective ones) and the efficiency with which they are translated into policies. They equate programmatic linkages with more structured party systems capable of representing a broad scope of interests, while associating clientelistic and charismatic linkages with unstructured party systems capable of representing only narrow interests. The authors use extensive elite interviews of deputies as well as public opinion data to analyze these different types of linkages and find that the Czech party system is the most structured system, the Bulgarian the least so, with the Polish and Hungarian systems falling in between these two extremes. The authors carefully dismiss the institutional explanations most frequently cited by the existing literature to account for such differences, and instead emphasize historical legacies, particularly from different types of communist regimes, as the primary determinants of the different linkages.

*Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies*, by Jon Elster, Claus

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Offe, and Ulrich Preuss, analyzes the posttransition consolidation processes in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Slovenia, and thereby also grounds itself in the democratization literature. It focuses on formal constitutional choices, electoral and party systems, the formation of socioeconomic cleavages, the transition to a market economy, and social policy transformation. While covering more than just party politics, the authors declare that “the structure and interaction of political parties are the most significant variables which contribute to the consolidation or failure of the political systems of democratic polities” (pp. 110–11). They limit their analysis to the electoral arena and treat parties mostly as organizations as they study their organizational development, the formation of socioeconomic cleavages, and the effects of electoral systems. The authors employ a more conventional consolidation criterion than the one used by Kitschelt et al. Following Samuel Huntington, they equate consolidation with the growing institutionalization of the formal rules of the game (pp. 28–31). Applying these rules loosely (and somewhat inconsistently) to their empirical analysis, they find that in Hungary and the Czech Republic, party systems and democracies are more consolidated than in Bulgaria and Slovenia. They explain this variation by stressing the interaction of long-term historical legacies with short-term transition- or posttransition-related factors.

*Political Parties after Communism*, by Tomáš Kostecký, focuses on how social cleavages and political institutions structure the development of party systems, yet it ignores the trickier question of how these party systems affect democratization. Kostecký begins with a straightforward history of Czech, Polish, and Hungarian parties during the interwar and post-1989 periods. The party literature itself—in particular, Lipset and Rokkan’s model—is his principle intellectual point of departure as he explores the role that center-periphery, state-church, agricultural-industry, and class cleavages as well as institutions played in structuring party systems; he also adds in generational and gender divisions as additional factors to his analysis. Thus, Kostecký studies parties in the electoral arena and analyzes them in terms of their organizational and policy dimensions. His findings cannot be easily summarized, since he attributes varying importance to the different analytical factors without always clearly distinguishing how important any given factor is relative to another. However, Kostecký does clearly emphasize the importance of two factors: (1) historical legacies predating the communist era and (2) the initial but somewhat diminishing organizational underdevelopment of postcommunist parties (pp. 152–59).

*Learning to Choose*, by Hubert Tworzecki, begins with a party history

and then explores how the cleavages specified by Lipset and Rokkan structured the Polish, Hungarian, and Czech party systems. Tworzecki refines his initial macrohistorical explanation by analyzing public opinion data from 1992 to 1995, which allows him to pay close attention to the effects that the nature of communist rule, the type of the transition, and the economic consequences of marketization all had in structuring party systems. The author parses the net effect that these long-term and short-term factors had in shaping voters' preferences and then demonstrates how strongly these preferences ultimately shaped voters' electoral choices (and thereby structured the party system). He reports the emergence of increasingly stable voting patterns but also points out that they paradoxically coexist with organizationally volatile parties (p. 102). The author concludes by calling for more research on parties' organizational development and how it interacts with the formation and transformation of voter preferences (p. 243).

*Unexpected Outcomes*, by Robert Moser, analyzes how Russia's mixed electoral system structured the evolution of its party system and affected the representation of women and ethnic minorities. Moser pays less attention than the other authors to voters and parties' policy positions; instead, he treats parties as organizations in both the electoral and the legislative arenas. Moser's work is interesting because it is the first book-length study of mixed electoral systems as well as one of the first attempts to apply the methodologically and theoretically advanced electoral systems literature outside of well-established democracies. His geographic trespassing has, as the title suggests, produced a number of unexpected outcomes. Contradicting the conventional Duverger's Law, Moser finds that Russia's single-member-district electoral system permits a larger number of parties to enter parliament than does its system of proportional representation. He also finds that both kinds of electoral systems produced a far greater number of parliamentary parties than comparable electoral systems in the West. Moser explains these unexpected outcomes by taking a closer look at the *ceteris paribus* assumption of the literature on electoral systems; he finds that the under-institutionalization of parties, caused by various long-term historical legacies and short-term postcommunist contingencies, explains many of these discrepancies.

Anna Maria Grzymala-Busse's *Redeeming the Communist Past*, by concentrating on the varying electoral success and governmental effectiveness of Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish communist successor parties, has a very different focus from the other books. The author deals with a phenomenon that is *sui generis* to the region and that does

not have any self-evident theoretical starting point in established, Western-centric literature; thus, she is forced to integrate tidbits of theoretical insights from within and outside of the party literature to produce an interesting account of why the Hungarian and Polish successor parties were far more successful in redeeming themselves with voters than were their Slovak and especially their Czech counterparts. Grzymala-Busse looks very closely at the party-internal reform efforts and the historical legacies shaping them to explain both the electoral and governing effectiveness of communist successor parties. The result is less a refinement of existing models than it is a wholesale addition of a new model that addresses the largely overlooked but very important question of how political parties innovate.

In concluding this synopsis, it is important to accentuate two themes, only hinted at so far, that run through all six books. First, the books all emphasize the importance of historical legacies in shaping electoral alignments, institutional choices, types of voter-state linkages, or degrees of parties' organizational institutionalization. Despite this commonality, the authors vary in the types of historical legacies they emphasize (for example, cultural, economic, or institutional legacies), how far back in time they trace them, and how much causal weight they attribute to them. By comparing how the authors deal with these issues, we can enhance our understanding not only of the development of postcommunist *and* Western party systems, but also of historical social science more generally. Second, all the books identify stable and well-institutionalized parties as a key element for effective political representation and governance. Yet, despite this shared assumption, the works under review differ significantly in their assessment of how institutionalized the various parties are and in the causal mechanisms they identify to explain the underlying institutionalization process. Once again, closer comparison of these contrasting approaches reveals important new insights into both postcommunist and Western party politics.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY AND THE WAYS IN WHICH IT MATTERS

The six books, despite their shared emphasis on history, actually treat history very differently, thus providing a great opportunity to assess how historically informed analysis can be integrated with the more static, ahistorical theories prevalent in much of political science. The books' common emphasis on historical legacies is most clearly evident in their rejection of *tabula rasa* explanations, which claim that the al-

legedly shared and nearly identical communist pasts of Central and East European nations, combined with their simultaneous transitions to liberal democracy, created a set of nearly identical historical legacies. As a result, the collapse of East European communism in 1989 constituted a once-in-a-lifetime natural experiment in which all historical factors were controlled for and thus could be exogenized by invoking the *ceteris paribus* clause. *Tabula rasa* explanations thus contended that future political developments in postcommunist democracies would be attributable to ahistorical, post-1989 factors that were easily tractable by existing, Western-imported theories.

The six books are resolute in their insistence that history did not cooperate with these methodological fantasies. While these works all acknowledge the importance of 1989 as a critical juncture, they equally emphasize that the choices this turning point made possible were heavily constrained by historical legacies. Thus, they all employ a nuanced treatment of history by combining explanatory factors that are chronologically proximate to the outcome they explain and that hence have a short time horizon (for example, the type of transition, international factors, the type of marketization, and the role of NGOs), with more distal explanatory factors that, accordingly, have a longer time horizon (for example, the type of communist regime, industrialization patterns, and socioeconomic cleavages).<sup>8</sup> Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka nicely summarize this multifaceted treatment of history by pointing out that “the breakdown of political and economic regimes always offers new political actors opportunities to deal creatively with a highly contingent and open range of possibilities in order to craft institutions and power relations. Nevertheless, the creativity of actors is also constrained by the experiences of the past and the patterns of economic and political resource distribution under the old regimes” (p. 19).

Although this emphasis on history certainly is to be welcomed, acknowledging history and actually conducting effective historical analysis are not necessarily the same task.<sup>9</sup> Historical sociologists, historical institutionalists, students of comparative and American political development, and even the occasional historian have debated what exactly constitutes the difference between the two, and have suggested three criteria for assessing what constitutes effective historical analysis: the

<sup>8</sup> Paul Pierson, “Big, Slow-Moving, and Invisible: Macrosocial Processes in the Study of Comparative Politics,” in Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (fn. 3), 178–79.

<sup>9</sup> For a stimulating intellectual history of different models of political development as well as a good assessment of how effectively they each deal with continuity and change, see Andrew Janos, *Politics and Paradigm: Changing Theories of Change in Social Science* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), esp. 44–64.

structure of time, the causal weighting of multiple historical legacies, and the specificity of causal mechanisms.<sup>10</sup>

First, the way that historical explanations structure time depends on the interrelation of the chronological units that constitute a particular time horizon. Time can be genuinely historical when its units unfold in a continuous manner, such that each time unit interacts with the next one until they finally link up with the outcome to be explained; this continuous unfolding corresponds to the temporal structure favored by historians and thus constitutes the most subtle treatment of time.<sup>11</sup> However, time also can have a static or frozen structure, in which a past legacy is directly related to a present outcome and no consideration is given to the intervening time and how it interacts with or even modifies the antecedent legacies.<sup>12</sup> Between the two extremes of historical and static time, time also can have an episodic structure. Episodic time essentially resembles historical time, except that some historical episodes are leapfrogged, thus making its unfolding choppy and somewhat discontinuous.

Second, historical explanations assign different causal weight to historical legacies. As Jeffrey Kopstein points out, the “concept of legacy is especially slippery if the weight of the past affects the present, at a minimum, it is necessary to specify which past.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since all six books discuss multiple causal legacies, it is important to ask whether the chronological remove of these legacies from the outcomes they seek to explain affects their causal importance vis-à-vis each other. Are all causal legacies equally important, or are proximate legacies more important than distal ones? In other words, causal weight involves the issue of whether authors differentiate among the “causal half-life” of different historical legacies (Gryzmala-Busse, 21); explanations making such differentiations are preferable because they give us a clearer sense of how much the respective historical legacies mattered.

<sup>10</sup> Pierson (fn. 8); Ronald Aminzade, “Historical Sociology and Time,” *Sociological Methods and Research* 20, no. 4 (1992); Peter Knapp, “Can Social Science Escape from History: Views of History in Social Science,” *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (1984); Terrence J. McDonald, “What We Talk about When We Talk about History: The Conversations of History and Sociology,” in McDonald, ed., *The Historical Turn in the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Pierson, “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes,” *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (Spring 2000); and William Sewell, “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology,” also in McDonald. See also the exchange with Jonathan Sperber and Kenneth Ledford in Marcus Kreuzer, “Reply to Sperber and Ledford,” *Central European History* 36, no. 3 (2003); Ledford, “Comparing Comparisons: Disciplines and the Sonderweg,” *Central European History* 36, no. 3 (2003); and Sperber, “Comments on Marcus Kreuzer’s Article,” *Central European History* 36, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>11</sup> Sewell (fn. 10), 262–65.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>13</sup> Kopstein (fn. 2), 233.

Third, historical explanations vary according to whether or not they articulate specific causal mechanisms linking historical legacies to subsequent outcomes. Are such mechanisms identified and, if so, how specific and theoretically explicit are they? Gryzmala-Busse correctly points out that “many of the mechanisms of replication and transmission of the legacies of the socialist regimes have remained underspecified. Both critics and advocates of the legacy-centered approach seemed to assume that inertia or nearly ‘automatic replication’ will continue to make legacies relevant” (p. 21).

How successfully did each individual author’s historical analysis meet these three criteria? For Moser, history helps to explain why electoral institutions had very different effects in Russia than in established democracies. He discusses history in terms of background conditions—assumed as constant by existing theories of electoral systems while actually being very different in Russia—that explain why Russia’s electoral institutions failed to produce the same number of political parties that such institutions normally do in established democracies. He lists weakly institutionalized parties and volatile voter alignments as principle background conditions, which he then links to antecedent historical legacies such as an underdeveloped civil society, the sequencing of founding elections, and communist-era antiparty sentiments. These distinct historical conditions impeded the coordination of voters’ and politicians’ expectations required for postcommunist electoral institutions to have the same effects that similar institutions have in Western democracies (pp. 15–19, 35). Given Moser’s self-confessed “unexpected” discovery of history, it is not surprising that he treats it in an ad hoc manner; he neither specifies any causal mechanisms nor differentiates between the importance of proximate and distal historical factors, and treats history in a largely static fashion. Since he presents the importance of history as a negative finding, his unsystematic treatment of the subject is to a large extent understandable; to him, Russian history is a background noise sufficiently loud to drown out the systematic effects of electoral institutions, not a theoretically grounded explanatory factor to systematically account for the unexpected rate of party proliferation. Yet, this negativity does not detract from the importance of Moser’s conclusion; it still brings out a significant and largely overlooked dimension in the existing literature on electoral systems.

History looms even more prominently in Kostelecký’s and Tworzecki’s works than it does in Moser’s. The former two authors start out with sweeping descriptions of individual parties and their underlying alignment structures in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and

(also, for Kostelecký) Slovakia. They then identify various distal and proximate historical factors that shape postcommunist voters' preferences in such a way as to explain the present-day alignment structures. Apart from these similarities, the two authors differ in their treatment of history. Kostelecký provides a qualitative and wide-ranging account of various distal historical legacies, including precommunist legacies, regional identities, political culture, industrialization, state-church cleavages, class cleavages, and postcommunist political institutions. Reaching so far back into history, as he mechanically links legacies to postcommunist cleavages, his treatment of time becomes rather static. Kostelecký assumes, rather than empirically demonstrates, that these legacies have remained both unchanged and significant over time and thereby were capable of shaping voters' post-1989 preferences. He also does not explain how the chronological distance between various legacies affects their respective preference-forming capacities. Finally, Kostelecký does not specify a causal mechanism to account for these legacies' reproduction and how they actually shape voter preferences. In short, his treatment of history certainly is thicker than Moser's, but not necessarily more subtle.

Tworzecki, like Kostelecký, examines very similar historical legacies, but does so in a more nuanced fashion. Tworzecki attributes postcommunist alignment structures to precommunist social cleavages, communist-era socioeconomic structures, and—to a lesser extent—the transition mode (p. 239). His temporal treatment of the more distal legacies is, like Kostelecký's, largely static and does not weigh the effects of different chronological distances. Yet, Tworzecki is more subtle than Kostelecký in two ways. First, he takes advantage of quantitative, longitudinal data available for the more recent legacies (for example, post-1989 economic performance) and thus is able to treat them in a more dynamic and continuous fashion (pp. 192–95). Second, he suggests political learning as a possible causal mechanism for linking historical legacies to voters' preference formation (p. 239); this discussion is interesting, however, it comes somewhat late in the analysis and theoretically does not seem fully compatible with his emphasis on long-term legacies, which mostly are internalized, prepolitical (rather than learned) norms.

While Moser, Kostelecký, and Tworzecki are to be commended for taking history seriously, the authors of the other works under review here deserve praise for treating history in the sort of subtle, differentiated fashion that the broader literature on comparative historical analysis has been suggesting.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (fn. 3).

Elster, Offe, and Preuss's analytical framework avoids mechanically linking the characteristics of postcommunist party systems to antecedent legacies by paying careful attention to the interaction effects among different historical legacies. Their analysis pivots on two temporal axes. The first axis consists of the legacies, or what they call microcontinuities, left by the three pasts—the precommunist period, the communist era, and the postcommunist transition. Each of these three pasts is transmitted through internalized norms, political skills, resources, and institutional legacies (for example, the legal system), which in turn affect the power resources of postcommunist actors (pp. 19, 61–62). The second axis comprises the macrochanges, or *tabula rasa* effects, resulting from the collapse of communism, such as marketization, democratization, and—in some instances—nation building. The interaction of historical microcontinuities with transition-related macrochanges shapes the development of postcommunist parties (pp. 26–28).<sup>15</sup> Generally speaking, Elster, Offe, and Preuss treat time in a differentiated matter, attributing greater causal weight to the macrochanges of the recent transition than to the microcontinuities of the two, more distant pasts. They suggest that the precommunist and communist legacies primarily determined actors' resources, while the "anonymous contingencies" of the past transition have shaped actors' actual preferences (pp. 14–16). Thus, by distinguishing actors' resources and preferences, Elster, Offe, and Preuss specify two very concrete causal mechanisms through which history is related to the development of parties. Moreover, their emphasis on the transition-related contingencies—which sets them apart from the other authors, with the possible exception of Gryzmala-Busse—makes for a more dynamic treatment of time, since constraints on actors' choices are continuously updated rather than statically fixed by long-term historical legacies.

Unfortunately, the care that Elster, Offe, and Preuss devote to their analytical framework does not translate into their empirical analysis. Their individual chapters either stress the *tabula rasa* effects of macrochanges or the legacies of the microcontinuities, without ever demonstrating how the two interact. The chapters that focus on constitutional design and party systems firmly subscribe to a *tabula rasa* perspective and provide an informative synopsis of the politics behind the

<sup>15</sup> It seems as if in Elster, Offe, and Preuss's analysis the most recent stage of the triple past—the postcommunist transition—and the *tabula rasa* or macrochange are one and the same, and hence, overlap. This raises the question of whether or not to consider the transition's proximate impact as a historical legacy. Because of their chronological contemporaneity with the explained outcomes, we exclude transition effects as a historical factor.

various institutional choices and the formation of political parties. The analysis focuses almost exclusively on how the transition-related macrochanges have shaped the actors' preferences, without ever demonstrating how the historical legacies structured actors' resources. The same imbalance is present in their final two chapters, but in reverse; they deal with political cleavages and explain the variation in the countries' consolidation levels by stressing almost exclusively long-term historical legacies, such as the impact of state formation on countries' ethnic makeup or the impact that the timing of industrialization relative to communist rule had on elements of democratic development such as individualism, tolerance of diversity, and appreciation of competition (p. 301). Despite the authors' claim that they combine historical structures and political agency, the final two chapters, on closer analysis, are resolutely structural, since they leapfrog over any effects that the transition might have had on the consolidation. Their omission of the impact of nonstructural factors such as constitutional arrangements, party systems, and post-1989 socioeconomic policies on democratic consolidation makes this structural orientation apparent. To some extent, the book's different parts even contradict each other. For example, the authors claim that parties were weakly institutionalized in all four countries, thus posing a significant obstacle to democratic consolidation, yet somehow Bulgaria and Slovakia's party systems were less consolidated than those of Hungary and the Czech Republic (pp. 132–40). Moreover, it is never entirely clear how the allegedly divisive, consolidation-impeding ethnic and regime-biased cleavages in Bulgaria and Hungary (pp. 247–70) are possible, given that these countries' parties repeatedly collapse, reconfigure themselves, and generally lack the organizational infrastructure to transform latent social divisions into durable and politicized cleavages.

Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka, while sharing many of the strengths of Elster, Offe, and Preuss, are, in four ways, more careful and detailed in their empirical analysis. First, they focus on the same triple past as Elster, Offe, and Preuss; of the three pasts, the communist regime legacy clearly is the most important, since it directly shapes the choice of political institutions, the type of party-voter linkage, and substantive political divisions in the electorate. Unlike Elster, Offe, and Preuss, however, Kitschelt and his collaborators identify three distinct regime legacies from the communist-era episode: bureaucratic-authoritarian communism (for example, the Czech Republic), national-accommodative communism (for example, Hungary and Poland), and patrimonial communism (for example, Bulgaria). The effects of these communist regime legacies are, in turn, traced back to antecedent

causes (such as patterns of industrialization and interwar democratic experiences) as well as projected forward to the mode of regime transitions, institutional design, and transition to market economy. By linking the communist pasts both backward and forward, Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka sketch out distinct historical paths along which history unfolds in sequential, interlocking, if not fully contiguous, episodes.

Second, Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka carefully weigh the causal effects of the various historical episodes or, as they put it, their “changing efficacy,” over time. They point out that “it is reasonable to expect that at the beginning of post-communist democratization [communist-era] legacies are the strongest factors affecting programmatic or clientelistic party formation, because institutions, political-economic reform strategies and political alignments tend to be endogenous to the legacies” (pp. 60, 65–72). Third, they are refreshingly forthright about the historical—that is, moving—dimension of their dependent variable (for example, the type of party-voter linkage and substantive electoral divisions) and the limitations that their lack of longitudinal data imposes on their analysis. They point out that the party development in “Eastern Europe is a non-equilibrium process of learning in which political actors employ resources, legacies and new institutional rules to explore particular patterns of democratic political interaction” (p. 45). Fourth, Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka identify agency as the central causal mechanism linking the past with the present; they assert that historical arguments “must lay out a parsimonious logic detailing how and why actors with a capacity to process information, to define preferences and to deliberate about alternative pathways choose particular strategies” (p. 20).

Their empirical analysis does not always do full justice to their sophisticated historical frame of analysis. Most chapters start out with a brief restatement of how the historical legacies affect party-voter linkages and substantive divisions in the electorate and then proceed at great length to document these effects, yet they do not provide much evidence about the microprocesses through which historical legacies shape the party system. Just as with Elster, Offe, and Preuss, but on a much smaller scale, the causal inferences the authors make between the historical legacies and the party systems are a bit mechanical and correlational. For example, no evidence is presented on how actors deliberated over different historical pathways or on how some choices were foreclosed because of historical legacies’ constraining effects. Ad-

mittedly, such criticisms raise the question of feasibility given the book's admirable intellectual scope and already formidable length. Without any empirical focus on actors' decision making, however, their choices regarding institutions or type of party organization seem predetermined by historical legacies that narrow the actors' choice set to the point where their actual choices are forgone conclusions (pp. 32–34).

Among these historically rich and theoretically nuanced books, Anna Grzymala-Busse's work arguably offers the most successful historical analysis by providing the most continuous treatment of time and the smallest gap between analytical framework and empirical analysis. Her central, but by no means exclusive, focus is on communist successor parties' varying reorganization strategies in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland; she links the success of these reorganization strategies to three separate pasts by identifying very specific legacies rather than the broad period effects discussed by the other authors. She identifies the communist parties' interwar electoral strength, the nature of their post-1945 takeovers, and their handling of regime crisis in the 1970s and 1980s as key legacies that shaped what she calls the "portable skills and usable past" crucial for the parties' capacity to reorganize and innovate after 1989 (pp. 26–27). Grzymala-Busse describes in considerable detail how these legacies formed the actors' portable skills and usable pasts and therefore she is able to articulate a sequentially differentiated but chronologically tightly interlocking account. She shows how the strength of interwar communist parties affected their takeover strategy in the late 1940s, which shaped the bargaining skills they employed for solving the regime crisis in the 1970s and 1980s and ultimately affected their postcommunist reorganization strategies. Such a tight temporal and causal interlocking treats time as both continuous and unfolding, and makes transparent the causal mechanisms through which historical legacies are carried forward. Grzymala-Busse eschews the temptation to mechanically link legacies of various historical episodes directly to present-day communist successor party characteristics (and thereby leapfrog over intervening time periods). Instead, for her, historical legacies are the chronological sum total of legacies reproducing themselves, despite their interaction with new contingencies (such as the postwar Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe or crisis in the 1960s and 1970s), until they finally explain why the Czech communists, despite historically having the strongest party, were less successful than their Slovak, Hungarian, and Polish counterparts in adapting themselves to new electoral competition.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTIES AND  
THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY FORM

The six books under review study postcommunist party politics through the lens of democratic consolidation and identify stable, well-institutionalized parties as a key consolidation criterion. They view stable parties as necessary for democratic consolidation because without them public opinion would remain unstructured, electoral accountability limited, interest aggregation ineffective, and governance inefficient. All six books conclude that current postcommunist parties are insufficiently institutionalized to be able to effectively carry out these functions. Thereby, the authors echo Scott Mainwaring's broader claim that weakly institutionalized parties constitute the hallmark of most third-wave democratizations and are arguably the biggest obstacle to consolidation.<sup>16</sup> Despite this shared acknowledgement that postcommunist parties are underdeveloped, the six books give this subject an uneven analytical treatment; this uneven analysis reflects a gap in the party literature which, given its Western-centric provenance, has by and large taken well-institutionalized parties as a given and consequently has devoted little attention to their origins and formation.<sup>17</sup> Still, the literature has not entirely disregarded party formation, since it provides three benchmark criteria for assessing how effectively the formation of political parties is analyzed.

First, to what extent do explanations avoid sociological reductionism? In the late 1960s Giovanni Sartori criticized much of the party literature for assuming that political parties are sociological "projections" that emerge automatically from certain given socioeconomic cleavages. He contended that party formation is not an actorless, structurally driven process, but instead depends greatly upon how political elites do or do not translate these cleavages.<sup>18</sup> In the six books under review, the issue of sociological reductionism emerges in large part because virtually all these works make extensive reference to Lipset and Rokkan's famous argument that parties emerged from a bottom-up, societally driven process.<sup>19</sup> Second, to what degree do explanations relax their

<sup>16</sup> Mainwaring (fn. 5), 3–14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.

<sup>18</sup> Giovanni Sartori, "From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *Politics and the Social Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 69, 87–88.

<sup>19</sup> Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleaveage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignment: An Introduction," in Lipset and Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York: Free Press, 1967). Sartori praises Lipset and Rokkan for marking a big step away from sociologically reductionist arguments because they analyzed nonclass cleavages and paid attention to historical sequences; see Sartori (fn. 18), 87–91. By the standards of the time, these were indeed marked improvements, but they do not alter the fact that the Lipset-Rokkan model is still actorless and structural.

single-unitary actor assumption, treat parties as collective actors, and analyze their internal politics? The formation of political parties is shaped crucially by, and therefore requires attention to, party-internal decisions regarding mobilization of resources, recruitment, career advancements, and policy choices.<sup>20</sup> Third, to what extent do explanations avoid functionalism? March and Olson point out that functionalism or claims of historical efficiency are associated with theories of natural selection where “regardless of the complexity or apparent anomalies of human behavior, historical processes are assumed to eliminate rules of behavior that are not solutions to an appropriate joint optimization problem.”<sup>21</sup> Such claims of historical efficiency play a key role in much of the existing literature, which claims that the exigencies of electoral vote maximization and stable, legislative voting coalitions constitute two functional requisites that lead to the automatic institutionalization of stable political parties.<sup>22</sup> Authors like Sartori and Stathis Kalyvas have effectively criticized such functionalist arguments and pointed to the importance of historical contingencies.<sup>23</sup>

Kostelecký and Tworzecki provide the most sociological accounts of party formation of any of the authors, since they treat the emergence of parties as an almost automatic by-product of preexisting societal cleavages and pay little attention to agency. On one level, given their primary interest in voter preference formation and the resulting electoral alignment patterns, this sociological focus is understandable. Yet, on another level, their neglect of agency is inconsistent with their explicit and extensive acknowledgement of parties’ organizational weakness. Both authors spend entire chapters chronicling political parties’ foundation and their subsequent splits and mergers (Kostelecký, pp. 3–73; Tworzecki, pp. 42–73). Tworzecki presents voters’ stability and parties’ organizational volatility as one of his major findings, and also discusses the important role that political parties play in shaping voter preferences and hence in structuring public opinion (pp. 11–14, 102–4). Ultimately, the considerable attention that both authors devote to parties

<sup>20</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Richard Katz, *A Theory of Parties and Electoral Systems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Kreuzer, *Institutions and Innovation: Voters, Parties, and Interest Groups in the Consolidation of Democracy—France and Germany, 1870–1939* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2001); and Susan Scarrow, *Parties and their Members: Organizing for Victory in Britain and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> James March and Johan Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors of Political Life,” *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1984), 740.

<sup>22</sup> John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origins and Transformation of Party Politics in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Sartori (fn. 18); Kalyvas (fn. 20).

and their organizational shortcomings ends up serving as descriptive but unanalyzed and unexplained background information.

Unstable parties are central for Moser, since they constitute the primary explanation for why Russia's electoral institutions had different effects than those in established democracies. For example, he points out that "elections are necessary for party formation but . . . the structure and context of elections, their rules and the political environment in which they are conducted also play a significant role in the emergence of a multiparty system" (p. 116). He also links these factors to party leaders' ability to control individual party members. While these leads are sensible and acknowledge the importance of party-internal politics, they do not add up to a theoretically grounded and empirically substantiated explanation. Moser never collects any data about parties' discipline, resources, governance practices, or any other measure of their institutionalization. He provides some evidence that candidates elected through a proportional representation system demonstrate greater party discipline than deputies elected through a single-member-plurality electoral system (pp. 115–21). Beyond this, however, we have little idea about longitudinal or cross-sectional variations in party institutionalization and the factors that explain them.

Elster, Offe, and Preuss also recognize parties' organizational weakness as a key feature of postcommunist democracies. They argue that the 1989 democratic transitions differ radically from earlier transitions in that their suddenness, lack of any military force opposing them, and their peacefulness (except in Romania and Yugoslavia) made them "actorless" or "subjectless" transitions. Such "non-revolutionary transitions do not generate a comparable measure of social and political integration and capacity for action. Counter-elites are small, poorly organized, ideologically confused" (p. 15). As a result, the key challenge for postcommunist democracies is to supplant the "numerous, fuzzy, overlapping and often short-lived organizational initiatives" by organizationally institutionalized and societally embedded political parties (p. 17). Unquestionably, Elster, Offe, and Preuss provide the clearest account for why political party formation matters, yet they offer as equally ad hoc and thin theoretical leads and empirical evidence as Moser does. Their case studies do not account for the varying rates of party formation or nonformation; they simply explain the organizational weakness of postcommunist parties—explanations that involve the nature of transition, low party identification among voters, weak civil society, and distrust of parties.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for all their attention to

<sup>24</sup> This issue is taken up by McFaul (fn. 4).

party institutionalization, their actual analysis explains only party non-formation and underdevelopment and never focuses on the party-internal decision making that both drives this process and ultimately helps to explain variation in party formation; it offers only a few faint analytical hints, such as in the discussion about the effects of electoral institutions and electoral market competition on the development of more stable parties (pp. 109–56, esp. pp. 131–40). Overall, the authors seem to suggest that the disappearance of the factors currently weakening parties will contribute the most to their institutionalization. To their credit, they do not attribute the disappearance of these factors to the functional requisites for electoral competition and stable legislative coalitions, but instead see it as a slow and largely indeterminate process that will vary a great deal across countries.

Gryzmala-Busse approaches the issue of party formation from a slightly different angle, since she focuses on the successful reformation of existing parties rather than on the creation of brand new ones; however, the issues involved in regenerating an existing party are very similar to those involved in founding a new one. Her analysis also stands apart by treating parties as genuine collective actors, developing an actual theoretical framework, and empirically explaining cross-national variations in party transformation. Throughout her analysis, she stresses the importance of party-internal politics: “Parties’ responses to these powerful environmental factors were mediated by internal organizational factors, and specifically, the elite’s ability to devise and implement strategies of regeneration” (p. 13). She considers party-internal elements such as recruitment strategies, centralization, party discipline, norms of cooperation, and political skills, and analyzes party-external constraints that include historical legacies, transition modes, and—to a lesser extent—electoral systems, campaign finance laws, parliamentary organization, and the structure of party systems. Arguably, of the works under review, hers is the most successful treatment of political agency formation.

Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka treat party formation in a sophisticated and very distinct way by concluding that postcommunist parties are more firmly institutionalized than contended in the other five books and in much of the literature in general. They reach this conclusion by developing a complex, multicausal argument in which they go to great lengths to point out that party formation is a bottom-up process driven by historical legacies, socioeconomic structures, and institutions, while equally being a top-down process involving party elites’ choices. New political actors “with little experience are destined to experiment with innovative strategies . . . [which] are lim-

ited by the distribution of resources, mutual expectations about the relevant participants' strategic moves, historical legacies and international setting" (p. 95). Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka also collect considerable data about the distribution of voter and party elite's policy preferences and use this evidence to demonstrate a considerable congruence between the two; they infer the existence of fairly well-institutionalized parties from this overlap (pp. 305–6, 395–403).

While there is no reason to doubt Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka's finding about the programmatic congruence between voters and elites, the inference they draw from this with respect to party institutionalization is questionable. On closer analysis, this inference rests on questionable theoretical assumptions and weak empirical evidence, and their conclusion about party institutionalization is based on a theoretically flawed treatment of agency. While the authors pay considerable theoretical attention to political actors and their choices, their explanation of party development is ultimately functional; that is, they view history as efficiently leading parties' organizational choices to be driven by the functional requisites of winning votes and assuring stable legislative coalitions: "The passage of time affects the process of party formation. . . . Party elites and voters go through a sequence of reciprocal signaling. . . . Eventually they coordinate around particular patterns of linkage" (p. 96). Thus, for Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka, stable parties' formation is a foregone conclusion and parties' organizational instability becomes a transitional phenomena amounting to little more than theoretically irrelevant background noise.<sup>25</sup> Also, consistent with this functionalism, Kitschelt and his coauthors neither treat parties as collective actors nor analyze their internal decision making.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the empirical evidence weakly supports Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka's functional account of party institutionalization. Party monographs and political historians that focus on Central and Eastern Europe portray a political landscape full of fissions, mergers, and brand new start-up parties—all of which indicate a serious deficiency in the organizational loyalty of postcommunist politicians. These insights have been corroborated by recent and more

<sup>25</sup> This criticism also applies to their explanation of voters' and parties' programmatic orientations. Here too the theoretical sections emphasize the importance of actors and their choices, yet in their actual empirical analysis, structural factors and historical legacies—rather than historical efficiency—dominate to such an extent that actors' choices in effect are predetermined.

<sup>26</sup> They briefly discuss the internal organizational characteristics of programmatic and clientelistic parties. According to the authors (45), these organizational characteristics are so closely tied to these parties' programmatic orientations that they do not constitute a distinct dimension and thus never become an important focus of their analysis.

systematic cross-national studies of politicians' party affiliation choices, which have been and remain very low. The degree of organizational disloyalty has decreased only in the Czech Republic, while remaining continuously high in Russia, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia.<sup>27</sup> In short, there is insufficient support for Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka's claim of a continuous, linear decline of levels of organizational disloyalty. At best, there might be two different organizational equilibria emerging, such that the formation and institutionalization of parties are not uniquely shaped by functional—that is, cross-nationally uniform—requirements of electoral and legislative politics.

The uneven treatment of party formation in these six books reflects theoretical and methodological problems in the wider party literature. The next section will briefly examine these problems, since they constitute a key obstacle to achieving a fuller understanding of the role parties play in the consolidation of third-wave democratization in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

#### PARTY AFFILIATION STRATEGIES AND PARTY DEVELOPMENT

Whether, to what extent, and how parties are organized has a significant impact on transitional democratic consolidation as well as on the political representation of established democracies. Scott Mainwaring points out that “a weakly institutionalized [party] system is characterized by considerable instability in patterns of party competition, weak party roots in society, comparatively low legitimacy of parties and weak party organizations. Weakly institutionalized party systems function very differently from highly institutionalized ones, with important implications for democracy.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the underinstitutionalization of parties is by no means a phenomenon confined to postcommunist democracies; it is also found in other third-wave democratizations (especially in Latin America), in established democracies (such as Japan, Israel, Italy, or India), and in much of nineteenth-century European notable politics. The broad geographic and historical scope of this phenomenon strongly suggests that party underinstitutionalization is not a short-term phenomenon, but instead is likely to be a medium, and pos-

<sup>27</sup> Kreuzer and Vello Pettai, “Patterns of Political Instability: Affiliation Patterns of Politicians and Voters in Postcommunist Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38, no. 2 (2003); Goldie Shabad and Kazimierz Slomczynski, “Interparty Mobility among Political Elites in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” *Party Politics* 10, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>28</sup> Mainwaring (fn. 5), 4.

sibly long-term, element of certain national politics.<sup>29</sup> So, if party institutionalization is such an important issue, why is it receiving little, or at least uneven, scholarly attention?

Mainwaring attributes this lack of attention to the Western-centric provenance of existing party theories that take stable political parties as a given rather than as a phenomenon requiring explanation.<sup>30</sup> Another factor might be that studying the internal politics of parties imposes formidable obstacles for collecting data. Membership figures, governance practices, relationships with interest groups, mobilization, and distribution of resources are all key elements of party-internal politics, for which it is extremely difficult to gather systematic and cross-national data. The seemingly questionable payoffs of gathering such data and studying internal party politics for countries with weakly institutionalized parties amplifies this difficulty. Their organizational fluidity gives the impression that their internal decision making is random, patternless, and hence, theoretically untractable. Jakub Zielinski correctly notes that “the period of organizational [party] confusion is frequently perceived as a temporary phenomenon lacking any wider theoretical significance.”<sup>31</sup> While these methodological and theoretical obstacles help to explain scholars’ unsatisfactory treatment of party formation, it does not justify it. Methods and theories should not be ends dictating what we study; they should be means that require adjusting so that relevant questions can be analyzed. If the formation and institutionalization of parties is indeed an important and defining characteristic of many democracies, then it is crucial to reconsider the theoretical orthodoxies that stand in the way of analyzing and explaining this phenomenon. These and other books suggest one starting point for moving beyond the orthodoxy of parties as single-unitary or (at least) collective actors by pointing to the importance of individual politicians to organiza-

<sup>29</sup> It should be pointed out that underinstitutionalization is not the only problem associated with party development, since many scholars going back to Robert Michels have argued that parties also can restrict political representation by virtue of their overinstitutionalization. Thus, there seems to be a curvilinear relationship between levels of party institutionalization and political representation. Parties have to cross a minimal level of institutionalization before they can become channels of representation; beyond this threshold, however, party institutionalization can reach levels at which parties no longer are agents of popular expression but instead become agents of social control. On this, see Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary Citizens in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 14–19; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 397–448; and Andreas Schedler, “Under- and Overinstitutionalization: Some Ideal Typical Propositions Concerning New and Old Party Systems,” Working Paper, no. 213 (Notre Dame, Ind.: Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, 1995).

<sup>30</sup> Mainwaring (fn. 5), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Jakub Zielinski, “Translating Social Cleavages into Party Systems: The Significance of New Democracies,” *World Politics* 54 (January 2002).

tional affiliation strategies. As already indicated in this article, the primary obstacle to party institutionalization is politicians' organizational disloyalty; without continuity in party personnel, there is little chance that parties will develop stable governance structures, attract sizeable memberships, and develop durable brand names. Thus, understanding the incentives and disincentives for party loyalty should be the theoretical starting point for analyzing party formation. Furthermore, the calculus of party affiliation should be evaluated in comparison to the organizational alternatives available to individual politicians. Fortunately, these organizational alternatives are limited and take the six empirically tractable types of organizational (re-)affiliation strategies displayed in Figure 1.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 1 sketches the six possible organizational affiliation strategies (represented by the double-lined boxes I–VI) available to politicians along with the sequence of organizational choices (represented by the dotted-line boxes) that produce them. A first-time politician faces three initial affiliation options: running as an independent, teaming up with other novices to form a new party, or joining an already existing party. After this initial choice has been made, a politician who joined a party (be it a new or an established one) faces four additional organizational choices: staying put within the existing party, participating in a merger with another party, leaving the existing party on his own and hopping to another already existing party, or coordinating his departure with another party member to start a breakaway party.

While we do not have enough space here to elaborate on the particular payoffs of these affiliation strategies,<sup>33</sup> Figure 1 does offer three suggestions for the further study of party formation. First, the differentiation among different affiliation strategies makes systematic data gathering possible, since fusion, fission, party switching, and start-up are observable and quantifiable forms of behavior.<sup>34</sup> Second, such data gathering permits detection of possible macropatterns that result from individual politicians' micro(re-)affiliation choices. Observation of such

<sup>32</sup> Such organizational reaffiliation strategies are so rare in established democracies that they have received almost no attention. See Peter Mair, "The Electoral Payoffs of Fission and Fusion," *British Journal of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (1990).

<sup>33</sup> For a more detailed definition and discussion of these six affiliation strategies, see Kreuzer and Pettai (fn. 27), 75–76.

<sup>34</sup> For some first efforts in this direction, see Kreuzer and Pettai (fn. 27); Shabad and Slomczynski (fn. 27); Scott Desposato, "Party Switching in Brazil's 49th Chamber of Deputies" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 16, 1997); and Carol Mershon and William B. Heller, "Party Fluidity and Legislators' Vote Choices: The Italian Chamber of Deputies, 1996–2000" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 30–September 2, 2001).

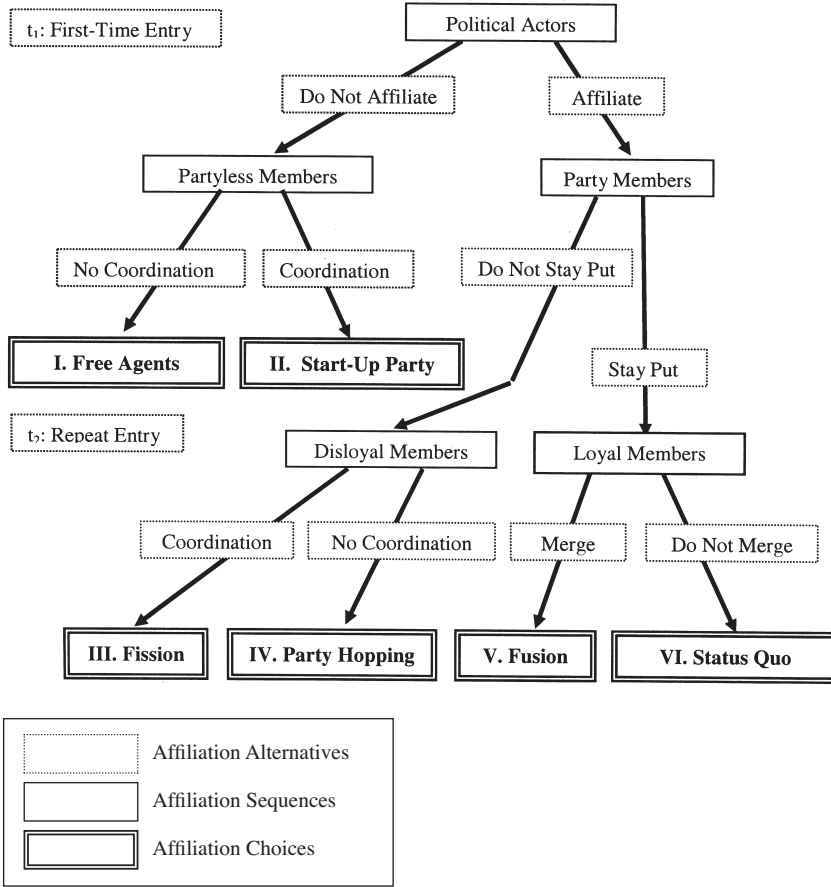


FIGURE 1  
TYPES OF PARTY AFFILIATION STRATEGIES

macropatterns is crucial, for it would indicate whether (re-)affiliation strategies are purely random or whether they reveal distinct, cross-national, and/or longitudinal patterns; such patterns, in turn, would provide valuable insight into whether and how parties form and institutionalize themselves.<sup>35</sup> Third, politicians' affiliation and reaffiliation with parties constitute choices that are amenable to systematic rational choice accounts about the costs and benefits of the various strategies and the contextual factors that determine the respective payoffs.<sup>36</sup> In short, this

<sup>35</sup> See Kreuzer and Pettai (fn. 27).

<sup>36</sup> Kreuzer and Pettai, "Party Switching: How Disloyal Politicians Structure Party Organization, Popular Representation and Political Change" (Manuscript, Villanova University, 2004).

taxonomy provides a valuable first step toward both opening up the existing black-box treatment of parties and studying one of their crucial internal processes without resorting to atheoretical, descriptive accounts.

#### LESSONS FOR STUDYING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

These six books clearly attest to the enormous benefits of cross-regional scholarship. While these works are all thoroughly grounded in European and American party literature, they avoid its mechanical application to postcommunist democracies. Instead, they thoughtfully adapt its theoretical premises to the contextual particularities of postcommunist democracies and, in the process, enrich it tremendously. As this article has pointed out, the two most important modifications have involved the importance of historical legacies and of party-internal dynamics in parties' development. The individual authors may vary in how effectively they grafted these two less commonly analyzed dimensions onto the existing literature, but ultimately they all share a creativity and courage to incorporate rather than exogenize them, as much of the existing literature does. In doing so, they indirectly address some of the criticisms leveled against the prevailing transition paradigm. Thomas Carothers has pointed out that studying political development through the transition lens gives rise to an overly linear path of development, one on which both the causes leading up to a transition and the processes shaping the subsequent consolidation have an excessively short time horizon.<sup>37</sup> These books offer a much more sophisticated lens for studying political development through which both its causes (for example, various historical legacies) and its effects (for example, party formation) are conceptualized as long-term processes. Thus, they offer what Paul Pierson called "long/long" explanations and avoid the "short/short" explanations that characterize much of the democratization literature.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, despite the complexity that history and party formation add to the analysis, such breadth has not translated into atheoretical, descriptive explanations. All of the books break with the widely held assumption that ontology and methodology align, that is, the more complex the former, the less rigorous the latter.<sup>39</sup> On this score, Grzymala-Busse is particularly successful because she combines politi-

<sup>37</sup> Carothers (fn. 6).

<sup>38</sup> Pierson (fn. 8).

<sup>39</sup> Peter Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics," in Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (fn. 3).

cal history with insights from historical sociology, survey data, and statistical analysis. Her study further suggests that such successful decoupling of ontological and methodological assumptions requires scholars to narrow the empirical focus from entire party systems to a particular set of parties. Such splitting would help fill the deficit of middle-range theories in the democratization literature, which still has a preference for lumping together many constituent parts of liberal democracy in sweeping macrotheories.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> On this point, see also Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Tóka, 1–3. The distinction between splitters and lumpers is owed to Jack Hexter, “On Historians: Reappraisals of Some of the Makers of Modern History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 241–42.