

SUMMARIES

Conflicts, Cleavages, and the New Party Systems in Eastern Europe

by Pietro Grilli di Cortona

Following the demise of Communist regimes in 1989, a lot of political parties reemerged in Eastern Europe and began to articulate their action in order to take part of the subsequent first parliamentary elections. When parties and party systems emerge out of a democratic transition which takes place in a vast area including many States, at least two crucial «classical» questions are at stake. A first question concerns the main cleavages and oppositions which favour and condition the formation of parties. A second connected question is whether and how the new party systems will change and evolve from the first (founding) democratic elections to the subsequent ones.

The essay aims at analysing and discussing the two questions. In this field Rokkan's theory occupies a particularly important place. With regards to the Central and Eastern European cases, the main question is whether new conflicts have emerged and to what extent they can represent the breeding ground for new parties and party systems.

In the transition processes from Communist regimes three main conflicts seem to prevail: 1) a conflict between democratic reformers and pro-Communist (or former Communist) conservatives has risen during the «round-table» negotiations, the formation of «umbrella organizations» and the more or less plebiscitarian national founding elections; 2) a cleavage between «anti-market» and «pro-market» groups (overlapping or replacing the former) is based upon the conflict between the social groups having resources and capabilities convertible into advantages in capitalist market society and those social groups whose socio-economic status is dramatically undercut by the economic transition; 3) a last group of cleavages concerns the national conflicts: nationalism has gained ground since 1990 and the role played by regionally based parties is increasing. Now nationalism represents potentially the most explosive cleavage.

The final section of the essay is devoted to explain the high level of instability showed by all Eastern European party systems after the first post-communist elections.

The Nationalization of Electoral Politics

by Daniele Caramani

This article revisits the theory of the nationalization of politics both in a conceptual and in a methodological perspective. Presenting and evaluating this theory through a critical analysis of the major works, this article focuses on the analytical utility and the theoretical interest of such a re-examination, and provides a new conceptual and operational definition of this political phenomenon.

The concept of nationalization is discussed in three electoral dimensions which permit its operationalization. The first dimension considers nationalization as a convergence of political parties' regional levels of electoral support; that is, as a process of territorial homogenization of voting behavior. The second dimension refers to an increasing uniformity of voting response from the regions to political forces, which means a one-directional swing between two elections. The third dimension sees nationalization as an electoral response given to national political forces (parties, candidates and issues) rather than to regional and/or local ones. Combining these three dimensions the article provides a typology of the different forms of nationalization.

This political phenomenon is explained by considering the reduction of territoriality of political cleavages as a major cause. In a comparative and historical perspective, elements of social integration and partisan competition are introduced in order to formulate several testable hypotheses concerning the variations of the levels of nationalization. In particular, this article considers the social and political factors able to explain temporal variations (among historical periods), systemic variations (which means variations between Western European countries), and partisan variations (among types of political parties).

The New Electoral Law in Parliament

by Adriano Pappalardo

The article focuses on the legislative process that brought about the 1993 Italian electoral reform. The findings show that the mixed system finally chosen was the result of external pressures (the referendum that modified the proportional law for the Senate), and of tacti-

cal and strategic calculations by the two main parties. So, the basic choice in favour of a one-ballot system, although embodied in the referendum, was also a consequence of diverging interests among the supporters of the two-ballots alternative, coupled with the PDS uncertainty and lack of clarity about its own purposes. Another key aspect, the weight of the proportional component of the mixed system, was strictly related to the one or two-ballots dilemma, that effectively pushed towards a fragmentation potential higher than originally divided, especially by the Christian Democrats. Here too, anyway, the biggest loser was the PDS, whose behaviour was often misplaced and never really convincing and convinced.

Approval Voting: Two Ballots in One

by Roberto D'Alimonte

The starting point of this paper is the outcome of the recent Italian elections of March 27-28, the first to be held in Italy with a mixed electoral system, in part plurality and in part PR. Moving from the observation that a significant number of candidates have been elected with vote percentages well below the majority threshold, the author argues whether the plurality system is the best system for choosing majority candidates, defined in terms of the Condorcet criterion. The search for an alternative leads the author to analyze the merits and demerits of approval voting (AV). The conclusion is that this innovative electoral system has several advantages (particularly vis a vis the plurality system), but it has also one serious limit due to the condition that individual preferences have to be «dichotomous» for the system to perform best. The author argues that, if this condition is met, then AV really is equivalent to the second round of a double ballot majority system with runoff, where the choice is between two sets of candidates, the good and the bad, instead of two candidates. It is suggested that the «ideal» system could be a double ballot one where the rule for the first ballot be absolute majority and the rule for the second be approval voting.

Does Center Equal Middle? Towards A Conceptual Delineation

by Reuven Y. Hazan

The concept of center parties has been stretched so far that it can no longer serve as a defining feature. The multiplication of center parties, and the migration of other parties towards the center, has left the

academic literature without the proper methodological tools to identify, define, and classify and increasing amount of the parties in most party systems today. The author proposes a delineation of the concept, divorcing between ideological center parties and spatial middle parties. Related terms such as center label parties, median parties and pivotal parties are addressed in presenting a new conceptualization and classification of the center and center parties. Examples of each type are presented based on a discussion of the post-war Italian party system.