INTRODUCTION: DEMOCRACY AND PARTY COMPETITION

The collapse of communism across Eastern Europe was one of the final manifestations of a worldwide spread of democratization over a twenty-year period that began with Southern Europe in 1974, then continued in Latin America in the 1980s and subsequently moved on to Eastern Asia in the late 1980s and 1990s. Political scientists devoted much effort to account for the timing and modalities of political-regime change and the structural conditions and dynamic processes that made possible this "Third Wave" of democratization (Huntington 1991). But as we approach the turn of the century, we have only the most sketchy understanding of the *practice of democratic competition, representation, and policy making* in these new democracies. Political scientists have delivered few theoretically incisive comparative analyses of the way the new democracies actually work.

Much of the political science discourse is still mesmerized by an almost exclusive concern with the "survival" or "consolidation" of basic democratic regime parameters in Third Wave democracies, such as civil liberties, free elections, and legal-bureaucratic predictability. Contributors to this debate seek to specify the minimal conditions that make democratic rules of the game persist over time (cf. Linz and Stepan 1996: 7–37). But there may be no one set of baseline features that keeps democracy alive. Moreover, the focus on holistic questions of democratic consolidation has diverted attention from the specific mechanisms of electoral competition and legislative representation as well as the modes of interest intermediation in the policy-making process, all of which contribute to breathing life into the democratic framework. The literature is full of general talk about civil society, political society, and the rule of law, but mostly devoid of concrete comparative analyses of democratic processes. In the final analysis, whether democracy becomes the "only game in town" depends on the *quality of democratic interactions and policy processes* the consequences of which affect the legitimacy of democracy in the eyes of citizens and political elites alike. Thus it may be

impossible to say much about the holistic problem of "consolidation" without a close analysis of the conduct of political actors – parties, interest groups, and social movements – inside and outside the institutionalized arenas of democratic decision making.[1]

The debate on the role of presidentialism or parliamentarism for the survival of democracy vividly illustrates the consequences of a holistic approach to the problem of regime consolidation that disregards a close study of democratic processes.[2] Contributors typically speculate about the implications of institutional design for democratic survival in a highly generalized fashion without delving into the practice of democratic competition and legislative decision making in which the impact of alternative institutional arrangements on policy outputs, such as economic reform, and ultimately on the public perception of the legitimacy of the democratic order would surface. The debate may establish correlations between executive-legislative institutional designs and the durability of democracy, but it yields little insight into the mechanisms of how and why democracies reproduce themselves.

One central and indispensable aspect of democratic practice is electoral competition for legislative office and the associated formation of political parties. Given the holistic predisposition of much research on new democracies, the comparative analysis of parties and party systems in Third Wave polities is underdeveloped. There are case studies of individual parties and descriptions of party systems, but we cannot think of many theoretically sophisticated and empirically comparative studies that would explain alternative modes of party competition in the electoral arena and party strategy in legislative and executive settings within any sub-set of the new democracies. This generalization applies not only to the post-communist and East Asian democracies emerging late in the Third Wave of democratization, but even to Latin American polities where democratic process features, including the study of political parties, have been the object of surprisingly little comparative research.[3] To our knowledge, no one has attempted in a systematic, comparative, and empirically grounded fashion to analyze the linkage mechanisms between citizens and party elites in these countries or the alignments, if any, that divide parties and their constituencies. In the

[1]This, we take it, is an interpretation of O'Donnell's (1996) basic complaint about the "consolidation" literature. O'Donnell is interested in the quality of democratic procedures, what he calls the difference between "universalistic" and "particularistic" democratic practices, not just the tenacity of democracies to persist.

[2]We are particularly thinking of the contributions edited by Lijphart (1992) and Linz and Valenzuela (1994). Shugart and Carey (1992) and Mainwaring and Shugart (1997) constitute steps forward in analytical sophistication.

[3]Mainwaring and Scully's (1995) edited volume comes closest to our concerns because it makes a concerted effort to map levels of party system institutionalization. But this is only a beginning because no effort is made to explain the patterns of variance identified in this volume, or to link them to other properties of party competition.

present book, we make a start in this direction for a small number of Third Wave democracies. Our empirical reference cases are four post-communist East Central European democracies, but our agenda is to contribute to research on the practices of party competition, representation, and policy making in new post-communist polities and other democracies more generally. With this objective in mind, we develop theoretical arguments, explore empirical research procedures, and pursue modes of data analysis we hope to be useful to students of democratic polities not only in the post-communist region, but also in Latin America, East Asia, or even advanced industrial democracies.

Research on advanced industrial democracies, of course, has analyzed practices of interest articulation, aggregation, and collective decision making for decades. On the one hand, such research can inspire comparativists who turn to new democracies at the end of the twentieth century. On the other, comparativists of advanced industrial democracies have at times built on unquestioned theoretical assumptions that betray the historical idiosyncrasies of the countries they study. In this regard, research on the procedural quality of democracy in new polities may enable us to ask new questions and explore novel research strategies that may even feed back on the study of advanced industrial democracies.

Three tasks appear to us particularly important to characterize the quality of democratic procedures in order to promote a useful dialogue between students of "old" and "new" democracies. First, students of democracy must identify critical dimensions and variations in the modes of interest articulation and aggregation through parties, associations, and movements within and across democratic polities. This task is essentially descriptive, but is fruitful only if its empirical categories are already guided by theoretical interests that drive the second and the third task to explain democratic process features and to employ such features to account for the outputs and outcomes of the democratic decision-making process. Turning backward, diversity in modes of interest intermediation and collective decision making may be accounted for in terms of (1) the formal rules of the democratic games, as enshrined in constitutions and statutory law, and (2) the resource endowments and interest alignments of collective actors in light of historical pathways that have produced such constellations.

Our book attempts to shed light on a particular slice of political reality related to the first and second tasks, accounting for the formation and describing the dynamics of party systems in post-communist East Central Europe. In this introduction, we wish to argue that the study of party systems is critically important in the comparative analysis of democratic polities. We then sketch two explanatory strategies to account for the emergence of democratic process features and argue that they are actually complementary rather than competing, as is quite commonly believed in the literature on democratization. This introduction outlines themes and strategies of research only. We develop the concepts that characterize different democratic procedures and the specific theoretical propositions that inform our investigation of post-communist party system formation in the first two chapters of this study.

THE QUALITY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

Normative democratic theory has always emphasized that the "rule of the people" lends itself to different interpretations and practices. Thus, theorists have distinguished classical and realist democracy (Schumpeter 1946), liberal and populist democracy (Riker 1982), representative, participatory, and deliberative democracy (Fishkin 1991), pluralist and corporatist democracy (Schmitter 1974), and a host of other "democracies with adjectives" (Collier and Levitsky 1997; Held 1987). It is much harder, however, to relate such abstract normative models to the empirical realities of democratic practice, as it results from the interaction of individual politicians and collective actors (movements, interest groups, parties) inside and outside a variety of institutional arenas (electoral contests, legislatures, cabinets, administrative agencies, courts).

At the most general level, democratic political processes vary with the *scope* of societal interests they permit to mobilize and gain access to representation and participation within procedures of collective political decision making, the *effectiveness* of such processes to yield results that affect people's life chances through binding policies or other techniques of allocating costs and benefits among societal constituencies, and the *volatility* of such processes and outcomes over time. In the past thirty years, perhaps the most ambitious effort to develop an empirically grounded typology of democratic polities based on distinct democratic process types is Lijphart's (1984) work on majoritarian and consensual democracies. We introduce his ideas here not to give them wholesale endorsement, but to highlight the critical significance Lijphart attributes to parties and party systems, our main subject of study in East Central Europe, in his analysis of democratic processes.

In fact, a distinction between democracies based on the number of parties and the number of dimensions of political alignment on which parties place themselves constitutes the core of Lijphart's uni-dimensional typology of democratic polities. These features, in turn, are partially correlated with institutional arrangements, such as electoral rules. The larger the number of parties and alignments in a polity, the broader tends to be the scope of representation and fewer interests may be excluded from access to the political arena. With an increasing number of actors and policy dimensions, however, efforts to build viable majorities and to agree on durable, binding policy decisions become more complicated. As a result, the effectiveness of policy making may decline, provided the players do not agree on techniques of consensus building that reduce transaction costs and give durability to policy compacts, such as oversized winning coalitions and dense networks of legislative bargaining facilitated by weak executive dominance. While consensual democracies excel in terms of inclusiveness, at the opposite end of the spectrum majoritarian democracies shine in terms of effectiveness. Majoritarian democracies include few parties and issue dimensions that divide them. They reduce the scope of political representation, but therefore are more likely to provide effective governance based on single-party majorities and an assertive

executive that employs its legislative following to ratify executive policy choices. Whereas majoritarian democracies thus put a premium on effectiveness, they give less weight to inclusiveness and possibly to the stability of policy making.

Lijphart's typology squeezes many attributes of the democratic process into the single consensus-majoritarian dimension. The mobilization and conduct of interest groups is closely tied to the more consensual or competitive character of the polity (Lijphart and Crepaz 1991). Furthermore, legislative-executive designs, as indicated by the status and prerogatives of presidents in the government executive, relate to the consensual-majoritarian process dimension (Lijphart 1994b). Although Lijphart may go too far in claiming strong empirical associations of various democratic process attributes on a single dimension, we agree with the *central role he attributes to political parties and party systems for the quality of democratic procedures in different polities.* The anchor of the democratic polity is its representative format, constituted by parties as agents of interest intermediation that play in a variety of institutional arenas. In this spirit, our study of the nature of democratic processes in East Central Europe focuses on the emerging post-communist party systems to explore the citizen-party linkages they articulate and the alignments that transpire in the policy process.

An emphasis on political parties is not uncontroversial in the study of contemporary democracies. Theorists of interest group corporatism or of direct democratic plebiscitarianism have envisioned democratic procedures *without or with only a marginal involvement of political parties* in the process of interest intermediation. But neither corporatist nor plebiscitarian democratic ideas have yielded normatively coherent institutional design blueprints that are consistent with the essential baseline attribute of democracy, the equality of all competent citizens in the democratic process at least with regard to one aspect, the vote for legislative representatives in free and fair elections. Parties as associations of ambitious politicians who band together in the pursuit of elected office, by contrast, take as their starting point the electoral competition in territorially defined constituencies where each citizen enjoys the same weight in the choice among candidates. A more important deficiency of corporatist and plebiscitarian theories is their inability to identify empirical examples in complex societies, where corporatist or plebiscitarian techniques have displaced political parties. It may be ironic that corporatist interest intermediation has been most prominent in those polities, where organizationally powerful and ideologically coherent parties have a strong presence and delegate certain policy subjects to carefully constrained bargaining arenas among organized interests. Parties and legislatures here still determine the framework under the shadow of which corporatist bargaining takes place. In a similar vein, plebiscitarian decision procedures typically involve a legislative framework and an oversight process that determines when plebiscitarian procedures override other decision modes. Empirically, claims that parties and interest groups are involved in a zero-sum game to dominate the democratic policy process are ill-conceived. The presence of powerful political

parties in the electoral arena may yield a positive-sum game in which parties, interest groups, and sometimes even social movements alike jointly reach higher levels of mobilization and influence in the policy process.

Because open fair elections are central for the functioning of democratic interest intermediation, our study of post-communist polities concentrates on the role of parties and their linkages to citizens. More specifically, we examine the extent to which programmatic appeals shape the bond between citizens and voters, the nature of alignments among parties in the competitive party system, the patterns of representation that characterize each party system, and the executive governance structures that result from them. In the comparative literature on advanced industrial democracies, some of these features have received a great deal of attention, but others relatively little. Conversely, an important aspect of party democracy in that literature plays only a very subordinate role in our own study, the number of parties in the democratic system and the resulting competitive strategies. Let us comment on each of these democratic process features, as they relate to the study of recently founded democracies.

First, much of the comparative literature on advanced industrial democracies takes the presence of parties and their linkages to citizens so much for granted that it does not systematically examine the *full scope of basic techniques parties may employ to appeal to voters and to build durable linkages to electoral constituencies.* In stylized fashion, the two most common ways political scientists have described solutions to the problem of citizen-party linkage in Western democracies may be labeled the behavioral "Michigan" model and the rational choice "Rochester" model. According to the Michigan model, electoral preferences rest primarily on citizens' affective identification with a party and unthinking habitual support for that party, whereas the Rochester model emphasizes rational deliberation by voters who compare their own ideal policy preferences with those of parties' policy records and advertised agendas. In the Rochester model, party identification reflects the sunk costs of past deliberations about the proximity of voters' and parties' programmatic positions.

In new democracies, affective and habitual party identification often is not an option due to the recent emergence of the party alternatives. Moreover, rational voting may be impaired where parties do not present voters identifiable program alternatives. It is therefore our first task to analyze the extent to which programmatic appeals and constituency linkages characterize new party systems and to explore alternative linkage techniques to which political entrepreneurs may resort. These may involve the deployment of charismatic leadership or of direct clientelist exchanges in which parties buy votes and financial backing for material advantages politicians disburse to their supporters after the election.

Consistent with much of the Western party system research, Lijphart (1984) *assumes* that parties situate themselves on programmatic issue dimensions or alignments, a belief shared by comparative-historical students of party divides (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) as much as formal theorists in the rational choice framework (e.g., Downs 1957). But in new Third Wave democracies, the quality

of democratic processes may vary precisely because parties and entire party systems may violate the presumption of programmatic competition. To our knowledge, the literature on alternative linkage strategies and on the relevance of cohesive programmatic appeals for partisan politics is quite fragmentary and has yielded little systematic cross-national research. Given the practices of party competition in the United States, political scientists focusing on American democracy have devoted more attention to the variable programmatic coherence of parties than comparativists working on other advanced industrial democracies. Although the party systems of countries such as Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Japan suggest that parties employ clientelist linkages to instill voter loyalty in addition to or as partial substitute for programmatically cohesive appeals, the incidence of such practices has rarely found attention in systematic comparative treatments.[4] Particularly with regard to new Third Wave democracies, there is virtually no comparative research that would empirically determine party politicians' deployment of programmatic, clientelist, or charismatic linkage strategies, let alone systematic efforts to account for differences in linkage strategies across parties and countries.

Second, we analyze the nature of the programmatic divisions that emerge where programmatic appeals play an important role. Research pre-occupied with Western democracies, including that of Lijphart, has put considerable emphasis on the *content of political divides and competitive dimensions, conceived in terms of the interests and preferences of electoral constituencies* along which parties distinguish their positions, once they have decided to make partisan appeals primarily on programmatic grounds. What counts for the quality of democratic procedures is the nature of the stakes in political divides, the number of such divides, the relationship among such divides (crosscutting or reinforcing?) and the position of parties relative to each other on these divides (spread over the entire range of policy options or clustering around "centrist" appeals?). In our study, we analyze the emerging alignments both from the perspective of political elites who situate their own parties and their competitors in a system of alignments, as well as that of voters who perceive party alternatives through the lens of their personal preferences.

By comparing the social construction of party alignments from the perspectives of both voters and politicians, we already move to our third task, the study of *relations of representation* between partisan electorates and their legislators in the new democratic polities. While students of established Western party democracies have devoted some energies to the analysis of relations of representation in programmatically oriented party systems (e.g., Converse and Pierce 1986), surprisingly few comparative empirical studies have addressed the variability of relations of representation and accountability in democratic polities. This is all the more puzzling in light of the prominence questions of representation have for

[4]A partial exception is Katz (1980) who emphasizes the role of the electoral system in sustaining such practices.

normative democratic theory as well as for the empirical study of the legitimation of democratic political regimes.

Students of Western democracy often hypothesize a growing decoupling of politicians' and voters' preferences but rarely study this relationship empirically. Even more so, comparativists who examine Third Wave democracies often complain that parties do not represent their electoral constituencies, but this assertion is hardly ever empirically substantiated. The whole notion of "delegative democracy" (O'Donnell 1993) turns on the claim that political leaders can essentially dissociate themselves from their constituencies once in elected office and pursue private agendas without being held back by mechanisms instilling responsiveness and accountability to the democratic sovereign. Because of the importance of relations of representation for new democracies, we devote an entire chapter to this subject. In an effort to go beyond the existing literature, we distinguish specific modes of representation and theorize about their occurrence in the presence of different configurations of party competition.

The fourth and final democratic process feature we analyze in our study of post-communist East Central European polities moves the attention from "parties in the electorate" and parties as strategic actors in the electoral arena to the realm of legislative and executive politics. With regard to advanced industrial democracies, studies of the process of crafting majorities in legislatures and executives have proliferated, as evidenced by a large literature on coalition politics, but a detailed comparative exploration of coalition politics and majority formation in new Third Wave democracies is still lacking. In addition to the problem that students of non-Western democracies still have few data points to analyze coalition politics, such investigations may in some instances be hampered by the assumption of much Western coalition theory that parties are policy-seeking collective actors who appeal to voters based on rather unambiguous programmatic stances in the electoral arena and then employ these positions in the legislative arena to craft coalitions among competitors with overlapping, compatible preference schedules. Even in post-authoritarian democracies where programmatic appeals constitute a basic linkage strategy of parties to voters, the experience and recollection of suffering under the preceding non-democratic regime may invalidate the common hypothesis that parties with similar policy programs can enter coalition arrangements, if there is a deep regime divide between parties that overrules their policy commitments. The final substantive chapter of our study therefore explores the extent to which policy considerations shape the cooperation among parties in post-communist democracies as compared with the memories of the authoritarian experience and the sentiments that surround them.

As indicated earlier, we do not analyze the party system formats of new post-communist democracies, although in existing Western party system research *party system fragmentation* has played an important role. It appears both as an independent variable to predict parties' programmatic appeals in the electoral arena (Do such appeals converge on a "centrist" range or diverge sharply into polar opposites?) and the ease of coalition building in the legislative and executive arena as

well as a dependent variable accounted for in terms of electoral laws and societal cleavage dimensions. Our decision not to focus on party system fragmentation results from the difficulty of determining the number of parties in many new democracies in a theoretically meaningful fashion. Where parties are "weak" (Sartori 1986) in terms of building cohesive programmatic commitments and internal organizational structures, they may not be the effective locus of bargaining in the legislative arena or of campaigning in the election arena. Instead, the meaningful unit of analysis may be situated *below the party level* in the various currents and factions subsumed under a single partisan label. Conversely, where several parties have similar programmatic appeals and thus are located in the same sector of a political alignment system, the relevant unit of analysis may be "blocs" of parties *above the individual party level* in the same political sector. Whether or not the party system format thus measures a significant attribute of a polity varies within democratic process features. If party systems employ other linkage techniques than programmatic appeals, such as clientelist or charismatic appeals, knowing the party system format may be even less informative for a study of democratic decision-making techniques and policy outputs.

By focusing on four important process features of party democracy, our book is meant to contribute more than merely a close analysis of party system formation in four East Central European countries less than half a decade away from their founding elections. Instead, we hope to provide an exemplary model for the study of party systems in Third Wave democracies both with regard to the theoretical propositions we explore as well as our empirical techniques of data collection and analysis that may serve as a positive or negative reference for future research on democratic party systems not only in post-communist polities but also in other regions of the world.

The four countries we have chosen for our empirical comparison quickly developed "consolidated" democratic regimes in the early 1990s in the minimalist sense that just about all relevant political actors and most citizens began to treat the rules of multi-party competition, together with the basic civil and political rights, as the "only game in town." Non-democratic alternatives have managed to excite only political fringe groups. Nevertheless, these four post-communist democracies permit us to explore the procedural qualities of democracy because they exhibit striking contrasts in the ways parties appeal to voters, represent electoral constituencies, and compete or collaborate with their rivals. Even in a comparison among post-communist democracies, the over-riding impression often is *divergence* more than *convergence* of democratic processes.

ACCOUNTING FOR DIVERGING DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

Democratic procedures vary across countries and give rise to at least two questions of interest to students of comparative politics: first, how different democratic

processes have come into existence and, second, how democratic procedures shape public policies and more generally affect the allocation and distribution of life chances among electoral constituencies. Ultimately, the second, forward-looking causal analysis of the nexus between democratic process and policy outputs and outcomes, particularly as they involve the political economies of the new democracies, may pose the most exciting challenges for comparativists. But this nexus is hard to trace in Third Wave democracies that have often existed for little more than a decade. Here it is methodologically difficult to attribute policy performance to the current procedures of democratic decision making without taking into account the complex interactions between remnants of the old authoritarian system that affect the resources of players and their power configuration and the evolving new political forces in the democratic polity. Policy outputs and outcomes may be as much a consequence of the old as well as the new polities. Democratic political institutions and power relations often are, to a considerable extent, still *endogenous* to the power constellations that existed when the demise of the old regimes occurred and the new democracies came into being. Short of fundamental social revolutions, these power relations usually evolve gradually in the new democracies. Because past and present are often so closely intertwined, statistical efforts to isolate the independent effect of current regime type on economic performance have encountered formidable estimation problems and yield contradictory results.[5]

Because of the linkages between non-democratic regimes and new democracies, a backward-looking causal mode of analysis that examines the conditions under which particular process features of democratic competition, interest representation, and policy making "lock in" is therefore a more tractable and indispensable analytical step that must precede studies of policy outputs and outcomes. Even though forward-looking causal analysis of the linkage between democratic processes and policy outputs and outcomes in the spirit of comparative political economy may be an ultimate objective of comparative analysis, one must not put the cart before the horse. A firm grasp of players and processes in new democracies is an essential pre-condition for the subsequent analysis of democratic performance. A backward-looking causal analysis of democratic processes may eventually help students of political economic performance in new democracies to distinguish between the "legacies" of pre-democratic power relations and the consequences of the new democratic rules of the game and the emerging power relations among strategic actors that can no longer be traced back to pre-democratic origins.

Comparativists whose objective is to explain democratic process features such

[5]In addition to the extremely crude characterization of alternative regime types and the lack of a specification of interaction effects between old and new regimes, results of such studies suffer from problems of statistical model specification, variable sampling strategies, and the selection and operationalization of key theoretical and control variables (cf. Przeworski and Limongi 1993; Feng 1997; Leblang 1997).