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Democracy and its Citizens: Patterns of Political Change

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Author

Dalton, Russell J.

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CSD Center for the Study of Democracy

An Organized Research Unit
University of California, Irvine
www.democ.uci.edu

During this century there have been two waves of democratic expansion that have included dramatic periods of theoretical and empirical development in the social sciences.* The first occurred after the turn of the century, when Woodrow Wilson, Harold Gosnell, Walter Lippmann, and others reexamined the nature of politics in modern mass democracies. The second period followed the Second World War. It attempted to identify the requisites for stable and successful democracy and the factors that undermined democracy in interwar Europe. This period included scholars such as Barrington Moore, Hannah Arendt, Gabriel Almond, Raymond Aron, and Seymour Martin Lipset.

We are now living through a third period of democratic ferment that is producing a dramatic surge of academic research on the themes of democratization and democratic politics. The political systems of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced an amazing process of regime change. Popular pressures have moved ahead the democratization process in East Asia, ranging from the people power movement in the Philippines to the democratic reforms in South Korea and Taiwan. A wave of democratic elections has swept across Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s. These democratic transitions have created new freedoms for these publics, and new theoretical and political questions for social scientists. For the first time we are witnessing a transition from communism to democracy, and the nature and destination of this transition is unclear. Similarly, the expansion of democracy to societies rooted in non-Western traditions raises questions about the popular base of democracy in these societies.

As these democratic transitions are occurring, new challenges to the democratic process have arisen within established democracies such as the United States and Western Europe. Most advanced industrialized nations face problems of a changing economic structure, new forces of cultural change, and a new relationship between the citizenry and the government. Cultural diversity and ethnic fragmentation are now common problems for European states in the East and West. The political demands presented by environmentalists, the women's movement and other citizen groups are affecting nearly all advanced industrial societies. New and expanded patterns of political participation are common phenomena in these nations. Equally common are questions about the changing nature of electoral behavior and electoral choice in advanced industrial democracies. Everywhere, it seems, new questions about the nature of democracy are developing.

It is too soon to tell whether this period of political change will yield the type of theoretical and empirical advances that accompanied the two previous periods. Certainly our scientific tools are more sophisticated than in earlier periods, and our knowledge about societies and politics is much greater. These new events provide distinctive opportunities to test our theories, expand the boundaries of knowledge, and develop new theories. We normally observe political systems in a state of equilibrium, when stability and incremental change dominate our findings. Now we have opportunities to examine questions of fundamental change and

adaptation that often go to the heart of our theoretical interests, but which we can seldom observe directly.

The task of this essay is to review some recent major research advances in comparative political behavior. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive review of the field in a few pages (see Dalton and Wattenberg, 1993; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Kaase and Newton, 1995). Instead, we focus on a few major areas of research. I chose these areas for two reasons. First, I believe that these areas have made significant scientific advances in recent years. Second, although these examples are largely drawn from research on advanced industrial societies, they also are relevant to the process of transition for emerging democracies. These are areas where we can expand our present knowledge in the context of this global wave of democratization.

Political Culture and Democratization

One of the most powerful social science concepts to emerge from the previous wave of democratization studies was the concept of political culture. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's (1963) seminal study, The Civic Culture, contended that the institutions and patterns of action in a political system must be congruent with the political culture of the nation. Culturalist studies have been especially important in the study of democratization, as analysts tried to identify the cultural requisites of democracy (Almond and Verba, 1963, 1980; Almond, 1996; Verba, 1965; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt, 1981; McDonough et al. 1995; Weil, 1989).

Three kinds of culturalist studies are most visible in the democracy literature. The first is the "civic culture" theory of Almond and Verba. Drawing upon evidence from five democratic societies, they held that a nation's political culture exerted an independent influence on social and political behavior. Culture sets norms for behavior that members of society acknowledge and generally follow, even if they personally do not share these norms. This is by far the most influential research in this field; work done along its lines is voluminous and is not limited to democratic systems (see the reviews in Almond and Verba, 1980). The second approach is the "authority-culture" theory (Eckstein, 1966). Eckstein's work is especially relevant to present concerns because it discusses the dynamic aspects of culture and culture's role in processes of political change (Eckstein, 1988, 1990, 1996). Aaron Wildavsky developed a third distinct version of political culture analysis (Wildavsky, 1987). Wildavsky drew upon Mary Douglas' grid-group approach to develop a typology of cultures based on four distinct life styles. He based these types on social relations and the values they exemplified.

Despite the heuristic and interpretive power of the concept of political culture, some scholars raised questions about the precision and predictive power of the concept (Elkins and Simeon, 1979; Laitin, 1995); other scholars of democratization questioned whether culture played any role (e.g., DiPalma, 1990; Schmitter et al., 1986). Max Kaase (1983) penned the saying that measuring political culture is like "trying to nail jello to the wall." That is, the concept lacked precision and often became a subjective, stereotypic description of a nation rather than an empirically measurable concept. Some analysts saw political culture in virtually everything touching political life, others viewed it merely as a residual category that explained what remained unexplainable by other means. Even more problematic was the uneven evidence of culture's causal effect.¹ Political culture studies often were based on a public opinion survey of a single nation. In such a research design it was difficult to isolate the role of culture in influencing national patterns of political behavior.

Even before the current wave of democratic transitions, political culture studies were enjoying a revival of academic interest. Drawing upon the 1981 World Values Study, Ronald Inglehart presented new evidence on the congruence between broad political attitudes and democratic stability for 22 nations (Inglehart, 1990, ch. 1). ² Robert Putnam's (1993) research on the development of regional governments in Italy provided even more impressive testimony in support of cultural theory (also see Putnam, 1973). Putnam used an imaginative array of measures to compare the performance of regional governments in Italy. He found that the cultural traditions of a region--roughly contrasting the cooperative political style of the North to the more hierarchic tradition of the South--were the most potent predictor of the performance of their respective governments. Even more telling, Putnam showed that cultural factors were more influential than economic differences between regions, and that cultural patterns reflected historical patterns of civic association. Putnam's very creative and systematic study of cultural influences has produced a general renaissance in cultural studies (also see Putnam, 1995; Inglehart, forthcoming; Tarrow, 1996; Reisinger, 1995).

The recent democratization wave renews the importance of questions about the congruence between culture and the political system, and raises a new set of research questions for political culture research. Normally, political institutions and the basic principles of a regime are constant; thus it is difficult to study the interaction between institutional and cultural change. However, the recent shifts in regime form in many nations create new opportunities to study the congruence between cultural and institutional choices. To what extent did political change in Eastern Europe arise from the public's dissatisfactions with the old regimes? To what extent can the prospects for democracy in this region be judged by their public's support for democratic politics? For instance, we can examine how citizens evaluate different political systems based on real experience, thus testing the link between political norms and institutional choices in a way that is generally not possible. More generally, current events revive past debates on the continuity of culture and the ways in which cultural norms can be transformed (Almond and Verba, 1980). Eckstein's research also suggests that political culture should be studied as an extension of other patterns of social relations and the general levels of "civic inclusion" in a society (Eckstein, 1988, 1990, 1996). The depth and breadth of cultural norms compatible with democracy may be important factors in explaining the course of the political transitions now occurring worldwide.

Almost as soon as the Berlin Wall fell, survey researchers were moving eastward. We are quickly assembling a wealth of findings on the political attitudes of Russians and East Europeans, and this includes many studies of political culture. For instance, several groups of researchers have found surprisingly high levels of support for basic democratic principles in the former Soviet Union (Miller et al., 1993; Gibson et al., 1992; Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992). Furthermore, research from other Eastern European nations paints a roughly similar picture of broad public approval of democratic norms and procedures (Mishler and Rose, 1996; Dalton, 1994b; Weil, 1993).³ Although one must worry about the depth of these feelings, whether they reflect enduring cultural norms or the temporary response to traumatic political events, the publics in most post-Communist states began their experience with democracy by espousing substantial support for democratic principles. Boris Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 Russian presidential elections, following several years of difficult social conditions and with a strong challenge from the communists, is a testament of how Russian values differ from our images of the Soviet Union. Rather than the apathy or hostility that greeted democracy after transitions

from right-wing authoritarian states, the cultural legacy of communism in Eastern Europe appears to be much different.

An equally rich series of studies is emerging for East Asia. Doh Shin and his colleagues are assembling an impressive mass of survey evidence on democratic attitudes in South Korea (Shin et al., 1989; Shin and Chey, 1993). Despite the government's hesitant support for democracy, the cultural foundations of democracy appear extensive. There is similar research on Taiwan, where the transition to democracy has been accompanied by supportive attitudes among the public (Chu, 1992). Perhaps the most exciting evidence comes from studies of the People's Republic of China. Even in this hostile environment, Andrew Nathan and Tianjian Shi find that the pre-Tiananmen Chinese public espoused surprising support for an array of democratic principles (Nathan and Shi, 1993). One might question whether these opinions are sufficiently ingrained to constitute an enduring political culture, but even these endorsements of democratic norms are a positive sign about the prospects for democracy.

In summary, social science has made great progress in the last ten years in developing the empirical evidence supporting the cultural congruence thesis, and in collecting new evidence of citizen beliefs in the emerging democracies. Yet, these empirical successes have not yet been balanced by the type of theoretical innovation and creativity that marked the two previous democratization waves. Political scientists should do more than just collect new data on old questions of survey research--though replication is an important and valuable element of science. To move the field ahead, now is the time to ask additional questions. For instance, is there but one "civic culture" that is congruent with the working of a democratic system. Experience would suggest that there are a variety of "democratic" cultures, as well as ways to define culture, which require mapping and further study (Flanagan, 1978; Seligson and Booth, 1993; Almond and Verba, 1980). Equally important, our conceptualization of the elements of a political culture, and their interrelationships, has made relatively little progress since The Civic Culture study.

More generally, much of the new wave of empirical research in democratizing nations does not expand the theoretical bounds of political culture research. Tests of the contrasting models of Almond/Verba, Eckstein, and Wildavsky should find a rich medium in these new political experiences, and one should expect that new theoretical frameworks will emerge from these studies. Equally important, because the world is in flux, we now can examine cultural theory as a predictive tool. We can examine how the congruence between culture and institutions develops, because many nations are in the process of political transition (see, for example, McDonough et al. 1995; Rose and Mishler, 1994; Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Rohrschneider, 1996). Attempts to test theories of cultural change, or theories on the non-political origins of political culture are fertile research fields during this unusual period of political change. There are many other questions that involve the creation of cultural norms and political identities, and the overlap between personal preferences and perceived social norms. There has been progress, but not the frontal assault on our theorizing about the world that came from earlier democratization waves.

The current pattern of research may represent the achievement of a mature science; with well-developed instruments and research questions, further research becomes incremental rather than the creative theoretical work of earlier democratic waves. Still, I see the potential for theoretical creativity as the (so-far) missed opportunity of this democratization wave.

Political Participation and Democracy

An essential element of democracy is an involved public. Democracy requires an active citizenry, because it is through discussion, popular interest, and involvement in politics that societal goals should be defined and carried out in a democracy. Without public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force.

A central question in participation research involves the appropriate level of public involvement in a democracy. One form of this inquiry has analyzed cross-national variation in levels of voting turnout. This research implicitly holds that higher levels of voting turnout are a positive feature for a democracy. In general this is correct; democratic nations with high levels of turnout in national elections are more successful in involving their citizens in the political process.⁴ Similarly, high turnout levels in the first democratic elections in Eastern Europe were interpreted as a positive sign for these fledgling democracies. Consequently, the gradual decrease in turnout in several advanced industrial democracies (Dalton, 1996, ch. 3; Putnam, 1995; Topf, 1995a) and the sharp drop-off in participation in Eastern Europe has raised new concerns about the vitality of democracy.

Research on the sources and nature of political participation gives us a new perspective on this development. Participation research finds that national turnout rates are caused by a complex set of factors. Voter registration systems and other electoral procedures are a major influence on national turnout levels. By most estimates, for example, participation in American elections would increase by at least ten percentage points if the European system of registration was adopted (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Turnout also is encouraged when nations schedule elections on weekends, when more voters can find the time to visit the polls. In addition, proportional representation systems (PR) seem to stimulate participation when compared to plurality-based single-member districts systems. G. Bingham Powell (1980, 1986) and Markus Crepaz (1990) demonstrate that political competition is another strong influence on participation rates. Robert Jackman (1987) has conducted complementary analyses which show that the structural incentives for voting strongly affect turnout rates. He finds that the number of party choices and the nation's structure of legislative power are direct predictors of turnout. In short, national turnout levels reflect a variety of institutional factors and political conditions that are relatively independent from the vitality of the underlying democratic process.⁵

Empirical research also has placed voting turnout in the broader context of other forms of political action. While turnout rates have been declining, there has been a considerable expansion of citizen participation in protests, voluntary public interest groups, and other forms of unconventional political action (Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979; Jennings and van Deth, 1990; Topf, 1995b; Verba et al, 1995). New social movements, such as environmental groups and the women's movement, expanded the repertoire for political action and legitimated direct-action methods of participation for the affluent middle class. These methods have diffused across other political groups, and have now become a standard element of political participation (Kaase, 1989). Moreover, the policy-orientation influence potential of direct action methods represents a significant expansion of the public's means of influencing the democratic process.

Eastern Europeans obviously have more direct experience with unconventional politics, since the democratic revolutions of the late 1980s were normally fueled by public demonstrations against the old regimes. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s the World Values Survey found high levels of protest participation by the publics in several East European states

(Inglehart, forthcoming); people power also played an important role in the reinstatement of democracy in the Philippines and democratic reforms in South Korea.

Despite these similar patterns of protest, the sources of protest in these democratizing nations are much different from established Western democracies. The expansion of protest among Westerners came as an extension of democratic rights to direct forms of action; it is the expansion of conventional politics to other means, and is heavily used by the better educated and the politically more sophisticated. Protest in democratizing nations often was a challenge to the old political order. Like earlier waves of protest in Western democracies, it remains a method of disenchantment by those with limited political power. Having yet to develop the institutions of conventional democratic politics, unconventional politics represents an alternative method of action.

Moreover, citizens in formerly-communist states seem to harbor some doubts about developing the institutions of representative democracy as practiced in the West (Rohrschneider, 1996). The patterns of civil society and volunteerism that reinforce citizen action movements in the West are seen as reflections of the mobilized society of the communist era. At the same time, many Eastern Europeans are disillusioned by the competitive style of electoral politics practiced in the West. Even democratic political parties labor under the stigma of party symbolism that was practiced by the old regime. Thus one sees many East Europeans longing for alternative models of democratic participation, although the precise form remains unclear. One illustration of this can be seen in Germany; all the new eastern Länder have constitutional provisions for referendums and direct election that are not offered by several Western Länder.

In summary, participation levels and the various methods of political action are generally expanding in advanced industrial societies, and in more fundamental ways in emerging democracies. A major goal of democratic societies is to expand citizen participation in the political process and thereby increase popular control of political elites. Therefore, increases in protest and other citizen-initiated activities generally should be welcomed developments. This new style of citizen participation places more control over political activity in the hands of the citizenry. These changes in participation make greater demands on the participants. These activities also can increase public pressure on political elites. Citizen participation is becoming more closely linked to citizen influence.

The expanding repertoire of action also may raise potential problems. ⁶ For example, Sidney Verba and his colleagues (1995) have recently focused attention on whether the changing nature of political participation will increase inequalities in political involvement, and thus influence, in the democratic process (also Parry et al., 1992; Verba et al., 1978). Direct action methods require greater personal initiative and greater political skills. Consequently, political involvement is becoming even more dependent on the skills and resources represented by social status. This situation may increase the participation gap between lower-status groups and higher-status individuals. As the better educated expand their political influence through direct-action methods, less-educated citizens might be unable to compete on the same terms. Indeed, the participation rates of lower status individuals may even decrease as party-mobilized activities decrease. The politically active may become even more influential, while the less active see their influence wane. Ironically, overall increases in political involvement may mask a growing social-status bias in citizen participation and influence, which runs counter to democratic ideals.

The challenge for established and emerging democracies is to expand the opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and meaningfully affect the decisions affecting

their lives. To meet this challenge also means ensuring an equality of political rights and opportunities that will be even more difficult to guarantee with these new participation forms.

Value Change and Modernization

Another area where comparative political behavior has made major strides involves the study of value change. Early behavioral research examined the relationship between the development of an industrial society and the changing values of the public (e.g., Inkeles and Smith, 1974). In the last two decades this research has examined the further processes of value change that accompanied the development of advanced industrial, or postindustrial, society.

Ronald Inglehart's thesis of postmaterial value change (Inglehart 1977, 1990, forthcoming; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995) has furnished the most widely-used framework for studying the changes affecting mass publics in advanced industrial democracies. Inglehart bases his explanation of value change on two premises. First, he suggests that the public's basic value priorities are determined by a scarcity hypothesis: individuals place the greatest value on things that are in relatively short supply. ⁷ The second part of Inglehart's theory is a socialization hypothesis: individual value priorities reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's preadult years. The combination of both hypotheses produces a general model of value formation: an individual's basic value priorities are formed early in life in reaction to the socioeconomic conditions (personal and societal) of this period, and once formed, these values tend to endure in the face of later changes in life conditions.

Inglehart argues that the socioeconomic forces transforming Western industrial societies are changing the relative scarcity of valued goals, and consequently the value priorities of Western publics. Older generations remain more likely to emphasize traditional "material" social goals, such as economic well-being, social security, law and order, religious values, and a strong national defense. Having grown up in an environment where these goals seem relatively assured, the young are shifting their attention toward "postmaterial" goals of self-expression, personal freedom, social equality, self-fulfillment, and maintaining the quality of life.

What is most significant about Inglehart's postmaterial thesis is its broad relevance to the study of advanced industrial societies. His concept of value change was immediately useful in explaining many of the political changes affecting these nations: the public's growing interest in environmental and other quality of life issues, changes in participation patterns, and support for new social movements.

Postmaterial values can be linked to democratization themes in two ways. First, postmaterial value orientations have partially redefined the nature of politics in advanced industrial societies. These interests led to the formation of new citizen movements that are active and vocal participants in the democratic process. The environmental movement and women's groups, for example, have pressed for their alternative political agenda (Dalton 1994a; Gelb 1989). Often these issues have placed them in conflict with established economic interests, such as business lobbies and labor unions. These new social movements have been joined by New Left or Green parties that advocate their positions within the electoral and parliamentary arenas (Müller-Rommel, 1989; Kitschelt, 1989). In short, these orientations contribute to many of the political controversies that now divide the public and political groups in advanced industrial democracies.

In addition, postmaterialists press for changes in the style of democratic politics. Postmaterialism is linked to the changing action repertoires of Western publics (Barnes, Kaase et

al., 1979; Jennings and van Deth, 1990). Postmaterialists are more likely to use the unconventional forms of political action described in the previous section. Similarly, citizen groups and green parties call for an expansion of the democratic process to allow greater public involvement in policy making and policy administration. Postmaterialists favor citizen advisory groups, referendums, and other forms of direct democracy over the style of limited representative democracy practiced previously. In short, postmaterialism brings the principles of democracy into question--the so-called "Crisis of Democracy" literature (Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995)--by creating a debate between representative democracy and participatory democracy.

The postmaterial thesis also highlights the contrasting values of those nations now undergoing democratic transition in Eastern Europe or East Asia. There have been attempts to expand the postmaterial concept to these societies (Inglehart and Siemenska, 1990; Inglehart, forthcoming; Gibson and Duch, 1994), but this seems a questionable research hypothesis. Inglehart formulated postmaterialism as the consequence of advanced industrialism, and these societies are generally not at this stage of development. We should therefore expect that the publics and elites in Eastern Europe and East Asia will place greater stress on the material goals that once dominated the politics of Western democracies. For instance, while the Dutch may be striving to become postmaterialists, the Poles are hoping to achieve the materialist excesses to which the Dutch have become accustomed. In addition, the democratizing nations should place greater weight on developing institutionalized forms of political participation, and may want to avoid the diffuse participatory democracy advocated by postmaterialists. This suggests a significant divergence in the immediate goals of advanced industrial democracies and the emerging democracies. [8](#) Both sets of nations are becoming more democratic, but with different definitions of what democracy means and how it should function.

Electoral Change

Elections are the central procedures of representation in modern democracies, and past research has yielded dramatic advances in our knowledge about how voters reach their decisions.

A major theme in contemporary electoral research involves changes in the factors influencing voting decisions. Political choice in most Western democracies traditionally was structured by class, religious and other social divisions. Because individuals were often ill-prepared to deal with the complexities of politics, they relied on the political cues of external reference groups in reaching their political decisions. In addition, social institutions such as the unions and churches were major political actors, influencing both political elites and their membership. Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan's summarized this position in their famous conclusion: "the party systems of the 1960s reflect, with but few significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s" (1967, p. 50). Early electoral research largely substantiated Lipset and Rokkan's claims.

As this theme of stable, cleavage-based voting became the conventional wisdom, dramatic changes began to affect these same party systems. The established parties were presented with new demands and new challenges, and the evidence of partisan change became obvious. Within a decade the dominant question changed from explaining the persistence of electoral politics to explaining electoral change (Dalton et al. 1984; Crewe and Denver, 1985).

The growing emphasis on electoral change began with evidence that the class and religious divisions were decreasing in influence. For instance, Lipset demonstrated a decline in the level of class voting for several Western democracies (Lipset, 1981: appendix). Collaborating

research came from Australia (McAllister, 1992), Britain (Franklin, 1985), Germany (Baker et al., 1981), Japan (Watanuki, 1991) and other advanced industrial democracies (Inglehart, 1990; Lane and Ersson, 1991; Nieuwbeerta, 1995). One of the major findings from the last generation of electoral research holds that social position no longer determines political positions as it did when social alignments were solidly frozen. [9](#)

Mark Franklin and his colleagues compiled the most comprehensive evidence supporting this conclusion (Franklin et al., 1992). They tracked the ability of a set of social characteristics (including social class, education, income, religiosity, region, and gender) to explain partisan preferences. Across fourteen Western democracies, they found a consistent erosion in the voting impact of social structure. The rate and timing of this decline varied across nations, but the end-product was the same. They concluded with the new "conventional wisdom" of comparative electoral research: "One thing that has by now become quite apparent is that almost all of the countries we have studied show a decline . . . in the ability of social cleavages to structure individual voting choice" (Franklin et al., 1992: p. 385).

In many Western democracies the declining influence of group cleavages on electoral choice was paralleled by a decrease in the ability of partisan attachments (or partisan identifications) to explain political behavior. The strength of party attachments has weakened in several Western democracies over the past generation (see review in Dalton, 1996). Similarly, there has been a decrease in party-line voting and an increase in partisan volatility, split-ticket voting, and other phenomena showing that citizens are no longer voting according to a party line. Perot's strong showing in the 1992 American presidential election, the collapse of the Japanese party system, or Berlusconi's breakthrough in Italian politics provide graphic illustrations of how weakened party ties open up the potential for substantial electoral volatility.

The decline of long-term predispositions based on social position or partisanship should shift the basis of electoral behavior to short-term factors, such as candidate image and issue opinions. There is evidence that the new electoral order includes a shift toward candidate-centered politics. Martin Wattenberg (1991) documented the growing importance of candidate image in Americans' electoral choices, and comparable data are available for other Western democracies (Bean and Mugham, 1989; Bean, 1993). Furthermore, there are signs of a growing personalization of political campaigns in Western democracies: photo opportunities, personalized interviews, walkabouts, and even televised candidate debates are becoming standard electoral fare (Kaase, 1994).

The decline in long-term influences on the vote also has increased the potential for issue voting. Mark Franklin (1985) showed that the decreasing influence of long-term forces on British voting decisions was counterbalanced by an increased impact of issue voting (also Baker et al., 1981, ch. 10; van der Eijk and Niemoeller, 1983; Rose and McAllister, 1986). Oddbjorn Knutsen (1987) and others linked the rise of cross-cutting issue interests to the erosion of previous social cleavages. [10](#) In reviewing the evidence from their comparative study of voting behavior, Mark Franklin et al. (1992, p. 400) support this point, concluding: "if all the issues of importance to voters had been measured and given their due weight, then the rise of issue voting would have compensated more or less precisely for the decline in cleavage politics."

For advanced industrial democracies, these developments have an uncertain potential for the nature of the democratic electoral process (Dalton, 1996; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995). These changes can either improve or weaken the "quality" of the democratic process and the representation of the public's political interests. The nature of contemporary political beliefs means that public opinion is simultaneously becoming more fluid and less predictable. This

uncertainty forces parties and candidates to become more sensitive to public opinion, at least the opinions of those who vote. Motivated issue voters are more likely to at least have their voices heard, even if they are not accepted. Furthermore, the ability of politicians to have unmediated communications with voters can strengthen the link between politicians and the people. To some extent, the individualization of electoral choice revives earlier images of the informed independent voter that we once found in classic democratic theory (Popkin, 1991).

At the same time, there is a potential dark side to these new forces in electoral politics. The rise of single-issue politics handicaps a society's ability to deal with political issues that transcend specific interests, such as the U.S. budget deficit. Elites who cater to issue publics can leave the electorally inactive disenfranchised. Too great an interest in a single issue, or too much emphasis on recent performance, can produce a narrow definition of rationality that is as harmful to democracy as "frozen" social cleavages. In addition, direct unmediated contact between politicians and citizens opens the potential for demagoguery and political extremism. Both extreme right-wing and left-wing political movements probably benefit from this new political environment, at least in the short term.

For the emerging democracies, there is an apparent similarity to the portrait of voting choice we have just described. Emerging party systems are unlikely to be based on stable group-based cleavages, especially when the democratic transition has occurred quite rapidly, as in Eastern Europe. [11](#) Similarly, new electorates are also unlikely to hold long-term party attachments that might guide their behavior. Thus, the patterns of electoral choice in many new democracies may involve the same short-term factors--candidate images and issue positions--that have recently gained prominence in the electoral politics of advanced industrial democracies.

These similarities are only superficial, however. They do not reach below the surface of the electoral process. Advanced industrial democracies are experiencing an evolution in the patterns of electoral choice that flow from the breakdown of long-standing alignments and party attachments, the development of a more sophisticated electorate, and efforts to move beyond the restrictions of representative democracy. The new electoral forces in Western democracies also are developing within an electoral setting in which traditional group-based and partisan cues still exert a significant, albeit diminishing, influence.

The new democratic party systems of Eastern Europe and East Asia face the task of developing the basic structure of electoral choice--the political frameworks that Lipset and Rokkan examined historically for the West. This presents the unique opportunity to study this process scientifically: to examine how new party attachments take root, the relationships between social groups and parties form, party images develop, and citizens learn the process of representative democracy. The venerable Lipset/Rokkan framework may provide a valuable starting point for this research, and the Michigan model of party identification may provide a framework for studying how new political identities form. However, now we can study these processes with the scientific tools of empirical research. In addition, the creation of party systems in the world of global television, greater knowledge about electoral politics (from the elite and public levels), and fundamentally different electorates is unlikely to follow the pattern of Western Europe in the 1920s.

To answer these questions will require a dynamic perspective on these processes of partisan and electoral change. It is frankly too soon to determine how political scientists will respond to these challenges. There has already been an impressive development of the empirical base of research in these new democracies--a development that took decades in some Western democracies. There are many encouraging signs and impressive empirical studies emanating

from Eastern Europe and East Asia. The true test, however, is whether scholarship focuses on these broad questions, or simply becomes a replicant of earlier scholarship in the West.

Changing Publics: A Conclusion

In each of the areas examined in this essay, the citizens of advanced industrial societies have undergone significant changes during the past generation. Each of these areas is independent of the other, yet change in each area tends to reinforce concomitant changes in the other areas. When taken together, one can observe a general trend toward what we would call the *individualization of politics*. This involves a shift away from electoral decision making based on social group and/or party cues toward a more individualized and inwardly-oriented style of political choice. Instead of depending upon party elites and reference groups, more citizens now deal with the complexities of politics and make their own political decisions. Similarly, instead of depending on structured and institutionalized methods of political participation, more citizens are turning to various methods of direct democracy, ranging from community groups to social movements. What is developing is an eclectic and egocentric pattern of citizen action. Rather than socially structured and relatively homogeneous personal networks, contemporary publics are more likely to base their decisions on policy preferences, performance judgements, or candidate images.

An important element in this pattern of change is the modern mass media. The relationship between the individual and the media both contributes to these trends, and reinforces them (Semetko et al., 1991). The contemporary media provide voters with a greater variety of information sources, and potentially a more critical perspective of established political actors such as parties, labor unions, and industries. Access to a diverse media environment enables the public to become active *selectors* of information rather than passive *consumers* of political cues provided by others. In addition, the ability to see candidates and parliamentary leaders on television leads voters to pay more attention to the personal attributes of politicians, such as competence and integrity. The expansion of the 1992 American presidential campaign into new media forums illustrates this point, and similar developments exist in other Western democracies as new communications technologies change the patterns of information flow.

The individualization of politics also displays itself in the increasing heterogeneity of the public's issue interests. The postmaterial issues of environmentalism, women's rights, and life styles choices have been added to the already full agenda of advanced industrial democracies. In addition, citizens are becoming fragmented into a variety of distinct *issue publics*. Rather than politics being structured by group benefits, which often reflected socially derived cues, citizens now focus on specific issues of immediate or personal importance.

When taken together, these developments suggest that the nature of citizen politics in advanced industrial societies is in the process of transformation. Contemporary politics will become more fluid, and the framework for political decision shifts from societal institutions to individuals. Moreover, individuals are shifting their decision-making criteria from long-term factors, such as group loyalties and affective party attachments, to short-term considerations of policy preferences and performance evaluations. The citizenry also appears more willing to act on their preferences, and they possess the political skills and resources to use both conventional and unconventional political means. In short, both the volatility and velocity of political change seems to be increasing, and this pattern of change has become the dominant trend of our time.

As these changes in advanced industrial societies go forward, we have just lived through what is arguably the most significant political events of our lifetimes: the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the global democratization wave. As advanced industrial societies are evolving into a new form of democratic politics, we are witnessing the initial development of democracy in a new set of nations.

The democratization waves in Eastern Europe, East Asia and Africa touch at the very core of many of our most basic questions about the nature of citizen politics and the working of the political process. Normally we study democratic systems that are roughly at equilibrium and speculate on how this equilibrium was created (or how it is changing in minor ways). Moreover, during the earlier waves of democratic transition the tools of empirical social science were not available to study political behavior directly. The current democratization wave thus provides a virtually unique opportunity to address questions on identity formation, the creation of political cultures (and possibly how cultural inheritances are changed), the establishment of an initial calculus of voting, and the dynamic processes linking political norms and behavior. These questions represent some of the fundamental research issues of our time. The answers will not only explain what has occurred during this democratization wave, but may aid us in better understanding the basic principles of how citizens function within the democratic process.

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Endnotes

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1. Another criticism questioned whether culture was a cause or effect of institutional arrangements (Barry, 1970). I consider this a somewhat artificial distinction. Although the thrust of cultural theory emphasized its influence over institutional arrangements, the clear intent of Almond and Verba was to

draw attention to cultural patterns so that governments and elites could respond to these inheritances and in some cases remake the culture (Verba, 1965).

2. Inglehart's findings were subsequently criticized by Edward Muller and Mitchell Seligson (1994) on methodological grounds, and Inglehart has responded to these criticisms with new data from the 1990-91 World Values Study (Inglehart, forthcoming).

3. Another important question involves the relationship between mass and elite opinions, and their respective roles in the democratization process. For mass-elite comparisons in Eastern Europe see Rohrschneider (1994, 1996) and Miller et al. (1993).

4. The obvious caveat is that turnout can be artificially inflated in non-democratic systems. Thus turnout rates in Eastern Europe decreased as these nations moved from enforced participation under the communist regime to voluntary participation as a democracy.

5. Indeed, some methods of expanding turnout--e.g., by having highly divisive elections--might not be considered as positive reforms.

6. An even more fundamental criticism claims that direct action methods exceed the normal bounds of democratic politics and can place excessive strains on democratic systems (e.g., Huntington, 1981). These criticisms are addressed in Dalton (1996) and Klingemann and Fuchs (1995).

7. In his earlier work, Inglehart attempted to generalize the scarcity hypothesis into a broader theoretical framework of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human values; the Maslovian framework has become less prominent in Inglehart's more recent writings.

8. In his most recent work, Inglehart (forthcoming; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995) argues for a general process of global value convergence. To an extent I agree, if one defines convergence in terms of support for liberal and democratic values. However, the postmaterial model maintains that advanced industrial societies are evolving into a new form of social and political organization. This gap between advanced industrial democracies and emerging democracies is the divergence emphasized here.

9. Of course, in the social sciences nothing goes undisputed. A variety of British and American scholars have questioned the evidence on the decline of class voting (e.g., Heath et al., 1991). I do not find their evidence convincing.

10. There is considerable debate on the content of this new issue voting. Some issues represent the continuation of past social conflicts, now without a group base. Other issues tap the new political controversies of advanced industrial societies. Yet another approach argues that such "position issues" have been overtaken by a new emphasis on "valence issues" that assess the performance of government on broadly accepted goals, such as judging parties on their ability to guide the economy or foreign policy. Thus the growth of issue voting has created new questions on what issues are important.

11. The exception may be the party systems of Latin America and East Asia (Taiwan and South Korea) which might be able to integrate existing social cleavages because of the different nature of these democratic transitions (e.g., Remmer, 1991; Chu, 1992).