CHAPTER 23

VOTERS AND PARTIES

ANNE WREN

KENNETH M. MCELWAIN

1 REALIGNMENT OR DEALIGNMENT IN THE PARTY–VOTER NEXUS

POLITICAL parties assume a prominent position in comparative studies of electoral and legislative behavior in advanced industrialized democracies. Unlike the electoral system, parliamentary committees, or other pervasive political institutions, parties are rarely defined—in either structure or function—by the national constitution.[1] Nevertheless, political parties can be found in essentially all democratic—and some autocratic—polities. Indeed, many studies of party politics lead with E. E. Schattschneider's famous quote, "Political parties created modern democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties" (1942).

The reasons given for the relevance of political parties are manifold, but early studies focused on the parties' utility in the electoral process, particularly how they helped voters structure their preferences at the ballot box. As modern governments faced a widening and increasingly complex array of policy issues in both the pre-war and post-war periods, citizens were seen as being unwilling (or unable) to gather and process all the facts necessary to make an informed decision about which candidate to vote for (Campbell et al. 1960). Political parties—particularly those with long legacies and organized bases of support—simplified this process by providing an

[1] There are notable exceptions, including Germany where the German Basic Law explicitly specifies the legal rights, functions, and structure of parties.

informational heuristic about the policy platforms of those parties' candidates (Downs 1957). An American factory worker with strong labor union ties could infer how a Democratic Party candidate would vote in Congress without knowing very much about the candidate, herself. Again, in the words of Schattschneider, "The parties organize the electorate by reducing their alternatives to the extreme limit of simplification" (1960).

In addition to acting as informational cues, political parties played a crucial organizational and legislative role. Many parties—particularly on the left—maintained a large membership base, through which they recruited election candidates, distributed information, and aggregated interests to produce a coherent policy platform (Aldrich 1995; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). They have also been the primary players in parliamentary decision making and coalition formation. Political parties coordinated like-minded members of parliament into cohesive legislative blocs, and, through the various carrots and sticks at their disposal, rewarded or sanctioned politicians based on their adherence to the party's long-term goals (Laver and Schofield 1990; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999).

In their classic treatment, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) describe the deeply embedded relationship which formed between voters and the early mass parties. Those parties which successfully organized in the period at, or before, the extension of mass suffrage enjoyed a first-mover advantage in the relationships which they built with the new electorates. The scale of this advantage was such that observed party systems in Western Europe displayed high levels of continuity between the 1920s and the 1960s, in spite of the turbulent political events which occurred in Europe during this period. As a result, these authors famously argue, the structure of electoral cleavages had become "frozen" so as to reflect the structure of ideological conflict in these countries at the time of the mass parties' foundation.

Parties' organizational strategies were particularly important in strengthening the affective relationships between parties and voters during this period. The incorporation of significant segments of the electorate into the grassroots networks of the main political parties, or into closely associated organizational groups such as trade unions, facilitated the inculcation of lasting political identities.[2] As a result, voters exhibited considerable stability in their voting behavior, as their decision making relied heavily on the informational shortcuts provided by trusted political organizations. Elections essentially became contests over which party could develop the largest mass organization, and the vote shares of established parties tended to be relatively stable.

Even as Lipset and Rokkan described this deeply embedded linkage between parties and voters, however, there were indications of upheaval in the electoral landscape. Figure 23.1 shows trends in the total vote shares of parties established before 1960—in other words, parties which were in existence during the peak periods

---

[2] See Przeworski and Sprague (1986) on the organizational strategies of electoral socialist parties and their relation to the trades union movement; see Kalyvas (1996) on the relationship between Christian Democratic parties and Catholic social organizations.

of the "frozen cleavage" hypothesis—from the 1960s on.[3] The figure is composed of two panels, one containing annualized data and showing all data points; the second showing the average for each period between elections, or "election count," across all countries.[4] Using both year and election count allows us to differentiate between political outcomes that are a function of factors that affect countries contemporaneously (i.e. by year), or whether they vary by the frequency and natural cycle of electoral competition (i.e. by election count). Regardless of the measure, we can see that there is a strong quadratic relationship between time and the performance of established political parties.[5] The total vote share of these parties has declined at an increasing rate since the 1960s, indicating the stronger electoral presence of relatively new parties.
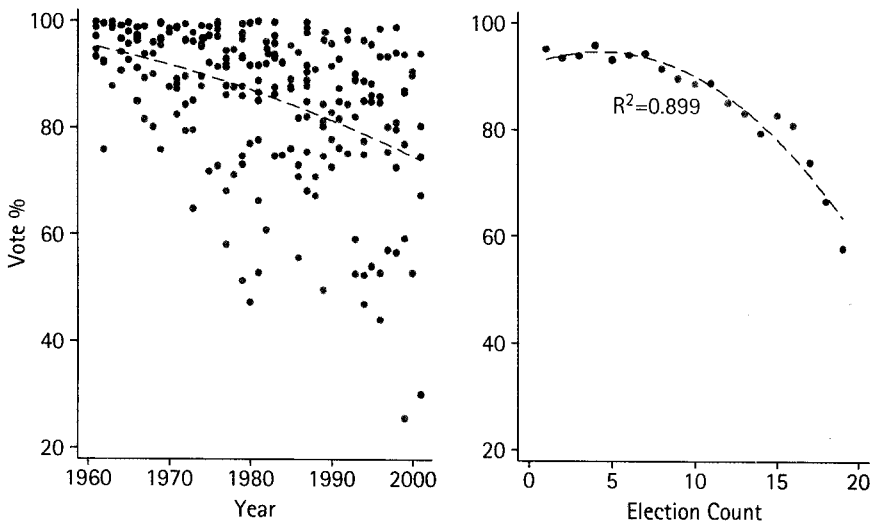
Annualized data shows all datapoints. Election count data shows average for each period. Regression line is fit using a quadratic specification: y = a + bx + bx^2 + e

Fig. 23.1 Total vote % of parties established before 1960

[3] Electoral data here and in other figures are compiled from the following countries: Australia (1946–2004); Austria (1945–2002); Belgium (1946–2003); Denmark (1945–2001); Finland (1945–2003); French 5th Republic (1958–97); (West) Germany (1949–2002); Greece (1974–2004); Iceland (1946–2003); Ireland (1948–2002); Italy (1948–2001); Japan (1946–2003); Luxembourg (1954–2004); Malta (1947–2003); the Netherlands (1946–2003); Norway (1945–2001); Portugal (1976–2002); Spain (1977–2004); Sweden (1948–2002); and United Kingdom (1945–2005). Data taken from Gorvin (1989) and Caramani (2000).

[4] For example, the observation for election count "1" is the average vote share across all sampled countries in the first election held in the period under consideration. The election count figure restricts data to cases where election count is less than twenty; because only Australia, Denmark, and Japan have had that many elections in the post-war period, including those cases could bias results based on factors specific to those countries. All figures in this chapter restrict election count to less than twenty.

[5] The fitted values are quadratic predictions of total vote % based on a linear regression of total vote % on election count and election count squared. The quadratic prediction is calculated using the "twoway qfit" function on Stata 9.

Additionally, numerous studies have found evidence of increasing instability in voter–party relationships. Panel surveys of individual voters show that the level of party switching and ticket splitting has been rising (Clarke and Stewart 1998; Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000). Similarly, formal membership in political parties has been falling in recent decades (Scarrow 2000), as has voter turnout—particularly in the 1990s (Wattenberg 2000). These changes have had a significant effect on election outcomes: there have been more new parties entering the political arena (Hug 2001; Tavits 2006), and, perhaps most significantly, fluctuations in the vote and seat shares of political parties have become more volatile (Mair 1997; Clarke and Stewart 1998; Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg 2000). Figure 23.2 displays trends in electoral volatility in the post-war period, using the Pedersen Index which measures net changes in parties' vote shares from election to election (Pedersen 1979).[6] The figure again uses two different time scales: one that plots every election by year, and a second that displays average volatility by election count. The scatter plots show that electoral volatility has increased over time at a fairly steady rate.[7]
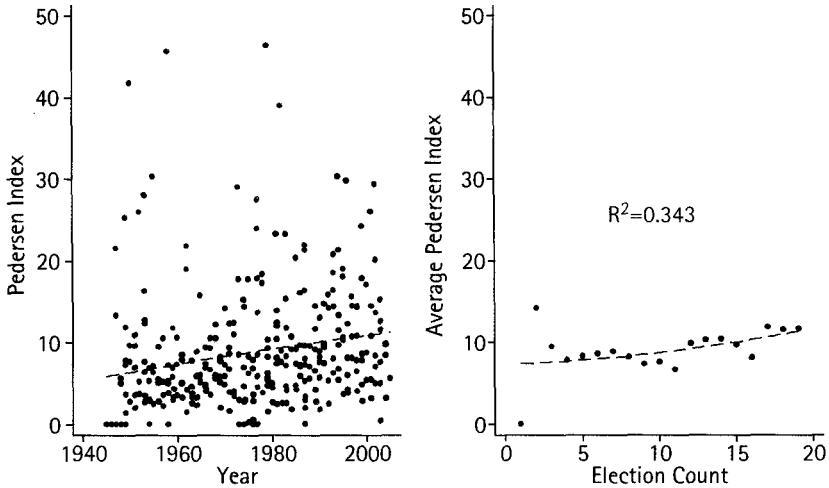

Fig. 23.2 Electoral volatility over time

[6] The Pedersen Index measures net changes in vote share using the formula: $0.5^* \sum (|V_{i,t} - V_{i,t-1}|)$, where V_i = vote share of each party i, and t = current election. There is some disagreement in the literature over how to calculate net vote share for new political parties. For example, if Party A and Party B merge to create Party C, should volatility be calculated as $V_{C,t} - V_{(A+B),t-1}$ or simply as V_C? Similarly, should fringe parties that are often tabulated in the "other" category be ignored altogether or treated as one bloc? In this chapter, we use the total vote share of Party C as the value of vote swing, and—following Lijphart 1994—ignore fringe parties altogether. This choice is motivated by the difficulty of keeping full track of which parties are merging/splitting in any given election, especially where different factions of the original party are amalgamated into separate parties.

[7] While the line of best fit is calculated using a quadratic regression, the slope appears to be constant over time, indicating that volatility is increasing linearly.

These disparate trends in the data are indicative of changes in the nature of the relationship between parties and voters in advanced industrial democracies. The question is how we are to understand these transformations. A useful theoretical guideline is provided by Otto Kirchheimer (1966), who predicted three interconnected changes to the party–voter linkage: a reduction in the party's adherence to stringent ideologies, a de-emphasis in the party's electoral reliance on particular social classes or denominations, and the strengthening of the party leaders' organizational authority over individual party members. In recent years, the comparative politics literature has identified change along each of these dimensions. Here, we broadly group these indicators into two subcategories, each with different implications for the future.

On one side of the party–voter nexus is a gradual shift in the distribution and content of the electorate's *policy preferences*, and the powerful challenge that this poses to the continuing popularity of existing political parties. In Lipset and Rokkan's framework, the primary electoral cleavage which emerged in all states derived from the industrial revolution: the historical ideological confrontation between capitalism and socialism, and the class conflict between workers and the owners of capital.[8] In the electoral arena, this conflict focused increasingly on practical policy debates on the appropriateness and scope of government intervention in the economy, with parties of the left advocating high levels of welfare redistribution and state intervention in the economy, while parties of the right advocated the welfare-maximizing properties of free market outcomes.

In recent years, however, some authors have pointed to the increasing political salience of distributional conflicts which cannot be easily understood in traditional "left–right" terms, as the world's most economically developed democracies become more oriented towards service production, and more integrated into international economic networks (Rodrik 1997; Iversen and Wren 1998). Others argue that at high levels of economic development and security, the salience of distributional conflict itself declines, making way for "postmaterialistic" concerns about quality of life issues such as the environment and personal autonomy (Inglehart 1977, 1997). These changes in preference are forcing a transformation in the *expressive content* of political parties, particularly in the range of policies that governments pursue. Where parties cannot adjust their policy platforms to the evolving concerns of voters, we can expect electoral volatility to continue—at least until new parties emerge to take their place.

Of perhaps more significance in the long run, however, is the *organizational* and *institutional* transformation of political parties in general, and the fraying of the connective tissue binding voters to parties in particular. In the idealized form, the mass party model was once efficient because deeply embedded party–voter linkages benefited both sides of the transaction. Voters could rely on parties to inform them about current policy debates and simplify choices between candidates at the polls. Political parties could listen to their grassroots networks to get a sense of prevailing

---

[8] The pattern of secondary cleavages, on the other hand—reflecting historical conflicts over religion, territorial issues, or rural–urban divides—varied from country to country depending on their individual history.

winds in public sentiment, and more importantly, benefit electorally from having a readily mobilized voting bloc. Two, largely exogenous changes in the electoral environment have challenged this mass party structure: improvements in the educational level of voters, and innovations in marketing and advertising technology, particularly public opinion polls and the television. Armed with these new tools, voters can now gather political information cheaply through non-party sources, and parties no longer have to maintain a massive grassroots organization to mount an effective national campaign (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). In other words, it is argued that the usefulness of mass party organizational strategies has declined for both politicians and voters, creating incentives on both sides for their abandonment.

Although these two trends are not mutually exclusive, the primacy of either one draws different implications for the future of the party–voter linkage. Whereas the inability to match changes in the electorate's policy preferences is problematic for *existing parties*, changes in political capabilities represent a fundamental shift in the density of ties connecting voters to *all political parties*. The former leaves the door open for eventual ideological *re*alignment and long-term electoral stability, while the latter predicts greater fluidity in voter–party allegiances and permanent electoral *de*alignment. Table 23.1 depicts the causal logic and observable implications of both hypotheses in greater detail.

In this chapter, we re-evaluate the literature on re- vs. dealignment and offer our own predictions regarding the future of the party–voter linkage. In the next section, we discuss the argument that socioeconomic and demographic shifts are causing the worsening performance of traditional parties. The old guard has purportedly failed to adapt to the evolving concerns of voters, leaving them vulnerable to electoral attack from new entrants. Section 3 describes recent changes in parties' organizational structures and their implications for the electoral performance of traditional parties, and the stability of electoral outcomes more generally. In Section 4 we report the results of a statistical analysis designed to investigate the effects of electoral competition and organizational change on the performance of traditional mass parties. Section 5 presents our conclusions and some directions for future research.

Table 23.1   Realignment vs. dealignment

Theory	Stimulus	Short-term implication	Response	Long-term implication
Realignment	Change in voter preferences	Growing ideological gap between voters and ESTABLISHED parties	Established parties adopt new policy platforms; Where slow, new parties take their place	Stabilization of vote fluctuations
Dealignment	Change in voter/party capabilities	Weaker affective and organizational ties between voters and ALL parties	Change in party organization: declining relevance of party activists and more "national" or centrist policies	Continuing vote fluctuations; declining voter turnout

To tip our hand early, we believe that the empirical ledger is tilted in favor of dealignment. The indications are that recent increases in electoral instability are symptomatic of more than a short-term readjustment of the party system to changing electoral preferences—although there is little doubt that such an adjustment is occurring. Rather they stem from underlying changes in the organizational structure of political parties themselves. We also note, however, that trends in electoral volatility do not seem to have much effect on the stability of government composition more generally. As such, the broader political implications of increased electoral instability may be less significant than is sometimes claimed.

2   CHANGES IN THE POLICY
PREFERENCES OF VOTERS

In standard theories of parliamentary behavior, voter preferences are assumed to be exogenous and fixed, while parties are reactive "second movers" who strategically choose policy platforms which maximize their political appeal. Early spatial models latched onto the idea of "issue congruence," wherein voters select political parties which advocate policies that are closest to their own preferences, and parties respond by crafting platforms which cater to the largest number of voters. Under certain conditions— most notably unimodal, left–right voter preferences and a first-past-the-post electoral system—parties should converge around the median voter and adopt centrist platforms (Downs 1957). More recent models of "directional" voting, on the other hand, assume that voters generally have vague policy preferences, and that their choices are determined by the direction and intensity of a party's promises—leading to ideological divergence, rather than convergence, among parties (Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Iversen 1994). Under both models, however, the *mechanism* of ideological formation is identical: parties advocate policies which allow them to capture the largest segment of voters (Stokes 1999).

For much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the primary ideological cleavage in electoral competition formed along the left–right economic dimension. Socialist parties forged close alliances with labor unions and emphasized workers' interests—particularly lower unemployment and economic security—in their policy platforms. Conservative parties, on the other hand, maintained strong ties to capital owners and tended to advocate conditions better suited for business development and capital investment. While the ideological separation between the two groups was not hard and fast, numerous studies have found empirical evidence of distinctive partisan patterns in the policy outputs of governing parties which relate to the preferences of these parties' core constituencies (Hibbs 1977; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995).

Beginning in the 1970s, however, there has been a gradual shift in the distribution of policy preferences within the electorate. Most critical is the declining salience of

the left–right economic cleavage as traditionally understood. This has occurred partially as a function of demographic changes. There is evidence that the social anchors of traditional partisanship have been eroding since the 1970s, with white-collar workers and a "new middle class" of service sector workers replacing farmers and laborers as the key socioeconomic segments of the electorate (Mair, Muller, and Plasser 2004). These changes have been associated with a decline in traditional class-based voting in many countries (Clark and Lipset 2001).

Alongside these demographic trends are changes in the debate over issues of economic organization, and in the range of alternatives under consideration. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, debates over the relative merits of capitalism and socialism have been replaced by discussions as to how best to manage the national economy in an internationally integrated economic environment. The increased openness of capital markets in particular has placed significant restrictions on national governments' abilities to pursue independent fiscal and monetary policies (Simmons 1998; Boix 2000). In many countries, responsibility for monetary policy has been delegated to politically independent central banks in an effort to counteract inflationary pressures (Grilli, Masciandoro, and Tabellini 1991). For national governments in EU member states, meanwhile, the constraints on independent action have been made even tighter by the establishment of an independent European Central Bank and the adoption of a single currency. The balance of evidence from numerous empirical studies suggests that while these constraints have been insufficient to remove distinct patterns of partisanship in economic policy making, the size of these effects has declined in recent decades (Wren 2006).

Empirical evidence also suggests that on economic issues, party ideologies are showing signs of convergence. Using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project, Budge, Robertson, and Hearl (1987) posit that electoral manifestos are converging towards the center on the left–right economic scale. Caul and Gray (2000) find that the left–right distance between major parties has declined in ten out of fifteen advanced democracies, and that this centralization has been most pronounced in majoritarian electoral systems, where centripetal pressures on policy are most powerful. Closer analysis adds the important caveat that this trend is not unilinear: Volkens and Klingemann (2002) show that the ideological distance between parties decreased 1940–60, increased 1970–80, and has been decreasing again since the late 1980s. In general, however, both the degree of polarization (the salience of the left–right spectrum) and the range of ideology (distance between the leftmost and rightmost parties) appear to have been higher in the 1940s than in the 1990s. Ezrow (2005) suggests that this gradual centralization may be a vote-maximizing strategy, as centrist parties tended to win slightly more votes between 1984 and 1998.

As parties moderate their ideologies, the scope of policies offered to voters has narrowed. The moderation of party platforms has, in turn, led to more centrist *governments*. Figure 23.3 displays diachronic trends in the ideological composition of the first cabinet that forms after an election, relative to the last cabinet in power before the election. While government turnover also occurs between elections, examining ideological change *across* elections allows us to see how the initial shake-up in parliamentary seats affects which actors seize power. Governments are

coded "1," "2," or "3," depending on whether a majority of the cabinet's portfolio is held by right-wing, centrist, or left-wing parties, respectively.[9] The graphs on Figure 23.3 separate data points into cases where the government preceding the election was leftist, centrist, or rightist (pre-ideology), and tracks changes in the direction of the next government's ideology (post-ideology). The data indicate a clear trend towards more centrist governments, particularly since the 1970s. In other words, both conservative and socialist governments are veering to the center, while centrist governments are holding steady.

The decline in the salience of the left–right economic divide (as traditionally defined) has also allowed room for secondary cleavages to increase in electoral significance. This change was predicted by Inglehart (1977, 1987, 1997), whose early work identified a "value change" in advanced industrial societies associated with the increased prosperity and economic security in the post-Second World War era. With their material needs met by economic development and the expansion of the welfare state, younger generational cohorts are purportedly prioritizing "lifestyle" issues such as the environment and individual liberty over more traditional material concerns. Importantly, Inglehart's work with public opinion data shows that these
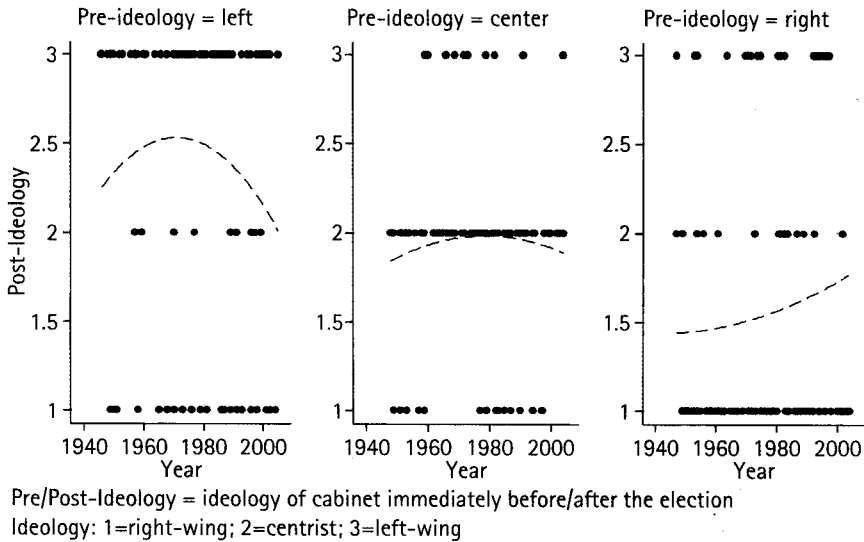

Pre/Post-Ideology = ideology of cabinet immediately before/after the election
Ideology: 1=right-wing; 2=centrist; 3=left-wing

Fig. 23.3 Trends in Cabinet Ideology Across Elections

[9] More formally, the ideological balance of cabinet is coded as: 1=conservative parties control at least 51% or superplurality of cabinet positions; 2=centrist parties control at least 51% OR there is a left–right alliance where each side controls at least 33% of cabinet; 3=leftist parties control at least 51% or superplurality of cabinet. Superplurality is defined as holding more portfolio positions than the other two factions combined, e.g. not counting independents, % of left >% center +% right. Data on government composition and political party ideology are taken from Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge 2000 and the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2005).

value changes tended to persist even as the post-war cohort aged, indicating the existence of a permanent shift in the electoral landscape (1987, 1997).

There are grounds for arguing that Inglehart's thesis—that the salience of "material" issues in advanced industrial democracies is declining—is overstated. Iversen and Wren (1998), for example, point out that the transition to a services-based economy confronts societies with stark new sets of distributional choices which cannot be easily understood in terms of traditional economic cleavages between "left" and "right." Similarly, several authors point to the increased significance of political conflict over globalization and, in particular, over perceived tradeoffs between economic openness, employment, and welfare state protection in Western democracies (Rodrik 1997). Kitschelt (1994, 1995) argues that electoral cleavages over "non-economic" issues of the environment or immigration are actually intimately linked with new sets of economic cleavages in post-industrial societies. The traditional left–right economic divide has shifted to incorporate this new dimension so that it now ranges from "left-libertarian"—concentrated among workers who are relatively sheltered in the new economic environment and who tend to espouse "postmaterial" values—to "right-authoritarian"—concentrated among those who perceive their welfare and economic security as threatened by recent economic changes, particularly economic openness.[10]

Traditional parties have been sluggish in their response to these socioeconomic changes, leaving open policy space for new parties to capture. While the entry of new parties into the political arena is by no means a novel trend, the proportion of elections with new parties has certainly been on the rise in recent decades. Of fifty-one elections during the 1950s, 27.5 percent saw at least one new party compete.[11] While this ratio held steady through the 1970s, it began to rise sharply in the 1980s, when 30.0 percent of elections had at least one new party, and even more in the 1990s, when 47.3 percent of elections saw new competition.

The new parties which have emerged in recent decades can be divided into three broad categories, centered around issues which were either new or neglected by existing parties. First are what Kitschelt (1994) calls left-libertarian parties, represented most notably by the Ecologists or Greens, whose emergence correlates with the rise of postmaterialist concerns over environmental degradation and nuclear energy.[12]

The second grouping is the New Radical Right, a mostly European phenomenon closely associated with emerging concerns over immigration from developing countries. The New Radical Right's electoral strategy is to capture policy space left empty by the increasing centralization of the traditional parties' platforms (Kitschelt 1995). While these parties—represented most (in)famously by Le Pen's Front National in France,

---

[10] Benoit and Laver (forthcoming), in their recent expert survey covering forty-seven countries, also find evidence that the "left–right" dimension is increasingly interpreted in terms of ecological as well as economic issues in many countries.

[11] There is some disagreement in the literature over how to code a genuinely new party—particularly whether one should count the merger of two parties into one as a new entity (Hug 2001; Tavits 2006). Here, we do not discriminate between types of parties, and count all splits, mergers, and genuinely new parties. The one caveat is that we only count parties that win at least 1% of the vote or one seat in parliament.

[12] There are also several new socialist and communist parties, which are seen as competitors to traditional social democrats on both the left–right and libertarian–authoritarian dimensions.

Haider's FPO in Austria, and Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands—are best known for their xenophobic stance towards immigrants, their overall electoral strategy is more nuanced, as they adopt firm conservative principles in support of market liberalism which appeal to independent shop owners and conservative businessmen.

The third category is regionalist parties, which espouse greater political independence of their territories from the central government without necessarily staking ideological positions on the left–right debate. Found most commonly in fragmented polities, De Winter (1998) argues that the best predictor of regional party success is the level of linguistic fractionalization—think Belgium and Spain—and to some extent, regional wealth—richer regions generally want more autonomy.

Figure 23.4 shows diachronic trends in the entry of new political parties, looking at parties with discernible ideological trends that tilt left and right, as well as those that are largely centrist. The left–right categorization is based not only on traditional class conflicts, but also on a libertarian–authoritarian dimension including environmentalism on the left and immigration on the right. Regionalist parties with distinct positions on the left–right cleavage are included within this taxonomy, but those that primarily advocate regional autonomy are excluded, since the particulars of regional political competition tend to be very country specific.

Figure 23.4 offers some interesting insights. First, the steady increase in the number of left-libertarian parties is driving the rise in the total number of new parties. In the post-war period, leftist parties constituted 52 percent of new parties which entered electoral competition. This resonates with Inglehart's (1987) argument that postmaterialist voters tend to line up on the left side of the ideological spectrum, thereby prompting the entry of proportionately more leftist parties over time. Second, centrist parties show the least amount of diachronic fluctuation in the number of new entries. Restricting the data to
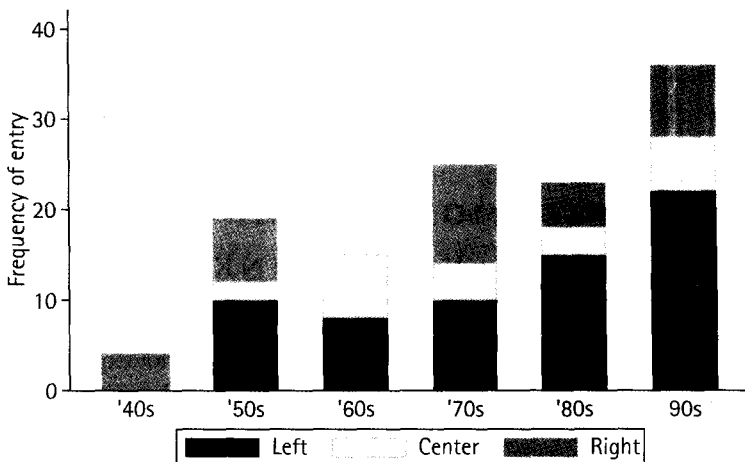

Fig. 23.4 Frequency of new party entry by ideology

between 1950 and 2000, the average number of new centrist parties per decade is 4.4, with a maximum of seven (in the 1960s) and a minimum of two (in the 1950s). The frequency of entry by new right-wing parties, on the other hand, displays the greatest level of instability. There was an average of 6.2 new conservative parties per decade between 1950 and 2000, but this ranged from zero new parties in the 1960s to eleven in the 1970s.

The increase in the number and ideological distribution of new parties provides some support for the hypothesis that the faltering performance of traditional parties stems partly from their failure to adapt to socioeconomic change. In line with Inglehart's hypotheses, it appears that old-guard parties, competing for centrist votes in traditional "left–right" terms, have been most consistently vulnerable to attack from new left parties with platforms focused on postmaterialist issues. It remains to be seen whether increases in the number of new right parties observed in the 1990s—associated with increased distributional concerns over economic globalization, and immigration more specifically—will persist in the coming decades.

Changes in vote preferences, however, cannot fully account for patterns of electoral volatility over the last few decades. Under the mass party model, the socialization of voters into enduring political identities ensured that changes in vote share would occur only when there were radical demographic shifts in the primary constituencies of the established parties. Given that shifts of this magnitude transpire slowly, we would expect the associated vote fluctuations to be relatively low and stable, at least to the extent that the voter–party linkage remains strong. At the same time, if new political parties have been successfully capturing disenfranchised voters, then their entry should lower volatility over time. However, as we saw from the scatter plots in Figure 23.2, electoral volatility has in fact increased at a fairly steady rate over the past forty years. This suggests that what we are observing is not simply preference divergence between voters and parties, but rather a more permanent *organizational* detachment between the two. In the next section, we discuss the more fundamental changes which are occurring in the nature of the party–voter linkage and their implications for the performance of the traditional parties.

3 ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES TO THE PARTY–VOTER LINKAGE

The demographic explanation discussed in the last section cannot explain why existing parties cannot simply inculcate new members into their fold. The obstacles to this kind of strategic flexibility may be understood in terms of the *organizational rigidity* of the mass party model. If voters are tightly embedded into the institutional structure of specific political parties, the only question on polling day is which side can better coax their partisans to show up. In effect, election outcomes turn on shifting patterns in

unionization or disparities in regional population growth. While the mass party organization may have been an effective means of political mobilization in an era where parties could not accurately monitor trends in popular sentiment and voters had little access to political information, this institutional structure severely limited the ideological flexibility of parties and the political choices of voters.[13]

Over time, however, the organizational structure of political parties, themselves, has begun to change. At the grassroots level, membership in political parties has been in steady decline in the last three decades (Katz and Mair 1992). Comparing fourteen advanced-industrialized democracies, Scarrow (2000) finds that most countries have seen a decline in party enrollment since 1960—both in absolute terms and as a ratio of the electorate—and that this downturn has been particularly pronounced since the 1990s. While parties often inflate membership figures for marketing purposes, Scarrow also cites public opinion poll data to demonstrate that self-reported party membership has experienced a steep fall.

These findings complement the literature on the diminishing affective ties between parties and voters. Using Eurobarometer surveys, Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg (2002) show that while the proportion of "very" and "fairly involved" partisans have stayed fairly constant over time, many "weak" sympathizers are turning into political independents. Examining majoritarian political systems, Clarke and Stewart (1998) detect what they call a "dealignment of degree:" while the percentage of voters with strong partisan ties is declining, they are turning into weak partisans or independents, not into supporters of other parties. On a broader comparative scale, Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg (2000) find an increase in the *reported* willingness of voters to split tickets between parties when there are multiple elections for different levels of government at stake. In general, the evidence points to voters abandoning partisan allegiances altogether, rather than permanently switching their allegiances to different parties.

This transformation is most pronounced among younger generations, who have grown up outside the mass party organization. Dalton (2000) makes the crucial point that the proportion of youths professing strong partisan attachments has been falling far faster than for older demographic groups. Inglehart (1987) argues that the strength of partisan attachments tend to increase with age, but only amongst voters who form attachments while they are young. If this is true, then the growing ranks of disaffected youth imply even weaker party–voter linkages down the road.

Underlying this transformation are two exogenous changes to the electoral marketplace—better education and new technology—which have allowed parties and voters to divest themselves of the mass party model. Both factors have altered the extent to which voters need parties to gain information about political events on the one hand, and how much parties rely on their grassroots membership on the other. While preference changes represent a shift in the ideological congruence between voters and parties, organizational changes are a function of shifts in the *capability* of the two actors, and the extent to which both sides depend on one another to maximize political goals.

[13] See Mair, Muller, and Plasser (2004) for more on country-specific causes and effects of party responses to increasing electoral volatility.

From an organizational standpoint, the two key societal functions of parties have been to educate voters about policies (Duverger 1954) and simplify choices among candidates (Downs 1957). Whereas this role was valuable when workers lacked the means to gather and process political information, improvements in educational attainment and the proliferation of media outlets provide new, non-party sources of information to voters. With near-universal literacy in advanced industrialized democracies, almost everybody can follow events in newspapers, and even more easily through television, radio, and the internet. The growing pluralism in information dissemination frees voters from blindly following party cues, while also increasing the odds that voters will learn information which parties may prefer to edit out, such as poor government performance or bribery scandals.

In addition to voters no longer needing parties, parties can now mount effective national campaigns without being bound to the preferences of partisan activists. While grassroots party members once provided invaluable manpower during election campaigns (Aldrich 1995), the proliferation of television ownership since the 1970s and internet access more recently allows party elites to bypass these middlemen altogether and launch media advertisements to tap a wider audience (Farrell 2002). Indeed, Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg (2002) find that in almost all countries, fewer and fewer people are participating in actual campaign activities. This new organizational mobility allows parties to better adapt to the shifting ideological concerns of the electorate at large.

The influence of new technology is also reflected in the greater centralization of political parties, particularly in the coordination of electoral campaigns. One measure is the growing identification of the party label with the party *leader*. Looking at the ratio of mentions of candidates compared to parties, Dalton, McAllister, and Wattenberg (2000) find that the media now refers to leaders more frequently than to parties. Indeed, most countries now prominently feature televised party leader debates before the election (Farrell 2002).

A second change is the way in which policy platforms are crafted and disseminated during campaigns. Whereas the mass party organization used to be a crucial medium through which party elites gathered information about the policy preferences of voters, the increasing availability and reliability of opinion polls make it possible for parties to collect data from a wider segment of the electorate. The sophistication of advertising tools also allows parties to "sell" or "market" platforms based on the salient issues of the day, rather than articulating only those issues which have been popular in the past (Farrell and Webb 2000). The professionalization of campaign managers and the quantitative increase in staffers at party headquarters are symptoms of this evolution. Whereas mass parties once served as important networks connecting a vast membership organization to the elites, this more recent trend represents the transformation of parties into professional campaign agencies for individual political candidates, particularly the party leader.

One important side effect of the decline of the mass party model has been the decline in levels of voter turnout across advanced industrial democracies. Under the mass party model, party leaders could count on grassroots activists to drum up support and convince voters to show up on election day. There has, however, been a

sharp decline in actual turnout figures, particularly since the 1980s. While turnout averaged 84.6 percent in the 1950s with a minimum of 71.3 percent, it has fallen to 77.3 percent since 2000 with a minimum of 59.5 percent. This drop-off stems in part from the declining mobilizational capacity of established parties. Figure 23.5 examines turnout as a function of the proportion of total votes garnered by political parties that had competed in that country's first post-war election. The correlation between turnout and the vote share of established parties is 0.293, and as the quadratic regression line indicates, there is a strong positive relationship between the two. Turnout tends to be higher when established parties dominate the electoral process; put differently, turnout is directly related to the electoral salience of these parties.

4 ELECTORAL COMPETITION, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE, AND THE PERFORMANCE OF TRADITIONAL PARTIES

The comparative politics literature thus provides us with two sets of hypotheses to account for the decline in vote share of traditional parties. The first focuses on socioeconomic and demographic changes in advanced industrial societies, suggesting that the failure of traditional parties to adapt to these changes and to the increased salience of new issues may be hampering their ability to compete effectively. The
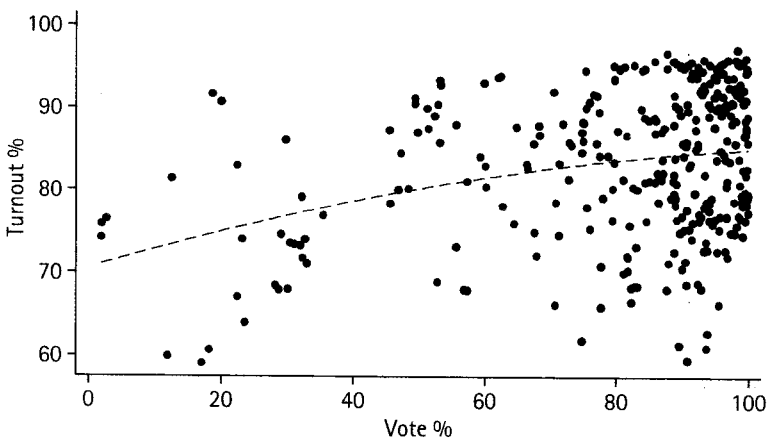
** Total vote share of parties that had competed in the first election of the post-war period

Fig. 23.5 Relationship between turnout and the vote share of established parties

second highlights a more fundamental change in parties' political and organizational roles. As new technologies play an increasingly important role as conduits of information between parties and voters, and as voters' levels of education and independently acquired political knowledge increase, the need for mass party organizations has declined. In this view, the faltering electoral performance of traditional parties and increasing volatility in voting behavior are symptomatic of a generalized decline in the relevance of the existing party model.

Disentangling the causal weight of these disparate factors is no mean feat, given that vote volatility, turnout, party membership, and new party entry all vary closely with time. We attempt to investigate these effects through a regression analysis, using *Pre-1960 Vote*, or the total vote share of all parties that had been in existence before 1960, as the dependent variable. Because pre-1960 parties were in existence during the peak periods of the "frozen cleavage" hypothesis, they represent those parties that traditionally had the strongest mass organization base. The statistical model employed is a pooled OLS regression with panel-corrected standard errors and panel-specific AR1 (autoregressive process of order 1) autocorrelation.[14] Each case in the dataset is one election in a given country after 1960, which yields a total of 220 cases among twenty advanced-industrialized democracies. The model uses "country" and "election count" as the panel and time variables, respectively.

We include two lagged variables that pertain directly to changes in the electoral and organizational viability of pre-1960 parties. To capture electoral volatility, we include *Lag Pedersen*, which is the Pedersen Index measure for vote fluctuation in the *last* period. If electoral volatility is due to vote trading between established parties, then higher values of vote fluctuation should *not* affect the collective vote shares of pre-1960 parties. On the other hand, a negative coefficient would indicate that diachronic increases in electoral volatility are in fact due to post-1960 parties stealing votes from pre-1960 groups. *Lag turnout* is a continuous variable for the proportion of the total electorate which cast a ballot in the *previous* election. Because pre-1960 parties traditionally won votes by mobilizing their grassroots membership, lower turnout may indicate a decline in their organizational capacity. If turnout is not tied to the organizational capacity of any subset of parties, however, decreasing turnout should not adversely affect pre-1960 parties any more than it does post-1960 parties. We use the lagged rather than the contemporaneous measures for both *Pedersen* and *Turnout*, because of endogeneity concerns over cause and effect.[15]

Another important independent variable is *New party count*, a discrete measure which tabulates the number of new parties that entered that given election. If it is true that the decline in the electoral performance of traditional parties reflects, in part, their failure to adapt to socioeconomic change—i.e. if new parties are capturing voters that value new policy issues neglected by traditional parties—then we should

[14] The AR1 specification indicates the inclusion of a lagged dependent variable.

[15] For example, vote swings of pre-1960 parties are direct, empirical components of the measure for current electoral performance, making contemporaneous values a "tainted" measure when explaining the dependent variable. The correlation between turnout and lagged turnout is 0.904, while the correlation between Pedersen and Lagged Pedersen is 0.218.

see new party entry have a negative impact on the vote share of the established parties. On the other hand, if new parties generally have little influence on overall patterns of electoral competition or are simply trading votes with one another, then their entry should have insignificant effects on the old guard's performance.[16]

A series of other variables capture trends in electoral instability. We include the dichotomous variable *Coalition* which equals "1" when a coalition government immediately preceded the election. This follows a simple empirical observation by Rose and Mackie (1983) that parties in coalition governments generally do worse in the subsequent election than those in single-party governments. While all government parties lose votes on average, the effect is stronger for coalition parties, because their supporters often see the policy deals made to support coalition governments as an abandonment of the party's electoral manifesto. *Parliamentary turnover* is a discrete variable that counts the number of changes in cabinet composition between the last to current elections. We predict that government parties will be penalized by voters should they be unable to maintain a stable cabinet.

We also include two measures for political institutions. *Electoral change* is a dichotomous variable that equals "1" where the electoral system was altered prior to the election. This is recorded when there is a change in: (1) the electoral formula (e.g. switch from plurality to PR and vice versa, or changes in the type of PR rule); (2) the mean district magnitude (change of more than 10 percent); and (3) the legal threshold of representation. Changes to the electoral system alter the framework of electoral competition and, as such, should have a negative effect on *Pre-1960 vote*, as institutional change should disproportionately harm parties which have nurtured their organizational base to maximize efficiency under the status quo system.

Effective threshold is a continuous variable that measures the effective threshold of representation, a composite index of various electoral rules which represents the difficulty of winning a seat under that electoral configuration (Lijphart 1994).[17] One of the difficulties of winning votes in plurality systems (which have higher thresholds) is that voters tend to behave more strategically by not casting ballots in favor of doomed parties, even if they prefer the doomed party to more prominent, established alternatives (Duverger 1954; Cox 1997). In theory, a higher effective threshold should allow older parties to do better, since inertial effects in favor of the status quo party system are stronger.

Finally, dummy variables for *Decade* are also included in the model to distinguish between factors that affect all countries at the same point in time, and those that affect countries at certain periods in their political maturation (as captured by the *Election count* time factor). Crucially, *Decade* also allow us to disentangle the impact of the other independent variables from a simple time trend.

[16] While models of strategic party entry generally predict that new parties should only compete when the odds of success are good, empirical studies have found that most new parties tend to do quite poorly. As of yet, there is no robust model on the correlates of initial party success (Hug 2001; Tavits 2006).

[17] The effective threshold is calculated by averaging (1) the threshold of exclusion, which is the maximum percentage of votes that a party can obtain without being able to win a seat, and (2) the threshold of inclusion, which is the minimum percentage of votes that a party can win and still gain a seat. The threshold of exclusion (*Texcl*) $= V/M+1$, where V=vote share and M=number of seats in the district. The threshold of inclusion (*Tincl*) is the higher of either (1) the legal threshold of representation, or (2) *Tincl* $= 100/2M$, where M=average district magnitude (Lijphart 1994).

Table 23.2 displays the regression results from the pooled OLS regression. The overall model fit is excellent, with an R-squared of 0.97. The analysis yields some interesting observations regarding the electoral competition between new and older parties, as well as the organizational capacity of the older parties themselves.

First, we can see that the entry of new parties decreases the vote share of parties that had been around before 1960, suggesting that new entrants are indeed competing successfully on new issues. The coefficient on the *New party count* variable is negative, with each additional party lowering the vote share of pre-1960 parties by 3.58 percent.

Second, the increase in electoral volatility has been more damaging to traditional parties than to newer parties. The negative coefficient for *Lag Pedersen* indicates that electoral volatility has a negative effect on the vote share of traditional parties as a group. A one standard deviation increase in *Lag Pedersen* decreases *Pre-1960 vote* by 1.85 percent. These estimates indicate that instability in election outcomes is due to older parties losing voters to newer parties, rather than simple horse-trading between established parties.

Third, the *Lag turnout* variable has a positive coefficient, such that a 10 percent decrease in turnout in the previous period decreases the vote share of established parties by 1.5 percent. This finding again points to the significance of changes in the organizational structure of traditional parties. The implication is that older parties are losing votes faster than newer parties due to their declining ability to mobilize voters on election day.

Turning to the other variables, we can see that, as expected, *Coalition* is negative while *Parliamentary turnover* is positive, although only *Coalition* is statistically significant at conventional levels. The coefficients of both institutional variables—*Effective threshold* and *Electoral change*—have signs in the predicted direction, although their substantive impact is low. The difference between the most permissive and most restrictive thresholds—0.67 in the Dutch system of nationwide PR vs. 35 under British-style single-member plurality—only equates to an increase in the vote share of pre-1960 parties by 3.5 percent. The most likely explanation for the small coefficient is that the AR1 variable (lagged *Pre-1960 vote*) already incorporates the effects of electoral threshold on voter behavior in the previous time period, and because electoral threshold rarely changes over time, the lagged variable understates the true impact of this measure. Similarly, electoral rule change, which should theoretically wreak havoc on election outcomes, only decreases *Pre-1960 vote* by 1.89 percent. This may reflect the fact that electoral rules are generally altered at times and ways that favor incumbent government parties, many of which are pre-1960 groups (McElwain 2005). The decade dummies are all significant and positive, with the size of the coefficient becoming larger the further back one goes in time. Since there were fewer "new" parties in 1960 than in 1990, it is not surprising that older parties did progressively worse as the years wore on.

In sum, this simple analysis produces a few important findings. The entry of new parties has had a significant negative impact on the vote share of parties established before 1960. The traditional parties, as a group, appear to face a genuine electoral threat from the new competitors organized around new electoral issues, which we described in Section 3. Their faltering electoral performance, therefore, may be partly

Table 23.2 Estimating the electoral performance of established political parties (1960–2002) (model: pooled OLS regression, correlated panels corrected standard errors (PCSEs))

Variable	Vote % of pre-1960 parties		Descriptive statistics		
	β	(SE)	Min/max	Mean	S.D.
New party count	− 3.576[c]	0.563	0/5	0.483	0.856
Lag Pedersen	− 0.273[c]	0.091	0/46.35	8.852	6.793
Lag turnout	0.149[a]	0.089	59/97.2	83.583	8.880
Coalition	− 2.585[b]	1.316	0/1	0.562	0.497
Parliamentary turnover	0.535	0.435	0/6	0.727	1.080
Electoral change	− 1.888[a]	1.056	0/1	0.103	0.305
Electoral threshold	0.102[a]	0.061	.67/35	11.074	11.319
1960s	11.925[c]	2.748	# of cases:	45	
1970s	8.966[c]	2.514		60	
1980s	7.239[c]	2.589		60	
1990s	3.289	2.342		55	
Constant	70.988[c]	7.711			
Wald	147.81				
N	220				
R^2	0.965				

Notes: Group variable: country (20); time variable: election count (1–24).
Panel-specific AR(1) auto-correlation; sigma computed by pairwise selection.
[a] $p < 0.1$.
[b] $p < 0.05$.
[c] $p < .01$.

attributed to a failure to compete successfully on new policy dimensions. At the same time, the close relationship between the decline in voter turnout and the electoral performance of the established parties indicates that organizational change—and in particular the scaling back of the grassroots organizations of mass parties—has also had a critical role to play. Finally, and of considerable interest, is the finding that the increase in electoral volatility has not affected all parties proportionately, but rather has had a particularly negative impact on traditional parties.

How should we interpret these results? On the one hand, we might expect to observe increased electoral volatility as a side effect of electoral realignment. That is, if party systems are currently undergoing a period of adjustment in response to socioeconomic changes, then we should see a short period of increased volatility

followed by a return to vote stability as the system returns to equilibrium, when once-established parties adjust their policy platforms or new parties take their place. On the other hand, if increased electoral volatility is in fact a symptom of more fundamental changes in party organizations, and in the nature of the voter–party relationship, then there is no reason to expect a reduction in volatility over time. Indeed, the statistical analysis shows support for both positions: new parties are entering the electoral arena and taking votes away from established parties, but at the same time, political mobilization—the hallmark of the "mass party model"—is declining overall and harming the electoral bottom line of the old guard.

Adjudicating between these two forces is a challenging task for future research, and lies beyond the scope of this essay. We can, however, investigate some empirical indicators which allow us to discern "trends within trends." Specifically, while electoral volatility may be on the rise, we can examine whether the *rate* of increase is high or low; put differently, are increases in volatility accelerating or holding steady? We conduct a simple test by comparing Pedersen Index values at time (t) with lagged Pedersen values at time (t−1). The correlation between the contemporaneous and lagged values is only 0.218, indicating that vote fluctuations in one time period do not allow us to infer a great deal about fluctuations in the next period. The standard deviation for Pedersen$_{(t)}$ − Pedersen$_{(t−1)}$ is much larger (8.553) than the mean (0.504), attesting to the high instability in electoral volatility. Figure 23.6 analyzes the rate of change in electoral volatility by displaying the difference between the contemporaneous and lagged measures, excluding elections that followed a major electoral rule change.[18] The data suggest that the rate of increase in electoral fluctuations is holding steady over time, giving us no reason to believe that
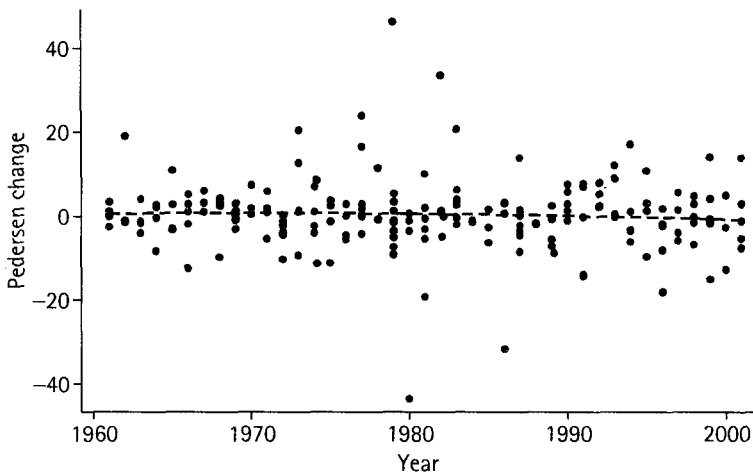

Fig. 23.6 Fluctuations in the Pedersen Index [Pedersen(t)−Pedersen(t−1)]

[18] Including cases following electoral rule change does not significantly change results, but this operationalization better captures natural trends in electoral volatility independent of *institutional* volatility.

electoral volatility will decline any time soon. Importantly, there is no indication of electoral stabilization *despite* the increasing number of new political parties (described in Figure 23.4). Based on the limited data available here, what we seem to be observing is steady *de*alignment, rather than cyclical realignment.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Parties play a crucial role in parliamentary politics, and its purported decline—operationalized here and in other works by an electoral volatility index—has been the focus of numerous studies of electoral and legislative behavior. Scholars have identified two parallel trends in the linkage between parties and voters. First, voters are showing weaker partisan identification with political parties, and there appears to be a widening gap between the policy preferences of voters and the electoral manifestos of parties. Second, improvements in educational attainment and innovations in media technology are strengthening the political capability of both parties and voters, making it unnecessary or undesirable for both groups to be locked into a mass party structure. These two changes are interconnected, one symptom of which is the increasing centralization of party platforms in favor of the median voter: the availability of advertising tools allows parties to tap a national audience for votes (capability change), but is also exacerbating the ideological distance between parties and voters (preference drift).

These two explanations have different implications for the future of the party–voter linkage. If preference change is the main culprit for electoral instability, we should see an eventual decline in vote volatility once existing parties realign and adapt to the evolving policy preferences of voters, or when new parties emerge to take their place. If electoral instability is driven by changes in the political capability of voters and parties, however, then the organizational ties between the two groups will continue to fray, and current vote fluctuations can be interpreted as a precursor to permanent partisan *dealignment*.

In this essay we have analyzed the causal weight of these divergent hypotheses. The literature suggests that new parties typically take advantage of ideological niches left unoccupied when older parties veer to the political center, leading to the proliferation of parties espousing "postmaterialist" values. Our statistical analysis confirms that older parties are progressively losing votes to newer groups, but equally important, that established parties are failing to ensure that their supporters turn out on polling day. Coupled with the fact that trends in electoral volatility—the rate of change in vote fluctuations—have held steady over time, the preponderance of evidence seems to point to long-term dealignment rather than temporary realignment.

While cross-national regressions are one way to study the effects of new parties on electoral competition, to truly understand the salience of new political parties, we must develop a better understanding of how they are structured internally. In theory, new parties should be organized in a way that best matches the preferences and

capabilities of voters at the time of that party's inception; the organizational structure of older parties, on the other hand, may reflect historical baggage from the incentive structure of previous time periods. To play devil's advocate, if successful new parties develop a mass organization rather than a catch-all structure, we could infer that the full mobilization model of older parties is still relevant and that recent trends in electoral volatility do not necessarily indicate dealignment.

One way of settling this debate is to develop a "life-cycle model" of political parties. While there has been intriguing new research on *when* parties form, there is less information about what determines their initial success, how their organizational structure changes over time, and what factors explain their lifespan. This requires comprehensive data on the membership rolls, internal by-laws, ideological composition, and electoral strategies of new parties, but also of established parties which are currently dominant but were once young themselves. Most studies of electoral and party politics begin in the post-war period (as we do), but it is difficult to understand the evolution of new parties without knowing how parties which were small at their inception gradually became larger.

This distinction between small and large parties is more than just a matter of votes, since the organizational foundations of electoral success differ between parties of different size. Kirchheimer (1966), for example, argues that only large, nationally competitive political parties should adopt a catch-all structure, since smaller parties espousing relatively extreme or new ideological positions would be better off allying closely with the niche bloc of voters that care passionately about these issues. Maintaining a mass organization structure becomes problematic only when the ideological diversity within the party expands or the membership balloons to an unmanageable size, but new parties, particularly postmaterial groups, are still relatively small. As such, it is difficult to infer how they will adjust their organizational foundation should they become successful, especially if Inglehart is correct in predicting an expanding voter base with postmaterialist values.

Finally, while electoral volatility is an interesting phenomenon in its own right, it is by no means clear whether this should lead to a more fundamental change in party politics. On the one hand, the demobilization of mass parties, the increasing salience of postmaterialist values, and/or changes in the content of ideological debates over the economy may all change the issues discussed and policies legislated in parliament. On the other hand, instability in the electorate does not necessarily indicate instability in government composition and formation. The entry of new parties may diminish the electoral salience of established parties, but are these new parties increasingly entering government or causing more rapid turnovers in government composition?

This query lies at the heart of Peter Mair's distinction between party change and party *system* change. Party changes occur when the vote distribution between existing parties with similar ideological positions fluctuates, such as when socialist and communist parties trade votes. This does not change the overall pattern of political competition, however, since the left vs. right cleavage is preserved. Party *system* change, on the other hand, entails a shift in the cleavage structure of politics or in patterns of government formation. For example, if a dominant centrist party loses

votes to both left- and right-wing parties, the ideological basis of political competition becomes more polarized. Alternatively, when a majoritarian party that competes against a coalition of smaller parties splits, creating a new system where two latent coalitions are vying for power, the basis of government formation is altered. A good example is Ireland in the late 1980s, when the Progressive Democrats split from Fianna Fáil, weakening the latter's claim of being a viable majoritarian party and setting up coalition alternatives of Fianna Fáil-PD vs. Fine Gael-Labour. In general, party change appears to be more frequent than party system change, leading Peter Mair to argue that electoral volatility is not fundamentally altering the foundation of political competition (Mair 1997; Mair and Mudde 1998).

Figure 23.7 gets at this distinction between party change and party system change by displaying trends in the frequency of cabinet turnover between elections.[19] Cabinets are far from stable in parliamentary systems: opposition parties can orchestrate a government coup by passing a vote of no confidence, or the cabinet may dissolve itself strategically to redistribute ministerial portfolios and spread the wealth among more MPs (Mershon 2002). One of the implications from the literature on electoral volatility is that the prevalence of new parties should decrease government longevity, since newer parties lack the expertise and long-standing relations with other parties that make it possible to keep governments intact. The left panel of Figure 23.7 shows, however, that
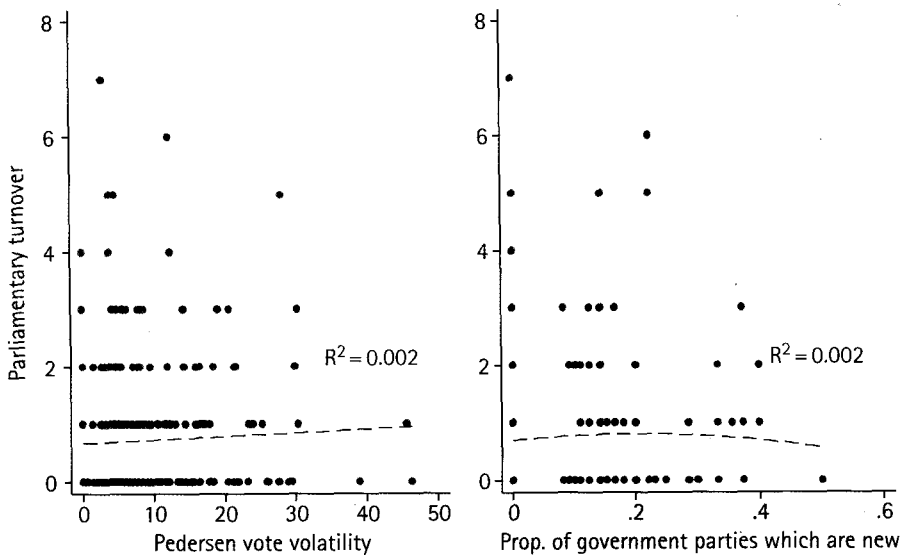
Note: Parliamentary turnover counts number of changes in cabinet composition.

Fig. 23.7 Components of government stability

---

[19] Cabinet change is recorded whenever the executive is replaced or a new party enters/leaves the existing cabinet. This coding follows Woldendorp, Keman, and Budge (2000).

government stability is independent of *electoral* stability, as measured by vote volatility. The right panel depicts the relationship between the proportion of total government parties that are new (defined as never having been in government) and cabinet stability, and this, too, indicates that government stability is independent of new party entry.

While there are other ways to measure government effectiveness—examining policy outputs and macroeconomic performance come to mind—this figure suggests that the doom and gloom surrounding normative evaluations of electoral volatility may be overblown. Indeed, to the extent that older parties still occupy most cabinet positions, the decline in their relative vote shares may simply signify the desire to shed electoral fat, or organizational capacity that is irrelevant to legislative power. Restated, the question is whether parties are becoming leaner and meaner vs. thinner and weaker. While the relative stability in government composition speaks to the former, we trust future research to better explicate the causes and effects of changes to the party–voter linkage.

REFERENCES

ALDRICH, J. H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ALESINA, A., and ROSENTHAL, H. 1995. *Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ARMINGEON, K., LEIMGRUBER, P., BEYELER, M., and MENEGALE, S. 2005. Comparative political data set 1960–2003. Institute of Political Science, University of Berne.

BENOIT, K., and LAVER, M. Forthcoming. *Party Policy in Modern Democracies.* London: Routledge.

BOIX, C. 2000. Partisan governments, the international economy, and macroeconomic policies in OECD countries, 1964–93. *World Politics,* 53: 38–73.

BOWLER, S., FARRELL, D. M., and KATZ, R. S. 1999. Party cohesion, party discipline, and parliaments. Ch. 1 in *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government,* ed. S. Bowler, D. M. Farrell, and R. S. Katz. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

BUDGE, I., ROBERTSON, D., and HEARL, D. eds. 1987. *Ideology, Strategy, and Party Change: Spatial Analyses of Post-War Election Programmes in 19 Democracies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CAMERON, D. 1984. Social democracy, corporatism, labor quiescence, and the representation of economic interest in advanced capitalist society. Pp. 143–78 in *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism,* ed. J. H. Goldthorpe. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

CAMPBELL, A., CONVERSE, P. E., MILLER, W. E., and STOKES, D. E. 1960. *The American Voter.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

CARAMANI, D. 2003. The end of silent elections: the birth of electoral competition, 1832–1915. *Party Politics,* 94: 411–43.

——— 2000. *The Societies of Europe: Elections in Western Europe since 1815.* London: Macmillan Reference Ltd.

CAUL, M. L., and GRAY, M. M. 2000. From platform declarations to policy outcomes: changing party profiles and partisan influence over policy. Pp. 208–37 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies,* ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CLARK, T. N., and LIPSET, S. M. 2001. *The Breakdown of Class Politics: A Debate on Post-Industrial Stratification*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

CLARKE, H. D., and STEWART, M. C. 1998. The decline of parties in the minds of citizens. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1: 357–78.

COX, G. 1987. *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political Parties in Victorian England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— and McCUBBINS, M. D. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

DALTON, R. J. 2000. The decline of party identifications. Pp. 19–36 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— McALLISTER, I., and WATTENBERG, M. P. 2000. The consequences of partisan dealignment. Pp. 37–63 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— —— —— 2002. Political parties and their publics. Pp. 19–42 in *Political Parties in the New Europe: Political and Analytical Challenges*, ed. K. R. Luther and F. Muller-Rommel. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— and WATTENBERG, M. P. 2000. Unthinkable democracy: political change in advanced industrial democracies. Pp. 3–18 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DE WINTER, L. 1998. Conclusion: a comparative analysis of the electoral, office and policy success of ethnoregionalist parties. Pp. 204–47 in *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, ed. L. De Winter and H. Tursan. New York: Routledge.

DOWNS, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

DUVERGER, M. 1954. *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. New York: Wiley.

EZROW, L. 2005. Are moderate parties rewarded in multiparty systems? A pooled analysis of Western European elections, 1984–1998. *European Journal of Political Research*, 44: 881–98.

FARRELL, D. M. 2002. Campaign modernization and the west European party. Pp. 63–84 in *Political Parties in the New Europe: Political and Analytical Challenges*, ed. K. R. Luther and F. Muller-Rommel. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— and WEBB, P. 2000. Political parties as campaign organizations. Pp. 102–28 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GORVIN, I. ed. 1989. *Elections since 1945: A Worldwide Reference Compendium*. Chicago: St James Press.

GRILLI, V., MASCIANDORO, D., and TABELLINI, G. 1991. Political and monetary institutions and public financial policies in the industrialized countries. *Economic Policy*, 13: 341–92.

HIBBS, D. 1977. Political parties and macroeconomic policy. *American Political Science Review*, 71: 1467–87.

HUG, S. 2001. *Altering Party Systems: Strategic Behavior and the Emergence of New Political Parties in Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

INGLEHART, R. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

—— 1987. Value change in industrial societies. *American Political Science Review*, 814: 1289–303.

—— 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

IVERSEN, T. 1994. The logics of electoral politics: spatial, directional, and mobilizational effects. *Comparative Political Studies*, 272: 155–89.

—— and WREN, A. 1998. Equality, employment, and budgetary restraint: the trilemma of the service economy. *World Politics*, 50: 242–56.

KALYVAS, S. N. 1996. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

KATZ, R., and MAIR, P. eds. 1992. *Party Organizations: A Data Handbook on Party Organizations in Western Democracies, 1960–1990*. London: Sage Publications.

—— —— 1995. Changing models of party organization and party democracy: the emergence of the cartel party. *Party Politics*, 11: 5–28.

KIRCHHEIMER, O. 1966. The transformation of the western European party systems. Pp. 177–200 in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

KITSCHELT, H. 1994. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—— 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

KORPI, W., and SHALEV, M. 1979. Strikes, industrial-relations and class conflict in capitalist societies. *British Journal of Sociology*, 302: 164–87.

LANGE, P., and GARRETT, G. 1985. The politics of growth: strategic interaction and economic performance in the advanced industrial democracies, 1974–1980. *Journal of Politics*, 473: 792–827.

LAVER, M., and SCHOFIELD, N. 1990. *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

LEWIS-BECK, M. 1988. *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

—— and STEGMAIER, M. 2000. Economic determinants of electoral outcomes. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3: 183–219.

LIJPHART, A. 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies 1945–1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LIPSET, S. M., and ROKKAN, S. eds. 1967. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press.

MCELWAIN, K. M. 2005. Manipulating electoral rules: intra-party conflict, partisan interests, and constitutional thickness. Doctoral dissertation. Stanford University.

MACKUEN, M. B., ERICKSON, R. S., and STIMSON, J. A. 1992. Peasants or bankers? The American electorate and the US economy. *American Political Science Review*, 863: 597–611.

MAIR, P. 1990. Introduction. Pp. 1–22 in *The West European Party System*, ed. P. Mair. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— 1997. *Party System Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—— and MUDDE, C. 1998. The party family and its study. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 1: 211–29.

—— MULLER, W. C., and PLASSER, F. eds. 2004. *Political Parties and Electoral Change: Party Responses to Electoral Markets*. London: Sage Publications.

MERSHON, C. 2002. *The Costs of Coalition*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

PEDERSEN, M. N. 1979. The dynamics of European party systems: changing patterns of electoral volatility. *European Journal of Political Research*, 71: 1–26.

POWELL, G. B., and WHITTEN, G. D. 1993. A cross-national analysis of economic voting: taking account of the political context. *American Journal of Political Science*, 372: 391–414.

PRZEWORSKI, A., and SPRAGUE, J. 1986. *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

RABINOWITZ, G., and MACDONALD, S. E. 1989. A directional theory of issue voting. *American Political Science Review*, 83: 93–121.

RODRIK, D. 1997. *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics.

ROSE, R., and MACKIE, T. T. 1983. Incumbency in government: asset or liability? Pp. 115–37 in *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*, ed. H. Daalder and P. Mair. Berkeley, Calif.: Sage Publications.

SCARROW, S. E. 2000. Parties without members? Party organization in a changing electoral environment. Pp. 79–101 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SCHATTSCHNEIDER, E. E. 1942. *Party Government.* New York: Farrar and Rinehart.

—— 1960. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

SIMMONS, B. 1998. The internationalization of capital. Pp. 36–69 in *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism*, ed. H. Kitschelt, P. Lange, G. Marks, and J. Stephens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

STOKES, S. C. 1999. Political parties and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 243–67.

STROM, K. 1990. *Minority Government and Majority Rule.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TAVITS, M. 2006. Party system change: testing a model of new party entry. *Party Politics*, 121: 99–119.

VOLKENS, A., and KLINGEMANN, H.-D. 2002. Parties, ideologies, and issues: stability and change in fifteen European party systems 1945–1998. Pp. 143–68 in *Political Parties in the New Europe: Political and Analytical Challenges*, ed. K. R. Luther and F. Muller-Rommel. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WATTENBERG, M. P. 2000. The decline of party mobilization. Pp. 64–76 in *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ed. R. J. Dalton and M. P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WOLDENDORP, J., KEMAN, H., and BUDGE, I. 2000. *Party Government in 48 Democracies 1945–1998: Composition-Duration-Personnel.* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

WREN, A. 2006. Comparative perspectives on the role of the state in the economy. In *Oxford Handbook of Political Economy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.