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## **Alignment, realignment and dealignment in multi-party systems : a conceptual and empirical study**

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## Stellingen

### Behorende bij proefschrift 'Alignment, Realignment and Dealignment in Multi-Party Systems – A Conceptual and Empirical Study'

van Hila Federer-Shtayer

- 1- The debates over whether or not the connections between voters and political parties in the party systems of Western democratic states are still relatively stable and structured, (i.e. in alignment), whether or not these party systems have changed and, – if so – what kind of change has occurred (i.e. realignment or dealignment), have their roots in a conceptual problem: there is no single agreed operational definition of either realignment or dealignment.
- 2- “*Collective ambiguity* [...] [wherein] each scholar ascribes his[/her] own meanings to his key terms [...] can be rampant – to the point of destroying a discipline as a cumulative fabric of knowledge” (Sartori 1984:35).
- 3- Dealignment in a multi-party system is *a process that begins with erosion of the alignment of voters along the main cleavages or with declining levels of partisanship (this is the first phase, in which the process is partial). The process will then progress and become wider and deeper, so that no mechanisms of voter alignment – partisanship or alignments along cleavages – will function (this is the second phase, in which the process becomes a full dealignment). Throughout the two phases of the dealignment process, the structure of the electoral party system will be modified, but the shifts will not necessarily begin immediately. During its partial phase, modifications of party system structure will occur only occasionally and chances are high that the party system structure will become more fragmented. In the second phase of full dealignment, the party system structure will change very frequently, but will not necessarily become more fragmented.*
- 4- The transition from alignment into dealignment or realignment in at least one of its manifestations occurred during a period of about twenty years between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s in eleven European multi-party systems: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Flanders, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Wallonia. In the vast majority of these cases, diminishing of patterns of alignment was identified throughout the mid 1960s and mid 1970s.

- 5- Most European multi-party systems are currently in a state of disconnection between voters and parties. This has been the case since some point in time between the mid 1960s and mid 1980s and will probably continue for a long time: no signs of realignment have appeared. Therefore, dealignment should not be viewed in a negative light, but rather should be seen as part of what Enyedi (2008:299) called “the process of democratization, when ‘voters begin to choose’.”
- 6- Our era is characterised by an ‘Audience Democracy’: voters function as an audience that responds to a play that is being presented on the political stage.
- 7- The Maverick Element: non-conforming issues that are of primary concern. These could be initially raised by, and in turn can mobilize, even those who were previously not engaged in formal politics.
- 8- Since the Party Cartel is part of the state and has a self-protection mechanism any institution that tries to challenge the political alliance will not receive continuously high support in the long run, unless it undergoes a socialisation process.
- 9- “It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious.” (*Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) English philosopher and mathematician*)
- 10- “The more I learn, the more I learn how little I know.” (*Socrates (c. 469 BC – 399 BC)*)