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## **Parties under pressure : explaining choices made by parties in the wake of heavy electoral defeat**

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## 2 Parties and party change: state of the field

### 2.1 Introduction

The evolution of political parties is one of the most expansive subject areas in the body of political science literature. This is no wonder: in a modern context, political parties form one of the essential parts of democratic systems. With their important functions for elite recruitment, structuring public opinion and formulating policy, political parties play an essential role in modern democracies. It is therefore no surprise that since the rise of mass political parties, political scientists have sought to understand the way in which this vital democratic institution develops. They found that as the nature of modern democracy changed, political parties were likely to adapt and change with the times, giving rise to an entire literature on party change.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this chapter is twofold and unfolds roughly in this order. First, it seeks to give an outline and overview of the general literature on political parties as it developed, specifically the literature on party change. Second, it seeks to make clear the position and relevance of the current study to the debate. With regard to this second aim, the argument that will be presented is that debate on party change following external shocks has more or less arrived at a stalemate, since the prevailing theories are not equipped to go into the specifics of what can and cannot be expected to change. Therefore, it will be argued towards the end of this chapter that a new theory of party change following electoral shocks is required to resolve these problems.

This chapter starts by defining the population, quickly sketching three aspects of political parties which together make up the way political parties are understood in this study (section 2.2). The chapter then moves on to a discussion of party change in general (section 2.3). This section identifies two major bodies of the literature on party change – one on gradual party change, the other on party change induced by external shocks –, highlighting some common characteristics and problems associated with the party change literature as a whole. These two bodies of literature shall be discussed separately in sections 2.4 and 2.5. It will then be argued, in conclusion (section 2.6) why a new model of party change following external shocks, specifically electoral shocks, is needed to further our insight into why some parties develop in certain directions and other parties in others.

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1. E.g. M. Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, trans. from the French by B. North and R. North (London: Methuen, 1954 [1951]); R. Harmel and K. Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994): 259–287; R. S. Katz and P. Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: the Emergence of the Cartel Party,” *Party Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 5–28.

## 2.2 Parties

Though there is now general agreement that “democracy has become unthinkable save in terms of political parties”<sup>2</sup>, there is considerably less agreement on what exactly a political party is. The debate on the proper definition of political parties will not be rehashed here, since it only serves to delineate the population to which this study applies.<sup>3</sup> However, for the sake of clarity, this dissertation employs the minimum definition of parties as developed by Sartori: “a party is any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or nonfree), candidates for public office.”<sup>4</sup> As Sartori notes, such a definition is best suited to the purpose of delineating the class of objects we are talking about.<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasised that this is its only purpose: parties do more than just participating at elections, but it is only the participation at elections that defines all parties and sets them apart from other organisations.<sup>6</sup>

Since this definition considers any official organisation that competes at elections under a common label with a fair chance of securing a seat a party, it nicely suits our study, which is after all concerned with the effects of electoral competition on parties. To delineate the population with which this study is concerned, therefore, it is more than sufficient. However, this study is also concerned with party change, specifically changes to a party’s essential character and operations. Since parties do much more than run candidates for election, the minimal definition does not suffice for this purpose. Following Von Beyme, we propose to resolve this by referring to party functions, or what parties do, in addition to what they are.<sup>7</sup>

These functions should be seen as somewhat broader than simply electoral. It is true that all parties have in common an effort to place candidates in public office, but they also have different essential functions and characteristics which if changed would undoubtedly constitute meaningful party change. Here broader functional definitions of parties can help, such as the one given by Von Beyme which identifies four functions: a programmatic or ideological function, an interest aggregation function, a mobilization or socialization function and an elite recruitment or government formation function.<sup>8</sup> These also fit counterparts in the American literature, such as the one given by Chambers: “nominating; electioneering; shaping opinion; mediating among groups, “brokerage”, or finding formulas of agreement; managing government; and supplying connections between the branches of government”.<sup>9</sup> From these functions and the minimal definition, four essential characteristics of any particular party can be distilled: its organisation, electoral strategy,

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2. As famously expressed in E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (New York: Holt, Rinehart / Winston, 1942).

3. See for example G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 58-64.

4. *Ibid.*, 63.

5. *Ibid.*, 64.

6. *Ibid.*

7. K. Von Beyme, *Politische Parteien in westlichen Demokratien* (München: Piper, 1984), 25.

8. *Ibid.*

9. W.N. Chambers, *Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience, 1776-1809* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 45.

its ideological or policy programme and the personal composition of its elite and of the slate of candidates it seeks to place in office. These four essential characteristics, while not determining the extent of the population, do serve to define a way of looking at the essentials of parties.

A last consideration that will be explored further below in our discussion of party change is that this study sees parties not just as organisations but as institutions. Rather than just organised forms of behaviour, parties are organised forms of behaviour imbued with value. This has been present since some of the earliest contributions to the literature: Michels observed a related process of goal displacement.<sup>10</sup> As the organizational needs of a party forced it to organize to obtain its original goals, eventually the organization itself would become more important than these goals.<sup>11</sup> According to Michels, this led to the displacement of the original goal of socialist parties in overthrowing capitalism with the mere survival of the party itself. This argument offers an important insight into political parties: their survival becomes a priority in and of itself since their existence is valued by their adherents.

## 2.3 Party change in general

This dissertation is mainly concerned with how parties change. Parties have changed a great deal between their origins in the 19th century and the present day. It is not surprising, therefore, that the literature on political parties has considered issues of party change even before the term itself was attached to it. Some of the most influential works in the general literature on political parties, without using the phrase, concern themselves with issues of party change. This is because of their focus on the evolution and development of political parties as a class of organisations, seeking to explain why parties at any particular time were constituted as they were and predicting how they would develop further. Any comprehensive treatment of political parties must unavoidably address how parties have shaped up over time.<sup>12</sup>

The early literature on the historical development of parties naturally developed into works that focused on gradual party change. These works highlight the evolutionary character of party change, stipulating that parties adapt gradually to changes in their environment. It is characterised in large part by focusing on the notion of party types pioneered by Duverger, with various types of parties succeeding each other over the course of history.<sup>13</sup> This body of literature on gradual change will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4 below. A more recent body of literature makes a different argument, arguing that party change is the result of external shocks. These short, sharp shocks of environmental pressure force a break in the normal resistance of parties to change. This part of

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10. R. Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. from the German by E. Paul and C. Paul (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978 [1915]), 373.

11. Michels, *Political Parties*, 373; see also M. Ostrogorski, *La Démocratie et les Partis Politiques* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1912), 642.

12. E.g. Ostrogorski, *La Démocratie et les Partis Politiques*; Michels, *Political Parties*; Duverger, *Political Parties*; Von Beyme, *Politische Parteien in westlichen Demokratien*; L. D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1967).

13. Duverger, *Political Parties*, 63.

the literature is comparatively smaller, and will be the subject of section 2.5 below.

Before moving on to detailed discussion of these two different bodies of literature, section 2.3.1. through 2.3.3. shall discuss various characteristics and problems common to the entire field of party change. A first commonality is that both bodies of literature have a similar view about the origins of party change. In both parts of the literature, factors external to the party are involved in causing the party to change. In the gradualist body of literature, this takes the form of the evolving structure of society. An example is the use of universal suffrage to explain the rise of the mass party type.<sup>14</sup> External shocks are more dramatic and shorter episodes of external pressures, such as electoral defeat, which is the focus of this study.<sup>15</sup>

This need to invoke the external environment as a cause for change is the result of the nature of parties as institutions. As parties are organisations imbued with value and their survival is valued highly, they are not likely to change of their own accord.<sup>16</sup> This resistance to change which is a main characteristic of institutions and therefore of political parties makes it hard to explain change in political parties without reference to some external factor, since changes in the internal dynamic to produce party change must be explained somehow.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.1 Why study party change?

Studying party change is important because of the central position of parties in modern democratic systems. Unsurprisingly, normative judgments are often made as a result of empirical observations on the development of political parties. These normative judgments go back to the beginning of empirical research on political parties, when the desirability of their emergence was still a discussion. In observing the development of political parties into permanent organisations, Ostrogorski combined observation of the empirical reality of parties with fierce criticism of the way they enforced discipline and became vehicles for power.<sup>18</sup> The kind of parties criticised by Ostrogorski and Michels resembles the mass party type of a well-disciplined and centralised party with a class of professional politicians running it, even though they extrapolated this to respectively party and organisation in general.<sup>19</sup> In a similar vein, the elaboration of party types such as the catch-all party and the cartel party (see section 2.4 below) has gone hand in hand with warnings about what they might mean for the nature of democracy and the relationship between parties and voters.<sup>20</sup>

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14. Duverger, *Political Parties*, 66.

15. A. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, trans. from the Italian by M. Silver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1982]), 242; R. Harmel and K. Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 3 (1994): 265.

16. Cf. Michels, *Political Parties*, 373.

17. Cf. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 242.

18. Ostrogorski, *La Démocratie et les Partis Politiques*, 619ff.

19. Ostrogorski, *La Démocratie et les Partis Politiques*, 619ff. Michels, *Political Parties*.

20. O. Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems," in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. J. LaPalombara and M. Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 200; R. S. Katz and P. Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: the Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 115.

Studies of party change have also engaged with claims that political parties have been experiencing a ‘crisis of party’. These claims often centered around social changes that shifted the linkage function of political parties.<sup>21</sup> Among others, rising electoral volatility as a result of partisan dealignment<sup>22</sup> and declining memberships of political parties in Western democracies<sup>23</sup> were observed. These large-scale electoral changes were the subject of several works in the literature which also deal with party change.<sup>24</sup>

The problem with the ‘crisis of party’ genre, as observed among others by Mair, was that while these developments did occur, parties survived.<sup>25</sup> Daalder as well as Mair imply that this may be the result of a normative bias.<sup>26</sup> Political parties proved a resilient institution.<sup>27</sup> In general, the consensus appears to be that part of the explanation for the survival of political parties as a category of institutions in Western Democracies is exactly their capacity for change. Rose and Mackie already noted this when they described their trade-off between internal and external pressures, stating that adaptation was “a necessary condition of survival”.<sup>28</sup> Mair, in a sceptical lecture on the entire idea of a crisis of party, observed that parties had a remarkable capacity to adapt that enabled them to survive.<sup>29</sup> In other words: the reason for the continuity of political parties is their capacity to change. Naturally, this makes party change a highly important subject of inquiry.

### 2.3.2 Party change and historical neo-institutionalism

Indeed, it could be argued that the nature of parties as institutions makes it harder to explain change *tout court*. This is the first problem shared by the entire literature on party change. After all, if political parties are institutions and institutions are resistant to change, then it becomes easier to explain the persistence of political parties than the ways in which they have changed. This problem was described in more general terms by Hall and Taylor in their discussion of the new institutionalisms: under the assumptions of neo-institutionalist narratives, institutions are defined by stability, but if so, why do they change?<sup>30</sup>

21. R. S. Katz, “Party as linkage: a vestigial function?,” *European Journal of Political Research* 18, no. 1 (1990): 158-159; Katz and Mair, “Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy,” 8; R. A. Koole, “Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel? A Comment on the Notion of the Cartel Party,” *Party Politics* 2, no. 4 (1996): 509.

22. See Mair, *Party System Change*, 77.

23. See P. Mair and I. van Biezen, “Party Membership in Twenty European Democracies, 1980-2000,” *Party Politics* 7, no. 1 (2001): 5-21.

24. E.g. P. Mair, W. Müller, and F. Plasser, eds., *Political Parties and Electoral Change: Party Responses to Electoral Markets* (London: SAGE, 2004).

25. Mair, *Party System Change*, 89.

26. H. Daalder, “A Crisis of Party?,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 15, no. 4 (1992): 285; Mair, *Party System Change*, 88.

27. See for example K. Lawson and P. H. Merkl, eds., *When Parties Prosper: the Uses of Electoral Success* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2007), 1.

28. R. Rose and T. T. Mackie, “Do parties persist or fail? The big trade-off facing organizations,” in *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations*, ed. K. Lawson and P. Merkl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 534.

29. Mair, *Party System Change*, 89.

30. P. A. Hall and R. C. R. Taylor, “Political science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44 (1996): 937.

In the social sciences, the new historical institutionalism provides an important conceptual and theoretical vocabulary with which to think about the complex process of change. A central concept in this literature is path-dependency, a concept originating from the study of technological change in history that David described as “one damn thing follows another”.<sup>31</sup> On a somewhat deeper conceptual level, path-dependency is usually conceived as a process by which previous events exert influence on the eventual outcomes of a process.<sup>32</sup>

Though the concept is useful in politics especially because of the complexity of the subject matter, some have rightly pointed out that it was never really clearly conceptualised.<sup>33</sup> Pierson himself offers a particularly useful and explicit characterisation of path-dependence as a process of increasing returns, where each step along a path increases the cost of turning away from it.<sup>34</sup> This is particularly useful to the analysis of political institutions, as it helps arrive at a way of thinking about how path-dependence impacts upon political processes in terms of cost-benefit.

The accompanying concept is that of the critical juncture or the punctuated equilibrium. The two resemble each other in important ways but are nevertheless distinct concepts. A state of punctuated equilibrium appears as a more formal concept. In this view, the development of institutions is marked by long periods of stable equilibrium, punctuated by shocks that throw the system off-balance and cause rapid change.<sup>35</sup> This view, though popular, has also been noted to employ rather strong assumptions: “institutions explain everything until they explain nothing”, without a middle way.<sup>36</sup>

Like punctuated equilibrium, critical junctures appear as crucial periods of change spurred by crisis which occur in different ways in different cases.<sup>37</sup> Specifically, in historical sociology and economic history, critical junctures are presented as small, contingent events that trigger large path-dependent processes, such as the invention of the steam engine that sparked the Industrial Revolution first in England rather than in another country which may have had similar structural conditions.<sup>38</sup> Such macrohistorical analyses often seek to explain large changes occurring in different ways across different countries.<sup>39</sup>

In one such macrohistorical work Collier and Collier give a very useful elaboration of

31. P. A. David, “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY,” *The American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (1985): 332.

32. David, “Clio and the Economics of QWERTY,” 332; R. Berins Collier and D. Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 27; Hall and Taylor, “Political science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” 941.

33. E.g. P. Pierson, “Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 251–267.

34. *Ibid.*, 252–253.

35. S. D. Krasner, “Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective,” *Comparative Political Studies* 21, no. 1 (1988): 79.

36. K. Thelen and S. Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” in *Structuring Politics. Historical Unilateralism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. S. Steinmo, K. Thelen, and F. Longstrech (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15.

37. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 29–30.

38. J. Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (2000): 536–537.

39. For a classic in political science that falls within this category, see S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and voter alignments: cross-national perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967).



the concept which mitigates several of the problems with punctuated equilibrium.<sup>40</sup> The prior conditions still maintain some relevance to the outcome, and the outcome of the causal process is not stable per se but is made stable by mechanisms of reproduction that represent ongoing political and institutional processes.<sup>41</sup>

However, Capoccia and Kelemen have argued that the macrohistorical perspective on critical junctures is not necessarily a good fit for other fields of institutional analysis.<sup>42</sup> This is partly because these studies, by seeking to explain historical outcomes using the critical juncture framework, often explicitly or implicitly define them with reference to their outcome of change.<sup>43</sup> While Capoccia and Kelemen agree that critical junctures are the 'genetic' moments of path-dependence, i.e. the way they originate, they point out that the outcome may also be a restoration of the status quo.<sup>44</sup> They therefore define critical junctures more specifically as "relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest" and during which there is a greater and broader scope for change.<sup>45</sup> Since this study focuses not so much on why parties have turned out the way they have (the historical outcome) but on why parties in crisis act as they do (the process), this is the more useful definition for the purposes of this dissertation.

Path-dependence arguments generally represent continuity, since it conditions current outcomes on past actions, while critical juncture or punctuated equilibrium arguments represent the possibility of change. Especially where path-dependence is produced by institutions in a given society, this can produce periods of continuity.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, such a reading is too simplistic. In Collier and Collier's study on labour relations in Latin America, path-dependence arguments are used to get at complex causal processes and to account for the fact that similar causes lead to different outcomes in different countries.<sup>47</sup> This is also a strength of the path-dependence concept noted by Hall and Taylor.<sup>48</sup>

There is a broader field of organisational literature to consider. Political parties are not the only organisations or institutions where explaining change presents a problem. A wider field of organisational and political sociology has sought to address this central issue: institutions have something permanent about them and exist in a state of equilibrium, so why and how exactly do they change? Perhaps for this reason, Wilson has described particular processes of political organisational change, but has not gone into much detail about its antecedents.<sup>49</sup>

Broader organisational theories do offer explanations of change and choices made in the

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40. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 30.

41. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 31; See also Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," 537.

42. G. Capoccia and R.D. Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism," *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007): 342.

43. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 30; Mahoney, "Path Dependence in Historical Sociology," 513-514.

44. Capoccia and Kelemen, "The Study of Critical Junctures," 342; 352.

45. *Ibid.*, 348-349.

46. Hall and Taylor, "Political science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 942.

47. Collier and Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena*, 29.

48. Hall and Taylor, "Political science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 941.

49. J. Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 205-211.

process of change, albeit on small aspects of the concept of change. One such study is Fligstein's study of the diffusion of diversification in American industry, in which he argues that the adoption of changes depended on the willingness of industry elites to change and, more importantly, on the example of leading firms.<sup>50</sup> Relevant to our later discussion of shock, he also uses the concept of an organisational field to suggest that change is most likely when the usual structure and pecking order of the field are disrupted.<sup>51</sup> Others have cast the decision to innovate as a cost-benefit analysis. March and Simon state that organisations do not even search for alternative courses of action if the present course of action is satisfactory.<sup>52</sup> Even if they state that this is not due to any sort of resistance to change and that if a better course of action presents itself at any point an organisation will change, this focus on the high costs of change is something they have in common with those who believe organisations are resistant to change.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.3.3 Delineating party change

A second problem common to the entire party change literature is the question of what is and is not to be seen as party change. If one zooms in closely enough, parties change constantly. From one election to the next, slogans, policies and slates of candidates change, but this is not usually what the term party change means. Instead, party change as it is generally understood refers to a profound change to the party's essentials. According to Mair, this is exactly the problem with speaking of party change in individual parties – how does one know conclusively when a party has changed?<sup>54</sup> His solution is not to look at change in individual parties, but rather at change in party systems.<sup>55</sup> In the body of literature concerned with gradual party change, scholars have often followed this advice and looked at change across party systems as a whole rather than at individual parties.

Some related fields of study do not experience this problem. There is a wealth of studies on party platform change, which is studied using the available data on party manifestos.<sup>56</sup> This is also one of the fields of party change research that have recently seen the most activity. The earliest part of this literature focused mostly on environmental explanations

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50. N. Fligstein, "The Structural Transformation of American Industry: An Institutional Account of the Causes of Diversification in the Largest Firms, 1919-1979," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, ed. W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 334-335.

51. *Ibid.*, 313.

52. J. March and H. Simon, *Organizations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 194.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Mair, *Party System Change*, 49.

55. *Ibid.*, 51.

56. Such as A. Volkens et al., *The Manifesto Data Collection: Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR)* (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung (WZB), 2018).

such as shifts in voter positions<sup>57</sup> and the shifts of other parties<sup>58</sup>. More recently, internal factors such as the relative importance of office<sup>59</sup> and the power of party activists have been added to the list of explanations<sup>60</sup>. These studies employ statistical analysis of manifesto data to measure the response of parties to changes in the environment.

## 2.4 Gradual party change

As already briefly touched upon in the discussion above, a large volume of studies that treats party change as a gradual process is concerned with a succession of party types representing broad changes in the nature of political parties. Party types constitute broad categories of parties based largely on the way they interact with society and the state.<sup>61</sup> Duverger's typology of political parties in particular has been very influential.<sup>62</sup> His concepts of the top-down, loosely-organised cadre party founded by notables and the bottom-up, highly-organised mass party that emerged after universal suffrage have been incorporated in most of the successive contributions to the literature. Much like Duverger himself did with the mass party, these contributions to the literature usually posited that one party type would displace earlier types, leading to a sort of linear succession of party types.<sup>63</sup>

This part of the literature is also marked by successive claims that one party type would become dominant. This started with Duverger himself, who argued that the (left-wing) mass party enjoyed a competitive advantage due to being better-suited to the demands of modern politics and society, and would eventually become dominant.<sup>64</sup> It was criticized among others by Epstein, who claimed that the trend had not materialized and that in fact, rather the opposite was the case: a 'contagion from the right' marked by declining membership numbers and increasing focus on campaigning and communications which would lead to looser organisations.<sup>65</sup> Defending Duverger, Seiler proposed a perspective in which he reinterpreted these contagion theories as adaptation to new circumstances

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57. J. Adams et al., "Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do Parties Respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results?," *British Journal of Political Science* 34, no. 4 (2004): 589–610; J. Adams et al., "Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties' Policy Shifts, 1976-1998," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 513–529; J. Adams, A.B. Haupt, and H. Stoll, "What Moves Parties? The Role of Public Opinion and Global Economic Conditions in Western Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 5 (2008): 611–639.

58. J. Adams and Z. Somer-Topcu, "Policy Adjustment by Parties in Response to Rival Parties' Policy Shifts: Spatial Theory and Dynamics of Party Competition in Twenty-Five Post-War Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 4 (2009): 825–846.

59. G. Schumacher et al., "How Aspiration to Office Conditions the Impact of Government Participation on Party Platform Change," *American Journal of Political Science*, 2015, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12174/abstract>.

60. Ibid.

61. Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?," 509; Katz and Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy," 6.

62. Duverger, *Political Parties*.

63. Ibid., xvii; 64-65; 427.

64. Ibid., xvii; 427.

65. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, 257.

without destroying previous forms.<sup>66</sup> For example, cadre parties did not disappear as a type and become mass parties; they merely adopted a more rigid form of organization. This resulted in a new typology of party types charting the ways in which mass and cadre parties have developed from their origins.<sup>67</sup>

Epstein's account of contagion from the right shares some of its logic with a highly influential addition to the expanding scheme of party types. Kirchheimer added a new party type known as the catch-all party.<sup>68</sup> Rather than going back to the cadre party, as Epstein more or less claimed, Kirchheimer argued that parties of all kinds were developing away from their origins.<sup>69</sup> He observed that parties were reducing their ideological baggage, strengthening their top leadership, de-emphasising their *classe gardée*, reducing the influence of individual members and securing access to a variety of interest groups.<sup>70</sup> He attributed this to the blurring of class divisions in post-war societies, which increasingly led parties to regard their ideological heritage as baggage. As a result, these parties "exchanged effectiveness in depth for a wider audience and more immediate electoral success".<sup>71</sup> Von Beyme made similar observations to Kirchheimer, observing that parties were accumulating more functions than in the past alongside processes of de-ideologisation, erosion of ties to social 'pillars' and a greater focus on the party elites.<sup>72</sup>

A third influential party type is the cartel party.<sup>73</sup> Observing how the decreasing number of party member had made parties vulnerable, Katz and Mair proposed that parties had captured the state for support with the use of state subventions.<sup>74</sup> In effect, they argue, the differences in resources between winners and losers of election have become smaller.<sup>75</sup> The resulting "cartel parties" basically helped secure each other's existence through inter-party collusion and through capture of the state.<sup>76</sup> This proposed new party type has had its detractors, with criticism focusing among others on the conceptual confusion between the party level and the systemic level<sup>77</sup> and the alarming consequences for the quality of representation the theory foresees.<sup>78</sup>

The key thing to take away from the body of literature on party types is the focus on macro-level developments in the party system with largely structural antecedents. What these contributions, and others like them which will not be discussed extensively in this chapter, such as the electoral-professional party<sup>79</sup> and the business-firm party<sup>80</sup>,

66. D.-L. Seiler, *De la Comparaison des Partis Politiques* (Paris: Economica, 1986), 198.

67. *Ibid.*, 245.

68. Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems."

69. *Ibid.*, 185.

70. *Ibid.*, 190.

71. *Ibid.*, 184.

72. Von Beyme, *Politische Parteien in westlichen Demokratien*, 430-434.

73. Katz and Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy," 8.

74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, 16.

76. *Ibid.*, 17.

77. Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?," 508.

78. H. Enroth, "Cartelization versus representation? On a misconception in contemporary party theory," *Party Politics* 23, no. 2 (2017): 132.

79. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 264.

80. J. Hopkin and C. Paolucci, "The Business Firm Model of Party Organisation. Cases from Spain and Italy," *European Journal of Political Research* 35 (1999): 307-339.

have in common is that they signal certain large developments in the overall structure of parties and party competition, which they then proceed to explain with reference to social developments. They focus on how parties in the plural change, or rather, on how *party* as a concept changes, and why. The developments they describe are gradual and cumulative, the result of a slow-moving adaptation to social circumstances.

The problem with this, of course, is that this particular body of literature is rather deterministic and assumes a dialectic in which one dominant party type displaces the previous one. Previous authors have convincingly argued, with reference to deviations in individual countries, that it is too simple to assume that a single dominant party type will materialise in all countries.<sup>81</sup> Koole observes that this deterministic approach is not a very fruitful avenue for research, stating that it has so far produced only high-level studies trying to demonstrate a switch in the dominant paradigm, as it were, and idiosyncratic studies of individual parties that do or do not comply with what should be the dominant type.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, it might be more fruitful for party research to focus on "... why, and under what circumstances, a certain category of parties develop in one direction and another category in another."<sup>83</sup> This is essentially a problem of complex causality that can be addressed by path-dependence arguments, with special regard to the importance of sequence.<sup>84</sup>

Krouwel can be said to have done this (although without the path-dependence argument), splitting the development of political parties over time into their electoral, programmatic and organisational dimensions using various indicators.<sup>85</sup> One has to wonder, however, whether the question Koole posed can be answered by observing various party types at the macro-level in this way.<sup>86</sup> Since research is mostly taking place on the system level, what stands out are logically the system-wide trends that lead to the kind of literature that has developed so far on party types. Yet when describing these trends, there is the risk that has demonstrably affected the body of literature on party types of extrapolating the development wrongly to the entire population, leading to a kind of 'dominant type versus exceptions' literature.<sup>87</sup>

In order to get at the reasons why certain parties develop in certain ways and others in others, the analysis needs to be taken into the individual party level. Additionally, it needs to be able to point out the sequence of events that leads to change. This is where insights on external shocks, which will be considered below, could be relevant to the further development of the literature as a whole. If we assume, based on the insights of organisational and institutional theory, that change is not something that just happens when we are looking at an institution like a political party, then it also follows that changes happen most when parties are put under pressure.

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81. Krouwel, "Otto Kirchheimer and the Catch-All Party"; Koole, *De Opkomst van de Moderne Kaderpartij*, 204.

82. Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?," 520.

83. Ibid.

84. Hall and Taylor, "Political science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 941.

85. A. Krouwel, *Party Transformations in European Democracies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 32.

86. Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?," 520.

87. This problem was also observed by Daalder, "A Crisis of Party?," 285.

In this way, furthering the body of literature on external shocks might be the way forward for the literature on party change. By observing the moments that theoretically would force parties to make the most dramatic adjustments, much can potentially be learned about the reasons for the development of certain parties in certain directions and others in other directions. This is what this study intends by studying parties after a heavy electoral defeat – by looking closely at the reasons parties had to take actions that lead to party change, we can perhaps start to bring the overall development of political parties more sharply into focus.

## 2.5 Shock-induced party change

It has already been observed that the conception of parties as institutions makes it easier to explain their persistence than their change. The point of departure of the part of the literature concerned with external shocks is exactly this: that parties, being institutions, are inherently conservative and resistant to change. The theorists in this field seek to explain why parties make large changes, primarily to their organisational structure, and as a related question, why the internal balance of power in parties shifts. This body of literature hinges on two major contributions: those of Panebianco and Harmel and Janda.<sup>88</sup>

Panebianco presents one of the more extensive treatments of the question of party organisational change in his *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. In doing so, he sums up various earlier debates occurring in the literature about changes in political parties. First, he engages the idea that parties must necessarily develop in a certain way, concluding that there are in fact many paths to change.<sup>89</sup> This is very relevant to the assumptions inherent in the research question posed in chapter one: after all, the very question of how parties change is only relevant if the direction is not predetermined simply by their being political parties. In a second discussion, Panebianco considers the intentionality of change and the problem of unintended effects.<sup>90</sup> He strikes a middle way here – changes are intentional but can also have unintended consequences.<sup>91</sup>

Most importantly, Panebianco treats one of the major questions of the organisational change literature: whether the origins of change are endogenous or exogenous.<sup>92</sup> In effect, he argues, neither is sufficient: purely endogenous origins cannot explain the shift of power that produced them, while purely exogenous origins run into the problem that organisational change does not always occur even when the environment changes. The model Panebianco proposes combines the two: something in the environment changes, challenging and ultimately discrediting and displacing the party's dominant elite, ushering in a new dominant coalition which then restructures the organisation.<sup>93</sup> Relevant to

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88. Panebianco, *Political Parties*; Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change."

89. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 240.

90. *Ibid.*, 240-242.

91. *Ibid.*, 241-242.

92. *Ibid.*, 242.

93. *Ibid.*, 244.

the topic of this dissertation, electoral defeat is named as a prime example of such an environmental crisis.<sup>94</sup>

Harmel and Janda build on the theory of shock-induced change introduced by Panebianco by bringing in the concept of party goals.<sup>95</sup> The attribution of certain goals to parties is not new: after all, Ostrogorski and Michels had already observed a process of goal displacement.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, rational choice theory has variously assumed that parties seek to maximise votes<sup>97</sup>, or to attain office<sup>98</sup> or concrete policy goals<sup>99</sup>. Building on these three goals, Strøm and Müller offer a vision in which parties are after a mixture of these goals and are forced to compromise between them.<sup>100</sup> This is analytically useful, if imperfect because it generally takes votes to enact policy or gain office. They acknowledge this by stating that votes as a goal only serve the purpose of obtaining something else, which is a useful thought.<sup>101</sup> However, precisely this interconnectedness of the different party goals makes it very difficult to distinguish what a party's goal is in practice. A party can pursue a policy it thinks will gain it votes or office, and yet claim to do so for reasons of the policy itself, or seek to gain votes to pursue its policy by moderating it a little.

By bringing in this concept of party goals, Harmel and Janda offer an account of how an external shock works to force party change.<sup>102</sup> They assume that each party has a 'primary goal': either policy, office, votes or maximizing internal democracy.<sup>103</sup> This allows a higher level of detail in thinking about the extent of party change to be expected.<sup>104</sup> Roughly speaking, when this primary goal is affected, pressures towards party change are higher.<sup>105</sup> There are therefore two ways in which party change can occur in the Harmel and Janda model: power-oriented changes to consolidate or preserve the power of a dominant faction or goal-oriented changes to pursue the party's primary goal when the party's performance is unsatisfactory.<sup>106</sup> While it is largely left implicit, therefore, Harmel and Janda also add the element of varying extents of party change to existing party change models. This is not without important consequences for analyses based on their model, as shall be argued later.

Several scholars have operationalised and tested the propositions offered by Harmel and Janda.<sup>107</sup> A first quantitative analysis by the authors themselves and others found

94. *Ibid.*, 243.

95. Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," 272-273.

96. Ostrogorski, *La Démocratie et les Partis Politiques*, 642; Michels, *Political Parties*, 373.

97. A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 21.

98. W. H. Riker, *The theory of political coalitions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

99. R. Axelrod, *Conflict of Interest* (1970); A. De Swaan, *Coalition Theories and Cabinet Formation*, with a foreword by Amsterdam (Elsevier, 1973).

100. K. Strøm and W. C. Müller, "Political Parties and Hard Choices," in *Policy, Office or Votes: How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, ed. K. Strøm and W. C. Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13.

101. *Ibid.*, 9.

102. Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change."

103. *Ibid.*, 278-279.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*, 280-281.

106. Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," 278; See for Panebianco's account of power-oriented change Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 245.

107. Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," 279-283.

support for the model's most enduring contribution: party change does not just happen.<sup>108</sup> Environmental shocks did not automatically lead to party change without internal changes accompanying them. The study did not test the propositions on party goals, however, showing how tricky their operationalisation remains.<sup>109</sup> A study zooming in on party manifestos (and therefore related to the party platform change literature) also showed that the more disastrous an electoral defeat, the more likely a party was to undertake a drastic change of identity as expressed in their manifestos.<sup>110</sup> Albeit limited, this offers some support to the hypothesis on party goals, since as Strøm and Müller argued, votes mediate office and policy goals.<sup>111</sup>

However, as Müller observed, the general analysis, while thorough, was not really suited to finding actual causal relationships.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, the analysis can only go so far as to find correlations that may indicate causal relationships. This is, in essence, an instance of the 'black box' problem. We know roughly what cause and effect are: in this case, internal and external factors lead to party change, or at least coincide with it. However, we cannot be sure what happens in between, and it seems logical to use qualitative analysis, specifically case studies, to mitigate it.<sup>113</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning Bale's study of the Conservative Party since 1945. He concludes that of the three major drivers of change he studies (defeat, leadership or dominant faction), defeat tended to have a big effect, but that leadership was also important and bigger defeats did not always bring bigger changes. His conclusions in general reveal a high degree of complexity and he ends by rightly cautioning fellow scholars that party change is inherently complex.<sup>114</sup>

Applying the Harmel and Janda model to the case of the Socialist Party of Austria, Müller found support for the model and noted in particular the strength of leadership change as an explanatory variable.<sup>115</sup> He was less sure about the effect of electoral defeat, but attributed this, according to the model, to the party having an office goal. Similarly, Bille found that although leadership change did not always lead to party change, it itself did conform to the expectation that losing office rather than losing votes was the most important shock to the case of the Danish Social Democrats.<sup>116</sup> The model has also more recently been more or less successfully applied to cases as wide-ranging as the strategy shift by Palestine's Hamas<sup>117</sup> and the merger that resulted in the Conservative Party of

108. R. Harmel et al., "Performance, Leadership, Factions and Party Change: An Empirical Analysis," *West European Politics* 18, no. 1 (1995): 17.

109. *Ibid.*, 2-8.

110. K. Janda et al., "Changes in Party Identity: Evidence from Party Manifestos," *Party Politics* 1, no. 2 (1995): 189.

111. Strøm and Müller, "Political Parties and Hard Choices," 9.

112. W. C. Müller, "Inside the Black Box: A Confrontation of Party Executive Behaviour and Theories of Party Organizational Change," *Party Politics* 3, no. 3 (1997): 295.

113. *Ibid.*, 295. To go into more detail on why case studies are more suited to this task is beyond the scope of this chapter, but will be treated more thoroughly in chapter four.

114. T. Bale, *The Conservatives Since 1945: the Drivers of Party Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 313-317.

115. Müller, "Inside the Black Box," 308-309.

116. L. Bille, "Leadership Change and Party Change: The Case of the Danish Social Democratic Party, 1960-95," *Party Politics* 3, no. 3 (1997): 389.

117. F. Løvlie, "Explaining Hamas's Changing Electoral Strategy, 1996-2006," *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 4 (2013): 570-593.



Canada<sup>118</sup>.

What stands out in the body of case studies applying the Harmel and Janda model is the wide range of developments they attempt to explain. Some authors seem to be content to explain the occurrence of change<sup>119</sup> or to explain a certain phenomenon<sup>120</sup>. This is significant because things get complicated and potentially problematic when authors get specific about the extent and type of changes expected.

Duncan's analysis of the Dutch CDA's 1994 defeat using the Harmel and Janda model is more structured and comprehensive than most studies in describing the changes.<sup>121</sup> Duncan's insistence on looking at changes in four subfields – leadership, strategy, organisation and programme – lead him to reveal an important puzzle posing a challenge to the Harmel and Janda model. In the case of the CDA, Duncan encounters a puzzling absence of programmatic change in circumstances that, according to the propositions formulated by Harmel and Janda, should lead to drastic changes across the board.<sup>122</sup> Significantly, this leads him to conclude that not only is the focus on a single goal evidently too simple, but that other factors such as the electoral system need to be incorporated in the model.<sup>123</sup>

Still in use decades after its first formulation, the most-cited contribution of the model is that it is wrong to assume that “party changes just happen or must happen”, and with good reason.<sup>124</sup> Its multi-faceted understanding of the causes of party change as circumstances overcoming the resistance of all large organisations to change has been rightly influential. The idea that parties change most abruptly when their primary goals are threatened has found ample support in these case studies (see above). That parties change after an external shock seems to have been demonstrated sufficiently.

However, the flipside of all this is that after the formulation of the Harmel and Janda model, theory development on external shocks seems to have stalled. In part, problems such as those felt in Duncan's study of the CDA can be regarded as the result of overstretching the model. After all, this particular model was not intended and therefore not constructed to explain which types of party change will occur, only to test and demonstrate that party change occurs after shocks and that more severe shocks lead to more extensive change.<sup>125</sup> The model simply cannot explain why the CDA after 1994 did not change its programme (in Duncan's view) but did change its organisation.<sup>126</sup> And if the external shocks angle is to be used to gain further insight on the way different parties change in different ways, this has to be addressed.

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118. E. Bélanger and J.-F. Godbout, “Why Do Parties Merge? The Case of the Conservative Party of Canada,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2010): 41–65.

119. Bille, “Leadership Change and Party Change”; Müller, “Inside the Black Box.”

120. Løvlie, “Explaining Hamas's Changing Electoral Strategy, 1996-2006”; Bélanger and Godbout, “Why Do Parties Merge?”

121. F. Duncan, “‘Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same': External Shocks, Party Change and the Adaptation of the Dutch Christian Democrats During ‘Purple Hague’, 1994-8,” *Party Politics* 13, no. 1 (2007): 69–87.

122. *Ibid.*, 83.

123. *Ibid.*, 84.

124. Harmel and Janda, “An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change,” 261.

125. *Ibid.*, 262.

126. Duncan, “‘Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same',” 83.

The problems could very well be due to a linear and unidirectional definition of party change as change away from the party's origins. It has already been discussed how this is a problem in the body of literature concerned with party types, where the prevailing tendency has been to describe a succession of dominant party types.<sup>127</sup> But it is also part of the problem demonstrated in Duncan's case study. He notes continuity in the ideological or programmatic area, but at the same time there had been considerable activity in that area.<sup>128</sup> In light of concerns about the party's loss of identity which he also notes, this begs the question whether the situation is actually one of continuity or of change back towards the party's prior identity.<sup>129</sup> The model presented and tested in this dissertation will seek to address both of these problems with past contributions to the debate on external shocks.

Before moving on to the conclusion of this review of the literature, it should be noted that the idea that parties change as a result of shocks appeared in a different form in the wake of what is called the Great Recession in the first half of the 21st century (by analogy to the Great Depression a century earlier). Treating the Great Recession like a shock (but not explicitly in the tradition of this particular party literature), Bremer has tried to measure its impact on the development of parties and party systems in Europe, naming it a "critical juncture".<sup>130</sup> He concludes that the European centre-left had responded to the crisis in an unusual way relative to other party families by at the same time reaffirming the need for fiscal prudence and repudiating the economic agenda. They did not, as expected, uniformly shift left. In a similar study on stances towards European integration in Southern Europe, Charalambous *et al.* found that parties had increased competition over the issue of European integration as a result of the Great Recession, but interestingly, that this development was not mirrored among legislators.<sup>131</sup> These studies are interesting because they show the important effect of shocks from outside the party system on the development of political parties within the system.

Using another crisis, Meyer and Schoen showed that parties also anticipate the effects of a policy crisis, and studied the effects on electoral behaviour of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.<sup>132</sup> In a similar vein, Kim and Solt found that in addition to electoral shocks, the fall of the Berlin wall also caused parties to relabel.<sup>133</sup> However, there is always the risk of treating a crisis of this variety as a shock in a category all by itself, which diminishes the generalisability of findings. Especially given the role the European Union and its institutions played in the politics of the Great Recession in Europe, it remains to be seen if insights from these studies can be applied beyond Europe.

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127. Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems"; Katz and Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy"; Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel?"

128. Duncan, "'Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same'," 78-81.

129. *Ibid.*, 78.

130. B. Bremer, "The missing left? Economic crisis and the programmatic response of social democratic parties in Europe," *Party Politics* 24, no. 1 (2018): 35.

131. G. Charalambous, N. Conti, and A. Pedrazzini, "The political contestation of European integration in Southern Europe: Friction Among and Within Parties," *Party Politics* 24, no. 1 (2018): 48.

132. M. Meyer and H. Schoen, "Avoiding vote loss by changing policy positions: the Fukushima disaster, party responses, and the German electorate," *Party Politics* 23, no. 4 (2017): 431.

133. M. Kim and F. Solt, "The dynamics of party relabelling: Why do parties change names?," *Party Politics* 23, no. 4 (2017): 444.

## 2.6 Conclusion: Towards a new theory of shocks and change

As we have seen, the political science literature on party change has proven very proficient at explaining broad patterns of gradual party change as well as the occurrence of party change in general after external shocks. In some fields, such as programmatic, organizational and leadership changes, the causes of specific types of change are the subject matter of an extensive literature of their own. The two bodies of party change literature are largely complementary: contributions based on party types tend to be better-suited to explaining organizational change, while research on external shocks and change accounts for faster-moving areas of change such as programmatic and leadership changes.

As has also been argued above, the body of literature on external shocks has so far provided evidence that shocks of various kind do lead to some sort of party change. It seems plausible that the most abrupt changes take place when a party is put under extended pressure. However, party scholars are faced with a problem when attempting to further refine the theory to account for the multitude of different ways in which parties, once they have decided on the need to change, do change themselves in response to an external shock. The quantitative study reported by Harmel *et al.* did not touch on this at all, lumping programmatic and organizational variables together,<sup>134</sup> and the single-case studies have either confined themselves to specific modes of change (implicitly or explicitly) or ran into problems explaining the absence of changes in one particular area. They rarely have defined precisely in which areas they would expect changes to occur, with the exception of Duncan's study on the CDA.

In addition, without defining precisely where change is to be expected, there is always a risk of running afoul of Mair's problem with identifying party change.<sup>135</sup> If change is confined to party organization, but programmatic change is lacking, to what extent has the party still changed substantially after a shock? Part of the challenge of Duncan's CDA case study is that he considered the programme to be such an important part of the substance of the CDA that he was confounded by its seeming absence.<sup>136</sup> In other words: without programmatic change, he could not be entirely sure of the extent of change in the party.

The aim of this dissertation in terms of its contribution to this literature on party shocks and party change is to offer more clarity on why certain parties favour certain changes while others favour others. To do so, it needs a model which adds another step. The existing models stop at the need for and consequently presence of change. A new theoretical model is necessary to explain the choices that follow next: in which areas, and more importantly in which direction, will the changes be made? Therefore, it will need to move away from the common perception of change as being one-directional away from the party's identity and roots, and move towards a concept of change that can also involve the intensification or renewal of a party's prior commitments. In doing so, it also brings back in the concept of path-dependency as an explanatory factor determining the type of

134. Harmel et al., "Performance, Leadership, Factions and Party Change," 8.

135. Mair, *Party System Change*, 49.

136. Duncan, "Lately, Things Just Don't Seem the Same," 83.

change.

The next chapter aims to construct a heuristic model that functions as the starting point for building such a theoretical model. This model seeks to combine the demonstrated strengths of the shock theory models in explaining whether a party will change, while recognizing the variety of internal and external factors that can lead to party change with a more specific understanding of dimensions of change in particular parties. In doing so, it intends to take a next step in understanding how shocks cause parties to change.