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Social Democratic Parties in Central and Southeast Europe

Organisations Based on Political Convictions or Management Agencies for the Government?

■ Only in northern and western Europe are political parties organisations based on political convictions which are constrained, with regard to their principal aim – the control of state resources – in terms of the values and interests they espouse. In other parts of the world, although the party-political orientations termed »conservative«, »liberal« and »social democratic« have been adopted from northern and western Europe, the self-imposed limitations that go hand in hand with them in respect of the conquest and exercise of power have not.

■ The current competition in central and southeast Europe between conservative, liberal and social democratic forces conceals a more fundamental categorisation: the parties of the left labelled »social democratic« are organised in central and southeast Europe in terms of ethnic and clan-based parties, post-communist, postmodern-hybrid and – exceptionally – genuine social democratic parties. In the wake of recent changes in the party-political landscape these central and southeast European parties could prove to be, not latecomers, but forerunners, in the event that northern and western European parties abandon the self-imposed restrictions of their traditions and mutate into ideology-free management agencies for government.

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1 Introduction

According to Max Weber, political parties are voluntary associations whose supreme goal is to control the resources of the state (power, jobs, money) through their leaders. However, Weber considered northern and western Europe to constitute a special case: here – and only here – parties have formed as »*wertrationale Gesinnungsgemeinschaften*« or associations based on convictions, rationally oriented to absolute values, of which German social democracy is the outstanding example. The principal aim of control of state resources is subject to certain restrictions for such parties: this can be a legitimate aim only if the convictions which the party represents are not violated or betrayed. Because these parties are not willing to get hold of state resources *at any cost*, they handicap themselves. The fact that it is precisely in Europe that this type of conviction-based party has hitherto been dominant is connected to the continent's specific social and political lines of conflict and constellations of interests, which emerged – as we intend to show – from the three great European revolutions of the modern era.

The political affiliations »conservative«, »liberal« and »social democratic« which developed in northern and western Europe, together with the corresponding party names and programmes, were exported to the farthest corners of the globe, in particular to Latin America, but also to the southern and eastern periphery of Europe itself. In the process, however, their self-imposed limitations went astray. The relevant labels and receptacles were exported, but not the voluntary self-restraint. As a result, expectations directed towards parties at Europe's periphery have so often been disappointed. The parties of central and southeast Europe, with which we shall be concerned in what follows, are seldom typical programme parties – that is, associations based on social democratic, conservative or liberal convictions, which set themselves particular aims, such as the social inclusion of the less privileged via redistribution, the careful preservation of the political and social status quo or achieving the highest possible level of individual freedom. What we find instead are organisations dedicated to the conquest of government power without the encumbrances of political convictions in order to capture state resources, regardless of the imported labels in terms of which they compete with one another.

In these circumstances, two misconceptions are to be avoided, however. First, the idealisation of the northern and western European parties, adduced as standards of comparison. These parties, too, are organisations which desire access to state resources, must be effective in terms of electoral and power politics (and not necessarily faithful to their values) and, in attempting to solve real problems, must often put aside both their beliefs and the social interests of the party base. In every political party there is a tension between an inevitable Machiavellianism, on the one hand, and the values to which the party has explicitly committed itself, on the other hand. The seemingly unavoidable conflict between party platform and reality has been stressed by the »dark side« of political science, in the tradition of Nietzsche, including such authors as Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels, and always based on the same insight: the noble intentions of the party programme founder, again and again, on hard political reality. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that a balance can be struck between the two poles – otherwise, politics would be no more than an unending series of attempts at deception. Too lax an interpretation of the party's own programme and commitments or even the »betrayal« of its principles will trigger internal and external resistance which will ultimately lead either to the correction of this deviation or a loss of significance. Overstepping the boundaries it has set for itself would, at least over the long term, entail political damage. Second, a distinction must be drawn between conservatives and liberals on the one hand, and social democrats on the other hand, with regard to the relationship between Machiavellianism and the convictions embodied in the party platform. Conservatives tend to regard themselves as the »natural party of government«, which means that Machiavellianism is in a sense built into their programme. Since the world as it is represents the best of all possible worlds, any political or social action such parties might envisage boils down to little more than marginal adjustments. The same applies to liberals, whose basic demands are satisfied by virtue of the very existence of capitalist democracy. Social democratic parties, in contrast, *by definition* assume that they do not live in the best of all possible worlds, but rather in a world which must be remodelled in the interests of the less privileged majority and by political means. Any »betrayal« of the party's programme is therefore more serious than in the case of conservatives. The perceived »perpetual betrayal« characteristic of social democ-

atic parties at Europe's periphery gives rise to even more frustration – and certainly a good deal less than in the case of conservatives who are more at ease with more or less brutal power politics.

2 Parties in Western Europe

The apportionment of the democratic political scene in Europe in terms of conservatives, liberals and social democrats has proved remarkably stable, at least in normal times. Naturally, this does not mean that Europe's political history over the past 150 years can be described in terms of continuity. Insofar as the political constitution of western and northern European states has been that of capitalist democracies, and not assailed by violently anti-system parties, the main political and social conflicts have tended to be between conservatives, liberals and social democrats. Conservatives, liberals and social democrats are *the* political representatives of capitalist democracy; whatever their political differences might be, the underlying consensus is that democracy must be maintained as the arena of debate and radical challenges to the capitalist economic system should be rejected. In over 150 years, the only new and, apparently, permanent pro-system party to have emerged is the Greens.

This extraordinary stability, which is in marked contrast to the speed of economic and social change, derives from the fact, as already mentioned, that the formation of the major political currents was closely connected to Europe's three great revolutions in the modern era: the cultural revolution of the Reformation, the political revolution in France and the industrial revolution which started in England. In the wake of the Reformation, the line of conflict opened up between clerical and anti-clerical forces which, after the French Revolution, was reproduced as the conflict between conservatism and liberalism. With the Industrial Revolution, the emerging industrial working class formed the basis of social democracy, whose relations with liberalism and conservatism were characterised by both conflict and cooperation. It is, first of all, this deep rootedness of the parties in the history of modernity – and its traumas – which explains the stability of the party system and also the calculability of pro-system forces. On top of that, secondly, each of the three – or, with the Greens, four – major political currents is closely tied to the interests of major social groups, which in turn represent the three fundamental factors of production of capital-

ist economies (in terms of classical political economy), namely: labour, capital and land. While »labour« is represented by social democrats, conservatives and liberals share the representation of »capital«; the Greens, in contrast, have replaced the conservatives as the political representatives of »land« (at least in the sense that this can be translated as »the environment«).

The parties are therefore bound in two ways: normatively, to ideas which developed in the three revolutions of modernity, and socially, to the major interest groups defined in terms of their role as factors of production – and not to the particular interests of certain branches, regions, cliques and so on. Non-particular are interests whose assertion can be legitimised informally as in the public interest – for example, with the pattern: the workers' welfare promotes economic prosperity and thereby improves business conditions for capital; or: freedom of action for capital also benefits the workers because jobs are created and prosperity maximised; or: an unspoiled environment forms the basis of existence of labour and capital. The assertion of particular interests, in contrast, ends up in a zero-sum game: whatever clan, region or branch X manages to appropriate is lost by clan, region or branch Y. It is also important, finally, that interest groups and their political representatives recognise the existence and legitimacy of other interests; with regard to political competition, it is not a matter of eliminating one's opponent, but finding a balance between different, but in principle compatible interests.

If the interplay between norms, interests and policies is to function, what is needed is political parties which accept certain limitations on their scope of action through values, traditions and commitments to particular interests. At the same time, parties also need external and internal mechanisms of correction. Such mechanisms include:

- The major social interest groups themselves, which not only avail themselves of the parties, but also influence political events directly – through associations, the media, think tanks and so on – or indirectly through their activities in the »sphere of labour and goods«, and put pressure on their political representatives. The links between parties and interest groups are also discernible in a multitude of personal and organisational contacts, dual memberships, a common political language, shared taboos, a common interpretation of history and so on, which become condensed into *traditions* of political conduct. Such traditions can be broken

only with difficulty (or with a political cost).

- So-called civil society, in other words, the multitude of citizens' initiatives, professional organisations, religious communities and so on, which represent the various interests, without being directly associable with any of the three factors of production. These organisations, too, function as correction mechanisms, providers of impetus and ideas, early warning systems and so on, which prevent the parties from breaking out of the channels of norms and interests to which they are committed.
- Party members themselves (including activist organisations), which in some respects stand between the parties as contenders for political power and civil society and interest groups. The party membership is a reflection of the wider society within the party. If it is to carry out its corrective function it cannot fall below a certain size: it has to be big enough that the overwhelming majority of its members have no realistic chance, individually, of attaining sought-after party or government office. Party elites can be corrected only by memberships which do not themselves consist mainly of career politicians.
- The interaction between parties which can react to the mistakes (or the »betrayal«) of their rivals by occupying the vacated fields of action; the re-establishment of parties can also serve as a mechanism for compelling established political forces to correct their policies or (relatively speaking) marginalise them.

The abovementioned correction mechanisms are often – and with good reason – characterised as »veto powers« which, on both the left and the right, can hinder or prevent the rapid implementation of reforms. These veto powers also help to ensure that politics remains calculable over the long term and that the parties or governments led by these parties do not cut themselves off from society.

3 Parties on Europe's Periphery

If their names are anything to go by, the parties on the central or southeast European periphery are a reproduction of the western European political model; there too, the most important debates take place between conservatives, liberals and social democrats (so far, usually without the Greens). The parties are members of their respective international party families and their programmes are largely imported from the West. These attributes, however,

are secondary in relation to Weber's definition of parties: the capture of state resources – often for the purpose of private acquisition or servicing clientistic networks – is so much to the fore that the representation of values and social interests is eclipsed. Should the need arise, values can be switched for tactical reasons – for example, in Hungary, one political party (FIDESZ) was able to transform itself from a liberal into a nationalist party without much difficulty because its leadership took the view that there were more potential voters on the right. Parties are less predictable. Naturally, their practical political options are restricted, too, but by external factors, not by their own traditions and the self-restraint to which they give rise.

Although, historically, the countries of these European regions had to bear the consequences of modernity's revolutions they experienced them belatedly and distorted by the hangover of pre-modern conflicts. They had to adapt to a modernity which did not emerge from their own internal developments but came from outside. This applies just as much to the nation-building of the nineteenth century as to the period of transformation after 1989. In reaction to these external impositions a peripheral nationalism developed which – to this day – exhibits two forms: on the one hand stand modernisation and adaptation to an idealised West at any price, paying little heed to the specific problems of their own societies; and on the other hand stands a national introversion which reinterprets its own backwardness as a special historical mission against the decadent, materialistic and egoistic West. In both versions of peripheral nationalism, which mirrors the old debate between Westernisers and Slavophiles, *backwardness counts as an advantage*, whether because the nations at Europe's periphery have not yet made the mistakes characteristic of the Western model and are realising its original features in a purer form – that is, they can be more radically market-oriented, more democratic and more aggressive in the assertion of freedom – or whether they have preserved a naturalness long since vanished from the West and, only marginally affected by the drawbacks of modernity or of capitalism, can build a community which is more meaningful than the capitalist democracies of the West.

The revolutions of modernity operated only indirectly at the periphery of Europe and traditions were formed via external influences. As a result, assertion of the social interests associated with the factors of production in stable political cultures could not take place. This was already the case during the pre-

Communist period: capital was weak, to a large degree of foreign origin or personified by national minorities. A national bourgeois culture, the foundation of modern liberalism and, later, of conservatism, could develop only in rudimentary form. The historical reserve of domestic ideas and traditions on which conservatives and liberals were able to draw after the transition of 1989–90 was therefore extremely limited or – as in Poland or Hungary – replete with authoritarian traditions. Communism destroyed everything which could have developed in terms of bourgeois traditions. The conservative parties of central and southeast Europe therefore exhibit a remarkable paradox: they dress themselves up in the rags of apparently ancient traditions, thereby flexibly connecting the Middle Ages and post-modernity, but as modern political forces are curiously devoid of tradition – in the sense of educated and property-owning bourgeois traditions which would normatively limit the range of practical political options. This also means that the reversion to history, saintly kings, Renaissance princes and »nobles' republics« is quite arbitrary.

Even the nominally social democratic parties in central and southeast Europe are, with some exceptions, without traditions or social roots. The industrial working class developed late and Communism, which posed as the »rule of the proletariat«, in reality disenfranchised the working class and discredited the recourse to the traditions of the industrial working class – an industrial working class which, admittedly, in the West had been expanded and watered down into the notion of the »workforce«. But even the basic social democratic motivation which had its origins in the earlier workers' movement – protection of the weak against the injustices and risks of the market – was largely exhausted or abandoned without a struggle to the conservatives who offered the putative warmth of the national or ethnic community as a substitute for social security.

The correction mechanisms mentioned earlier, which help to ensure that political parties do not stray too far from the traditions and social commitments which support them, are only weakly developed in central and southeast Europe:

- The trade unions have still not shed their role in the Communist system as institutions for providing the workforces of large enterprises with various services, but as a result of the shrinking or disappearance of the old industrial combines their significance is under threat. They are divided, disunited, limited to the company level

and have a low public profile. The same applies to the employers' associations. At least in central Europe, foreign chambers of industry and commerce represent capital better and more efficiently than local associations.

- Civil society organisations in central Europe are also weak or used for political ends. In southeast Europe, in contrast – not least because of the massive presence of foreign donor organisations as a consequence of civil war – an autonomous NGO industry has developed which has specialised in drawing sustenance from foreign donors, although they often stand in express opposition to established political parties.
- Party memberships are generally too small to counteract party elites. For all or most party members, politics represents an individual career path, not an instrument for shaping society in accordance with normative principles. Political engagement is motivated by the personal prospects of lucrative party or government office or other perks, not political convictions.

This describes some of the conditions which explain why the development of parties in the sense of value-oriented conviction-based communities has *not* been possible on the east and southeast periphery of Europe, despite the fact that the central and southeast European countries are largely modelled on capitalist democracies – in other words, western and northern European examples. The lack of commitment – one might also call it flexibility – of these parties is, in turn, one of the factors which explains the marked instability of most party systems. One-time election victors can find themselves, only a few years down the line, nearing the five-per cent threshold, new political forces rise to heights formerly undreamt of, minor parties wield far-reaching influence due to their key role in coalitions and parties can switch positions and international affiliations. Party political fluctuations are combined with strong political polarisation; on top of that, parties monopolise public political discourse since other participants in the political process – trade unions, associations, interest groups, civil society organisations, regional groups, independent media, think tanks and so on – are barely able to obtain a hearing. Under these circumstances, politics is not perceived as a way of solving the problems of society, but as a permanent and, basically, pointless struggle between the parties for government power, in isolation from the rest of social reality. Without substantive ties between political parties and society, however, the political system loses its function

as *society's system of governance*. Politics becomes a self-referential system. As a result, on the one hand, the market usually acquires much more latitude as an alternative governance mechanism than is the case in western and northern European countries. Neoliberal regimes have not been established in central and southeast Europe in consequence of the economic-policy convictions of politicians, but simply because of the lack of political capacities for governing society. On the other hand, the gaps in national systems of governance are at least partly filled by international regulation, in the first instance that of the EU (during crisis periods the IMF also comes on the scene). This also applies to those countries which are not yet EU member states – such as the countries of the western Balkans – but in which public discourse is totally dominated by the prospect of future membership. The curious situation emerges in which nation-states which regained their sovereignty only a few years ago and lament its restriction – for example, by the EU – so violently, threatened to be crushed between the market and the EU.

4 Social Democratic Parties in Central and Southeast Europe

In a period in which many western European parties are giving themselves over to modernisation, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between the norm (western European social democracy) and deviations from it (the parties of Europe's eastern periphery). The western European parties are also struggling with the definition of social democracy in the twenty-first century. But perhaps precisely this is now the »norm«: permanent and earnest debate on what the proper relationship should be between tradition and adaptation to changed circumstances. However negatively tradition might shape the modernised social democratic parties of northern and western Europe, it is at least a resource which can be mobilised at any time and can be brought to bear against a change of direction interpreted as »over-adaptation«. This tradition is, in most cases, not available to the »social democratic in name only« parties in central Europe and the Balkans. This is their »negative common denominator«. Apart from that, the social democratic label conceals radically different political tendencies and structures, in the context of which four main types of social democratic party can be identified.

4.1 Ethnic and Clan-based Parties

Ethnic and clan-based parties are premodern political forces based on premodern social structures and hierarchical relations. They exist primarily in countries in which modern, anonymous social relations and a modern, impartial state have not yet emerged. Instead, they are dominated by personal, quasi-familial or clan affiliations. Politics in these countries is less *gesellschaftlich* (»society-oriented«) than *gemeinschaftlich* (»community-oriented«). This can result from general backwardness – which does not rule out hybrid combinations with modern or even postmodern elements – but it can also be the result of a process of social regression as a consequence of, for example, the Yugoslav wars or reflect the structuring of state and society along ethnic lines of conflict. The freedom of action of ethnic and clan-based parties is not constricted either by their own programmes and traditions or the norms of a democratic polity based on the rule of law. On the contrary: precisely because they are based on communal, pseudo-biological structures, the particular interests of their own community are the highest normative principle. The ethnic or quasi-familial community is to be protected and supported by any means necessary, when it comes to it, even by means condemned as criminal in modern societies and states under the rule of law. Social democratic programmes can conceal the ethics of the mafia.

Ethnic and clan-based parties are authoritarian and paternalistic. They are usually represented by an uncontested leadership figure who is unconstrained by legal and democratic norms and is able to act unhampered by rules. EU membership, however, towards which every country and most political movements in the region are striving – and in particular clan-based parties labelled social democratic – requires above all the rule of regulations, however controversial they might be. Europeanisation would, theoretically, undermine the presuppositions of clan orientation. The leading personalities and clans can resolve this dilemma only by means of two strategies: they can either set out from the assumption that they will be able to elude European regulations in their own sovereign territory, or they can merely pretend to pursue integration in order to keep open the option of their country as an offshore territory for activities which are illegal in the EU.

4.2 Postcommunist Parties

In most central European countries, beneath the label of social democracy a historically new type of party, which still awaits close analysis and concerning which it remains to be seen whether it will be merely a transitional phenomenon or a lasting political reality: the postcommunist party. These parties form a political current which in the first place is defined only negatively, as »no longer communist«. Regardless of their official programmes, which they have lifted from their western European sister parties, Max Weber's laconic definition of political parties as organisations for the appropriation of state resources fits this type of party like a glove.

Postcommunist parties, from a sociological standpoint, represent partly the survival and self-help projects of the former communist administrative or functional elites and partly those who were neither among the party's ideological hardliners nor willing to entrust their own futures solely to market forces. This elite seeks to protect itself against the otherwise all too likely fate of exiting the historical stage as a now superfluous class by forming political parties, in which, in comparison to the other parties in the process of formation at the outset of political contestation, they possess considerable resources, including qualified political, administrative and economic-technical personnel; a comparatively high level of internal coherence and discipline; a high level of insider knowledge; a small, but secure – and, with the social hardship of transformation, growing – share of the vote (for example, pensioners); and also material resources (the real estate and assets of the old communist party) and international contacts.

In a transitional period, the postcommunist parties function simultaneously as forces within the framework of democratic competition and as informal *privatisation agencies*, controlling the transition of formerly state-owned productive assets into private hands, whether as members of the functional elite they become owners themselves or, on the basis of insider information and informal political networks, profit from the sale of state-owned assets to foreign investors and ascend through the hierarchies of multinational companies. The function of postcommunist parties as privatisation agencies can be long-lasting only if the large-scale privatisation of state-owned companies, which at some point must come to an end, is followed by small-scale, everyday privatisation of state-owned – and European – resources (outsourcing, awarding of

contracts and so on). In this context, the postcommunist party elites will develop a contradictory relationship with the state: on the one hand, the appropriation of state resources is their most important source of income, which means that it is in their interest that there is a *strong* state; while on the other hand, they pursue an anti-statist ideology and seek the dismantling of state competences, in particular in the social realm. This contradiction is resolved – if in a somewhat cynical fashion – if private enrichment from public resources is taken not only as a strategy for the benefit of individuals, but also celebrated as a virtue from the standpoint of so-called *Ordnungspolitik* (the basic idea of which is that the state is supposed merely to create a framework within which market forces are to interact and unfold their dynamism under competitive conditions).

No postcommunist party has been able to hold onto government uninterruptedly since 1989–90. The economic and social deficits of central and southeast European postcommunist states are therefore not to be solely attributed to these parties. It should rather be assumed that conservative and liberal opponents have developed a similar »hybrid« relationship to the state – it is just that the postcommunists benefited from a better initial position. Economically speaking, they were able to profit from the social upheaval (without correcting it) which resulted from the first, chaotic phase of transformation. The postcommunists seemed to offer social certainty, which the voters, disconcerted by wild capitalism, very much desired, so that in several countries they dominated the second phase of transformation. As things stand at the moment, however, it is questionable whether the postcommunists will remain a permanent political force in their current form.

4.3 Postmodern-Hybrid Parties

Parties which can be labelled postmodern-hybrid are to be found largely on the right in central Europe: they combine a rhetoric characterised by missionary zeal and fixated on the nation's heroic history with economic populism and almost total flexibility in day-to-day politics. To the left of the political spectrum a postmodern element can be identified in some parties to the extent that a certain lack of orientation, in other words, the absence of binding traditions or a solid social basis is not interpreted as a weakness but as a strength. They are »hybrids« in

the sense that they combine elements in their programmes and practice which under other circumstances would count as mutually exclusive: genuinely social democratic motifs are combined with neoliberal elements in economic and social security policy, and anti-authoritarian-progressive elements in social policy with a moderate nationalism in foreign policy, and this whole policy mix is overshadowed by the charisma of the party leader. In contrast to the postcommunist parties, the postmodern-hybrid parties do not represent a survival project of the old nomenclature for their personal benefit, but emerge in some cases from the opposition against the *ancien régime*. As a result, they are able to maintain a certain proximity to their former allies in civil society and the NGOs and, in some respects, pose as the political wing of »new social movements«. In this respect they resemble the western European Greens, minus their environmentalism. Generally speaking, like the Greens, these are urban – mainly confined to the capital city – parties with a comparatively high proportion of women, including in senior positions. They are also attractive to students and young adults, for whom the emphasis on modernity and the pro-European orientation chime with their own expectations and life prospects.

What is unclear is the extent to which such parties follow the pattern of postcommunist parties as informal agencies of privatisation. It cannot be ruled out that, here too, there is private enrichment from state-owned assets, but not of the »systemic« kind, as represented by postcommunist parties.

4.4 Genuinely Social Democratic Parties

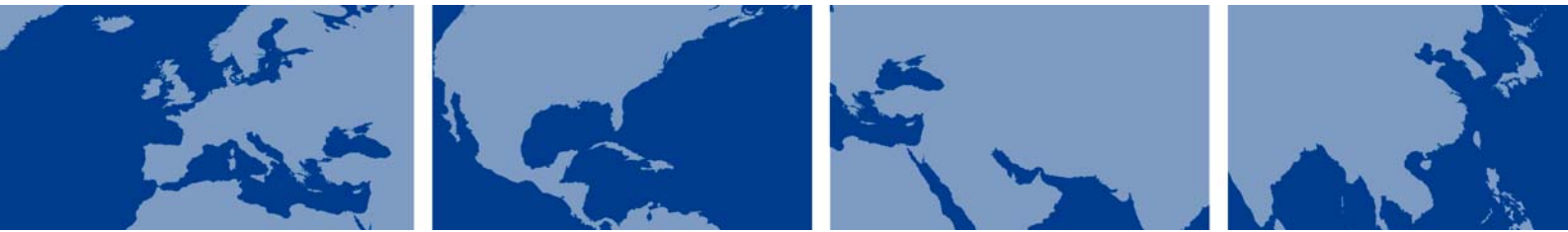
Needless to say, there are also »genuinely social democratic« parties in central and southeast Europe. Among the indicators of their social democratic character one might mention their efforts at least to take into consideration other approaches in economic and social policy, not just neoliberal ones. Attempts to get closer to the trade unions also point towards a genuine social democratic orientation, as does their interest in theoretical debate, usually falling back on Western models. However, this tends to manifest itself during periods of opposition, and to fade under the pressures of everyday government. Furthermore, in some cases smaller parties pay for their social democratic orientation with political marginalisation.

5 Models for the West?

Naturally, the categorisation presented here is too general to define the position of every party in the region. Even »mature« western European parties often exhibit features of ethnic or clan-based parties – witness the mafia ethics displayed by the CDU's party donations scandal. Western European party programmes also often represent particular interests in a manner contrary to the party's established principles – an example is the FDP's policy towards its clientele of pharmacists and dentists. It is therefore not a matter of unambiguous classifications, but rather the particular weighting of different elements and orientations which allows us to characterise parties as clan-based, postcommunist, postmodern-hybrid or genuinely social democratic. Furthermore, central and southeast European parties in particular are often fairly unstable, which means that they have to be described rather as moving targets than as established long-term entities. The usual classification of parties used in western Europe, based on a system of coordinates, composed of the axes libertarian–authoritarian and economic liberal–welfare state therefore find only limited application at the European periphery. The parties at this periphery are too flexible to allow their longer term location in a system of coordinates. Of greater interest than their positioning at any given time is their *movement* – for example, *from* a postcommunist *to* a social democratic party or from a clan-based party to a postmodern-hybrid party.

We have already pointed out that the classification of political parties on the periphery of Europe in terms of their *deviation* from their models in western and northern Europe is problematic. In some respects, almost the opposite relationship can be discerned: the trend is not for the parties at the periphery to come closer to their western sister parties, but rather towards the possibility – or danger – that the northern and western European models will jettison their historical ballast and be transformed into competing management agencies for the government, whose traditions no longer serve as guides to political action, but become hollowed out to become mere brand names. The state of the political parties could recapitulate that of postcommunist societies in general: they could present western countries with a vision of their own future. In the postcommunist era, globalisation managed to assert itself in short order and with full force, in the absence of the retardant and moderat-

ing effect of other social forces, such as trade unions, citizens' initiatives, social democratic parties, socially oriented religious movements, consumer groups, and environmental and third world movements, all of which tend to preserve social conditions »superseded« by globalisation (a view which, to be sure, assumes that globalisation is a unidirectional and irreversible process). Something similar can be applied to the political parties: the whole old-European »ballast of political tradition« hinders them and the governments which they lead in the efficient adaptation of societies to the rapidly changing conditions of globalisation and the remnants of tradition, reduced to empty phrases, are put to use only for the purpose of voter mobilisation. These parties are like football clubs whose teams play by the same rules and differ from one another only in that they have better or worse players under contract. In this way politics would be reduced to techniques and tactics. We hope that this fear will not be realised.



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