POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY IN THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

IMPLEMENTING INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY

Susan Scarrow

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PREFACE

A democracy needs strong and sustainable political parties with the capacity to represent citizens and provide policy choices that demonstrate their ability to govern for the public good. With an increasing disconnect between citizens and their elected leaders, a decline in political activism, and a growing sophistication of anti-democratic forces, democratic political parties are continually challenged.

For more than 20 years, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked with political parties around the world to create more open political environments in which citizens can actively participate in the democratic process. As a political party institute, NDI approaches its work from a practical viewpoint, offering assistance to promote parties' long-term organizational development, enhance their competitiveness in local and national elections, and help them participate constructively in government. This support takes many forms, from interactive training and guided practice to consultations and tailored resources that help parties become more open and representative organizations.

In 2004, NDI began producing a series of research papers that examine four topics central to the role and function of political parties. Two of the papers, "Adopting Party Law" and "Political Finance Policy, Parties, and Democratic Development," discuss regulatory mechanisms that directly impact parties, while the other two, "Implementing Intra-Party Democracy" and "Developments in Party Communications," relate to parties' internal governance and organization. Together, these papers aim to provide comparative information on elements of party politics and to shed light on different methods and their associated causes and effects. They also examine some of the implications of a political party's action or strategy in each area.

These papers do not offer theories on party organization or instant solutions for addressing the issues explored. Rather, they consider obstacles to, and possible approaches for, creating more effective and inclusive political parties. They flag potential pitfalls and bumps along the way, and illustrate the practical considerations of which parties may need to be aware. The papers also encourage greater exploration of the many excellent resources, articles, and books cited by the authors.

It is hoped that the *Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives* series will help readers gain a better understanding of each topic and, in particular, the complexities of the issues addressed. This paper, "Implementing Intra-Party Democracy," discusses the advantages and risks of intra-party democracy, examining some of the questions parties may face in implementing more inclusive decision-making procedures.

The series is an experiment in blending theoretical knowledge, empirical research, and practical experience. NDI invited four eminent scholars to write the papers and engaged a range of people—including party leaders, democracy practitioners, NDI staff members, and other noted academics—in every stage of the process, from developing the initial terms of reference to reviewing outlines and drafts. NDI is indebted to a large number of people who helped bring this series to fruition, particularly the authors who took part in a cumbersome, collaborative process and graciously accepted feedback and guidance, and the project's consultant, Dr. Denise Baer. Special appreciation is due to NDI Senior Program Officer Victoria Canavor, who managed the project from its inception.

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IMPLEMENTING INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY

"Intra-party democracy" is a very broad term describing a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberation and decision making. Some advocates for intra-party democracy argue, on a pragmatic level, that parties using internally democratic procedures are likely to select more capable and appealing leaders, to have more responsive policies, and, as a result, to enjoy greater electoral success. Some, moreover, converge on the premise that parties that "practice what they preach," in the sense of using internally democratic procedures for their deliberation and decisions, strengthen democratic culture generally.

Realistic practitioners recognize that intra-party democracy is not a panacea: Some procedures are better suited to some circumstances than to others. Moreover, some procedures seem even to entail distinct costs, and there are stable democracies with parties that lack guarantees or regular processes of internal party democracy. Nevertheless, the ideal of intra-party democracy has gained increasing attention in recent years because of its apparent potential to promote a "virtuous circle" linking ordinary citizens to government, benefiting the parties that adopt it, and more generally contributing to the stability and legitimacy of the democracies in which these parties compete for power.

This paper will discuss the advantages and risks of intra-party democracy, examining some of the specific questions parties may face in implementing more internally inclusive decision-making procedures. Given the diversity of parties' circumstances and political outlooks, there is no single, discrete set of "best practices" for intra-party governance. Party leaders ought instead to judiciously consider the practical effects of internally democratic party procedures and assess their respective merits.

The Case for Intra-Party Democracy

Political parties are crucial actors in representative democracies. Parties can help to articulate group aims, nurture political leadership, develop and promote policy alternatives, and present voters with coherent electoral alternatives. Party cohesiveness in legislatures contributes to efficient government, and politicians within the same party tend to be more responsible to one another than they otherwise would be, because of the shared electoral fate of those voted in on the strength of a shared party label. In short, parties ensure that voters have significant electoral choices, and they help ensure that choices made in elections will translate into decisions in the public realm. This view of the utility of parties in modern electoral democracies is a widely shared one. More disputed is the question of whether and to what extent it matters *how* parties arrive at the choices they present to voters, and specifically, whether and to what extent parties need to be internally democratic in order to promote democracy within the wider society. Answers to this question differ, depending in part on whether the focus is on *processes* or *outcomes*.

Those who emphasize the participatory aspects of democracy place the most value on intra-party democracy as an end in itself. They see parties not primarily as intermediaries, but rather as incubators that nurture citizens' political competence. To fulfill this role, parties' decision-making structures and processes should provide opportunities for individual citizens to influence the choices that parties offer to voters. These opportunities will help citizens expand their civic skills, and inclusive processes can boost the legitimacy of the alternatives they produce. In this way, party institutions can perform useful educative functions while also transferring power to a broader sector of society.

Intra-Party Democracy in Taiwan: The Introduction of Primaries in the Kuomintang

In Taiwan, the Kuomintang (KMT) governed a one-party state from the 1950s through the late 1980s. With the end of military rule in 1987, and the rise of new opposition parties, the KMT was challenged to adopt new ways of holding onto an electoral mandate. In 1989, the party introduced closed primaries to select candidates for that year's legislative elections. The change was pressed for by the party's national leader, but it was subsequently blamed for contributing to the party's loss. Two factors played a role in this: First, the change removed the selection power from local factions; these factions retaliated by withholding their support if their preferred candidates failed to gain the nomination. Second, the party members who participated in these primaries turned out to be more conservative than the party's potential electorate; as a result, the candidates they chose were not as appealing to voters as they could have been. In the wake of this defeat, the KMT changed its selection procedures several more times, developing procedures that included roles for individual members and local party factions, but that also gave the central party latitude to override local choices to provide more "balanced" slates.[1]

This is a powerful view, one that differs from what is sometimes called the "responsible party" view of government. In this alternative model, parties' essential contribution to democracy is to offer clear and distinct electoral choices so that voters can give their representatives a mandate by which to govern, and can subsequently hold them accountable if they fail to deliver on promises. From this outcome-oriented perspective, parties' organizational structures should be judged above all in terms of how well they help the parties choose policies and personnel that reflect the preferences of their broader electorates.

These models are not necessarily incompatible. Advocates of intra-party democracy would argue that their favored techniques more than meet the "outcomes test"—that parties which are more inclusive toward their supporters also offer the voters *better choices,* because such parties are more likely to be open to new ideas and new personnel, and less likely to concentrate on retaining or enhancing the power of a handful of party leaders. Skeptics might agree up to a point, but may warn that too much democratization could overly dilute the power of a party's inner leadership and make it difficult for that party to keep its electoral promises. For instance, depending on how they are structured, inclusive candidate selection procedures can weaken the cohesiveness of legislative parties, because national party leaders may lose the power to deny re-nomination or re-election to rogue members.[2] This is just one example of how changes in internal processes can have direct or indirect effects on political outcomes.

Another possible divergence between the democratic logics of *process* and *outcome* follows from the supposition that those who take the trouble to participate in processes such as party primaries may be more ideologically fervent than the bulk of a party's supporters. If so, candidates selected in this procedurally democratic way may correspond less to voters' general preferences than would, for instance, a slate chosen by party bosses who are paying attention to opinion polls. According to this scenario, procedures that enhance intra-party democracy would, paradoxically, produce legislatures that are less reflective of the electorate as a whole.

Of course, whether such an outcome would be likely to emerge depends in part on whether those who participate in party life really are politically different than other party supporters. Throughout the past century, politicians and political analysts have suspected that party activists tend to hold more extreme political views than the rest of a party's supporters. This has led many to think that maximizing the influence of members could potentially reduce a party's electoral appeal, because they will drive the party away from the more moderate positions that attract other potential supporters.[3] But whether this tradeoff actually exists is an open question. Although research on this point has not been definitive, the assumption behind it has proved remarkably enduring. Yet even if it were true that the most active members are more politically "fundamentalist" than the majority of party voters, the effects of democratizing reforms would still depend on the point from which such reforms start. For instance, moving from elite control to procedures

that empower activists in party conventions might produce more ideologically charged decisions, whereas moving decisions from party conventions to postal ballots from the entire membership might shift power from the most ideologically engaged to less active "ordinary" members, whose views are more likely to resemble those of the party's target electorate.

Whatever the real difference between active members and other supporters, party debates about possible reforms are sometimes premised on the assumption that these differences exist and are marked; indeed, that assumption may sometimes be a reason for reform. Thus, opponents of moving decisions to the membership as a whole may portray "democratization" as a Trojan horse, designed to empower national party leaders at the expense of local and regional party leaders. (This perspective is central to the so-called "cartel party" view of how, and for whose benefit, contemporary party organizations are changing—a view strongly influenced by the experience of the British Labour Party in the 1990s. One prominent advocate of this diagnosis has described much of the "democratization" of parties as a strategy of "empowering while decapitating the membership."[4])

Whether or not critics are correct in seeing particular cases of apparent intra-party democratization as stealth measures to strengthen party leaders at the expense of activist members, the very fact that the argument has any currency underscores the difficulty of evaluating procedural changes apart from their presumed effects on outcomes. Intra-party democratizing reforms, like any organizational changes, may make it more or less difficult for parties to realize other normatively and electorally desirable aims, such as mobilizing supporters, setting policy agendas, and governing effectively. How parties evaluate these tradeoffs may depend in part on their goals: Are they primarily focused on electoral success (an outcome orientation), or do they espouse process-oriented aims that predispose them toward more inclusive internal procedures? Parties like the Greens fall into the latter category, proclaiming a commitment to the transformation of society's political practices, beginning with their own internal ones. Yet few parties that survive politically for any length of time have a purely procedural focus, and most are far more likely to make democratizing changes, and to stick with them, if they seem not to conflict with other party aims. Moreover, even parties with a strong procedural commitment to inclusiveness may differ in their interpretations of what this commitment means: Should democratizing procedures empower *individual* supporters, or should they ensure the better representation of constituent *groups?* In short, expanding intra-party democracy may benefit those parties that implement these reforms as well as the wider society, but these changes may incur high costs for parties. To understand the tradeoffs involved, it is helpful to take a closer look at parties' organizational options.

Party Organization: Key Dimensions

All political parties that contest elections have some kind of organization outside the legislature. In some cases, this organization may be very informal and may be dormant at all times except during elections. Other parties may have highly professional organizations, and in addition they may have dense networks of local groups that are highly active

The Green Party in Germany: The Perils of Too Much Intra-Party Democracy?

Formally founded as a political party in 1980, the Green Party in Germany emerged out of the milieu shaped by the social-protest movements of the 1970s. From the beginning, the party was committed to developing a new organizational style, one that left as much power as possible with the "grassroots," and in which the party's officeholders were subordinate to the party, and not vice versa. One early manifestation of these principles was the widespread use of party meetings to set party policies on various issues. Such meetings, generally held on a local or regional level, were often open to all party supporters, not just paid-up party members. Given that only a small proportion of party members would attend these meetings, it was not unusual to have a small group of committed individuals push through resolutions that were unrepresentative of (or even embarrassing to) the wider party. After several years of experience with this, state Green parties mostly changed their rules to place less weight on all-member meetings, and more on delegate conventions. They also began to exclude non-members from decision making.[5]

throughout the electoral cycle. Many fall somewhere in between these extremes. The diversity of possibilities can make it difficult to compare different parties' organizational choices, or to figure out how proposed reforms might alter the profile of any specific party. So for purposes of simplicity, it may help to introduce a few terms that can make it easier to characterize and compare party-organization options. Two of these terms are the related criteria of *inclusiveness* and *centralization.* Both help describe the ways in which particular parties control access to such key governance tasks as selecting their leaders and choosing candidates for public office.

Inclusiveness tells us about how wide the circle of party decision makers is. Under the most exclusive rules, key decisions are controlled by a single leader or a small group of leaders, and others have no binding role in the process. In the most inclusive parties, all party members, or even all party supporters, are given the opportunity to decide on important issues, such as the choice of party leader or the selection of party candidates. Because inclusiveness is a matter of process as well as of formal rules, more inclusive parties will offer more opportunities for open deliberation prior to the decision stage. Proponents of expanded intra-party democracy seek to move parties in the direction of more inclusive decisions.

Centralization describes the extent to which decisions are made by a single group or decision body. In a highly centralized party, an executive committee meets frequently and has the authority to make decisions that are accepted at all levels of the party. In especially decentralized parties, the national party committee probably meets much less often and tends to be focused more on coordination and communication than on providing definitive guidance to the party. Somewhere in the middle on the centralization scale is the so-called "stratarchical" party, in which decisions are decentralized among geographic layers of the organization ("strata") but tightly controlled by party elites at each of these different levels.[6] Such stratarchical models would seem to hold greater appeal in federal countries, where regional parties have their own distinct political concerns, electoral priorities, and reward structures.

Exclusive party organizations tend to be centralized, but it is important to note that the reverse is not necessarily true. A highly inclusive organization may delegate decisions to subunits (such as candidate selection by members of district parties), but it may also centralize the decision process by minimizing the power of organizational subunits within the party (for instance, with leadership selection by a membership-wide ballot, instead of by delegates from local or regional parties).[7] In other words, decentralization and democratization do not necessarily go hand in hand. In fact, in some cases national leaders may advocate intra-party democratization because they see it as a way of weakening regional party leaders (of which, more below).

A third term to describe party structures is organizational ***institutionalization.*** The notion of party institutionalization may be invoked to cover a wide range of features, including a party's autonomy from other actors, the extent of its internal organizational development, and the extent to which supporters identify with the party and view it as an important actor.[8] In a more narrowly organizational sense, two key features defining the level of party institutionalization are the degree to which internal decision procedures are formalized, and the extent to which the party has coordinated structures throughout its target constituency. Low institutionalization tends to be a characteristic of newer parties, primarily because it takes time to develop formal structures and develop a broad organizational network. But the obverse is not true; established parties are not necessarily highly institutionalized. Similarly, parties with high degrees of intra-party democracy are generally highly institutionalized because they need rules that define who is eligible to participate and what constitutes victory in internal contests. However, high institutionalization does not equal internal democratization, and highly institutionalized structures are not necessarily internally democratic ones. In fact, institutionalized parties that are not internally democratic may be more difficult to reform than are those with less well-entrenched rules and practices.

Regardless, high institutionalization of political parties is generally seen as good for a country's political stability: Parties' internal rules can help to minimize factional conflicts, or at least channel such conflicts in predictable ways, and often promote smooth leadership turnovers. But even if institutionalization is desirable, it is hard to engineer deliberately, because to a certain extent, institutionalization is a product of time: Traditions can be at least as important

Party Primaries in Argentina

In 1983, Argentina overthrew its military dictatorship and reestablished an electoral democracy. One of the early acts of the newly elected Congress was the 1985 adoption of a Parties Law requiring parties to have formal rules for internal governance and to use democratic elections to fill party-leadership posts. The Parties Law does not require parties to use primaries to select candidates. Yet parties have increasingly turned to this method to select candidates for state and national elections, although the methods that respective parties have used vary from election to election. Most parties limit participation in their party-run primaries to registered members, though some open them up not only to party members but also to those unaffiliated with other parties.[9]

as written rules in determining which are the more coveted positions within a party, and it generally takes at least several elections to create a base of loyal and organized supporters. So higher institutionalization is not something that can be instantly imposed, nor is it necessarily something that all party leaders would want to promote. Those who aspire to build lasting party structures and loyalties may back measures to formalize rules that can help to transfer personal loyalties into party loyalties, thereby strengthening party institutionalization, but in weakly institutionalized parties, many leaders—particularly those with strong personal followings—may view institutionalization as a threat to their own power.

The terms *inclusiveness, centralization,* and *institutionalization* can help describe organizational differences among parties, as well as characterize changes over time within individual parties. These terms should not, however, be thought of as binary labels. Instead, we can think of them as describing scales along which parties range, being more or less inclusive, centralized, or institutionalized. Thinking of parties in these terms gives us a more precise vocabulary for describing what we mean when we talk about the expansion of democracy within parties. Organizational changes that expand intra-party democracy will, almost by definition, increase inclusiveness, but what constitutes a "democratizing" change in any specific case depends on where the party is initially located along the "inclusiveness" spectrum. Furthermore, to evaluate the impact of changes in inclusiveness, it is important to recognize that these changes generally do not happen in isolation; they are likely to affect other aspects of the organization also, including levels of centralization and institutionalization. As we will see in greater detail below, *how* changes in inclusiveness affect these other aspects largely depends on which mechanisms are used to expand inclusiveness.

Implementing Intra-Party Democracy

What are some of the ways of expanding inclusiveness in party procedures, and what are some of the practical considerations associated with such techniques? It is impossible to give a complete inventory of the many ways in which parties have sought to incorporate supporters within their basic decision structures, but it is a bit easier to outline some of the primary choices that parties must make when implementing the more common forms of intra-party democracy. These choices fall under three main headings: selecting party candidates, selecting party leaders, and defining policy positions.

Selecting Candidates

Recruiting and selecting candidates is a crucial task for parties, because parties' profiles during elections, and while in office, are largely determined by which candidates are chosen and where their loyalties lie. Parties that want to include a wide circle of supporters in this process generally rely on one of two devices: either a direct ballot of eligible supporters, often called a "primary" election, or else nomination by some kind of party assembly. The latter can be an assembly of the whole (a "caucus") or an assembly of representatives chosen for this purpose.

Whichever procedure is used, parties must decide who is eligible to participate. Generally, parties limit participation

Practical Questions for Candidate Selection

- What is the selection device?
  - → Meeting or primary?
  - → If a meeting, local, regional, or national?
  - → If a primary, in-person or postal ballot?
- Who determines candidate eligibility?
- Who determines membership eligibility?
- Must party leaders pre-select nominees?
- Must party leaders approve choices?
- Are choices limited by party rules?

to enrolled party members, though in some instances parties open the process to include any interested supporters. While a more open policy is more inclusive, openness creates the risk that the processes will be infiltrated by people who do not share the party's vision—or perhaps even by those who actively oppose it. Thus, parties generally consider it important to limit participation to members in good standing. Membership qualifications often include dues payments, and many parties reserve the right to refuse membership to those who disagree with core party values. In addition, some parties may impose a waiting period before new members are allowed to participate in candidate selection procedures, a provision that can help ensure that would-be candidates do not "swamp" local parties with their newly enrolled supporters. In contrast, other parties do not have such a participation cutoff, and may even consider it beneficial for the party if candidates compete to enroll their supporters as party members. (See below for a fuller discussion of party membership.)

Another related question is: Who determines eligibility? This is in part a question about who keeps the definitive membership records. Generally, this is done by either the local party or the central party. National party authorities may want to centralize this process, possibly fearing that local parties may be too lax in enforcing eligibility rules or that they may selectively enforce these rules in a way that will undermine the perceived fairness of the process. However, in some cases, particularly where there are "open" primaries, it may be civic authorities who are the de facto adjudicators of eligibility (in the sense that all eligible voters may participate). In fact, this may be one reason some parties find it attractive to use an open primary, because it avoids the potential difficulty of putting party authorities in a position to deny participation rights to those who might oppose them.

Parties that adopt some kind of primary system for candidate selection generally choose between a postal ballot and an in-person ballot. Of these, the postal ballot is easier to organize, at least in countries with good postal services, and it is often preferred because the ease of voting encourages wider participation. It is also easier to organize (at least as long as parties have a reliable list of members' addresses) in that it obviates the need for parties to set up their own polling stations throughout the country. On the other hand, postal ballots present a greater potential for fraud, because mail-in voters' identities cannot be verified, and because postal ballots are not received and counted on a single day.

With respect to inclusive candidate selection procedures, the main alternative to the primary election is selection at a party meeting. In cases where districts are geographically compact, a local party may call a meeting of its entire membership to pick the candidate or candidates. For national elections, this "caucus" option may be practical only in countries with single-member districts; it could also be used in municipal elections, even in cases where the party's task is to pick a city-wide slate of candidates. When districts are geographically larger, parties often rely on less inclusive representative assemblies to choose the candidate or candidates. In the case of presidential-candidate selection, assembly delegates may be chosen on the basis of pledges to support a particular candidate. When delegates must choose an entire slate of candidates, delegates may have more latitude about whom they will ultimately support, although factions or leaders may try to circumvent this by selecting delegates who have pledged to support certain internal tendencies.

Whatever the way in which members or supporters are incorporated into the selection process, one important consideration is whether party rules limit their choices. For instance, some parties require that would-be candidates be approved by a party-selection board prior to being eligible to participate in party primaries or caucuses. In other parties, central party authorities reserve the right to withhold *ex post facto* the nominations of individuals selected in intra-party

Democratized Candidate Selection with Balanced Slates: Israel, 1996

In 1996, two of the three largest Israeli parties, Labour and Likud, used closed primaries to select their parliamentary candidates. The party members' decisions were binding and could not be overridden in the interests of creating balanced slates. Both parties, however, devised processes that were supposed to ensure balanced outcomes. For the election, each party had to present a single national list. But to ensure that candidates represented all areas of the country, both parties selected candidates according to geographic district. Both had "functional" districts, as well, to ensure the representation of certain groups (non-Jewish members and those on collective settlements in the case of Labour, those from agricultural settlements in the case of Likud). In both the geographic and functional districts, only members from the district were eligible to vote. Finally, both parties also reserved positions for candidates from certain social sectors (women, young persons, non-Jews, etc.), guaranteeing that the top vote-getter from each category would be moved up into a more prominent spot on the list if he or she did not reach this level in the primary election. These district and reserved seats together made up a large ratio of each party's safe seats. Thus, rules established ahead of time enabled both parties to have some control over the demographic face of the party's candidate slate, reducing the perceived need for slate-balancing intervention after party members had made their choices.[10]

contests. Such rules are intended to ensure that candidates are well qualified as both campaigners and representatives of party principles. They can also make it more difficult for those who do not support party policies somehow to "steal" nominations and embarrass the party. (A notorious instance of what happens in a party without such a safeguard occurred in the U.S. state of Louisiana in 1991, when voters in a Republican primary nominated David Duke as the party's gubernatorial candidate. Party leaders could personally repudiate the candidate, an outspoken white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan member, but they had no way of denying him the use of the party label.) Of course, rules that limit choices are somewhat at odds with the idea of making selection processes more inclusive. If rules for vetting candidates are overused, they can become tools with which party leaders may strengthen their own internal power bases.

Some rules limit selectors' choices in a different way, by imposing demographic quotas on the types of candidates who must be chosen. For instance, in some countries that vote using list system proportional representation, certain parties have required that their selection processes must produce gender diversity among some minimum number of the top names on the party list. This requirement can be mandated as part of the initial selection process, or it can be added as a remedial action, for instance, by stipulating that if the primary ballot does not place a woman as one of the party's top three candidates, the top female vote-getter will be promoted to the number-three spot on the party list. Some parties have gone even further and implemented the "zipper principle," meaning that lists are constructed in accordance with a strict male-female alternation. Other systems for ensuring diversity may allocate seats according to region, ethnicity, or religious community. Such quota systems aim to produce candidate lists that are "balanced" in ways considered appropriate to the specific political situation. Slate-balancing measures may be more difficult to insert into decentralized selection processes in districts with few candidates, but such measures are certainly possible. For example, in 1993, the British Labour Party adopted a system of "one-member, one-vote" procedures for district-level candidate primaries. At the same time, the party conference also decided that half of the party's vacant parliamentary seats, including half of the winnable seats, would be filled by candidates chosen from all-female short lists. In other words, some districts were told that they could pick any pre-approved potential candidate, as long as the candidate they chose was a woman. This system (replaced in 1996 by the much weaker mandate of gender-balanced short lists) illustrates one way in which decentralized choices (process goals) can be engineered to fit with other national aims (outcome goals).

Parties adopt such systems of constrained choice because even if voters in party primaries are alert to the value of having balanced slates, it would be almost impossible for them to cast their ballots in a way that guaranteed a balanced outcome. Inserting demographic "safeguards" is an attempt

to limit the impact of possible tradeoffs between process and outcomes, and they help ensure that a party's selection processes yields candidates who are demographically representative. On the other hand, measures like these radically curtail the extent to which party members have a say in candidate selection, and as such they can be resented as unfair limits on intra-party democracy.

Practical Questions for Leadership Selection

- Which leaders are elected versus appointed?
- What is the selection device?
  - → Party assembly?
  - → Membership ballot?
  - → Combination process?
- What arena determines the party leader?
  - → Parliamentary caucus?
  - → Party congress?
  - → Entire membership?
- Do rules of succession limit pool of potential leaders?
- Which party units become selectors?
- Who adjudicates party disputes?

Selecting Leaders

Many of the same questions are asked when establishing inclusive leadership selection processes as are asked when establishing inclusive candidate selection processes: Who may participate as a selector? Are there any limits on who may stand as a candidate in the internal election? And who oversees the fairness of the process and, if necessary, adjudicates disputes?

In both parliamentary and presidential systems, selecting a party leader may be equivalent to selecting the party's leading candidate. In parliamentary systems, there may be formal rules requiring parliamentary groups to designate their own leaders, but in some cases these groups will have pre-committed themselves to a candidate chosen by a larger group of party supporters, such as a party conference or a membership ballot. In the latter case, the same questions about participation eligibility arise as with balloting to select party candidates. A third option is a combined process—for example, having the legislative party or the party conference act as a gatekeeper, deciding which candidates will appear on a party-wide ballot (a practice used in the British Conservative Party in 2001).

Because the choice of party leader is so important for defining the party's course and image, such pre-selection mechanisms may play an important role in leadership elections. Beyond straight-out vetting by the legislative party, there are other ways of handling pre-selection. For instance, candidates may be asked to demonstrate that they have the support of a certain number of regional parties or a certain percentage of the party's legislative delegation. Alternatively, there may be a nomination board composed of representatives from party factions, one charged with certifying "approved" candidates either before or after party members make their choices.

The mere fact of having regularized and inclusive procedures for leadership contests may help dampen intra-party rivalries by setting clear rules of succession. Because the decision is so important, though, there may be conflicts about how these procedures operate. If so, it may be difficult for parties to find an internal party body considered neutral enough that it can adjudicate disputes about who may participate and whether procedures were fairly followed. When parties do not have their own mechanisms for resolving such conflicts, this may encourage disappointed contestants to appeal to national courts for help. Judges may be reluctant to get involved in parties' internal affairs, viewing parties as essentially private associations. However, especially in countries where some form of internal democracy is legally mandated by national party laws, courts may have no choice but to get involved if some participants claim that democratic procedures were violated.

Setting Party Policies

One of the ways to assess the degree of internal democracy in a party is to ask who helps determine the content of the party's electoral promises. In the most inclusive of parties, individual party members may be asked to vote on specific policy positions. More usually, parties have chosen the less inclusive option of asking party conference delegates to endorse a set of commitments prepared by a platform committee. Often, the deliberation process may be more

open than the actual vote. Party policy committees may take pains to show that they are listening to different viewpoints, for instance by holding consultation meetings around the country or soliciting comments via the Internet. Similarly, party leaders may permit an airing of viewpoints during debates at party conferences, even if conference votes seem structured to ensure the passage of a platform committee's recommendations. The point of such open consultation is to demonstrate that the party's policies have been developed in cooperation with the party's members, who are presumed to be representative of the party's most devoted supporters.

Although party conferences are the most common venue for the formal endorsement of party policy positions, occasionally parties hold internal plebiscites on specific policy issues. One situation that may prompt such a vote is when the issue at stake divides a party's leaders. Holding a vote allows their differences to be aired; in return, the leaders of the opposing factions agree to abide by the outcome. Party leaders may also back internal votes in hopes of strengthening their own positions vis-à-vis other members of their party—for instance, when a prime minister fears that she may lose the support of her legislative party on some issue. Here, of course, there is always the risk that members will not provide the solicited backing.

Unlike candidate selection and leadership selection, decisions on issues are less likely to occur on a regularly scheduled basis (with the possible exception of the ratification of campaign platforms). Thus, one of the questions that arises in connection with policy votes is: Who may call them? Is this the prerogative of the national leadership only, or can members or regional leaders call for a formal policy consultation exercise or organize an internal referendum? The answer to this question helps to determine how easy it is for dissatisfied factions to use policy votes against the party leadership. But even if party leaders formally have the sole right to determine whether and when votes may be taken, in some circumstances leaders may be successfully pressured into holding such a vote. This can happen even in the absence of written rules on consultative votes, though pressure on leaders to consult members in this way is more likely to succeed in parties whose statutes or traditions explicitly recognize the procedure.

In cases where the membership is balloted on issues, the same procedural questions must be answered as with ballots to select candidates or leaders: Who is eligible to participate, and will there be a postal ballot or in-person voting only? In addition, there is the question of whether the vote will be considered to be advisory or binding on the party leadership. If the latter, is there a minimum threshold for participation in order for the result to be considered binding?

Practical Questions for Policy Determination

- Is the party process formalized?
- What role do party members play?
  - → Participating in debates and forums?
  - → Consultation meetings?
  - → Selecting party platform writers?
  - → Internal party plebiscites?
- What role do parliamentarians play?
- Who adjudicates policy disputes?

Party Members: Essential to All Mechanisms of Intra-Party Democracy

In order for any of these more inclusive decision procedures to operate effectively and in a democratic way, parties must make decisions about who will be eligible to participate in them. Where these limits are set, and how they are enacted, can crucially affect the experiences of those who participate, the decisions reached, and their perceived legitimacy.

In most cases, though not all, parties limit participation to party members. But this still leaves a wide degree of latitude, because parties differ in defining who counts as an eligible member. There are two key procedural aspects to this: What are the official requirements for becoming a member, and who is responsible for verifying membership status?

Membership definitions. Parties' official membership requirements may be more or less formal, and more or less difficult to meet. Usually they include payment of at least a token financial commitment (in the form of monthly or annual dues payments); sometimes they also include the

Consulting Members on Policy: France, 2004

In December 2004, French Socialist Party leaders appealed to their membership to settle a major policy dispute. The party held a consultative ballot among members to help decide whether the party should endorse a "yes" vote in the French referendum on the revised treaty for the European Union. This internally controversial issue held the potential to split the party. Holding the internal vote allowed "pro" and "anti" forces within the party to voice their opinions, and the strongly favorable vote provided the party's first secretary (its leader) with the definitive endorsement he had hoped for. (In the end, nevertheless, most of the party's supporters ignored the party's endorsement and voted against the European constitution.)

requirement that members actively participate in party life. The level of expected financial commitment may reflect the party's financial needs and the availability of other sources of funding: Parties that rely on supporters to fund important activities may need to set their dues levels comparatively high. And parties that impose dues requirements may scale these to different income levels, and generally offer reduced rates to students, the unemployed, and others for whom the dues may represent a barrier to membership. But even parties that do not need members' funds to finance their work may nevertheless have a dues requirement, because they want members to show their commitment by subscribing. Requiring regular (monthly or annual) dues payments also gives parties a good way of distinguishing who is, and who is not, a member in good standing.

Generally, would-be members must in some way apply for membership. In more highly institutionalized parties, application procedures may involve official bodies that can accept or reject applicants, and which can expel members judged to be harmful to the party's interest. Other parties may be more informal, such as the British Conservatives in the 1950s and 1960s, whose large reported membership figures reflected the practices of local party associations—who in turn generally counted all donors as members, whether or not they indicated any interest in being considered "members."

Presumably, the more difficult the membership requirements, and the more formal the procedures, the smaller the membership is likely to be as a ratio of the party's supporters. Partly for this reason, parties can hesitate to raise dues rates, fearing that this would scare away members. But parties generally maintain some obstacles to membership, in order to discourage opponents from "infiltrating" and subverting them—a possibility that can be of particular concern when members are given powers to choose leaders and set policies. As a result, and somewhat paradoxically, parties that seek to devolve decisions to members (increasing inclusiveness) may simultaneously tighten central controls over the matter of who is allowed to be a member (increasing centralization).

Membership centralization. As this problem suggests, another question related to the administration of a membership-based political party is: Who is in charge of maintaining records and verifying eligibility? Primary responsibility may rest with local party officials, or with regional or national party authorities. Parties that are trying to develop locally active membership organizations may rely on local organizations to take the lead in recruitment and enrollment. The locus of control over access to membership may depend on the distribution of power within the party organization (how centralized is it in other areas?) and also on the organizational capacity of the central party (is it equipped to maintain a central membership database?). When membership administration is handled solely by local parties, national parties may lack members' current contact information. They then have no way of directly mailing information (or ballots) to members, and must rely on the local parties to report accurate figures, distribute ballots and other official communications, and resolve disputes about who is and who is not eligible to participate in party decision-making processes.

Decentralization of this kind may make for a more democratic party in one sense: Control over access to membership does not rest with the central leadership alone. However, such decentralization does carry the risk that different areas will use different procedures for determining

eligibility, as well as the risk that local party elites will manipulate membership rolls to their own advantage. Decentralization may thus multiply the opportunities for disputes about eligibility for participation in party decision making, which can in turn undermine the perceived fairness of decisions reached using internally democratic procedures. On the other hand, particularly when local authorities or local populations are distrustful of central party authorities, locally produced irregularities may be preferable to nationally imposed ones.

As mentioned above, one way to remove both local and national party authorities from the job of determining membership eligibility is to turn it over to state authorities. Parties can do this of their own volition or, as in some cases, may be forced to do it by unhappy supporters who take their grievance to court. Deferring to state authorities on matters of party-membership eligibility greatly reduces parties' ability to exclude unwanted supporters. Nevertheless, it considerably reduces the costs to parties of maintaining membership bases: Parties do not have to worry about whether members have maintained their eligibility, and civic authorities maintain the necessary database. It also eliminates the internal political strains produced by adjudicating disputes over membership eligibility.

Reasons for Parties to Enroll Members

Proponents of intra-party democracy tend to assume that parties can easily enroll supporters as members, and that the biggest obstacle to intra-party democracy may be elites' reluctance to share power. In fact, however, it cannot be assumed that political parties can easily assemble a membership base. Although accurate membership figures are often hard to come by, it is clear that parties in democracies seldom enroll high proportions of their supporters as members: In western European democracies once characterized as having "mass membership parties," parties that enroll as much as 10 percent of their voters have been a rarity in the past half-century; 2 to 3 percent is a more common ratio today.[11] So advocates of intra-party democracy also need to think carefully about how parties are going to assemble and maintain a core group of supporters who are willing to invest time and energy in political affairs.

Intra-party democracy is not the only consideration for those who might join a party, or for parties seeking members. Indeed, unless individuals are seeking a career in politics, they may be more likely to join and remain involved with a party if they receive something from their membership in addition to the opportunity to participate in politics. Similarly, parties that find members to be useful in multiple ways may be more likely to invest in recruiting them. So it is worth taking a moment to reflect on how parties may benefit from having organized membership bases, how citizens may benefit from enrolling as party members, and how parties may be able to attract members by offering supporters multiple reasons to join.

Common benefits that parties may garner from formally enrolling their supporters as members include some or all of the following:

Legitimacy. Legitimacy can be conferred even by the most passive of members. Parties with large membership rosters can boast of their grassroots support. This is a benefit that may be magnified when party members play a role in selecting leaders and candidates—in which case, those selected can claim a broad mandate well before they face the electorate at large.

Connection to supporters. When members are included in formal and informal discussions of party policies and in the selection of candidates, it fosters links between party leaders and the party's key supporters. In this way, members may enhance the "linkage" function that is generally attributed to parties: Party leaders may be less isolated from the public if they receive continuous feedback from members who care about politics. And parties with mechanisms that target messages to members can in turn enlist their members to spread party messages into the wider community. In addition, members generally serve as electoral bedrocks for parties. Even where a party's members are not entirely happy with party leaders, members are still the voters who are least likely to defect or stay home on election day.

Financial support. Members may be an important source of revenue for parties. Even in countries where parties receive state subsidies, parties may be required to raise a percentage of their revenues from other sources—in which case, members' dues and members' donations can be extremely important alternative funding sources.

Volunteer labor. Getting a party's political message out to hostile or inattentive publics is a primary goal for every party. Even in an age of increasingly professionalized and well-financed campaigns, volunteers often have a role to play in this respect. They are even more important to parties in countries where low-tech communications are the norm. Having an organized membership provides parties with a reservoir of likely foot soldiers.

Candidates. Memberships can be good sources of candidates. This may be particularly important in countries with partisan local governments, and hence where parties must find large numbers of candidates to contest seats and possibly engage, in turn, in the often unglamorous work of municipal government.

Reasons for Supporters to Become (and Remain) Enrolled Members

Just as we can ask why parties might want to go to the trouble of recruiting and retaining members, we also can ask why individuals would want to make the effort to join a party. Understanding the mixture of motives individuals have for joining can be particularly useful for parties interested in recruiting.

To express a political conviction. For some members, party membership may serve a primarily expressive function: They join in order to show their support for a party or its leaders. Members can show their solidarity without necessarily becoming very involved in party activities.

To learn more about politics. Those interested in politics may find that party membership helps them stay better informed. As a member, they may receive special briefings about political issues (from newsletters, for instance, or member-only web pages), and they may receive invitations to meetings where they can hear debates about issues and can listen to, and often meet, political leaders and political "celebrities."

To participate in politics. Some people join parties in order to try to influence political outcomes, whether by participating in party campaigns, or by helping to make party decisions.

To help fulfill personal political ambitions. Many parties consider active party membership a prerequisite for nomination to public office. Even so, party membership will not be very large if the only supporters who enroll are those who hope to win the party's nomination for public office.

To gain social benefits. Party membership may provide good opportunities for people to socialize with like-minded individuals—for instance, when attending meetings or working on campaigns, or when spending leisure time at party-sponsored social clubs. Local party branches may enhance these opportunities by sponsoring some activities that have a primarily social purpose.

To gain economic benefits. Parties often provide economic rewards for their members that can range from the kinds of bulk-purchase discounts that many organizations and clubs offer their members to the ethically dubious practice of using state resources as patronage benefits. Whatever the size of the benefits, the distinctive feature is that they are reserved exclusively for members, thus rewarding those who maintain their enrollment.

None of these rewards are mutually exclusive, and most individuals are probably motivated in a variety of ways to join and maintain their memberships. Still, thinking about the reasons that people join helps highlight steps that parties may want to take if they hope to boost their memberships. One way to make party membership more attractive is to increase the benefits reserved exclusively for members. As mentioned above, some of these benefits may be of the sort that any large organization can provide to members, be they group discounts for commercial products or priority access to special events (political and non-political). They can also provide members with extra information about politics (magazines, password-only access to websites) and with a sense of "insider" access to politicians (party meetings attended by local or national political figures). For parties that do see a boost in enrollment directly before primary elections, providing tangible benefits like these may be one way of holding onto the new members after the primary is over: Members may join for one reason but choose to stay on for another. Another way to make membership more appealing is to lower the costs of membership. This may mean lowering dues rates, but it may also mean making the party more accessible, for instance by making it possible for members

Table 1: Selected Models of Party Organization and Organizational Tendencies

Type	Centralization	Inclusiveness	Institutionalization
1. *Dominant Leader*	High	Low	Generally low
2. *Party of Notables*	Medium (often stratarchical)	Low	Low to medium
3. *Individual Representation*	Medium to high	Medium to high	Medium to high
4. *Corporatist Representation*	Medium to high	Medium	Medium to high
5. *Basis Democracy*	Low to medium	High	Medium to high

to enroll on the Internet, or by contacting a well-advertised national party address, rather than requiring those who are interested to seek out the party's local offices.

In any case, whatever the reasons for supporters to join and remain enrolled in a political party, parties need to have a critical mass of members in order for intra-party democracy to be effective. The more people who participate, the less likely it is that procedures will be hijacked by small groups of extremists, and the more likely it is that outcomes will deliver a mandate respected by the party's wider circle of possible voters. Luckily, expanded opportunities to participate within the party may themselves help boost membership, both by making it more attractive to people who are politically engaged, and by giving existing party members and would-be candidates greater incentives to recruit their like-minded friends and supporters.

Models of Party Organization

As all of this makes clear, parties have adopted a wide range of approaches to their internal organization, and they are constantly experimenting with new structures and new procedures to cope with internal and external pressures. So it is hard to generalize about how democratizing membership will affect a party's overall structure. However, using the ideas of inclusiveness, centralization, and institutionalization presented above, we can distinguish five common organizational models: (1) the "leader-dominated" party; (2) the "party of notables," sometimes called the "cadre" party; (3) the party of "individual representation"; (4) the "corporatist" party; and (5) the party built on "basis democracy." These models help clarify some of the different challenges and internal stresses caused by democratizing reforms. Some of these models have been more characteristic of certain historical eras than others, but none of them are entirely obsolescent: Elements of all the models can be found in contemporary parties in new as well as established democracies. While no individual party perfectly corresponds to any of these types, recognizing a party's general organizational starting point can give us some clues about the likely effects of organizational democratization: Which groups are likely to benefit, and what types of structure may need to be strengthened or changed to make internal democratization work?

Dominant leader. Parties dominated by a single leader generally construct their appeal around the popularity, perceived integrity, and sometimes financial resources, of that individual. This leader articulates and embodies the party's programmatic aspirations, and the party may even take its name (or at least its nickname) from him or her. Many successful parties in contemporary democracies fit this description, either originating as or becoming (at least for a while) the vehicle for a single dominant leader (for example, Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* in Italy). In such parties, the leader may be self-selected (perhaps as the party founder), may be anointed by an outgoing leader, or may come to the fore as a result of demonstrated electoral appeal. He or she may gain the position with the formal endorsement of a party conference, but in practice the leader can dominate party decisions while holding a variety of formal positions within the organization—or even while holding none at all. Such parties may use local branches and party assemblies to

mobilize support, but their main characteristic is that the power to shape the party's political direction is tightly held at the center.

In leader-dominated parties, party organization is often weakly institutionalized, and there may be little concern about promoting intra-party democracy (see Model 1 in **Table 1** on the previous page). In the short term, this may not be a concern, because having a charismatic leader gives a party a memorable "brand" that is easy to promote, and such a leader can define the direction of the party. In the long term, however, the lack of formal decision-structures often leads to problems with leadership succession and policy definition. Conflicts among would-be successors may become acute when rules for settling such disputes are absent or little-used. Moreover, the lack of clear paths for advancement may discourage talented individuals from pursuing political careers within the party. Where dissent is discouraged in the name of supporting the party's leaders, and where there are few formal channels for containing disagreements, disputes are more likely to lead to party splits than to organized factionalism.

"Parties have adopted a wide range of approaches to their internal organization, and they are constantly experimenting with new structures and new procedures to cope with internal and external pressures."

Leader-dominated parties are not necessarily anti-democratic or anti-inclusive in spirit. In fact, in new and emerging democracies, parties of this type have formed around dissidents who rose to prominence because of their opposition to dictatorships. Political leaders such as Nelson Mandela in South Africa and Kim Dae-Jung in South Korea gained their stature partly as a result of their principled commitment to democracy, and their ascent to top public offices came quickly after the lifting of political restrictions—circumstances which meant that political success almost necessarily preceded party institutionalization. So in at least some cases, the lack of formal structures and the lack of internal democracy are products of the party's newness and rapid success, not an indication of how leaders have sought to consolidate their power. But whatever the reasons for weak internal governance structures, most parties dominated by a single leader will probably need to adopt more formal structures for leadership replacement at all levels if they hope to hold together after the dominant leader leaves the political scene.

Party of notables. While the leader-dominated party has become a familiar model, dominant leaders were not so usual when democratic parties emerged in the nineteenth century. Then, most parties were weakly institutionalized, with loose decision-making procedures, comparatively weak legislative cohesion, and ephemeral organizations that were generally dormant between elections. Many of these parties arose out of pressures within a legislature, and they only later developed structures to link themselves with supporters. Rather than organizing around a single charismatic leader, these parties tended to be dominated by a small and self-selected leadership corps, generally consisting of elected officials, leaders from the party's constituencies (clerics, trade union leaders, and so forth), local community leaders, and party bureaucrats. Power was often dispersed between leaders at different levels, who used informal rules and backroom methods to select candidates and leaders. Whatever the mixture of career paths leading to the top in such parties, one common characteristic of these original "parties of notables" was that they were not concerned about maintaining even the appearance of internal democracy: Their platforms sought the endorsement of social "quality," not democratic "quantity."

The contemporary counterparts to these nineteenth-century parties are those that are loosely structured around the resources and reputations of a group of like-minded elites (see Model 2 in Table 1). Such parties tend to be decentralized and weakly institutionalized, with their organization in communities or regions centered on leaders whose support is at least somewhat independent of the party organization. Like their predecessors, these parties are exclusive, with decisions resting in the hands of the notables who embody the party's public profile. In these parties, organizational democratization tends to entail increased institutionalization,

because the parties need to delineate membership boundaries before they can expand membership rights.

Individual representation. Toward the end of the nineteenth century some of these parties began to experiment with other organizational forms, largely spurred by the success of the new socialist parties. Socialist and labor parties first emerged outside of legislatures, generally at a point when many of those they sought to represent had yet to be enfranchised. In part because their activities were restricted in the electoral arena, they built up permanent organizations that enrolled and organized supporters between elections in order to foster solidarity with their political cause. In many countries, these extra-election organizations helped create new social-political identities that shaped national politics for years to come. These parties tended to construct organizations in which individual members or group interests were represented in regional and national party conventions.

Almost from the beginning, critics questioned the extent to which these bottom-up structures constituted true intra-party democracy. Most famously, early in the twentieth century, the German sociologist Roberto Michels proclaimed in his study of the German Social Democrats that "every party organization represents an oligarchical power grounded upon a democratic basis"; thus, "who says organization, says oligarchy."[12] This is a strong indictment, and it is one that has haunted many democratic parties ever since. However, the fact that it was made at all illustrates the emerging shift in attitudes about the internal operation of political parties. Even if parties that embraced these standards did not live up to them entirely, merely by proclaiming them they were making important arguments about the legitimacy conferred by internal democracy. The electoral successes of some of these new parties (mainly of the left) added further weight to these arguments. As a result, by the second half of the twentieth century, other parties—including many of the older cadre parties, which changed their structures to make them more formal and less elitist—began to accept these organizational ideas.

Today, even parties with strong leaders often have representative structures that give at least the appearance of popular involvement in the party's candidate selection and policy articulation. In these parties, decision structures may remain centralized, but they rest on a more formally layered, and more inclusive, base than they do in "parties of notables" (see Model 3 in Table 1). In other words, by the end of the twentieth century, many parties in established democracies paid at least lip service to the idea that parties benefited from some degree of democracy within their own organizations. Even when this change may have been more rhetorical than real, the articulation of this intra-party democratic ideal helped to change public expectations of parties. It also helped define the notions of good practices that were in place by the last quarter of the twentieth century, a time when parties in emerging democracies around the world began looking for models for strengthening ties between political leaders and supporters.

Corporatist. For many parties, proclaiming a commitment to intra-party democracy has meant enhancing participation opportunities for individual members or supporters. However, empowering individual supporters has never been the only option for parties seeking to build more democratic structures. Some parties have developed what might be called a "corporatist," or group-based, style of internal representation, in which leaders of interested constituencies have privileged positions within the party. Delegates from these groups (such as church or trade union networks) sit in party councils and act on behalf of their supporters. Members of the represented groups are sometimes considered to be indirectly enrolled in the party as a result of their corporatist representation in it.[13] Examples of parties with this corporatist style during some part of the twentieth century include the U.K.'s Labour Party, Sweden's Social Democrats, the Austrian People's Party, and Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party. As this list suggests, the idea of formalizing sub-group representation within party structures is an old one, found especially (though not exclusively) among parties of the left that developed in tandem with trade union movements. Corporatist parties are strongly institutionalized in terms of the strength of group loyalties, but their structures for mobilizing supporters may or may not be so well developed, depending on how much the parties can rely on the organizational strength of the affiliated groups. Generally speaking, decision making in these parties is inclusive in terms of group interests, but not in terms of individual preferences (see Model 4 in Table 1).

The Mexican PRI in the 1990s: Decentralization and a Retreat from Corporatism

For much of the twentieth century, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominated Mexican politics. This began to change in the 1980s as the PRI lost support after a period of economic upheaval. In 1988, the PRI suffered large losses in the national legislature and retained the presidency only as a result of questionable electoral tallies. This election made it clear that the PRI was going to need to broaden its electoral appeal to compete effectively. In response to these changing circumstances, both the PRI's leader and the PRI-backed president sponsored party reforms designed to shift power away from the party's corporatist sectors (for example, trade unions and the agricultural sector), which were decreasingly effective in delivering the vote, toward the more geographically and individually organized "popular" sector of the party. In addition, party leaders at the subnational state level were given a greater say on the party's national executive, and steps were taken to widen participation in candidate selection processes (for all but the presidential nomination).

Although many of these reforms were quickly reversed, enough of them were sustained to cause significant shifts in power within the party. State governors gained a much greater role in the nomination of the PRI's presidential candidate for the 2000 election, but in turn, governors became even more dependent on the local party bosses who controlled nominations for state-level offices. The PRI decentralized some of these processes, and also expanded the circle of participation for selecting legislative candidates. In some locales, the more open selection contests aggravated party divisions, prompting groups to campaign against the PRI or even join a different party. As well, some of the beneficiaries of these decentralizing changes were local party bosses who were more interested in shoring up their own power than in carrying through plans to broaden the party's appeal through internal democratization. Even so, ahead of the 2000 election, the PRI continued its experiments with intra-party democracy by holding a presidential primary open to all voters. This strategy was not, however, enough for the PRI to hold onto the presidency, and the party was defeated for the first time in 71 years.[14]

More recently, a number of traditionally corporatist parties have begun to downplay group representation in favor of a more direct mobilization of individual supporters. Such changes have come in the context of efforts to broaden the parties' support base, something that may seem more urgent when traditional constituent groups (like churches and trade unions) show a diminishing ability to mobilize political support. At the same time, in some parties, certain factions have tried to extend the corporatist principle beyond the representation of economic sectors, arguing that democracy requires that other groups should have guaranteed representation in party structures—so as to ensure that a range of voices are heard. For instance, many parties have considered introducing reserved candidacies or executive council seats for members of demographic groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in party ranks (for example, women, younger people, or ethnic minorities). When granted, such privileges for favored sub-groups must then be reconciled with preexisting arrangements for distributing power within the party. These complications illustrate how corporatist principles, which have always given priority to group representation, were likely ultimately to conflict with the "one-member, one-vote" principles of individual representation.

Basis democracy. In recent years, some party reformers have become critical of representative arrangements based on either individual or group rights, and have advocated what might be described as "basis democracy" (after the Green parties' intentions of representing their party "bases") or "plebiscitary democracy." This is a model founded on highly inclusive procedures, such as the referendum ("plebiscite"), which prioritizes broad participation in both deliberation and decision making. Those who favor such structures argue that party organizations should provide a more direct role for party supporters in important decisions. This model came to prominence among the "new left" parties that emerged in Europe in the 1980s, and it is these parties that have garnered the greatest experience with such structures. In many cases, parties that experimented with the procedures of basis democracy found that these

procedures required them to institutionalize to a much greater degree than they initially intended, because the new procedural focus raised issues that could only be resolved through clear new rules. Reformers in more traditionally organized parties have also attended to some of the ideas of basis democracy, and in some cases this has resulted in the adoption of new procedures, such as party primaries to select candidates, party-wide ballots to select party leaders, or new procedures for settling programmatic issues (see Model 5 in Table 1 on page 15).

These five organizational models are helpful for understanding the different starting points from which contemporary parties may embark on organizational change, and different directions in which they may head when they seek to promote greater inclusiveness in internal decision making. For political parties, "democratization" means very different things depending on the initial organizational context. To put it most sharply, increasing inclusiveness in a party of notables means something entirely different than it does in a basis democracy party. What differs is not only *who* is empowered by the change but also *what practical steps* need to be taken to make democratization work: In a weakly institutionalized party of notables, one of the first requirements for internal democratization may be to establish firm rules about who is eligible to participate—an issue the basis democracy party will probably have confronted already.

Choosing Party Structures

Building effective party structures is an endless task. Healthy organizations can and will adapt to changing circumstances, so some degree of change is always inevitable. But we can distinguish certain factors that shape parties' organizational decisions and certain circumstances under which parties are most likely to experiment with different approaches, including internal democratization.

Party laws and other legal constraints. In many countries, parties' organizational practices must conform to legal statutes that spell out ground rules on such matters as candidate selection, party finance, and leadership selection. These laws vary greatly in their degree of specificity. For instance, even when national laws require parties to organize "democratically," they often leave it up to the parties to interpret this mandate. Even when party laws and political finance laws set extensive constraints, parties can still have many organizational alternatives available to them.

Institutional environment. Party organizations and procedures are likely to reflect the institutional environments within which parties compete. Parties in unitary states, for example, seem more likely to be centralized, and parties within federal states seem more likely to have more independent regional subunits, though these tendencies are by no means universal. In federal systems, regional elections may be an important focus of party activity, and federal regions may become important power bases for party leaders—factors that encourage a certain degree of decentralization. Similarly, candidate selection rules may to some degree reflect a country's electoral system. For instance, decentralized candidate selection seems more likely to be used in single-member district systems, because in such systems it is easier for local selectors to get to know the candidates, and it is easier to decentralize candidate selection when the choices pertain to non-centralized districts to begin with. Nevertheless, one recent review of candidate selection procedures in multiple countries failed to find this link between electoral systems and the degree of decentralization in the candidate selection process, a finding which makes it clear that institutional settings are only one of many factors that influence party choices.[15] Even so, because the electoral system dictates the nature of the election task, it is also likely to shape at least some of the details of the rules about how candidates are selected.

Communications environment. Parties' organizational choices often reflect the environments in which they compete. One of the elements of these environments is the extent to which parties can rely on mass media to transmit their messages. Some parties can use free or purchased publicity to reach large audiences, which may reduce the parties' reliance on more labor-intensive, word-of-mouth strategies. But not all parties have the luxury of adopting a media-intense strategy. That option can be limited by technical factors, such as low levels of access to print or broadcast media. It can also be limited by political or financial factors that make it difficult for specific parties to use public

or commercial mass media to distribute their message—a problem that can particularly afflict new parties or those radically challenging the status quo. Whatever the reasons, parties with only limited access to mass media are more likely to retain or cultivate grassroots organizations that can help distribute the party message.

Cultural and historical setting. Another environmental factor that can affect parties' organizational choices is the extent to which other groups and leaders are able and willing to mobilize support for the party. Parties may not need to develop complex institutions of their own if they can rely on other groups to mobilize their electorate. For some parties, it is above all the support of local religious leaders that proves crucial—when these leaders promote the idea that religious identity has clear political implications. For example, in the 1950s, Italy's Christian Democrats could afford a relatively weak organizational face because they could rely on the support of Catholic priests and Catholic organizations throughout the countryside.[16] Similarly, on the left, many social democratic parties relied on trade unions to persuade their members that their economic identity should translate into a social-democratic party allegiance. Many trade unions used their organizational skills to help with election campaigns, and used their members' collective financial resources to help bankroll favored parties. However, in the absence of groups that will mobilize on parties' behalf, parties may seek to build up their own networks of individual supporters throughout the country.

"Building effective party structures is an endless task. Healthy organizations can and will adapt to changing circumstances."

Ideological commitments. Ideology often plays some role in shaping parties' organizational decisions. This can be seen most clearly in parties whose organizational *forms* are closely linked to their ideological identities. Most strikingly, when the Green parties emerged in the early 1980s, many of them made strong commitments to intra-party democracy, something they saw as central to their broader pledge to do politics differently. Similarly, some European communist parties of the 1950s saw their own internal hierarchy as a pattern for the political model that they were promoting and as an element that would contribute to their long-term success. For these kinds of parties, ideological commitments may be their paramount consideration when it comes to making organizational decisions. But even parties that view organizational choices more instrumentally may at some point find themselves coming under pressure to institute some form of internal democracy—in order to put into practice the democratic values they preach. This dividend may seem particularly enticing to parties in countries—whether established democracies or newly democratizing regimes—where public opinion has shifted in favor of participatory democracy and democratic transparency.[17]

Imitation. Organizational "contagion" has long been seen as a powerful force promoting at least temporary convergence in parties' structures. Such contagion arises from the fact that parties are attuned to their rivals' successes: Parties that are losing ground with respect to membership size or electoral support may be particularly receptive to changes that seem to be working well for others. One result is that new techniques—from the torchlight processions of past eras to today's web pages and intra-party plebiscites—may see waves of popularity. But organizational fads can always prove ephemeral. If parties expand intra-party democracy because they are imitating a technique that seems to have worked for others, rather than out of a genuine conviction that this technique reflects their own party ideals, they are probably more likely to abandon it quickly if it fails to show immediate results—whether by contributing to electoral success or by boosting membership figures.

The foregoing sources of organizational change can be summarized along two dimensions. On the one hand, we can distinguish between internal and external pressures for change. "Internal" pressures include party factions and ambitious individuals, as well as the strains caused by organizational growth or decline. "External" pressures include changes in party laws and electoral losses. On the other hand,

we can describe pressures for change as being primarily ideological or else primarily tactical. Of course, many changes are prompted by a mixture of these pressures. For instance, factions already pressing for organizational change may capitalize on a big electoral defeat to win supporters for reform. But understanding the impetus behind different pressures for change can help us better understand the different circumstances under which particular reforms are more likely to be adopted.

Conclusions

Today, political parties that compete in elections and that alternate in office are generally seen as both the hallmarks and guardians of representative government. This view is a relatively new one. In the early part of the nineteenth century, when organized political parties were first emerging, parties were more often depicted as undesirable, because they threatened the unity of the nation, and because they seemed to "corrupt" independent representatives and persuade them to tow party lines. Such criticism has never entirely disappeared, either, particularly in countries where there is a general premium placed on unity due to perceived threats to the nation. For the most part, however, these negative views changed quickly as more countries gained experience with electoral democracy. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, competitive political parties have increasingly been recognized as essential to the efficient and proper functioning of democracy. As such, they have been expected to organize public opinion by offering voters choices at elections and to provide enough cohesion to organize the work of legislative and executive branches.

There has been much less agreement about whether it is necessary for parties to organize themselves in internally democratic ways in order to promote the democratic functioning of the political systems in which they compete. But even if views still differ on the absolute necessity of intra-party democracy, most agree that there are often sound and even self-interested reasons for parties to adopt more open decision-making processes. Such procedures may help parties win elections, recruit and select good candidates, and retain popular support. On the other hand, in some instances, internally democratic procedures may undermine parties' competitive standing, at least in the short term. In this way, organizational questions are often more practical than they are straightforwardly moral, which is one reason why it is difficult to advocate legislation to impose democracy on parties: There is no one-size-fits-all model for how to run a party.

That said, in countries where there is widespread popular disillusionment with politicians and parties, and where there is growing interest in democratic self-determination, responsive parties may rightly decide that they would be well advised to adopt more transparent and inclusive internal procedures. In such cases, the changes the parties make to benefit themselves may prove beneficial for the wider society—and for the stability and legitimacy of democratic institutions.

ENDNOTES

1. See Chung-li Wu, "The Transformation of the Kuomintang's Candidate Selection System," *Party Politics* 7 (January 2001): 103–18.
2. This seems to have happened temporarily in Israeli parties when they experimented with the democratization of candidate selection in the mid-1990s. See Gideon Rahat and Reuven Y. Hazan, "Candidate Selection Methods: An Analytic Framework," *Party Politics* 7 (May 2001): 297–322.
3. See especially John D. May, "Opinion Structure of Political Parties: The Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity" *Political Studies* 21 (June 1973): 135–51.
4. Richard S. Katz, "The Problem of Candidate Selection and Models of Party Democracy," *Party Politics* 7 (May 2001): 293.
5. See Thomas Poguntke, *Alternative Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).
6. Samuel Eldersveld, *Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964).
7. Pippa Norris, *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Gideon Rahat and Reuven Y. Hazan, "Candidate Selection Methods: An Analytic Framework"; Austin Ranney, "Candidate Selection," in David Butler, Howard Penniman, and Austin Ranney, eds., *Democracy at the Polls: A Comparative Study of Competitive National Elections* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), 75–106; Krister Lundell, "Determinants of Candidate Selection: The Degree of Centralization in Comparative Perspective," *Party Politics* 10 (September 2004): 25–47.
8. Vicky Randall and Lars Svåsand, "Party Institutionalization in New Democracies," *Party Politics* 8 (2002): 5–29; Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
9. See Miguel de Deluca, Mark Jones, and Maria Ines Tula, "Back Rooms or Ballot Boxes? Candidate Nomination in Argentina," *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (December 2002): 413–36; Bonnie Field, "Modes of Transition, Internal Party Rules, and Levels of Elite Continuity: A Comparison of the Spanish and Argentine Democracies," Working Paper, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, 2004.
10. See Gideon Rahat and Reuven Y. Hazan, "Candidate Selection Methods: An Analytic Framework."
11. Susan Scarrow, "Parties without Members? Party Organization in a Changing Electoral Environment," in Russell Dalton and Martin Wattenberg, eds., *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79–101.
12. Roberto Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracies,* Eden Paul and Cedar Paul, trans. (New York: Dover, 1959), 401.
13. Thomas Poguntke, "Party Organisations," in Jan van Deth, ed., *Comparative Politics: The Problem of Equivalence* (London: Routledge, 1998), 156–79.
14. See Joy Langston, "Why Rules Matter: Changes in Candidate Selection in Mexico's PRI, 1988–2000," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33 (August 2001): 485–511; Jonathan Rosenberg, "Mexico: The End of Party Corporatism?" in Clive Thomas, ed., *Political Parties and Interest Groups: Shaping Democratic Governance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 247–68.
15. Krister Lundell, "Determinants of Candidate Selection: The Degree of Centralization in Comparative Perspective."
16. Carolyn Warner, *Confessions of an Interest Group: The Catholic Church and Political Parties in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
17. Russell Dalton, *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies: Public Opinion and Political Parties in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and France,* 2nd ed. (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1996); Ian Budge, *The New Challenge of Direct Democracy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

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