

Rejoinder to Lancaster

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Thomas Lancaster offers an insightful and profound discussion on the necessity of finding appropriate models in the study of newly evolving party systems in Europe. His commentary broadens, rather nicely, the scope and intent of my essay. He recognizes a major problem in the development of a broad body of comparative party systems literature; i.e., finding an equilibrium between the generalities of broad-gauged theoretical models and the particulars of in-depth case studies. Professor Lancaster also recognizes another serious problem revolving around the capacity of models to answer and explain fully the nuances of each general context, in our case democratizing party systems in Eastern and Central Europe. While I was concerned primarily with the application of West European party systems models in the study of inchoate party systems of Central and East Europe, he takes my study a step further and suggests we look at not only the analytical value of the seminal West European party systems models, but also consider the application of theoretical frameworks employed in democratic transitions in European polities; e.g., Spain's transition to democracy. Generally, Professor Lancaster anticipates the potential scope and depth of the academic debate that will evolve over the analytical value and utility of different types of models for the understanding of developing party systems in Central and Eastern Europe.

Professor Lancaster makes a series of important distinctions as to the relevance of seminal works on parties and party systems classifications such as Duverger's (1954). Lancaster correctly assesses the "parochialism" inherent in this study of West European parties. The application of Duverger's tenets to other European parties and their roles in their respective systems may become, as Lancaster states, "problematic outside the geographical context from which [they were] induced." Notwithstanding the critique of time-honored models and schemas for their lack of scientific objectivity, Professor Lancaster again questions correctly the analytical and descriptive capacity of Sartori's model. Because it lacks the ability to answer certain

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types of questions, such as why the Czechoslovak party system destabilized a system fraught with ethno-nationalistic cleavages, Lancaster believes the true nature of Sartori's schema is manifest; i.e., its primary function as a classificatory schema. It is here that he suggests utilizing other types of models such as those found within the transitions literature.

While I would not disagree with most of his arguments, I hope that my essay would engage political scientists in looking at the utility of Sartori's model and others' frameworks in analyzing the newly developing European systems. Though models such as Sartori's may not have the capacity to analyze in a rigorous manner (or what might be thought to be methodologically rigorous), I still believe that models like Sartori's allow us to examine numerous causal variables within democratic party systems that, in turn, allow us to speculate about the reasons for systemic development, instability, etc. Without speculation, the inferential side of empirical analysis would not fully manifest itself; hence, the analytical side of the study of party systems would suffer.

Finally, Professor Lancaster has brought to light a major question that all students of comparative party systems will have to deal with in assessing appropriate models in the study of Europe's developing party systems; viz., the purported analytical value of the model or conceptual approach used in studying given party systems. His suggestion that "transportability" be taken into consideration is not only wise, but could enable us to strive toward his advocacy of "mid-range" theories, which perhaps would enable us to avoid the pitfalls of parochialism and overly broad generalizations.