Integrating the Horizontal and the Vertical: Comparative Reflections on the Emergence of the Extremist Parties in Western Europe — For a better understanding of the ongoing polarization of the French party system

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Integrating the Horizontal and the Vertical: Comparative Reflections on the Emergence of the Extremist Parties in West Europe
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Introduction

Theories on parties and party systems always reflect some normative concerns of the time. In Giovanni Sartori's case, it was a danger of democratic breakdown caused by extreme polarization that urged the Italian political scientist to tenaciously inquire about dynamism generating either centripetal or centrifugal competition in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The nightmare of Weimar was already a mere distant memory, but the Chilean tragedy in 1973 made people feel all the more anxious about the future of Italian parliamentary democracy, where not only the Communists were gaining in votes, but also the Left extremists' violence was raging. Now, thirty years has passed since the publication of Sartori's book. As far as Western European democracies are concerned, nobody seems worried any more about polarization or democratic breakdown. Instead, most scholars are preoccupied with the ever-widening gap between the major parties and the public. When Peter Mair and Richard Katz succeeded in the mid-1990s in reviving academic interests in party organizations with their famous "cartel party" model, this concern was surely the main driving force for this research trend. Therefore, if we attempt to build a new party system theory\(^1\), it should grapple squarely with the problems of growing discontent of the electorate with their governing parties and especially those of the extremist anti-system parties (both right and left) attracting protest votes. This paper is, however, just a preliminary note offering some basic ideas, which might be helpful for this objective, and does not intend to provide any empirical basis to them, as the task is far beyond the capacity of the author who is more a historian of politics than a political scientist.

What this paper proposes has nothing to do with political engineering pretending to cure or alleviate the problems of political alienation in Western advanced democracies. In fact, a certain amount of popular discontent with the major parties seems almost inevitable especially in Western

\(^1\text{This paper is a preliminary version of my contribution to a book project on new party system theories, edited by Professor Junko Kato on behalf of the Japanese Association for Comparative Politics.}\)
Europe, with all the overwhelming issues including Europeanization, marketization and immigration. The problem is to know how each party system can "absorb" popular discontent expressed through votes for extremist or protest parties, and what will be the cost of these operations (cf. Ieraci, 1992). In some countries like Sweden, dissatisfaction with the EU policies and the political class has not given rise to any protest parties. Although the former Communists (Left Party) and the Christian Democrats profited from widespread discontent with the two major parties (Social Democrats and Conservatives) and considerably gained in the elections of 1998 (Möller, 1999), both of them are considered as more or less responsible. In Norway and Denmark, the extreme-right parties have been increasingly marked by spectacular anti-immigration discourse, but the major parties seem to be paving, although very carefully, the way toward "integrating" or "taming" them, as is shown by the recent experiences of support without participation (Sitter, 2006; Pedersen, 2005; Bille & Pedersen, 2004). On the contrary, in France, there has been no sign of lifting a political quarantine against Le Pen's Front National since the early 1990s. No serious dialogue has been established between the governing left parties and the rising Trotskyists. The total of the extremist right and left parties' votes amounts to nearly 30% in the presidential elections of 2002. Not only electoral arithmetic is distorted on both right and left (see for example the general elections of 1997 and the presidential elections of 2002) (cf. Andersen & Evans, 2003, 2005; Evans & Ivaldi, 2005), but also the legitimacy of governance is seriously questioned. Also quarantined for a long time, the Italian MSI chose to be much more moderate after the collapse of the DC and has been finally "integrated" as a part of the right governing coalitions under the Second Republic. In Austria also, the ÖVP decided in 2000 to form a government with the extreme-right FPÖ, which resulted in division and electoral collapse of the latter, although this "solution" did cost the country dearly, especially in diplomatic terms (Luther, 2003). In the Netherlands, the "List Pim Fortuyn", who participated in the general elections for the first time in 2002 was considered as not really extreme-right because of their relatively moderate position and so more acceptable than anti-immigration parties in other West European countries (Pennings & Keman, 2003; van Holsteyn, Irwin & den Ridder, 2003).

Why do some countries have sizable extremist parties representing new issues or general popular discontent and others not? Why do some countries have to pay heavily for "absorbing" their extremist compatriots, while others do not suffer that much? Of course, several different factors are working here, including rules of electoral and parliamentary games as well as political culture regarding new issues. To simplify the argument, however, this paper assumes that the positioning of the established parties and the direction of competitive pressure they generate is vital in answering these questions.

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2 Issues like environment, European integration and immigration might cut across the traditional socio-economic (right-left) scale, and parties mobilizing these issues can have considerable room of choice in locating themselves on this scale.
Centrifugal competition and Sartori’s failure

Many theories have been already proposed to explain the emergence of the extremist parties in West Europe. Far from claiming any theoretical superiority over these precedent efforts, this paper tries just to give another point of view by focusing on the directions of competition within each party system. The competition strategies of the established parties decisively influence when and where will emerge parties willing to mobilize new issues or popular discontent. Moreover, when they face centrifugal competition, their policy distance from the mainstream parties will be longer, and the difficulties of integrating them and its costs will increase.

The direction of competition is one of the essential variables of Sartori’s model. The problem is, however, that Sartori’s model, especially that of polarized party system, clearly fails to predict or explain the ongoing polarization, for example, of the French party system. From the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, France had a very stable party system called "quadrille bipolaire". The blocs of left and right, each of which was composed of the firmly allied two parties, competed with each other centripetally (Knapp, 2002, 2004). The "metrical center" was not occupied (cf. Keman, 1994), and Sartori would not have seen in this typical moderate pluralism anything else that would predict the drastic polarization in the next decade (cf. Sartori, 1976, 348).

In fact, the problem does not lie solely with the interpretation of the French case. Pennings (1998) and Ware (1996) claim that Sartori’s model often fails to explain the changes happening to the party systems. In particular, Sartori’s explanation seems fundamentally flawed as to the centrifugal drives emerging within polarized systems. He assumes that in polarized pluralism, "the central area of the political system will be out of competition" because of the existence of center-located parties, and this generates centrifugal drives (Sartori, 1976, 134-5). To support this claim, he criticizes one of the Downsian assumptions and maintains "the undecided or floating voters are" not always "center located". Indeed, when there are parties in the center, the moderate electorate will be "a highly stable electorate". This is what he means by the statement that the central area is "occupied" in a center-based multiparty system, and so "there is no point in hunting for the non-transferable votes, and the transferable votes may well be located at the outer ends, not in the middle area, of the spectrum" (Sartori, 1976, 344, 350). Centrifugal drives are very likely to occur. Therefore, Sartori’s logic about the centrifugal drives in polarized systems is essentially based on the assumption that the center parties' electorate is highly stable, but he does not provide any empirical evidence to support this claim, which is vital to his model of polarized pluralism.

Perhaps, Sartori was biased on this point by the Italian situations of the time, where the DC, predominant center party, had a very stable electorate both in the North (because of the Catholic subculture3) and in the South (because of party machine clientelism). In contrast, in some of his cases

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3 "(Political) subculture" refers here to a large number of people organized into a comprehensive set of
of polarized pluralism, the electorate of the center parties was in fact highly volatile. The Chilean deviation was noted by Sartori himself (Sartori, 1976, 135). For the French Fourth Republic, Sartori considers the MRP (Christian Democrats) and the Radicaux (left liberals) as center parties, but the electoral results indicate the electorate of the Radicaux was far from stable, although the votes for the MRP became relatively stabilized after its crushing defeat in 1951, because of the party's Catholic bases of the East and the West⁴. Therefore, what matters in order to know the correct direction of competition is not only the placement of parties but also the spatial distribution of "transferable" (Sartori) or "available" (Bartolini & Mair, 1990) votes. Sartori would agree to this perspective, as he also proposes to focus "on the rewarding tactics of inter-party competition"(Sartori, 1976, 342). He erred simply because of the unfounded assumption on the transferability of center parties' votes⁵.

**The "solidness" of the party's electorate and the spatial distribution of available votes**

Again, several different factors are working to increase or decrease the "availability" ("transferability") of votes, including electoral and parliamentary institutions and sociological changes of the electorate, as Bartolini & Mair (1990) suggests in Part III. However, this paper focuses on the organizational bases of the parties' votes. My basic line of arguments is quite simple: the "solidness" of each parties' electorate will be determined by the strength of the party's organizations and networks⁶. The spatial distribution of available votes will thus depend not only on the location of existing parties but also on the solidness of each party's electorate.

This spatial distribution will greatly influence the positioning strategies of (new) parties willing to mobilize new issues or popular discontent. Even if a certain area of the policy spectrum is occupied, or even crowded with established parties, there will be room for these emerging parties to locate themselves in this area, when the established parties' organizational ties with their voters are weak and

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⁴ In the case of Weimar, Sartori's analysis about centrifugal competition was not incorrect, because its center happened to be the Catholic Center Party, whose electorate was very firmly encapsulated.

⁵ See also Mair (2005) and Sartori (2005). However, Sartori's error might be more far-reaching. Many passages of his book make us wonder if he starts with the assumption that most of the competing relevant parties have a solidly organized electoral base, although there are many others implying the opposite assumption. In effect, this results in a certain ambiguity about his central notion of "direction of competition". For example, vote transfer from the center parties to the wing parties is considered as a form of centrifugal drive and polarization. However, when the latter gain votes by going to the center, does the vote transfer mean the polarization of voters (centrifugal move) or the moderation of wing parties (centripetal move)?

⁶ As to the various functions the party organizations might be able to play, see, for example, Tan (2000); Widfeldt (1999); Scarrow (1996).
fragile. To return to Sartori's model of polarized pluralism, the mere existence of center parties does not necessarily generate polarization. Center parties with solid organizational/network basis will do so, as did the Weimar Catholic Center Party. In contrary, when the left end of the spectrum was occupied by a strongly organized Communists like the French and Italian ones in the 1950s and 1960s, there would be almost no hope of an electoral success for new extremist parties on the left.

In short, different party organization types (or party models) would lead to different dynamics of party competition. So, in order to explain the emergence of extremist or other new parties mobilizing new issues or popular discontent, it is indispensable not just to ask where the established major parties are on the spectrum, but also to inquire what type of organizational networks they have to stabilize their electorate.

The idea of linking party organization types to patterns of party competition is not new at all. Bartolini & Mair (1990, chapter 9) argues convincingly that the strength of the cleavage system will determine the voters' mobility in each party system, and the party's organizational density is one of the three dimensions of the cleavage strength. It is true their hypothesis and analysis treat this indicator only on the system level, while my proposition is to measures it for each party and to make it explain the direction of intra-party competition. However, in her effort to re-interpret Sartori's party system theory, which is very similar to mine especially in her criticism of Sartori's polarized pluralism model, Evans (2002, 168) cites "the socio-organizational bonds" as one of the factors explaining the direction of competition, although she has never tried applying her model.

Nonetheless, thanks to the research following Katz & Mair (1995), I still have the advantage of having a framework for understanding the recent developments of party organization. Whereas Bartolini & Mair (1990) saw nothing that could replace declining subcultural mass organizations in support of the cleavage systems, we know clientelist networks might be able to consolidate otherwise volatile voters, although networks of clients might in turn limit the parties' strategic flexibility, as Kitschelt (1994, 1995) underlines. Besides, if the solidness of the major parties' electorate changes over time along with the transformation of their party organizations, a comparative analysis would be possible between West European countries, because they share the basic pattern of historical developments in socio-political organizational patterns, as Katz & Mair's famous schema suggests. Such a comparative framework would allow us to explain the different patterns of the extremist parties' emergence in various West European countries.

All in all, this paper will be an attempt to link the fruits of party organization research to the reformulation of party system theory. Curiously enough, in spite of spectacular developments in party

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7 This reasoning seems conform to the conclusion of Hazan (1997)'s empirical studies about the impacts of center parties on party systems.
8 We have many works examining the impacts of the established parties' positioning on the electoral results of the extreme-right parties. To cite some recent examples, Meguid (2005); Meguid (2005); Carter (2005); Van Der Brug, Fennema & Tillie (2005); Norris (2005). None of them, however, refers to the party organizations as a factor influencing inter-party competition.
organization research, their implications have not been fully developed as far as party system theory is concerned.

**From organized subcultures to various forms of clientelism**

Most of Northern and Central European countries had a few sets of subcultural mass organizations, each of which were closely associated with one of the major parties, although the relative strength of these subcultures varies from country to country, as well as the absolute level of organizational density. However incomplete it might be, we use the volume (membership of the party organizations and related associations) of these mass organizations and especially their density (ratio of membership to electorate) as the indicator of the solidness of the parties' electorate.

By contrast, the Iberian countries are exceptional with this regard, as they had no organized political subcultures. France is to be located midway. It was only after the mid-1930s that the French Communists came to establish dense partisan networks especially in the suburbs of the largest cities. This was the first and only organized subculture in France, and the other major parties were much less organized and more dependent on local notables' more or less clientelist networks.

In addition, since the 1970-80s, because of the unfreezing of the cleavage systems, most of the organized subcultures have collapsed either simply to wither away (the Netherlands) or to be replaced by clientelist networks (Austria, Belgium and Italy). The worldviews or ideologies that used to unite subgroups of the organized subcultures are now completely gone, and the trade unions and other professional associations have long distanced themselves from the formerly allied parties. The residue of mass organizations of the major parties in Western Europe are now propped up by increasingly dangerous clientelist practices and/or swelled up by transitory populist/charismatic appeals (cf. Kitschelt, 1999, 2000). This is the reason we cannot use any more the party membership as indicator of the solidness without caution.

To put this in terms of incentives, solidaristic incentives, which were the pillar of encapsulating mass organizations in the golden age of the political subcultures, have almost completely disappeared. Material incentives, which used to be offered in a relatively collective and universalistic manner through trade unions and other associations, have now to be distributed in a more particularistic manner. Voters motivated solely by purposive incentives are "rational" actors, and will switch without hesitation to the neighboring parties when his party's program does not fit his policy preference best any more. As we know very well, populist mobilization and charismatic appeals are the most important source of electoral volatility. In comparison, however inefficient and expensive they are as a way of loyalizing voters (cf. Nakayama, 2006), clientelist practices do have some effect of consolidating ("loyalizing") voters. Therefore, we might be allowed to approximate the solidness of the contemporary parties' electorate by measuring the quantity of particularisticly distributed material
incentives.

However, the magnitude of clientelist practices by the major parties are extremely difficult to measure, and it cannot but be judged through qualitative research such as in-depth case studies. Roughly speaking, the principal channels of benefit allocation were the vast public enterprises and financial institutions. So the importance of ministerial portfolios and the length of stay in government will be a good indicator of each party's dependence on clientelist allocation of resources. In addition, in France (Nakayama, 2006) and Belgium (Deschouwer, 2002, 172), party politicians are also adept in constructing partisan networks by using the resources of local governments they take care of as members of parliament (MPs) are allowed to hold local mandates (cumul des mandats in French) concurrently. So the number (and size) of the local governments under control as well as the length of control should be also taken into consideration.

**The Unfreezing Process and the Emergence of Far-Right Parties in Scandinavia**

In most Central and Northern European countries, new parties emerged as soon as the subcultural organizations of the traditional majors parties began to disintegrate, as the unfreezing of the traditional cleavages usually means the growing number of “available voters”. However, the pace of this organizational decay and its sequence (with which party the unfreezing process begins) greatly varied according to the socioeconomic changes of each country and especially to the strategic responses of the major parties' leaders to the organizational decline. Variations in the unfreezing process lead to different spatial distribution of available voters, which urges new political entrepreneurs to choose different policy positions for their new parties. All this brought about different dynamics of competition.

1) Progress Parties in the 1970s

Let us begin by comparing the Scandinavian countries. The Nordic party systems used to be known for the striking similarities in their party constellations, composed of five traditional parties (Communists or Left Socialists, Social Democrats, Left Liberals, Agrarians, Conservatives) (Arter, 1999). Note the three out of these five families were considered to have a more or less well-organized political subculture (Social Democrats, Agrarians, Conservatives). As to the electoral fortune of new parties, however, these countries differ considerably. Especially, the right-wing Progressive parties have scored very differently after their emergence in the “Earthquake elections” in the early 1970s. The Danish one had the most important and stable results, before being relayed by the more conspicuously anti-immigrant Danish People's Party. The Norwegian one began with a more humble score, but has made a rapid progress in the 1990s, benefiting from a rising tide of anti-immigration opinion. It finally went beyond 20% in last year's general elections. In contrast, Sweden never saw the emergence of a relevant Progressive party until the New Democratic Party in 1992, which scored very
poorly anyway. Where did all these differences come from?

The puzzle seems to be solved by comparing the unfreezing process and the location of available votes in these three party systems after the early 1970s. In the Nordic party systems, as in those of Central Europe, the electorate was so stably segmented by the established parties that new parties could expect a sizable portion of votes only to the extent that the organized subcultures of the major three parties (Social Democrats, Agrarians, Conservatives) were unfrozen and released more or less floating votes. A rapid comparison of these parties' membership shows the unfreezing proceeded very unevenly in the three countries (Katz & Mair, 1992; Mair & van Biezen, 2001). Denmark was affected the earliest and the most seriously by the process. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, all the three major parties lost almost half of its party members and never recovered from it\(^9\). This explains the biggest and lasting success of the Progress Party in Denmark. In contrast, in Norway, the big three recorded a smaller loss (about 20%) in the early 1970s, but the Labor and the Conservatives soon recovered from it and even made considerable gains afterwards. Finally, in Sweden, the Social Democrats as well as the Center (agrarians) did not make any loss but a non-negligible gain in the 1970s\(^10\). Let us note, by the way, due to their anti-tax and anti-welfare slogans, the Progress Parties had no choice but to locate themselves in the right end of the spectrum.

2) Anti-immigration wave of the 1990s

The second wave of the right extremist parties began in the 1990s. The timing of the membership decline of the Social Democrats and the Conservatives was decisive in determining the direction of competition taken by the Progress Parties and their electoral successes. In Norway, drastic declines of the Labor and Conservative membership did not begin as late as in the late 1980s. In addition, the center area of the spectrum was firmly occupied by the two smaller parties with very solid voters, the Center (agrarians) and the Christian Democrats. Facing a rapid decline of the agricultural population, the Norwegian Agrarians adopted a strategy of clinging to the defense of farmers' or rural interests, which was diametrically opposed to that of the Swedish colleagues (Christensen, 1997), but similar to that of their Danish (Goul Andersen and Bendix Jansen, 2001). This option allowed the Norwegian party to keep its solid grip over farmers and rural voters (Christensen, 2001) although their numerical importance was rapidly shrinking. Unlike their counterparts in the other Nordic countries, the Norwegian Christian Democrats was not new at all but have been based on the center-periphery cleavage, which was reactivated and reinforced by the EU-entry issue, and its electorate was relatively

\(^9\) For the Conservatives, the decline started a little later, that is, at the beginning of in the 1970s. The electorate of the Danish Progress Party in the 1973 elections came almost evenly from the three major parties and the Left Liberals. Mainz University, EREPS country-specific analyses, "Vote switch from/to the Danish Progress Party from 1973 to 1998". http://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/ereps/download/denmark_norway_vs.rtf.

\(^{10}\) According to Katz & Mair (1992), the membership of the Conservatives shrunk in 1970 to less than half of its 1960 level, but the sources it relies on are different for the first half of the 1960s and afterwards.
cohesive. Therefore, when anti-immigration issues were politicized at the end of the 1990s (Hagelund, 1990), there was no other free space than the far right end, and so the Progress Party successfully mobilized this new issue by going further to the right. Nevertheless, the subsequent collapse of the Conservatives' party organizations "softened" their electorate, and opened up competitive space for the Progress Party on its left. So the party changed its cap in the mid-1990s and began to compete centripetally. The party's electorate was swelled up by a part of popular voters released by the Labor Party, whose membership began to decline again in the late 1990s. This explains the party leader's "struggle for decency", and the relatively low costs of absorption of the party by the established parties (Hagelund, 1990).

In Denmark, the situations were less favorable because of the move of the Liberals (Venstre, agrarians). From the 1960s, the Danish Social Democrats and the Conservatives stabilized their membership in the 1980s, and the latter succeeded in taking back votes from the Progressive Party. But the solidness of their votes remained low, and the loosened votes of the Social Democrats were now taken by the far left (Socialist People's Party), not any more by the center parties (the Centre Democrats etc.), as in the 1970s. When the Conservatives and the Labor began to lose their membership again in the 1990s, the Liberals took advantage of these newly available votes by making a swift rightward move. Like the Norwegian Center, the Danish agrarians also chose a strategy of sticking to the farmers and rural interests, although it became a catchall party by gaining more volatile votes on its right. Their membership has increased in the 1990s, and the party has retained the extremely solid core of its electorate. This loyal core allowed party to move on the right-left spectrum without taking too much risk. As a result, the Liberals have been competing for the ever-softening electorate of the Conservatives with the Progress Party, locating themselves between these two parties since the early 1990s (cf. Knusten, 1998; Benoit & Laver, forthcoming). Therefore, when (anti-)immigration issues were politicized at the end of the 1980s, the Progress Party's leadership was torn between the two strategic options; Glistrup, founder of the party, preferred to keep fighting over the Conservatives' voters, while Kjærsgaard and her friends argued for an extremist line on immigration to "own" the issue and to attract the voters of the popular classes leaving the Social Democrats. Finally, the latter left the Progress Party and founded the Danish People's Party, which won a big success in the elections of 2001 and 2005. Therefore, the competition was centrifugal as far as the Danish People's Party is concerned, because they are being pushed away by the Liberals whose

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11 This was also true for the Norwegian Center Party, but the striking difference was that the interests of the Danish farmers urged the party to go right-ward by advocating free-market liberalism and unconditional support for the EU, while the Norwegian Center finally went to the left of the Social Democrats by claiming more state support for agriculture and environmental measures as well as by absolutely opposing the EU membership (cf. Benoit & Laver, forthcoming). But the parallelism ends here. While the Danish Liberals traveled rightward to collect the former Conservative voters, the Norwegian Center did NOT move leftward to get the voters released by the Social Democrats with the far-left parties.
core electorate is still very solid. Because of this centrifugal pressure, the Liberals and the Conservatives had to pay more, and will have to, in order to "absorb" the extremist neighbors.

In Sweden, the Social Democrats finally began to decline organizationally in the 1990s (Mair & van Biezen, 2001), and so the Greens and the Left Party (former Communists) sometimes succeed in attracting a part of the SAP's electorate. Although there is still no lasting extreme-right party, potentials are thus rising, as most of the European extreme-right parties made a leap by gathering the disoriented former left voters of the popular classes (for example, Perrineau, 1997; Evans, 2000). There is also, however, a favorable sign. While the Conservatives have maintained their party organization at the (rather moderate, it is true) level of 1980s, the Center Party has lost a half of its troops in the 1990s (Widfeldt, 2001). Thus, the center area has no party with a solid electorate, and this distinguishes the country from Norway and Denmark. It is true the Christian Democrats and the Left Liberals collected some of the thus released voters of the center area, the solidness of their electorate should be still lower, and so space large enough is "available" in the center for a party, new or old, to gain votes by mobilizing issues like Europeanization and immigration. Competing for the still solid Conservatives' electorate would be at least as pains-taking as forcing its way into the center. Therefore, contrary to Rydgren's (2002) apprehensions, there will be less danger of contamination of an "anti-immigrant racist party" in Sweden, even if the Social Democrats' electorate should become less solid, making more popular-class votes "available" in the near future.

Substituting Clientelism and Extreme-Right Parties in Central Europe

In the Nordic countries, clientelist practices of the parties are very seldom reported, and we know indeed there is almost no room for that in the countries' political structures and culture. This is not the case, however, in Central Europe. When the subcultural mass organizations began to weaken and decay in the 1960s and 70s, the parties tried to compensate the loss of solidness of their electorate by diverting governmental resources and feeding material incentives. In Austria and Belgium, the major parties (Socialists and Christian Democrats) maintained their membership at the level of the 1960s until the 1990s, which assured them a relative stability in their electoral results. These countries have approached to the countries like France, where clientelism constitutes an essential part of the political fabric. This is the reason these countries have been experiencing terrible difficulties with the extremist parties in contrast to the Nordic countries and just in the same way as France.

Before that, let us begin by examining the developments in the Netherlands as an exception confirming the rule. In contrast to its Central European neighbors, the country never knew an

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12 The Liberals has now the largest party organization in the country.
13 According to Rydgren (2004, 496), the Danish People's Party won recognition as support party of the Liberal-Conservative cabinet without giving up its xenophobic, neo racist rhetoric.
extended use of clientelism by the governing parties. This results in the dramatic collapse of the "pillars", major parties' mass organizations, as early as in the late 1960s and in the early 1970s. Therefore, although the apparent volatility was not greater than in the Nordic countries, the solidness of the electorate should have considerably declined. It is true the CDA had never been out of power until 1994, and it is often reported that the party took advantage of the governmental power to provide its related associations with ample subsidies. However, the arrival of the Purple Coalition in 1994 brought to an end this flow of public resources to the former religious pillars, and has finally opened up the center area of the spectrum to a freer competition, where every party, including new comers, plays on an almost level playing field. This very low level of solidness of the electorate explains the new anti-immigration party "List of Pim Fortuyn" emerged on the scene in 2002 with a much more moderate program than its counterparts in the other West European Countries. In effect, although the party is scaled at the right end of the spectrum, the gap with the Liberals (VVD) on immigration policy is much smaller than in France and Belgium, as well as on attitudes towards EU (Benoit & Laver, forthcoming). This relatively moderate position allowed the new party to attract some of the Liberals and Labor voters, discontent with the "Purple" government (van Holsteyn & Irwin, 2003). The country's experts concluded the LPF should be classified not as extreme right but as right (Pennings & Keman, 2003; Pellikaan, van der Meer & de Lange, 2003) and that it "occupied previously empty policy space" without any major shift of the opinion to the right (van Holsteyn, Irwin & den Ridder, 2003). Therefore, the cost of "absorbing" the LPF was found to be much smaller than in the case of the Austrian FPÖ and possibly of the Norwegian Progress Party, although the Dutch major parties have shifted their immigration policy to the right.

In contrast to this relatively "happy" ending in the Netherlands, Austria (Müller, 1994; Luther, 1999; Müller, Plasser & Ulram, 2004) and Belgium (Deshouwer, 1994, 1999, 2002, 2004; Mair & van Biezen, 2001) have a more gloomy future because of the massive use of clientelism by the major parties. They maintained their party membership density at the level of the 1960s well into the 1980s and have not yet experienced an overall collapse. Indeed, it increased in the 1970s. With the two major parties (Socialists and Catholic Democrats) competing centripetally for floating voters and so government power, there was no room in the center area for a protest party. So when the major parties' organization finally began to decline in the late 1980s (Austria) and in the early 1990s (Belgium), protests votes went to the far right.

As the organizational density of the Austrian major parties is still extraordinarily high (by far the highest in West Europe), the FPÖ had no choice but to go to the extreme right and to compete

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14 For a comparison with Belgium, see Deschouwer (2002).
15 The ratio of the major parties' membership to the electorate fell as follows from 1959 to 1971; CDA, 8.1% (total of the three major religious parties) to 2.4%. PvdA, 2.3% to 1.1%. On the contrary, the Liberals (VVD) increased its membership ratio in the 1970s from 0.5% (1952, 1963 and 1972) to 1.0% (1977). Andeweg (1999).
centrifugally on the issues of immigration and EU (Knutsen, 1998; Cole, 2005; Benoit & Laver, forthcoming).

In Belgium, or more precisely in Flanders, the picture is more complicated with the existence of the Liberals (PVV, renamed VLD in 1992). As the party had been excluded from the government for most of the time after the 1950s, it has criticized the clientelist dominance of the established parties well before the rise of the Vlaams Blok. In effect, it was to blandish its will to break the party-dominated "System" and to advocate "citizen democracy" that the party changed its name and internal organization in 1992. Unfortunately, however, the VLD was too much involved in the "System" to absorb protest voters against the Socialists and the Christian Democrats. Unlike the Flemish Block, the party cannot (and will not) claim to be a complete outsider in the “System”. It joined the national (federal) government several times after WW2. And its organizational density rose respectively about 50% and 35% during the party's stay in power (1972-1977 and 1981-1988), which shows the party was not absolutely innocent of clientelist practices. As a result, the VLD failed to stop the rise of the Flemish Block, increasingly successful in collecting protest votes. Moreover, the existence of the VLD compels the Flemish Block to go further to the right, as the Liberals has also their pillars, however weakly organized it is in comparison to the other two major parties. Because of this centrifugal pressure exerted by the VLD, it would be extremely difficult to "integrate" the Flemish Block in the near future.

Putting France in the comparative perspective

With all these European examples in mind, it is now much easier to understand why France has been suffering since the mid-1980s from the ever-growing extremist forces on both ends of the spectrum. Since the 1970s, all the four major parties have succeeded in establishing local partisan networks based on the local governments resources. Mayors who serve as MPs concurrently can distribute these resources to their party supporters in more or less particularist ways. Through various kinds of "city-hall clientelism" (Tafani, 2003), the electorate of the major four parties has thus become increasingly solid. And the decentralization reforms of 1982 have multiplied its effects. It was only a few years later that Le Pen and the National Front made their electoral breakthrough. The center space of the spectrum has been taken alternatively by the two camps competing centripetally with each other. Any protest party, left or right, would be obliged to compete centrifugally at the ends of the spectrum, instead of approaching the flank parties of each bloc in the hope of attracting some of its electorate. Within the National Front, Bruno Mégret, former no.2 of the party, tried to pursue this alternative strategy only to be expelled in 1998-9 by Le Pen, who never thought of abandoning his time-worn polarization strategy. This strategy would lead, according to his expectation, to the paralysis of the regime and the capitulation of the governing parties.
It is true that the French bureaucracy had much greater autonomy than its counterparts in the Central European countries, and effectively limited the amount of public resources available to the parties' clientelist practices (Shefter, 1977; Sawicki, 1998). However, the power balance between the parties and the bureaucracy very often fluctuated in the course of the 20th Century (Nakayama, 2006a). In addition, even under the bureaucratic hegemony, member of Parliaments were able to divert the resources of the city hall they serve as mayor, thanks to the cumul des mandats, in order to consolidate their local networks. With the increasing state intervention in socioeconomic spheres, public money flowing from the central government to the local governments also grew very rapidly in the form of subsidies and state banks' loans. Launched as early as in the 1920s, a series of local infrastructural projects, including rural electrification, waterworks and social housing, greatly increased the resources in the hands of mayors (Nakayama, 2006b).

It is true some of the Socialist (SFIO) and Communist MPs did use these resources to reinforce their parties' local bases, but they were rather exceptional (Bleitrach et al., 1981; Girault, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2002; Sawicki, 1997; Lefebvre, 2004). After the Popular Front, the bureaucratic control had been gradually reinforced over the allocation of financial and other government resources (Thoenig, 1981). Especially with the transition to the Fifth Republic, local politics became increasingly bureaucratized, and mayor who would dare partisan distribution of the budget would receive a very bad grade from the central ministries. In addition, MPs and mayors had to adapt their electoral alliance strategy to the various local situations and needed to maintain autonomy from the parties' national headquarter. So it was also in their own interests to distance themselves from national party politics. Therefore, most of them used their city hall's resources just to nurture their own personal local networks, which were often very poorly coordinated or disciplined by the party headquarters in Paris. Even the Communist mayors could not always resist this temptation of autonomy and non-partisanship (Bellanger, 2002, 2004).

It was in the 1970s that this trend was reversed. With a huge ideological mobilization after May 1968, the French local elections have been (party-)politcized again, and party discipline finally got imposed on formerly independent mayors first in the left bloc, and then spread to the right through electoral competition. Especially with the Left's massive victory in the municipal elections of 1977, the political weight of mayors and their resources considerably increased inside the new Socialist Party, led by Mitterrand (Lacorne, 1980; Rondin, 1985; Lewis & Sferza, 1987). Originally, the Gaullist Party had nothing to do with municipal clientelism during de Gaulle's presidency, because most Gaullist MPs did not pay much attention to nurturing their own local networks as they basically got elected thanks to the popularity and charisma of President de Gaulle (Charlot, 1970). However, Jacques Chirac remodeled the party after 1976, and the Gaullists finally made up for their delay in establishing local bastions (Knapp and Le Galès, 1993). This chase for local clienteles was led by Chirac himself, and establishing satellite associations around the city hall was one of their techniques.
(Tafani, 2003; Knapp, 1994, chapter 5). Even the Communists became increasingly dependent on their mayors' resources as their mass organizations began to decline in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s with the economic crisis and the subsequent industrial restructuring (Pronier, 1983; Ronai, 1989; Ronai, 2001). In other words, like the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats in Central Europe, the party went through a process of substitution of clientelism for the organized subculture, although the French Communist Party was more dependent on the city halls from the beginning (Fourcaut, 1986: Brunet, 1981, 1986).16

The "municipal electoral cycles" (Martin, 1996) is said to favor the incumbent mayors running for their first reelection. Two successive mandates, that is, 14 years would be long enough for MPs to establish their local bases, even if municipal turnovers are rather frequent in the larger cities (Martin, 2001). By contrast, the French local electoral systems are extremely disadvantageous for small parties if not allied with at least one of the major parties, and emerging parties tend to be systematically barred from the post of mayors and presidents of the departmental and regional councils (endowed with a huge and growing budget after the decentralization of 1982).

Therefore, it is quite natural for the French left and right challengers of the "system" to try to attract protest votes by extremist programs and aggressive anti-systemic discourses. Here the far left merits special attention. The situations are similar to the far right of the Flemish party system. In addition to a large-size Socialist Party, France has a Communist Party who very often participates in the government. The Communists has a still solid electorate thanks to its remaining municipal strongholds, but its mass organization are completely gone and their voters are not as loyal any more as in the past. Therefore, the party has to periodically resort to centrifugal competition in order to regain support lost to its left especially during its government participation. This cyclical competitive pressure urges the extreme left challengers, Trotskyists, to go further to the left, while in most Central and Nordic European countries, the extreme left or new left parties often move rightward, attracted by the increasingly available Social Democrat electorate. As a result, the situation in France is quite exceptional, in that the extreme-left anti-system populist parties win a considerable electoral success by collecting some of the popular class voters disappointed with the left government.

Concluding remarks

This paper starts from a small and not really new idea on party system theory. My proposition is to incorporate the organizational character of each competing relevant parties into Sartori's one-dimension spatial competition model. This means integrating the vertical (politico-sociological, in other words) point of view developed by the recent research on party organization and the

16 As to the rise of party municipal clientelism in 20th-Century France, see Nakayama (2005); Nakayama (2006a) for the details and the reference.
horizontal perspective which our colleague party system theorists have long been so familiar with. To see how this new idea fits the realities, my paper takes up the case of the extremist anti-system parties in contemporary Western Europe, because the integration or absorption of these parties is by far the most important and urgent preoccupations of the West European party systems.

Using the concept of "solidness" of the electorate, my paper first points out some important defect that might have slipped into Sartori's spatial competition model at the moment of its conception. Then, returning to the historical developments of the West European party systems, my paper goes on the assumption that the "solidness" of the electorate can be translated into the organizational density of the subcultural mass organization before the unfreezing of the traditional cleavages systems, and then into the amount and scope of clientelist practices, i.e., particularist distribution of public (government) resources.

Finally, my paper applies the above perspective to several country cases taken up from the systems recently experiencing the emergence of the right or left extremist parties. By examining the spatial location of available (transferable) votes on the right-left spectrum, my brief case studies show that my model explains first whether the extremist parties emerge (or grow into a sizable electoral force) on the ends of the spectrum (and on which end), then whether these extremist parties compete centripetally or centrifugally. These two factors determine the cost of absorption or integration of the extremist parties.

The timing and sequence of the unfreezing process as well as the magnitude of clientelist practices are essential to understand their strategies of positioning and competition.

1 When the major wing parties (Social Democrats and Conservatives) began to decline organizationally, if the center is also unfreezing, there will be less danger of the extremist parties (Sweden and the Netherlands), as there are also available space in the center.

2 When the center parties remained relatively solid but stayed at the center, the extremist parties are more likely to emerge, but they can be still absorbed without too much cost, if their established neighbors (wing parties) begin to lose in solidness of their electorate. In effect, it would be reasonable to suppose that the Nordic subcultural organizations will not last so long even if they persist still now, and in this case, the extremist parties will soon change to centripetal competition in search for the wing parties' electorate.

2-b But the problem is to know when the clientelist bases of the party organizations will finally begin to decay. The Italian case led to a Star Wars-like happy ending with the sudden collapse of the DC and its clientelist accomplices of the center. But in spite of successive scandals of corruption, clientelist practices are still lingering on and on in Austria, Belgium and France, and these countries are unlikely to be able to have done with their extremists in the near future and will have to continue to pay its costs.

3 Finally, when the center parties with relatively solid electorate move to the right or left to compete the wing parties' now less solid electorate (the right side of Denmark), or when a flank party
exists on the outer side of the principal wing party and enjoys a relatively solid electorate thanks to their sporadic government participation (the left side of France and the right side of Belgium), the situations will be the most complicated and troublesome. Pushed away by the centrifugal competition of its ex-center or flank party rivals, it would be difficult for the extremist parties to change cap and move inward.

In this way, I hope my paper has demonstrated the workability and practical merits of my theoretical proposition, however limited the scope of my case studies is. I also know very well how rudimentary their empirical foundations are. My paper is just tossing off a theoretical idea, hoping it to be taken up by someone else competent for this task, which would never fit my skills as a historian.
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