The Consolidation of Democracy and Representation of Social Groups

PHILLIPPE C. SCHMITTER
Stanford University

To the neophyte graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley in the early 1960s, attending Seymour Martin Lipset’s course on political sociology (Sociology 290) was a revelation. The big “comparative” questions—development and democracy, class conflict and political change, nation-building and state formation, national trajectories and international trends, public opinion and public policy—were there, and they all got a serious hearing. Lipset handled each with awe-inspiring erudition and that heterodox blend of behavioral, structural, and cultural factors that is his hallmark. I remember references to incidents of working-class history in obscure towns I had never heard of, to parties, unions, and movements over a century-long span, to scholars—living and dead—from almost every continent, and to books written in Finnish and Swedish, not to mention German, French, and Italian!

As one of the requirements for that course, I wrote a review of an article that Lipset had published only a few years previously: “Party Systems and the Representation of Social Groups” (Lipset, 1960). This has not proven to be one of his more cited works. Indeed, I wonder if anyone else has been similarly influenced by it. The review I wrote then has long since been lost in one move or another, and I cannot even recall how the author reacted to my effort. What I do remember is that reading and criticizing this particular article not only provided me with several important themes that appeared in my subsequent doctoral dissertation (Schmitter, 1971), but sent me on a lifetime trajectory of research.

The lessons I drew from it at the time may not seem so surprising today, but in the atmosphere of triumphant “behavioralism” and “functionalism” that then prevailed in the social sciences they were decidedly unorthodox:

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• Political processes cannot be reduced to the preferences or behaviors of individuals but are conditioned by group actions and interactions.
• These groups—their solidarities and their conflicts—make independent contributions to determining political outcomes.
• "Representation" is the key (but not the exclusive) relationship between such groups and the making of authoritative decisions.
• This relationship is increasingly structured through specialized, "legally constituted" organizations with identifiable and reproducible boundaries. Together, they form distinctive subsystems within the polity.
• These representative organizations have a relative autonomy and an operative logic of their own that cannot be reduced either to the preferences of individuals or to the solidarities of groups that compose them. In Lipset's terms, they were neither just "a means for political adjustment" among conflicting social groups nor merely "an instrument of manipulation" by dominant authorities.
• However, the formal institutions of government—their procedures and substantive policies—can have a significant and enduring effect upon groups and the organizations that represent them. In other words, public policy is not a mere epiphenomenon produced by previously formed group interests, even less by independently established individual preferences.

What I disagreed with in the article was its main empirical conclusion, namely, that "parties are by far the most important part of the representative structure in complex democratic societies" (Lipset, 1960, p. 53). Perhaps my objection was due to the fact that I had come to Berkeley from Switzerland (admittedly, an implausible explanation given my total lack of attention to Swiss politics when I was a student at the University of Geneva). In that country, parties were hardly capable of dominating—certainly not monopolizing—the representation of social groups. Even in the United States, it seemed obvious to me that much of the "action" was bypassing its two-party system and electoral process altogether.

So, I was convinced by Lipset's plea for the importance of social groups and the autonomy of representation processes, but I drew the perverse conclusion that this implied looking elsewhere—not at political parties but at what were then called "pressure" or "interest groups"—on the hunch that this was where the linkage between social groups and public authorities would increasingly be channeled.

After a research trajectory that has taken me to several countries and continents, involving a lengthy effort at refining and adapting the categories used to analyze how interest associations structure the representation of social groups, I am now prepared to return to that initial disagreement with Lipset and to focus it on what may well be the most significant issue for contemporary political science: How can democracy be consolidated in the aftermath of the transition from autocratic rule? What are the respective roles of such intermediaries as political parties, interest associations, and social
movements in this highly complex (and, in most cases, still undecided) process? To what extent do different ways of structuring and governing the process of representation determine what the outcome will be?

THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

Intuitively, the notion of consolidating democracy seems rather obvious. After a period of considerable uncertainty and unknown duration during which the previous autocracy “transits” to some other form of political domination, it becomes necessary to transform its improvisations into stable rules and alliances under which actors can compete and cooperate on predictable terms. From a “war of movement” in which many have high expectations (and some have great fears) about the magnitude of change, the democratic struggle should settle into a “war of positions” along established lines of cleavage for mutually agreed-on advantage (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 108-110, 229-239). Consolidation could be defined as the process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectivities (i.e., politicians and citizens) that participate in democratic governance. If consolidation sets in, the democratic regime will have institutionalized uncertainty in certain roles and policy areas, but it will also have reassured its citizens that the competition to occupy office and/or to exercise influence will be fair and circumscribed to a predictable range of outcomes. Modern, representative, political democracy rests on this “bounded uncertainty” and the “contingent consent” of actors to respect the outcomes it produces (Schmitter & Karl, 1991).

Leaving aside the difficulties inherent in distinguishing the two stages and in measuring their duration and effect, it should be noted that the insistence on transition and consolidation that one can find in so much of the contemporary discussion of democratization represents an important, if often implicit, theoretical option (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). It involves a rejection of the previously widespread notion that democracy was a functional requisite or an ethical imperative. Neither the level of economic development, the stage of capitalist accumulation, nor the hegemony of the bourgeoisie can automatically guarantee the advent, much less the persistence, of democracy. Nor is this regime outcome the inevitable product of some previously attained level of “civilization,” literacy, educational attainment or distinctive political culture. This is not to deny that affluence, a relatively equal distribution of wealth, an internationally competitive economy, a
well-schooled population, a large middle-class, and a willingness to tolerate diversity, to trust adversaries, and to settle conflicts by compromise are not advantageous; it is just that democracy still has to be chosen, implemented and perpetuated by “agents,” real live political actors with their distinctive interests, passions, memories, and—why not?—fortuna and virtù. No doubt, they will be constrained by the above developmental and cultural factors, but there is still plenty of room for making right or wrong choices. Even the most inauspicious setting can still give rise to an attempt to democratize, vide Haiti, Mongolia, Benin, and Albania—and, who knows, some of them may succeed—vide India, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Portugal, and Papua-New Guinea, none of which seemed to stand much of a chance when they began changing regimes.

It is the focus on these strategic interactions that distinguishes much present-day theorizing on democratization from earlier work that stressed functional requisites or cultural imperatives. The ensuing years taught a bitter lesson as many relatively highly developed and “civilized” countries descended into autocracy. Moreover, some of the recent democratizers are simultaneously facing acute problems of adjusting to international economic competition and accommodating to internal cultural diversity—and they have (not yet) regressed to the status quo ante.

Let us not, however, be misled by all this emphasis on choice and voluntaristic action. The core of the consolidation dilemma lies in coming up with a set of institutions that politicians can agree on and that citizens are willing to support. Arriving at a stable solution, especially in the climate of exaggerated expectations that tends to characterize the transition, is no easy matter. Not only are the choices intrinsically conflictual—with different parties of politicians preferring rules that will ensure their own reelection or eventual access to power and different groups of citizens wanting rules that will ensure the accountability of their professional agents—but they are extrinsically consequential. Once they are translated via electoral uncertainty into governments that begin to produce public policies, they will affect rates of economic growth, willingness to invest, competitiveness in foreign markets, distributions of income and wealth, access to education, perceptions of cultural deprivation, racial balance, and even national identity. To a certain extent, these substantive matters are anticipated by actors and incorporated in the compromises they make with regard to procedures, but there is lots of room for error and unintended consequence. In the short run, the consolidation of democracy depends on actors’ and citizens’ ability to come up with a solution to their intrinsic conflicts over rules; in the long run, it will depend on the extrinsic impact that policies made under these rules will have on social groups. Here is where the “objective realities” of levels of develop-
ment, positions in the world economy, conflicts over sectoral product and distributions of welfare, and the "subjective preferences" of classes, generations, genders, ethnic types, status groups, and situations reenter the picture with a vengeance. Given the likelihood that some time must elapse before the new rules of cooperation and competition produce observable results, it seems safe to assume that the process of consolidation will be a great deal lengthier than that of transition.

NOTIONS OF PARTIAL REGIMES AND TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

It may also be a more differentiated and variegated process, for modern democracy is a very complex set of institutions involving multiple channels of representation and sites for authoritative decision making. Citizenship, its most distinctive property, is not confined to voting periodically in elections. It also can be exercised by influencing the selection of candidates, joining associations or movements, petitioning authorities, engaging in "unconventional" protests, and so forth. Nor is the accountability of authorities only guaranteed through the traditional mechanisms of territorial constituency and legislative process. Much of it can circumvent these partisan mechanisms and focus directly through functional channels and bargaining processes on elected or appointed officials within the state apparatus.

If this were not the case, the process of consolidation would be much simpler—and I would readily concede Lipset's point that "parties are by far the most important part of the representative structure." All one would have to do would be to focus on the formation of a party system sufficiently anchored in citizen perceptions, an electoral mechanism reliable (and acceptable) enough to produce winning candidates, and an institutional arrangement for ensuring that decisions binding on the public would be held accountable to its properly elected representatives. Much of the recent literature does exactly this, with considerable confidence and erudition (Pridham, 1990).

My hunch is that this may be inadequate. Either it ignores the very substantial changes that have taken place in the nature and role of parties in well-established Western democracies or it anachronistically presumes that parties in today's neodemocracies will have to go through all the stages and perform all the functions of their predecessors. I believe it is preferable to assume that today's citizens—even in polities that have long suffered under authoritarian rule—have quite different organizational skills, are less likely to identify so closely with partisan symbols or ideologies, and defend a much
more variegated set of interests. Moreover, the new regimes are emerging in an international environment virtually saturated with different models of successful collective action. All this may not preclude a hegemonic role for parties in the representation of social groups, but it does suggest that they will be facing more competition from interest associations and social movements than their predecessors and that we should revise our thinking about democratization accordingly.

First, what if modern democracy were conceptualized, not as "a regime," but as a composite of "partial regimes," each of which was institutionalized around distinctive sites for the representation of social groups and the resolution of their ensuing conflicts? Parties, associations, movements, localities and various clienteles would compete and coalesce through these different channels in efforts to capture office and influence policy. Authorities with different functions and at different levels of aggregation would interact with these representatives and could legitimately claim accountability to different citizen interests (and passions).

Constitutions, of course, are an effort to establish a single, overarching set of "metarules" that would render these partial regimes coherent by assigning specific tasks to each and enforcing some hierarchical relation among them, but such formal documents are rarely successful in delineating and controlling all these relations. The process of convoking a constituent assembly, producing an acceptable draft constitution, and ratifying it by vote and/or plebiscite undoubtedly represents a significant moment in democratic consolidation, but many partial regimes will be left undefined, for it is precisely in the interstices between different types of representatives that constitutional norms are most vague and least prescriptive. Imagine trying to deduce from even the most detailed of constitutions (and they are becoming more detailed) how parties, associations and movements will interact to influence policies, or trying to discern how capital and labor will bargain over income shares under the new metarules.

If political democracy is not a regime but a composite of regimes, then the appropriate strategy for studying its consolidation would be disaggregation. Not only is this theoretically desirable; it also makes the effort more empirically feasible. In Figure 1, I have attempted to sketch out the property space that would be involved and to suggest some of the specific partial regimes that are likely to emerge. On the vertical axis, the space is defined in terms of the institutional domain of action, ranging from authoritatively defined state agencies to self-constituted units of civil society. Horizontally, the variance concerns the power resources that actors can bring to bear on the emerging political process: numbers in the case of those relying primarily on the counting of individual votes; intensities for those that are based on
Figure 1: Sketch of the Porperty Space Involved in the Consolidation of Whole and Partial Regimes in Modern Democracies

weighing the contribution of particular groups of citizens. Competing theories and models of democracy—liberal versus statist, majoritarian versus consociational, unitary versus federal, presidential versus parliamentary—have long argued the merits of particular locations in Figure 1. In my view, all are potentially democratic (provided they respect the overarching principle of citizenship and the procedural minima of civil rights, fair elections, free associability, etc.).

Second, what if it were not “democracy” but “democracies” that are being consolidated? Beyond some common threshold of basic procedures
that must be respected⁶ lies a great deal of divergence in concrete rules and practices. These types of democracy are the result of different (but relatively stable) combinations of what I have already termed partial regimes. No single format or set of institutions embodies modern democracy—even if, at a given moment in time, some particular country may seem to represent "best practice." Instead, there is an array of possible combinations, and the dilemma of those who would consolidate democracy is to pick the one among many that satisfies both the short-term interests of politicians and the longer-run expectations of citizens.

If so, the challenging question facing political scientists becomes not whether autocracy will be succeeded by democracy but by what type of democracy? It could be argued that in the contemporary period (or at least since April 25, 1974 when the Portuguese "Revolution of the Carnations" launched the current wave), most polities are condemned to be democratic. The absence of a plausible alternative to some form of popularly accountable government means that those autocracies that resist (e.g., Burma, China, Cuba, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya, and most of the Middle East) must expend an increasing proportion of their resources in sustaining themselves in power—without much prospect for long-run success.

This "condemnation," however, does not ensure that all those that enter into a transition will succeed in consolidating a democratic regime. Some will regress to autocracy, probably in rather short order, vide Haiti and Burma. More are likely to get stuck in a sort of purgatory. They will persist as "unconsolidated democracies" where the procedural minimum will be respected, but politicians and representatives will prove incapable of agreeing on a viable set of rules for limiting uncertainty and ensuring contingent consent. Argentina and the Philippines are prominent examples of this outcome, and its specter is haunting Eastern Europe.

Third, what if the outcome of democratization were dependent, not so much on the presence or absence of certain prerequisites or on the virtues or vices of certain persons, but on the sequence with which certain processes occurred? There are a number of rather concrete tasks to be accomplished during a change in regime: Elections have to be convoked and held; parties, associations, and movements formed or revived; chief executives elected or chosen; ministerial and administrative positions filled or eliminated; collective bargaining arrangements created and institutionalized; constitutions drafted and adopted; legislatures elected and organized, and so forth.⁷ My hunch is that the role of different representative organizations and, with it, the type of democracy that will emerge, is determined to a significant degree by the timing and sequence of accomplishing these tasks.⁸ A sensible rule of thumb would be that those arrangements that get consolidated first should
have a greater and more persistent effect on those coming later. This would normally imply an advantage for political parties, because it is the convocation of so-called “founding elections” that typically links liberalization to democratization and serves to accelerate the process of transition (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 57-64).

THE PARADOX OF ASSOCIABILITY

Modern democracies tend to emerge as compromises. Their protagonists (not all of whom are “democrats”) prefer very different institutions and practices that, not coincidentally, tend to correspond to the arrangements of power that they believe will best defend their interests or advance their ideals in the future. In the initial uncertainty of the transition, however, no dominant group may emerge that can impose its “format” and what comes out is likely to be a hybrid—a second best solution—that resembles no one’s first preference.9

In this competitive process to define future rules and practices, interest associations and social movements are likely to find themselves in a paradoxical situation. Not infrequently, they will have been more tolerated by the ancien régime than political parties, especially if they concentrated on the representation of relatively localized or circumscribed interests.10 The defections of key professional and business groups often serve to challenge the “indispensability” of authoritarian rulers, just as the declarations of human rights movements discredit their legitimacy. Once the transition has begun, these and other organizations are usually swept up in what Guillermo O’Donnell and I have called “the resurgence of civil society” (O’Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 48). This unexpected mobilization can be a crucial factor in driving the authoritarian rulers beyond their hesitant and limited measures of liberalization toward full-scale democratization.

These initial organizational advantages when combined with a particularly strategic location in the system of production or administration can be translated into a genuine, if momentary, power advantage. In fact, associations representing important class, sectoral, and professional interests may be even victimized by their capacity to disrupt or nullify actions taken by the new democratic rulers.11 Not only will this be interpreted as extracting unfair rewards for “some” at a time when the rhetoric focuses on the rewards for “all,” but the disruption of social peace their actions inevitably provoke can also be seen as encouraging a coup by hardliners already convinced that the transition has gone too far. The pressure on these “functional” organizations not to make opportunistic use of their power during the transition is likely to be great.
For more loosely organized, topically focused "attitudinal" movements, the difficulties are of another nature. Many of their objectives may have been satisfied by the demise of autocracy itself. Others seem too specialized to provide general guidelines for the design of subsequent institutions. Whatever their role in bringing down the ancien régime (and it has varied a great deal), social movements depend on massive amounts of voluntary labor and personal enthusiasm, which are difficult to sustain over time and to focus on the minutiae of consolidation. Sporadic interventions may still be mounted—around the founding elections, the convocation of constituent assemblies, eventual coup attempts, and so on—but the role of these organizations seems inexorably to decline with the definition of stable rules and practices, at least until they are revived by another wave of protest (Tarrow, 1991).

Let us, therefore, concentrate our attention on those permanent associations that specialize in protecting or promoting class, sectoral, or professional interests and try to discern the conditions under which they might intrude on the putative monopoly of political parties in the representation of social groups. As we have speculated above, they can rarely be expected to play a sustained role during the transition, even if their momentary influence can be quite significant. They may also experience a good deal of difficulty in adapting to the rules of the game that emerge out of the consolidation period.

First, interest associations tend to be displaced from the center of political life and public visibility by political parties once elections have been announced, if their outcome appears to be uncertain and it seems safe to run for office. The former are organized along functional lines and can rarely adapt to compete in territorial constituencies. Moreover, their programs and symbols are too specialized to appeal to wider publics. Despite the fact that they rarely play much of a role in initiating the transition, parties do have access to those symbols and programs of general identification and may even draw resources and personnel away from preexisting (and less persecuted) associations and movements once the prospect of "founding elections" is in sight. The dynamics of electoral competition will compel party strategists to appeal to wider and more heterogeneous publics (especially where districts are relatively large and the electoral system less than perfectly proportional), and they may even have to deny their dependence on the very "special interests" that helped them get started. Territorial constituencies impose a different logic of competition and cooperation than functional constituencies. Interest associations will try the best they can to penetrate, even to colonize, these partisan units, but the imperative of assembling numbers and the rhetoric of appealing to the public interest work against their success—at least until longer-run needs for financial resources and specialized information can assert themselves.
Rather, the inverse is more likely to occur during the transition and early consolidation periods. Political parties will seek to penetrate and colonize interest associations. Where they are very successful, the result will be a set of partisan subcultures: Lager or familles spirituelles in which communities of differing color—"red, black, white, orange"—will confront each other and demand the exclusive affiliation of their members. Where they are only partially successful, they can leave behind a set of interest associations split internally into competing party factions or fragmented into competing units of representation. In either case, the sum total is likely to have less members and financial resources than in the more favorable outcome where class, sectoral and professional organizations manage to retain their respective unity and, hence, their monopolistic location in the emergent system of interest politics.

These tendencies toward fragmentation and/or competitiveness may, in some cases, be further exacerbated by emergent difficulties in responding to regionally or locally based challenges. The highly centralized nature of authoritarian regimes typically leaves an accumulated heritage of frustration in peripheral areas—all the more so when these are ethnically, linguistically, or culturally distinctive. Transition toward a new configuration of public offices may bring out simultaneous demands for a new configuration of territorial authority. These tensions are also likely to affect the unity of political parties, but the creation of regional representative bodies with their own party systems may absorb much of their impact. Because the core issues of economic management and social policy that most affect class, sectoral, and professional associations tend to remain firmly in the hands of central authorities, regionalism can bring little more than symbolic satisfactions to these interests. Effective influence requires a capacity to respond and negotiate at the national level, but resurgent peripheral identities may be hard to ignore (and difficult to gauge) in the relative uncertainty of the transition.

Finally, interest associations seem to face rather special problems of "resource extraction" during the democratization process. The new basis for both joining and contributing to them is (presumably) voluntarism. Invariably, the new constitutions enshrine freedom of association among their fundamental rights. Some may even guarantee Negativkoalitionsfreiheit, or freedom from having to join any specific association. This implies an end to exclusive state recognition and compulsory contributions. Willing individuals from different social classes, economic sectors, and professional categories must come forward to support their respective associations in a situation where lots of other claims are being made on their time and money. One does not have to be a strict devotee of Mancur Olson's Logic of Collective Action (1965) to recognize that once the "uncalculated" enthusiasm of participating
in the mobilizational phase of regime change is over, the temptation to free-ride on the effort of others is likely to settle in.

One can hypothesize, therefore, that the more the departing autocracy was characterized by extensive state corporatism or monistic control by the governing party, the greater will be the probable difficulty of adjusting to voluntarism and "official" indifference. Admittedly, there exist ample possibilities for granting informally to groups what constitutional freedom of association formally denies them. The complex provisions of a labor code, social security, and labor court systems, and the operation of assorted advisory commissions, not to mention the (often surreptitious) concession of outright subsidies, can help to overcome the limitations of voluntary associability. In some instances, the resource problem may center on the ownership of certain physical assets and the control over certain monopolistic services that associations acquired under authoritarian auspices. Whatever the case, the patrimoine from the defunct regime will be a major potential source of group struggle and an important determinant of the resources available to newly "liberated" interest associations. One of the murkiest areas of their operation during the transition and early consolidation is finance. Regardless of the formula that is eventually applied—retention of monopolistic privileges, distribution of the patrimoine, subsidization by government in power (or by other inconfessable sources, domestic or foreign)—the adjustment to new conditions of membership should weaken the role of organized business, labor, and agriculture during the interim. Once these problems are resolved, however, their respective associations may come to play a role in defining what type of democracy will consolidate itself.

For the reasons sketched above, my hunch is that such class, sectoral, and professional associations will not be a major factor in determining whether democracy as a general mode of domination will succeed authoritarian rule and persist for the near future; rather, their (delayed) impact will be significant in determining what type of democracy will eventually be consolidated. In the longer run, this will affect the distribution of benefits that is likely to set in, the formula of legitimation that is likely to be employed, and the level of citizen satisfaction that is likely to prevail. Another way of putting it is that the quality of democracy, rather than its quantity and duration, will vary with the emergent properties of associability (Schmitter, 1991). Organized class, sectoral, and professional interests can have an impact on the consolidation process, but it is going to take some time before the full extent of this becomes evident.

The strongest case for their long-run significance comes from the literature on societal or neocorporatism. Liberal thought had long suggested that political order rested on an implicit social contract between individuals and
their rulers. "Rational choice Marxists" added the notion that a compromise between classes was necessary if "capitalist democracy" were to survive.¹⁵ Neither (at least initially) paid much attention to the associations that actually aggregated the interests at stake into diverse categories and engaged in the negotiation of explicit agreements—liberals presumably because these organizations were expected to behave no differently than individuals; Marxists because classes an sich were supposed to be objectively capable of imposing their logic of conflict over whatever "class fractions" had emerged für sich.

The corporatist perspective that flourished during the 1970s and 1980s focused specifically on historical differences in the way these organizations had emerged and how they continued to affect contemporary economic performance, mainly across the advanced industrial countries. It suggested that formalized and centralized intermediation, primarily (but not exclusively) through associations representing class, sectoral, and professional interests, had become an important characteristic of some (but not all) modern political democracies. Moreover, the social contracts/class compromises negotiated under corporatist auspices seemed not only to have a significant impact on rates of inflation, levels of unemployment, and fiscal equilibria, but to contribute to the "govermability" of the polity (Bruno and Sachs, 1985; Cameron, 1984; Paloheimo, 1984; Schmidt, 1982; Schmitter, 1981; Schott, 1985; Wilensky and Turner, 1987).

The reasons for this were to be found not in the normative dilemma of ensuring obligation or in the functional imperatives for reproducing capitalism but in such contingent factors as the organizational response to previous social conflicts, the impact of war, and, most of all, the development of the modern welfare state with its Keynesian policy agenda. Once public officials intervened heavily and diversely in the macromanagement of the economy, they found themselves increasingly dependent on organized interests for the information and compliance needed to make their policies work. Associations, meanwhile, sought to shake off the limits of liberal, voluntary collective action by acquiring state recognition, centralized monopoly representation, licensing authority, guaranteed access, and other characteristics that would enhance their membership and resources.

In the well-established democracies of Northern Europe, these developments occurred piecemeal and without explicit ideological justification, even if the predominant Social Democratic parties of the region did stress the generic necessity for reformism and class compromise. Elsewhere, neocorporatist arrangements either survived from precapitalist practices or emerged pragmatically to solve specific postwar crises. In other words, their legitimacy was questionable—and not just because they resembled previous attempts by authoritarian rulers such as Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Vargas,
and Peron to impose such structures from above during the 1930s and 1940s. To this day, the connection between corporatism and democracy remains "essentially contested" (Schmitter, 1983).

It is, therefore, all the more ironic that the theme should emerge so insistently in discussions of the consolidation of neodemocracies. Here we are faced with a case of international diffusion. The Spaniards were clearly inspired by the relative success of such arrangements in northern and central Europe during the 1960s and 1970s. Their Pacto de Moncloa and its successors, in turn, encouraged others to attempt to forge an explicit macrolevel agreement between peak or sectoral associations representing capital and labor in the aftermath of authoritarian rule. While the record outside of Spain has, so far, not been encouraging and one can even question whether the various Spanish pacts from 1975 to 1984 really had much of an impact on controlling key economic parameters, the potential political effects can be very significant. The very image of representatives from such a wide diversity of interests signing such an accord—in the Spanish case, with the added blessing of the king—can serve to reduce uncertainty about substantive outcomes and "reciprocally legitimate" both the negotiating organizations and the government officials that brought them together. In this case, neocorporatism will have switched from being a "consumer" of legitimacy already well-established in state institutions to being a "producer" of it in democratic institutions that are just emerging. What an irony that just as corporatism seems to be dying (or, better, moribund) in the old democracies (Schmitter, 1989), it should be revived in the new ones!

The corporatist "growth industry" of the past two decades has, however, had some impact on the rapidly evolving discussion of types of democracy. Traditionally, these were delineated either according to formal constitutional/institutional criteria or the nature of their party systems. More recently, analysts have used variation in the structure of interest associations to generate new types (Lange & Meadwell, 1985), or have explored the relationship between the variation in the pluralist-corporatist dimension and the more conventional distinctions (Lijphart & Crepaz, 1991). While it is my conviction that these are steps in the right direction that should improve our understanding of the consolidation of democracy, I would like to enter a dissenting note. One of the reasons for the shifting fate of corporatist arrangements in advanced industrial countries has been the changing nature of their working class and, with it, the changing role of trade unions. To the extent that most of the discussion and virtually all of the measurement of corporatism has focused on certain properties of the union movement—concentration, monopoly, density of membership, hierarchic structures, official recognition, guaranteed access, and so on—this may prove misleading,
especially in countries where urban, regularly employed, unionized workers are a small, relatively privileged (and usually diminishing) proportion of the total work force. Granted that they may still be sufficiently well-located strategically to bring production to a halt (and they may also be concentrated in sectors of state employment where they are politically well-protected from the consequences of their actions), nevertheless, one should not assume that their consent is necessary for corporatism to work. It may be possible to work out “bipartite” deals between capital and the state that could have similar effects or to bring in associations representing the self-employed, professionals, service employees, consumers, housewives, even various marginal groups from the underground economy to give agreements a “popular” component. Admittedly, this will be a lot messier than the classic tripartite formula, but in places like Latin America where wages are already at a subsistence level and constitute a small percentage of national income, where overmanning and unemployment exist side by side, and where the policy thrust is toward privatization, it may be a feasible alternative. In Eastern Europe, “classic” blue-collar workers are a much more significant proportion of the population, but their ranks are rapidly shrinking and their organizations are in disarray. Who is to say that associations representing emergent “political capitalists,” shareholders in privatized enterprises, professionals, farmers, and various petit bourgeois interests will not play a more important role than trade unions in whatever social contracting takes place?

With these heretical thoughts in mind, let us now turn to the issue of how to capture these emergent properties during the difficult period of consolidation.

**THE EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF ASSOCIATIONS**

In response to the opportunities (and threats) of democratization, individual associations are likely to have to change significantly in their internal structures and operative practices. Some will make every effort to retain the organizational advantages they enjoyed under the previous autocracy; others will seize on the chance of establishing a new relationship with their members and inserting themselves independently into the policy process. Here, there is a deep-seated irony, because those social groups that are in greatest need of collective action (i.e., those with numerous, dispersed, and relatively impoverished individuals as potential members) are the least likely to be successful in attracting these members on a rational and voluntary basis. The small, concentrated, and privileged groups should have less difficulty in generating resources under democratic conditions. Not only do they need them less (their members may have adequate resources to act individually),
but they were usually the privileged interlocutors and beneficiaries of the previous autocracy. Left to its own devices, then, the new "liberal" associability could produce a systematically skewed overrepresentation of dominant class, sectoral, and professional interests. Subordinate groups have, of course, the new resource of voting between competing parties to pursue their general interests, but they may have to rely on the state recognition, licensing, and subsidization characteristic of the ancien régime to participate effectively in the democratic game when it comes to advancing their more particular interests. The practical temptations of neocorporatism, in other words, may outweigh the ideological attractions of pluralism.

First, let us turn briefly to some properties of individual, direct membership organizations representing the interests of business, labor, and agriculture that may change with the advent of democracy: number, member density, and representational domain.

**NUMBER**

Theoretically, this should be unlimited under the newly acquired twin freedoms of association and petition. As James Madison put it so bitterly in *The Federalist Papers*, No. 10: "The most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts." Indeed, his pluralist formula was designed to increase the potential number by multiplying the levels of authority around which they could form, as well as placing no barriers to their continual fragmentation. Several factors, however, may either raise the threshold of association formation for specific social groups, or restrict access to bargaining arenas by those that do manage to get organized. Here is where public policies, either held over from the previous regime or created anew under the new democratic regime, can be expected to play a crucial role. Linked to this basic condition are subsidiary questions of whether the associations are new or merely rebaptized versions of previous ones, whether their formation is spontaneous or sponsored (and, if so, by whom), and whether they tend to emerge early or late in the process of transition.

**MEMBER DENSITY**

According to liberal democratic theory, the proportion of those eligible to join and contribute to this form of collective action who actually do so is supposed to be determined only by the rational and independent calculation of individual capitalists, workers, and agriculturists. In fact, the usual social and economic "filtering mechanisms" are often supplemented by deliberate
public and private actions. This leads to the murky area of outside sponsorship by political parties,\textsuperscript{17} statutory obligations by state agencies (vide chamber systems for capitalists and agriculturists, closed shops, and union taxes for workers), and even more subtle forms of fiscal discrimination, licensing, export certification, subsidized services, and outright coercion—all of which can bind various social and economic categories to their respective units of representation in ways they do not freely choose but which have been accepted as compatible with democratic practice.

**REPRESENTATIONAL DOMAIN**

According to the usual canons of democracy, interest associations (old or new) should be able to determine by themselves whom they wish to represent. They set the limits on whom they attempt to recruit as members and what they purport to speak for. Rarely, however, is this the case. Under state corporatist auspices—the usual Southern European and Latin American inheritance from authoritarian rule—these domains were specified by law or administrative regulation. Interests had to be organized by economic sector or professional specialization, to have adopted a given territorial format, to have restricted themselves to a certain level of interaction, and to perform a prescribed set of tasks. Conversely, certain domains and activities were proscribed, as were specific political, ideological, or cultural affiliations. These are organizational “habits” that may decay slowly, even when the original measures are revoked.\textsuperscript{18}

Whatever the inheritance and the inertia, countries are likely to vary considerably in the way in which interest domains are defined. Two dimensions seem especially crucial for future democratic practice: the degree of specialization into functional (e.g., product, sector, or class), territorial (e.g., local, provincial, or national) and task (e.g., trade vs. employer associations, unions oriented toward militant action vs. those oriented toward the provision of services) domains, and the extent of discrimination according to individual member characteristics, such as size of firm, level of skills, public-private status, religious belief, ethnicity, party affiliation, and so forth.

Summarizing this “bundle” of characteristics relative to individual associations, the two emergent properties that seem to make the most difference for the consolidation of different types of democracy could be called “strategic capacity” (Pizzorno, 1977) and “encompassingness” (Olson, 1965): Are these newly created or recently renovated organizations sufficiently resourceful and autonomous to be able to define and sustain a course of action over the long run that is neither linked exclusively to the immediate preferences of their members nor dependent on the policies of parties and agencies
external to their domain? If this is the case, how broad a category of represented interests can be covered by any given organization or coordinated by peak associations through hierarchical arrangements?

Where polities acquire class, sectoral, or professional associations with both strategic capacity and encompassing scope, these associations play a more significant role in the consolidation process than where a great multiplicity of narrowly specialized and overlapping organizations emerge with close dependencies on their members and/or interlocutors. Pluralist associations, in other words, weaken the role of interest intermediaries; corporatist ones strengthen it. This difference also affects the probability of establishing stable partial regimes and, hence, the type of democratic regime. For example, the chance of creating viable concertation regimes, the kind of regime that links associations directly with each other and/or to state agencies, seems contingent on the development of strategic capacity and encompassingness. Furthermore, once this linking is initiated, it will tend to encourage “participant associations” to acquire even more autonomy from members and party interlocutors and to extend their scope to bring wider and wider interest domains under their control. At the extreme, the neodemocracy could become populated with a series of “private interest governments” in sensitive policy areas (Streeck & Schmitter, 1984), with profound consequences for political parties, local clienteles, and the legislative process, as well as for the overall governability of the political order (Schmitter, 1981).

THE EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF ASSOCIATIONAL SYSTEMS

The second set of emergent characteristics refers to what one may loosely term the system of interest intermediation. The impact of organized interests on the type of democracy cannot be assessed by merely adding together the associations present in a given polity but must also take into account the properties that emerge from their competitive and cooperative interaction. To keep the discussion focused, let us again concentrate on just the three most salient dimensions.

The first is coverage. Which social groups are organized into wider networks of collective action, which operate strictly on their own, and which are completely left out? My decision to privilege class, sectoral, and professional associations already implies a biased assessment that these, among all the varied types of interest groups, are likely to make the most crucial decisions with regard to partial regime consolidation and, eventually, the type of democracy. In the narrow sense, the issue is whether identifiable segments
or factions of these interests ("potential groups" in the pluralist jargon) fail to organize—or do so to a degree appreciably less than would appear possible. Is this due to the persistence of repressive measures (e.g., prohibitions on the unionization of civil servants or the organization of shop floor units of worker representation), to a strategic calculation that their interests would be better promoted/defended through other means of collective action (e.g., political parties, informal collusion, or clientelistic connections), or to a structural incapacity to act under the new conditions of voluntarism and competitiveness? Granted, it may be difficult to assess counterfactually the presence of interest categories that "exist but do not act" and to reconstruct the logic that leads conscious and active groups to be satisfied through one mode rather than another of representation, but a comprehensive assessment of the coverage of emergent interest systems requires at least some effort in this direction, if only because of the hypothesis that democracies will face serious problems of legitimacy and governability if they exclude (or simply ignore) such potentially active social groups.

The problem is exacerbated when one shifts from this narrow class and sectoral focus to the much broader question of the coverage of "other" interests (not to mention passions), specifically, those people who are poor, aged, sick, unemployed, illiterate, dwelling in slums, foreigners deprived of decent treatment, natives suffering from ethnic, linguistic, or sexual discrimination, anxious about environmental degradation, concerned about world peace or the rights of animals, e costi via. Here, there can be no initial presumption that collective action will take the rather limited and specialized form of associability. Their demands may be better addressed via political parties (if they are voters), religious institutions (if they are believers), local governments (if they are spatially concentrated), or state agencies (if they are designated clients). They can also form their own social movements, with both an agenda and a means of action that may not be compatible with the more narrowly constrained scope of interest organizations. No empirical study could possibly cover all forms of actual and potential interest and their corresponding organizations. For Southern Europe, it can be argued that functionally based interest associations will be more significant in the consolidation process than, say, social movements and, subsequently, will contribute more to defining the type of regime that will emerge (Tarrow, 1991). This cannot, however, become a license to ignore completely the role of organizations and institutions representing those "other interests," if only because they will affect to some degree the number, member density, and domains, as well as the coverage, of class, sectoral, and professional associations.

The second emergent property is monopoly. The advent of democracy should encourage competition among associations for members, for re-
sources, and for recognition by, as well as access to, authorities. It does not, however, make it imperative or unavoidable. The usual assumption is that the previous authoritarian regime—if it did not suppress associability altogether for specific groups—compelled them to act within a singular, monopolistic, state-recognized (and often state-controlled) organization. Whether this situation persists after that regime has fallen seems to be contingent on political factors that assert themselves during the transition and that can have a lasting effect. By far the most salient, especially with regard to trade unions, is the emergent structure of competition among political parties. Rivalry between communists, socialists, and, occasionally, Christian Democrats over worker affiliation often antedates the demise of authoritarian rule, but it may be only after electoral politics has been restored that it can become sufficiently salient to split more or less unitary workers’ movements—as has happened in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Business associations have historically been less organizationally affected by partisan divisions—even when their members voted for competing parties—but they have sometimes been fragmented by linguistic or religious differences. Far more divisive for them has been the conflict of interest between small, medium and large enterprises—allogous to the difficulties of containing white- and blue-collar workers within the same peak association or of working out “nonraiding agreements” between unions representing differing skill levels. As mentioned above, regionalism and “micronationalism” has also led to situations of competition for members or access.

Whatever the source, the emergent postauthoritarian system will possess varying degrees of “monopoly power” in the representation of interests—and this will be crucial for the formation of partial regimes. Oftentimes, this will prove difficult to assess for the simple reason that associations may appear to have defined their domains in ways that imply competition while in practice coming to less obtrusive arrangements under which they agree not to try to lure away each other’s members or to share key resources and even leaders or to engage in a subtle division of labor vis-à-vis potential interlocutors. For example, capitalists in northern and central European countries are organized into separate hierarchies of trade and employer associations that seem to be competing for member allegiance and political access. On closer examination (and despite some past conflicts), this turns out to be a quite stable division of labor that lends considerable flexibility and “redundant capacity” to that class’s defense of its interests.

The third system property is coordination. Single associations tend to have a limited span of control and capacity for managing interest diversity. The age-old quest for “one big union” has gone unfulfilled for workers, although capitalists and farmers have sometimes come closer to that goal. In order to
represent more comprehensive categories, the usual technique has been to create "associations of associations." These peak organizations (Spitzenverbände is the incomparable German phrase) may attempt to coordinate the behavior of entities within a single sector (e.g., the entire chemical industry), a whole branch of production (e.g., all of industry) or the class as a whole (all capitalists, workers, or farmers irrespective of branch or sector). They may cover a locality, a province or region, a national state, or even a supranational unit such as the European Community. Their success in effectively incorporating all relevant groups and forging a unity of action among them also varies from very incomplete and loose confederal arrangements, in which members retain their financial and political autonomy and are moved to common action only by exhortation or the personal authority of leaders, to highly centralized and hierarchic bodies with superior resources and even a capacity to discipline all class or sectoral interests that refuse to follow an agreed-on policy line.

Such a high coordinative capacity is not attained without struggle or, at least, never without significant threats to the interests at stake. This is obviously easier to do where the scope is purely local and the sector quite narrow, for at these levels the mutual effects of small numbers and close social interaction can be brought to bear. To accomplish such feats on a national and class basis requires much greater effort. Normally, it comes only after the building blocks, the direct membership local and sectoral associations, have been created, but this tends to make the subsequent subordination of the latter more difficult. Perhaps the heritage of centralization from the immediately preceding state corporatist experience may facilitate such an outcome in Southern Europe. The extraordinary success of the Spanish Confederation of Employers (CEOE) at the peak of Spanish business suggests this (Aguilar, 1983; Perez-Diaz, 1985; Rijen, 1985), but the example of next-door Portugal shows that exactly the contrary can follow. The latter has two competing national industrial associations with little or no power to coordinate the behavior of their members, much less to speak for those (numerous) sectors of business that do not fall within the purview of either.

If strategic capacity and encompassingness were the two composite, emergent properties of individual associations that seemed most relevant, the two that best define the nature of interorganizational systems of interest intermediation are class governance and congruence.

Class governance is the capacity to commit a comprehensive social category (e.g., all owners of productive property, workers in all industries, self-employed in all sectors) to a common and long-term course of action and to be able to assure that those bound by such a policy do indeed comply with it. Theoretically, this could be accomplished by a political party,
although the logic of continuous electoral competition tends to undermine this for manual workers—and parties have almost never performed this function for capitalists. In practical and contemporary terms, if class governance is to become a property of civil society and the political order, it is a set of interest associations (or even a single peak association) that will have to do the job.

Congruence refers to the extent to which the coverage, monopoly status, and coordinative capacity of one class or sector are similar to others. One could postulate an underlying trend in this direction, especially between clusters of associations that represent conflicting interests. Nevertheless, in historical terms, some may take the lead in experimenting with (and, occasionally, borrowing from abroad) novel forms of self-organization that subsequently diffuse to their opponents or imitators. Given the high uncertainty of the transition period, incongruence would seem a rather normal state and the question would be whether this tends to diminish during the course of democratic consolidation. Several cases suggest that these differences in timing and structural context may institutionalize initial incongruence across classes and sectors. Japan, for example, has not been an easy case to classify since its location shifts considerably depending on whether it is being scored for its workers (close to the syndicalist pole), its capitalists (close to the societal or neocorporatist position) or its agriculture (close to state corporatism). Switzerland is another—if not so extreme—case of incongruence, with labor much less centrally coordinated and monopolicistically organized than capital. Elsewhere, the class and sectoral disparities are less marked, but Austria, Sweden and Norway stand out as models of congruence. Everywhere—even in such otherwise competitive and uncoordinated (i.e., pluralist) systems as in the United States and Canada—agriculture seems to find a distinctively corporatist way of organizing itself!

Together, class governance and congruence (where they are present) play a major role with respect to the partial regimes outlined in Figure 1. "Concertation" (direct-link) arrangements—bilateral or trilateral—are difficult to run without them. Agreements cannot be enforced, and parity in representation becomes illusory. The representation regime—the division of labor between associations, parties, and movements—seems to rest on a particularly close networking between the former two and an exclusion of the latter from effective exchanges. Finally, the pressure regime becomes less relevant, because most of the interaction takes place directly with involved state agencies. Parliament is only brought in when changes in fiscal legislation, welfare measures, and so forth are required in order to seal social contracts drawn up elsewhere. All this is very sketchy, but it should serve to illustrate how these two emergent system properties—as well as those of coverage,
monopoly, and coordination that lie behind them—can become (but do not necessarily become) significant factors in determining what type of democracy is going to consolidate itself.

A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Nothing in this essay proves that "parties are (no longer) the most important part of the representative structure in complex democratic societies." Rather, on the contrary, these territorially based, symbolically laden and electorally oriented organizations seem to have a considerable initial advantage in the process of consolidation. Whether they will succeed in converting it into a permanent hegemony within whatever type of democracy eventually manages to implant itself remains to be seen. Since it was in Southern Europe (Portugal, Greece, and Spain) that the current wave of democratization began in the mid-1970s and it is there that the processes of consolidation are furthest advanced, these should be the countries that can teach us the most about what (if any) changes have occurred in the respective roles of parties, associations, and movements.

Whatever the evidence should prove, the generic point should remain valid. The label democracy hides a continuous evolution in rules and practices and an extraordinary diversity of institutions. Just because the world is being swept on an unprecedented scale by the demise of autocratic regimes (themselves of considerable diversity) does not mean that their successors will necessarily follow the paths taken by the democracies that have gone before them. Not only are these neodemocrats likely to try to "jump stages" in an effort to emulate what they regard as the best practices of their most successful forerunners, but they may even come up with novel arrangements of their own.

It seems highly unlikely that they will be able to do without what has long been the hallmark of modern political democracy, namely, its dependence on the indirect representation, rather than the direct participation, of citizens (Bobbio, 1978). They may, however, be able to produce a different mix of the forms that modern representation can take and, in so doing, consolidate a type of democracy that will be more appropriate to the distinctive cleavages and conflicts of their respective societies. This is not to suggest that "democracy by political parties" is about to be replaced with "democracy by interest associations" or, even less, "democracy by social movements." Those pundits in the past who predicted that function would supplant territory as the basis of representation, or that the legislative process would be gradually displaced by tripartite bargaining between capital, labor, and the state, or that
identification with party would wither in comparison to mobilization through social movements, were all proven wrong. If nothing else, they should have learned that representation between social groups and public agencies is not a zero-sum matter. It is a capacious realm in which there is room for movement in several directions, as well as for the simultaneous presence of different forms. Whether the leaders of today’s neodemocracies, assailed on all sides by social, economic, and cultural conflicts, will have the imagination and the courage to experiment with these forms and to expand the realm of representation remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. A revised, abbreviated, and presumably more widely circulated version was published as Chapter 9 in Lipset (1963).
2. For this emphasis on uncertainty as “the” characteristic of democracy, see Przeworski (1986, pp. 57-61).
3. The locus classicus, of course, is Seymour Martin Lipset (1959a, 1959b). It should be noted that in his recent work, the level of economic development is described not as a requisite but as one among several “facilitating and obstructing factors” (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1990, pp. 9-14).
4. However, in some cases this experience can be avoided by pulling off the shelf a venerable constitution from the past, as was the case for Argentina and Uruguay during their recent transitions.
5. For a fascinating argument that it is often the “silences” and “abeyances” of constitutions—their unwritten components—that are most significant, see Foley (1989).
7. There will, of course, be infinitely more to be accomplished if the change in political regime is accompanied by a simultaneous transformation in the distribution of wealth, the institutions of private property, the nature of civil-military relations, or the territorial basis of state authority. Where such “simultaneity” occurs (as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union), the potential complexity of timing and sequence increases exponentially.
8. It should be noted that timing and sequence have two distinct points of reference: first, with regard to the accomplishment of these tasks in other polities undergoing regime change in the same “wave of democratization,” and second, with regard to when and how these tasks are handled within the country itself. Normally, we would assume the latter to be more significant, because so many functional interdependencies are involved, but under contemporary circumstances, communication across national units has become so frequent that the diffusion effects may be quite powerful. Moreover, there now exist a large number of organizations, national and international, specifically dedicated to spreading lessons about the most appropriate type of institutional response.
9. This was the central insight of a long-forgotten and now frequently cited article by Rustow (1960). I have expanded on this, with a great deal of help from Machiavelli, in Schmitter (1985a, 1985b).
10. The most common scenario is one in which the previous authoritarian regime exercised severe and systematic control over parties and politicians representing working-class constituencies but left trade unions and their leaders relatively free to build their own organizations and defend specific clienteles, often in the shadow of the official corporatist system. Spain fits this pattern during the last decades of the Franco regime more closely than do Greece or Portugal. See Zufiur (1985).

11. This is all the more likely in situations where the previous regime has banned or controlled tightly the activities of so-called “peak associations” that might be capable of coordinating the broad demands of whole classes. The type of associational behavior that emerges during the transition is, therefore, likely to be fragmented, uneven, and localistic, making it all the easier to discredit on grounds of “particularism.”

12. The “superiority” of parties in organizing for electoral competition will be all the greater where the duration of authoritarian rule has been brief and the leaders, symbols, and ideologies of former parties can be readily appropriated once the transition begins. Greek parties, according to this line of reasoning, had a considerable advantage over those of Spain, Portugal, and Italy.

13. Juan Linz (1983), speaking of Spain, has put the point well, if cryptically: “Politics takes precedence over interests.” In the past when manual workers formed a larger proportion of the potential citizenry, trade unions might have been in a stronger strategic position in the event of regime change. The British Labour Party seems a unique instance when unions took the lead in organizing a party, but that was not a case of change in the type of regime. Indeed, the recent successes of socialist parties in Southern Europe (France, Greece, Spain) have been gained in the absence of, rather than because of, these parties having a strong link with the trade union movement.

14. The literature is enormous and varied. For a guide to its complexities and controversies, see Cawson (1986) or Williamson (1989).

15. See, especially, Przeworski (1980) and Przeworski and Wallerstein (1982). In subsequent work, especially that of Wallerstein, the organizational structure of representation is taken into account, but class actors are always treated dichotomously as “capital” and “labor.”


17. Cf. Lapalombara (1964, p. 306), where this relationship is given the label parentela.

18. That this “decay” may be very slow and that surviving associations, especially trade unions, may struggle to retain the status (and resources) that they were guaranteed under state corporatism is especially well illustrated in Southern Europe by the Greek case after 1974.

19. However, the Basque nationalists and, more particularly, its armed militant component, the ETA, is clearly an exception that proves the rule.

20. To my knowledge, there has been only one case—Norway—in which the formation of comprehensive national class associations of business and labor largely preceded that of their respective, more specialized or localized member associations. Norway retains one of the most centralized and hierarchically structured interest systems in Western Europe.

21. A recent study of the peak association of French business (Weber, 1986) was entitled Le Parti des Patrons: Le CNPF 1946-1986. Its main theme is that precisely because capitalists in
France lacked reliable and significant access to political parties, they were compelled to rely so heavily on the CNPF for the defense of their class interests.

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