Political Parties After Communism: Developments in East-Central Europe. By Tomáš Kostelecký. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002. 240p. $25.95.

Political Parties in New Democracies: Party Organization in Southern and East-Central Europe. By Ingrid van Biezen. New York: Palgrave, 2003. 256p. $69.95.

— Seán Hanley, *University College London*

Much previous work on political parties and party systems in new democracies has examined them as a means to democratic consolidation and regime stability. Two new studies seek to give finer-grain comparative analysis of party development in the relatively successful new democracies of Southern and East Central Europe. Tomáš Kostelecký's *Political Parties After Communism* aims to give a broad overview of the development of party politics in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Kostelecký first outlines the historical evolution of parties in the four cases from the midnineteenth century until the collapse of communism and then gives a detailed survey of the development of parties and electoral politics between 1989 and 2002. Subsequent chapters take a more thematic approach, reviewing and synthesizing a range of research to assess the impact of political culture, historical legacies, social cleavages, and the institutional "rules of the game" on party development. A concluding chapter weights these different factors and seeks to highlight broader trends across the region. These are then contrasted with current patterns of party development in Western Europe.

Kostelecký argues that despite high levels of electoral and organizational volitility, party systems in the four states have acquired discernable patterns of left–right competition. These patterns vary depending on the relative importance of cultural and moral issues and the extent of the political right's enthusiasm for the free market. Such crystallization is underpinned by a growing rationality on the part of voters when making party choices; by a growing correlation between social characteristics and political opinions; and by the establishment of a degree of linkage between parties and social interests, albeit largely detectable at the level of aggegate voting partterns. Such social interests reflect a combination of precommunist cleavages, divisions generated by the communist system itself, and more recent conflicts generated by postcommunist reforms. Such interest-related issues, Kostelecký claims, have gradually displaced the personality and identity politics that characterized the early postcommunist period. In acquiring clearer sets of programmatic divisions and firmer social linkages, the author suggests, East Central European party systems are moving in the opposite direction from those of Western Europe, where class-based, ideological party politics has undergone extensive de-alignment in recent decades. Paradoxically, however, despite their differing trajectories, party systems in the two parts of the continent are coming together around a weak form of class politics, a process the author describes as "limited convergence" (p. 168).

As a general survey, this is a curiously uneven work. It has a strong bias toward examining historical and social-structural factors at the expense of institutions and political processes. While Chapter 5, for example, on the impact of electoral systems is barely 14 pages long, the preceding chapter on social cleavages extends to some 50 pages. Moreover, even within this extended discussion of cleavage, fully 20 pages (pp. 117–36) are devoted to gender divisions—an important and neglected topic, but not, according to the author's argument, a key influence on party competition. Class and socioeconomic cleavages, by contrast, which he sees as informing party competition in all four cases, merit only an eight-page discussion (pp. 106–14). Given the author's background as a sociologist and political geographer, it is disappointing that he did not choose to develop broader arguments or engage with any of the influentual literature relating patterns of postcommunist party competition to varying structural-historical pathways through communism.

The more limited argument that Kostelecký presents—that there has been a shift across the region from a "politics of symbols" to a "politics of interests"—also requires elaboration, as it leans heavily on findings from the Czech case. There is considerable evidence that in Hungary and Poland, socioeconomic issues, while more important to party competition, are framed in "value" terms by both Left and Right for whom issues of identity remain central. Accordingly, in these states, party electorates are heterogeneous cross-class alliances closer to those found in U.S. politics, rather than the traditional European division between economic "winners" and "losers" reproduced in the Czech Republic. There are also some clear gaps in Kostelecký's analysis. Despite noting that East Central European parties' lack of cohesion and stability makes assessing the party system consolidation difficult, the parties' internal dynamics and organizational life are not considered.

This institutional dimension of party development in new democracies is the topic of Ingrid van Biezen's *Political Parties in New Democracies*. Van Biezen seeks to

identify how the origins of political parties in Europe's newer, post–1974 "Third Wave" democracies may have influenced their organizational development and internal politics. She does this through four detailed case studies of parties in Spain, Portugal, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Rejecting comparison with party developments in contemporary Western democracies or generic models of democratization, she argues for focus on periods of party formation capable of relating specific patterns of democratization to specific patterns of party development. In practice, this entails comparing the emergence of parties in the Third Wave cases with the formation of parties during the "First Wave" of democratization in late-nineteenth-century Western Europe. Van Biezen argues that the Third Wave differed from the First in that it rapidly extended political competition, rather than gradually extending participation in a restricted but already competitive political system. Such differences, she claims, have consequences for parties' organizational development. First Wave parties tended to be mass parties with deep social roots, which represented the class interests of previously excluded groups. Third Wave parties, she hypothesizes, by contrast, should be top-down elite creations preoccupied with legislating on the broad institutional issues stemming from the introduction of democracy, rather than representing society. The existence in the late twentieth century of electronic media and the advent of state funding as a democratic norm, she suggests, would give few incentives for parties in Third Wave democracies to develop mass organizations or sink deep social roots. Rather, they should favor catchall electoral strategies, high levels of professionalization, small, inactive memberships, and a concentration of internal party power in the hands of parliamentary elites.

Van Biezen then tests these hypotheses empirically. She first explores party origins, organization, and funding in a detailed chapter on each national case. These chapters bring together an impressive array of primary data and secondary sources on democratization and party development in each state, although in the East European cases, the author is clearly handicapped by a lack of language skills. She concludes her analysis with three more comparative chapters examining parties' internal power dynamics, funding, and organization across the four cases. Overall, the author's hypotheses are confirmed. Parties in all cases demonstrate a clear trend toward etatization, elite domination, and catchall electoral politics. This is especially pronounced for Hungary and the Czech Republic. The one surprising finding is that it is party executives, not parliamentary elites, who tend to wield most internal power and control most resources. This, van Biezen suggests, may reflect the need of parties in new democracies to control and discipline legislators with low levels of party loyalty.

As with Kostelecký, Van Biezen's attempts to find common trends across all cases leaves largely unexplored *differences* between and within cases, which might yield further insights. Not only are Southern European parties organizationally more developed than the East European cases—seemingly a legacy of contrasting nondemocratic regimes—but in all four cases, "historic" parties—often former Communist parties—often diverge sharply from the expected pattern, seemingly because of ingrained organizational and political traditions. In stressing modes of democratization, funding norms, communications technology, and formal party rules, van Biezen's analysis also tends to overlook the importance of the real political dynamics of the four states. How, for example, might one explain the recent transformation of Hungary's center-right FIDESZ from the archetypal cadre party she describes to a social movement with mass participation and affiliated interest groups? Finally, notwithstanding the stress on party formation, the use of Western Europe as reference point is also perhaps problematic. Granted, as both Kostelecký and van Biezen note, much party theory derives from the West European experience. Western European parties have also served as both political models and political allies for those in new democracies. We should also note the European integration in pushing forward the "limited convergence" of parties and party systems across an expanding European Union. Ultimately, however, it is perhaps not that surprising that patterns of party formation and party competition in newly democratic Southern and Eastern Europe did not closely resemble those in Western Europe. Scholars of party politics in Europe's newer democracies could perhaps benefit from rigorously thinking through from first principles the role and nature of parties, in the manner, for example, of John H. Aldrich's (1995) *Why Parties?*

Overall, Kostelecký's *Political Parties After Communism* offers an accessible, if uneven, overview of party development in East Central Europe, but few new ideas or arguments. Van Biezen's *Political Parties in New Democracies,* by contrast, is a more original and substantive piece of work, which makes valuable linkages between patterns of democratization and party organization and presents important and, in places, surprising new findings.