Cleavages and Their Discontents

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INTRODUCTION

“Cleavage” is one of any number starting points for understanding social and political phenomena. In the social and political realm, “cleavage” is a metaphor, an image borrowed from geology: the crack in the rock that is the first to emerge under pressure. As such, the metaphor of cleavage organizes social and political phenomena around “sides” and (because unlike rocks, people often fear, desire, abhor what is on the other side) around competition and conflict between sides.

This paper constitutes an attempt to identify the place of cleavages on the conceptual map of comparative politics. In order to advance the discourse on the topic the paper focuses on the most controversial aspects of the cleavage-literature:

- Alternative conceptualizations of cleavages, alternatives to cleavage-politics and typology of cleavages
- Structural influences on political competition in postindustrial societies
- The degree to which sides must form isolated, self-referential and self-contained “groups”
- The possibilities of agents to shape the nature of enduring conflicts.

In concluding with the question of agency, the paper advances suggestions about the shape of a future elite-oriented agenda for the study of cleavage politics.

CLEAVAGE ALTERNATIVES AND RIVALS

The scholars working on cleavages are divided on the level of definitions as much as on the level of measurement. Yet, it seems to be possible to arrive at a consensus concerning the set of social phenomena that can be most intelligently discussed within the frameworks of the cleavage literature.

Alternate Approaches to Cleavage

Scholarship on the relationship between social divisions and political competition can be grouped according to the relative importance that its authors attribute to structures and agency. Scholars working within ‘structuralist’ approaches assume that that political divisions result from non-political social divisions. Traditionally these bottom-up approaches paid little heed to the motives of elite political actors, since they were thought merely to reflect structural imperatives. Nowadays they claim that it is more rational for parties to emphasize historic social and ideological divisions than to try to impose new divisions on society (Evans and Whitefield 2000).

The mainstream approach rejects rhetorically any form of structural determinism and underlines the more contingent process by which structures are translated into
political opposition through the processes of value-and identity-formation and the
efforts of political parties and other organizations. But it accepts that social
differences and conflicts are, logically and temporally, prior to the actions of
political institutions (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 217; Bartolini 2000). The definition
of cleavages found in the mainstream literature accordingly includes social structure
as a major constituting element. Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995) insist that cleavage
must involve "relatively persistent social division." Whitefield’s definition (2002:
181) ‘requires social division’. Kriesi claims that ‘cleavages have, of course, a
structural basis in a division between opposite social groups’ (1998: 167, italics
added). Although his research strategy begins with the analysis of issue divides, he
searches for their structural determinants, and when he does not find them, he
concludes that more research must be done (Kriesi 1998).

The flagship volume of the mainstream approach, Bartolini and Mair 1990, is
nevertheless somewhat ambiguous on the necessity of the structural base. According
to the authors any of the three constituting elements of cleavages (that is, the
structural, normative and organizational components), may ‘become enfeebled’, and
organizations may ‘develop autonomous strength’ (1990: 219). Thereby they open
the door for the possibility that cleavages may survive even after their structural
basis has largely evaporated.

A more radical departure from structural determinism is represented by those who
argue that value orientations alone can sources of fundamental socio-political
oppositions and can serve as anchors of persistent political behavior (Inglehart 1977;
Flanagan 1987). For these scholars it is not necessary to trace back attitudes, values,
belief-systems to particular structural factors. But similarly to social structural
approaches, party politics tends to be perceived also within this framework as
mirroring exogeneous factors, in this case values or world views.

The emphasis on attitudes is taken to the extreme by those (Colomer and Puglisi
2005, Taagepera and Grofman 1985, Taagepera 1999, etc.) who use the term
cleavage for differences over particular political issues. The evidential burden for
enduring impact of these particular issue-divides is clearly, exceptionally high. The
equation of “issue divide” or “issue dimension” with “cleavage” suggests either a
very thick understanding of “issue” or a thin understanding of “cleavage.”

Finally, the ‘agency-oriented approach’ distances itself from claims that political
competition must result from social differences or structure-like value orientations.
This approach turns the causal arrow the other way around. It focuses on the ways in

1 Bartolini (2000: 17), in a passage that is typical of this approach, emphasizes that what matters is
not social difference per se, but emotions linked to active membership in social groups, the “social
and political bonds which organizationally united the individuals who belong to them.”

2 In Bartolini (2000: 96) the first ‘analytical step’ consists of macro processes of modernization that
generated oppositions based on interest and/or Weltanschauung, the second is the crystallization of
opposition lines into conflicts over public policy, and the third is the emergence of alliances of
political entrepreneurs. He emphasizes the possibility of elites to choose strategy and arena, but the
identity of the cleavages is largely treated as given.
which political actors can create structural and value differences. Historians (e.g. Gellner) and political anthropologists (e.g. Brubaker, Laitin) have demonstrated that even the seemingly most fixed social categories are prone to manipulation. In comparative politics this perspective most often comes up in criticisms of the 'sociological prejudice' (Panebianco 1988) apparent in structuralist approaches and less often as the foundation of original empirical projects. The labels ‘persuaders’ instead of ‘translators’ that Sartori uses for politicians and parties exemplify this approach (Sartori 1969, Layman & Carsey 2002).³

In other words, agency-centered approach treats organizations (mainly parties) and some individuals as the independent variables, while the cleavages are dependent variables (Sartori 1969, Colomer and Puglisi 2005, Przeworski and Sprague 1986). As Adam Przeworski phrased it for the class cleavage: “…. the relative salience of class as a determinant of voting behaviour is cumulative consequence of strategies pursued by political parties of the left.” (Przeworski 1985: 101).

It is worth emphasizing that while each of these approaches uses the word “cleavage,” each also focuses on a particular cluster of definitions for the word. Their classic text of the cleavage literature spoke of “conflicts and controversies that can arise out of…relationships in social structure…” (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 6). Consequently, many see sociological determinism in the work of Lipset and Rokkan (Colomer and Puglisi 2005: 503, Flora 1999: 46) On the other hand, Lipset and Rokkan also acknowledged "the possibility that the parties themselves might establish themselves as significant poles of attraction and produce their alignments independently of the geographical, the social and the cultural underpinnings of the movements” (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 3). That is, their work can in fact be cited in favor of all the approaches listed above (and that is probably one of the reasons why it is so often cited).

The principal criterion for grouping the approaches and definitions above is the weight they attribute to social structure. Those that include structure are clearly better for prediction. Such phenomena as the character, alliance, success and number of parties, or the political agenda (Stoll 2004), can be predicted by cleavages if the cleavages are conceptualized, to some extent at least, as exogenous from the political process. If, however, the principal aim is not prediction but understanding of the logic of cleavage-politics, a focus on agency may very well be justified.

If one takes the minimalist definition of cleavages as a starting point, that is that they are comprehensive and enduring conflicts, then the question of the importance of social structure turns into an empirical question. One needs to assess how many of the existing enduring conflicts are defined by social structure and to what extent individual political loyalty tends to be anchored in social structural attributes? We are not able to give definitive answers to these questions here. But it is clear that while many of the protracted political conflicts have social structural underpinning,

³ Sartori and, in some of his works, Mair, in particular have done much to reinterpret independence of parties and their coalition choices in affecting the stability and change of the party systems and the broader social and cultural environments.
there are numerous oppositions that have more to do with values, world-views or historical memories. Within Western Europe the Irish example, where a considerable degree of electoral and party stability developed despite weak structural bases (and a ‘wrong’, personality-centered, electoral system) appeared as a deviant case (Mair 1997), but in a more global perspective values often rival structural factors in determining political identities.

The same applies for the stabilization of political loyalties. Structural voting is typically perceived to be superior in this regard. But there exist studies that show otherwise. Gábor Tóka found in Eastern European panel data that the combination of values and structure does not stabilize preferences more than values do and that “Values are definitely more effective in sustaining party loyalty than are the effects of socio-demographic traits unmediated by those value orientations.” (Tóka 1998: 607).

Finally, the insistence on social structural basis for cleavages demands a definition of social structure. This is rarely done unambiguously. Bartolini and Mair, for example, while insisting on the relevance of structural components, regard Austria religiously segmented due to the differences in attitudes towards religiosity (as opposed to differences in religious denomination). This example reveals that structure and attitude do not always separate easily: religiosity and church attendance, for example, can be interpreted as both.

These theoretical considerations and empirical findings strengthen our belief that the term cleavages should include conflicts without an explicit social structural origin. Our aim here is not to come up with a foolproof definition. But in the light of the observations above we will proceed with the working definition of cleavage-politics as simply “a pattern of political competition embedded in the social, cognitive or emotive structures of the citizenry as opposed to one determined by day-to-day issues, evaluations of government performance or personalities.” (Enyedi 2005: 598).

**Alternatives to Cleavage Politics**

The working definition above already constitutes the first step towards delineating the area for which cleavage is a relevant concept. Below we will proceed assessing the term’s relationship to other major concepts used for describing mass-elite linkages.

The cleavage-end of the semantic and conceptual field of comparative politics is dominated, rather obviously, by concepts such as subcultural and milieu parties, pillarization (interlocking of cultural, political social and recreational organizations), party centered institutional system and collective action. More importantly, one should pin down the principal ‘enemies’ of cleavage politics. These must refer to those actions of citizens that do not follow the pattern of persistent opposition and those institutional developments that shape people’s choices outside of the dynamic of enduring conflict.

As far as voting behavior is concerned three concepts stand out: personalism, that is
voting on the basis of a candidate’s personality or credentials regardless of policy proposals or group affiliations; clientelism, that is exchanging ballot for direct, tangible reward; and pocketbook voting—a combination of clientelist and personalist elements—that is seeking tangible reward on the basis of expectations about general economic performance rather than policy proposals. These patterns of behavior appear to have little connection to particular ascriptive characteristics or to particular views. But even these phenomena can be “contaminated” by cleavage-politics under specific circumstances:

Let’s take first personalism. Voting on the aesthetics or personality is pervasive and appears to have grown substantially with the spread of television (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). As summarized in a horoscope prediction from the American political satirical newspaper The Onion: "Your carefully considered issues-based Presidential vote will be negated by a hairdresser who likes the other guy's ties." (The Onion November 1, 2000). It is likely, however, that much seemingly personalist voting actually depends on at least a vague set of attitudinal-or policy-related guesses why one candidate is more attractive than another and what kinds of personal qualifications might be desirable for a leader. And while personalism should be still understood as one of the principal enemies of cleavage politics, it must be acknowledged that individuals may also be the main actors in the process of elite-led cleavage framing discussed above. Admittedly, some of the leaders who express certain values forcefully contribute only to structural confusion (Walesa, Fujimori, Yeltsin, etc.). But others (Mitterand, Berlusconi, Adenauer, De Gaulle, Orban, Paisley, etc.) have a decisive role in stabilizing the structure (or at least one pole) of the party system. If politicians remain prominent for a long time and if they invest into organization-building, they may be at the very core of the cleavage-building project. As the example of Indira Gandhi has shown, their role in maintaining the alliance of various sub-groups within the party should not be underestimated.

Clientelism, where it simply involves ad hoc vote buying among reasonably well-matched bidders, it certainly remains outside the cleavage realm. But much clientelism involves closely knit networks of patrons and clients extending across whole regions or countries. Such networks are often difficult to locate and measure—especially for outside researchers—but perform many of the same functions as ethnic or religious groups and may even contain a high degree of closure, albeit in an extremely hierarchical framework. To the extent that they do, they can be understood in structural terms and may potentially be incorporated into full cleavage framework. As clientalism moves away from short-term, rational

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4 One commonly-cited subset of personalism—charisma—is notoriously hard to define but for purposes of this analysis, it can be subdivided into “charismatic leader” and “charismatic society” approaches. Approaches focused on the personality of the leader belong below under the heading of personalism. Approaches focused on society bear strong connection to approaches based on divide and cleavage. Shils (1965) understands charisma as a “connection with . . . some very central feature of man’s existence and the cosmos in which he lives” (201). Geertz (1983) describes it as “a nearness to the heart of things” (123). To the extent that finding “the heart of things” amounts to identifying the issues about which voters feel most passion, this form of charismatic bond resembles a particularly intense form of issue divide.
interests towards culturally and socially meaningful units, so it becomes ‘friendlier’
to cleavage-politics.

Finally, *economic voting* offers another alternative to cleavage-politics since it, too
suggests the absence of fundamental structural or attitudinal differences between
sides. But it may also be intimately intertwined with voting based on principles and
ideologies, and in that case it becomes less remote from cleavage-politics. An
example is when voters particularly punish parties with anti-redistributionist
ideologies in hard economic periods (Tucker 2006). But otherwise, together with its
sociological background variables, such as individualism and consumerism, presents
a threat to cleavages.

Party strategies characterized by ‘*catch-all*-ism, by the emphasis on the *median*
voter, and by *candidate-focused campaigning* (Bowler and Farrell 1992) form
further obstacles in front of cleavage politics. Further threats to cleavage politics
come from institutional developments. The removal of political contention from the
public realm through the *privatization of conflicts* (Schattschneider),
*professionalization of politics*, and the delegation of power to *non-political bodies*
(national banks, courts, regional organizations, etc.) forms one major cluster of
perilous developments. ‘*Presidentialization*’ of parliamentary democracies (Webb
and Poguntke 2005) - the institutional counterparts of personalist voting - points into
the same direction. *Populism* also poses a challenge to cleavage-politics because it
relies on the appeal of the charismatic leader and the vague identification of its
target groups (“common people”).

Other system-wide institutional developments have an ambiguous effect on the
development of cleavages. Party system fragmentation is a case in point. Fragmented party systems allow for the expression of group identities and thereby
support cleavage politics. At the same time fragmented systems tend to be
accompanied by a higher degree of volatility and instability. Here it makes sense to
differentiate *fragmented party systems* from *party system fragmentation* (that is, the
growing number of parties). The former is rather positively related to cleavage
politics, the latter negatively.

*Promiscuous relations* across party lines also undercuts the emergence of cleavage-
like oppositions since it obscures up clear friend-foe distinctions. But, if the identity
of the groups behind the party is already well consolidated, they may perceive the
relations among parties as “foreign relations,” that has little bearing on a group’s
self-image or degree of representation.

*Participation levels* have an equally open-ended relationship to cleavage. By default
stakes are higher in cleavage-ridden countries and that should drive participation up,
but if the tensions between cleavages are dealt through consociational devices,
elections may lose their political relevance. When high participation occurs in such
cases it is often is due to the symbolic importance of election, the reassertion of
group membership.

According to Bartolini, *territorially-bounded political structures* (centre– periphery
relations) and *corporate group intermediation* may also pose a barrier to partisan
mobilization of cleavages, on the other. In practice, however, the more the parties
are able to dominate these other two channels of representation, more they (and the cleavages) benefit from the existence of corporatism and territorial organization. The same is true about direct democracy, another institutional mechanism that could threaten the relevance of partisanship. In practice the existence of these alternative channels is problematic only to the extent that they offer many veto-points, and therefore may dilute the politics organized around few overarching conflicts.

Moving closer to cleavage-friendly politics, ideological polarization appears as one of the natural ‘friends’ and desideologization as a natural ‘enemy’. But in practice non-ideological competition may very well characterize divided societies. As Lijphart and Sartori argued, in segmented societies elites do not need to outbid each other in ideological terms.

Examining organizational phenomena, the mass party model seems to be an adequate manifestation of cleavage politics. But note that cleavage parties have often had moderate number of members. In some divided societies like Belgium and Austria, party organization was the dominant form of integration and isolation, but in others, like The Netherlands, parties have never had large membership.

Figure 1. takes these observations into account and presents a conceptual map of comparative politics from the perspective of cleavage politics.
Cleavage Typologies

Those who give a structuralist definition to cleavage, typically have in mind ascriptive, census-like social differences: ethnicity, class, religion and region. The ‘classical’ Lipset and Rokkan conflicts pertain to the core features of societies, implying that cleavages must reflect ‘fundamental oppositions’ (Flora 1999: 7), or ‘elementary building blocks’ (Mair 2006: 374) of modern democratic development. Bartolini (2004: 3), on the other hand, explicitly emphasizes the width of theoretical possibilities when he refers to “lineage, property, class, education, credentials, power, status” as potential elements of the socio-structural side of cleavages.

Although the literature emphasizes de-freezing, many scholars agree that the cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan (center-periphery, church-state, urban-rural, owner-worker) are still the most important. There have also been attempts to broaden the catalogue to include, among others, post-materialist values based on generation and education (Inglehart 1977), regime support, foreign policy (Lijphart 1984) economic sector (Kitschelt 1994, Kriesi 1998), public vs. private sector (Dunleavy 1979), gender (Brooks 2006), but with the possible exception of postmaterialism, none of these have become as widely accepted as the classical gang of four. The catalogue of cleavages seems to have frozen better than the cleavages themselves.

There is also consensus concerning the time frame of the main cleavages. The center-periphery and church-state are rooted in pre-industrial era, the class and urban-rural conflicts in the industrial period, and the post-materialist cleavage in the post-industrial age (Inglehart 1990, Flanagan 1987). In case of Eastern Europe some authors (e.g. Evans and Whitefield 2000) similarly distinguish between cleavages rooted in pre-communist, communist, and post-communist eras.

But if one probes more deeply into the literature on the character of the particular cleavages, considerable confusion can be found behind this seemingly widespread consensus.

The Lipset and Rokkan categories have become metaphors, evocative but ambiguous. The “urban-rural” cleavage is typically understood nowadays to represent any of a variety of kinds of geographic differences. The “owner-worker” cleavage tends to refer to differences in socio-economic status, the “center-periphery” cleavage stands for either cultural (particularly ethnic) or regional differences, while the “church-state” cleavage covers many differences in cultural values and religiosity (Deegan-Krause, 2007).

The uncertainty concerning the content of these cleavages stems from changes in social reality, but also from the fact that all cleavages can be understood at more concrete or more abstract levels. Even the original Lipset and Rokkan text suggested that the center-periphery and the church-state cleavages could be conceived not only

5 Who are not necessarily structural determinists themselves.
as conflicts between specific ethnic and religious groups, but also as instances of the tension between universalism and particularism, involving standardization, centralization and collective rights. Urban-rural conflict was not only about such mundane issues as tariffs, but also about the maintenance of acquired status versus the recognition of achievement.

Given that cleavage-lines have a number of social, organizational and attitudinal characteristics and more or less abstracts levels, it is very difficult to say when a cleavage absorbed new elements, when it transformed and when it was replaced by another cleavage. For example it is often noted that in Norway present divisions surrounding concerning European integration resemble the center-periphery divide that existed at the beginning of the 20th century. But does this indicate the survival of an old cleavage or the development of a new one? In other instances, how are observers to assess parties that change their target-group without changing their official identity? Parties that were established as representatives of peasantry may become conservative parties, while socialist parties may turn into the representatives of the urban population, etc.

In some instances the shift from one format to another is dramatic. Knutsen (1988) argued, for example, that “the Left-Right dimension has altered from a structural class or status cleavage to an independent ideological cleavage” (349). According to Kriesi et al (2006) the meaning of the traditional class cleavage transformed into a social justice cleavage. But next to these major transformations, one can witness also an oscillation of identity on a daily basis, since it is a matter of interpretation whether the emphasis is placed on the structural (particularistic) elements or on the attitudinal (universalistic) components.

On way to think about cleavages that share fundamental similarities and can easily transform into each other is to appropriate the “family” metaphor. Agriculture versus manufacturing, village versus city, peasant versus urban, ascription versus achievement, for example, might thus be construed to constitute a single “cleavage family.” By treating these dimensions as distinct members of a common family—rather than lumping them together into a single category—it is possible to pay closer attention both to the subtle differences and to the process of transformation by which one becomes the other.

The cleavage family tends to have more attitudinal and more structural elements. Bartolini and Mair are probably right in claiming that divisive conflicts tend to have some elements of both, but by distinguishing formats of cleavages that emphasize the dominance of one over the other one obtains a tool that help understanding the dynamics of cleavage politics better. Lets demonstrate this point with the cleavage family that comprises ethnic, nationalist and center-periphery conflicts. If the nationalists within a majority community win the debate concerning the importance of ethnic identity, the result is the emergence of a cleavage between ethnic groups. That is, a fundamentally structural conflict. If the debate, however, goes unresolved, the result may be the creation of a nationalist cleavage within the ethnic groups about the relationship with the other group. Since this occurs within an ethnic group and the sides may lack other structural correlates, it is possible that this cleavage remains at the “value” level.
Conceptualizing these conflicts in terms of “center versus periphery” means to work at a higher level of abstraction. The link between this and the more concrete levels is far from straightforward. Given the multilevel nature of politics, “center” and “periphery” are not fixed categories, even for a particular group in a particular place. Groups that are peripheral in one contexts may be agents of centers at higher levels. Ethnic minorities dominating certain regions may be opposed of members of the national majority (who form locally a minority). Cosmopolitans, who often represent at national level a minority, can be seen as agents of a world-system. The principal question is which ‘system’ forms the reference point of the political discourse.

CLEAVAGES AND STRUCTURE

Over the past decades scholars have repeatedly questioned the image of close correspondence between political competition and division lines within social structure. Despite steady assault, it still appears that structure matters for cleavages, though not always in the ways that observers initially expected.

The Shifting Relevance of Structural Explanations

Our definition of cleavage does not require the prominent role of social structure, but, without any doubt, most of the principal cleavages have structural underpinnings. Therefore it is important to review the relevance of structural explanations for contemporary politics.

The challenge posed to both micro and macro-mechanisms of cleavage-politics seem to be omnipresent today. The majority of observers see a decline in the role of structure—at least of some structures—in determining political behaviour and consequently they tend to argue for the growing irrelevance of cleavages.

The decline thesis can marshal not only empirical evidence but a plausible narrative as well. According to the modernization-postmodernization frame mass-parties and cleavages are both products of industrial mass societies. Social phenomena like individualization, sectoral change (tertiarization), the rising power of mass media, affluence, cognitive mobilization, secularization, etc, destroy the basis of stable and politically homogeneous groups (Dalton et al. 1984; Kriesi 1993, Franklin et al. 1992, Inglehart 1990). It was also argued that regulated capitalism has solved the most burning problems of mass democracies (van der Eijk et al. 1992), and therefore grossly constrained the scope for cleavage-like oppositions. Most evidently, the micro foundations of cleavage-politics are under strain. Closed, homogeneous environments are increasingly anachronisms. The increased role of courts in settling disputes, the ascendancy of party in public and of cartel party, the growing power of regulatory agencies and regional organizations like European Union), and the spread
of direct democracy institutions (Schmitter 2001, Katz and Mair 1995) appear as further nails in the coffin of cleavage politics.

The main reference-point of the decline thesis is class. Although many scholars argue that class remains as relevant as ever (Evans 1999, Heath and Jowell 1987; Manza et al. 1995, Hout et al 2001, Weakliem 2001, etc.), an arguably larger group sees the power of class weakening (Beer 1982; Nieuwbeerta 1999, Franklin 1992, Dalton 2002, Ingehart 1990, etc.).

A second reference point—religion—also seemed to show clear signs of decline relevance, at least for industrialized nations, and this view was supported by observations on the decline of the salience of organized religion in the Western world (see e.g., Rose and Urwin 1969, Rose 1974, Lijphart 1971, 1979, for the original importance of religion and Franklin et al. 1992 for the decline). The recent rise of religious conflicts around the world and the spectacular success of the Christian Right in the US has shifted the scholars attention back to religion. But religion’s potential as a cleavage is limited by the asymmetry of the contending sides. Most countries are at the moment either too religious or too secular for a powerful religious cleavage (Glaeser 2004). Whereas increasing secularization in most developed countries means that the religious minority becomes ever more marginal, the high initial levels of religiosity in the United States mean that the process of secularization actually allows secularism to catch up with religion and raise levels of tensions in the medium-term. In this regard it is not necessarily useful to generalize from the US example.

Perhaps the only structural factor that is more visible in Western European party systems today than fifty years ago is ethnicity. In a number of countries (Belgium, Spain, Finland, the United Kingdom and, somewhat more controversially, Italy) ethno-regional parties have a stable presence. They have an even higher larger role in Eastern Europe (in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Hercegovina, and somewhat less importantly in Ukraine, Lithuania, Moldova, Latvia and Croatia). As Mozzafar (2006) noted, when electoral institutions are new, and when uncertainty is pervasive, ascriptive ethnic markers contain important information for political entrepreneurs and can help reducing the costs of mobilization. The same logic may work, as Klingemann and Wattenberg (1992) pointed out, on behalf of the voters: they may rely on the information they have about the candidates’ background when it comes to voting.

Around the world the unfinished process of nation-building provides good ground for deep-running, long lasting conflicts, although under the present conditions of globalization and communication the classical Lipset and Rokkan model of the formation of center-periphery cleavages is unlikely to repeat itself. But note that the Western story is itself not over: Since Western societies are becoming more multicultural, there is a growing possibility for the re-emergence of ethnic cleavages in once relatively ethnically homogeneous societies as soon as the number of

6 Ethnic cleavage posed a serious obstacle to democratization in Yugoslavia, Moldova, Ukraine and, Russia (Sekelj 2001), but in a number of other countries ethnic parties played a constructive role in governments.
nationalized immigrants reaches the threshold necessary for maintaining a party. These observations already indicate that the decline thesis requires a number of caveats. First, there is some evidence indicating that the decline of structural voting in some countries is rather due to certain institutional changes (such as the depolarization of party politics in the US in the 1970s and 1980s), and therefore the changes may be reversible (Elff 2007). Second, since we lack sufficient empirical evidence from the time before the WWII, the possibility that structural voting and ideological competition changes in cycles cannot be excluded. Finally, even if decline was general and robust, structure may remain important. To judge contemporary politics by the exceptional standards of mid 20th Western European politics may not be wise.

There is also the unresolved question of “new” cleavages. Much of the most productive recent work in contemporary cleavage-research has attempted to identify new structures that guide elite and mass political behaviour. At the attitudinal level a relative consensus exists. A strong argument may be made that the so called ‘new politics’ is structured by an increasingly dominant cultural dimension that is alternatively identified as libertarian-authoritarian, postmaterialist-materialist, GALTAN (etc.). Because the socioeconomic left-right dimension also survives, the political space is typically expected to be two dimensional, although whether the dimensions are orthogonal is hotly debated. The libertarian-authoritarian opposition continues some of the topics of earlier divides related to anticlericalism, nationalism, and traditionalism, but embraces many new topics as well, like environmentalism, euthanasia, international equality, European integration, etc. (Dalton 1996, Inglehart 1990, Kitschelt 1994, Kitschelt & McGann 1995, Kriesi et al 2006, etc.).

The new politics is known for its fluid, volatile relationships between social groups, value orientations, and party preferences (Knutsen and Scarb. 497, Franklin 1992, Müller-Rommel 1989). And yet, structural factors repeatedly re-emerge in the explanatory literature. Class (measured differently than earlier), sectoral employment, gender, age and education affect the vote for the left-libertarian and right-authoritarian parties (Muller 1999, Knutsen 2005, Kriesi 1998, Kitschelt and Rehm 2004).

High education, together with transferable skills lead to more ‘progressive’ attitudes (moral permissiveness, environmentalism, anticlericalism, etc.) and support for the left-libertarian parties. Lack of education increases concern about immigration, support for law and order policies and for traditional morality, and should trigger support for authoritarian conservative or radical right wing parties.

Although genders rarely form politically meaningful groups for party politics, ‘new politics’ has a strong gender aspect as well. Women in most Western democracies are more likely than men to support culturally libertarian (and, to a lesser extent, redistributive) policies. This is particularly true of younger women, the elderly

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7 Especially since a number of studies (e.g. Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995) show the impact of the combination of structure and values to remain rather stable.
continue to be on the conservative side (Iversen and Rosenbluth 2003).

Different working environments are supposed to engender different attitudes towards hierarchy and autonomy. The mechanism that transmits the impact of work-conditions on vote is equally well elaborated in the literature. In those professions that deal with objects, or routine, clearly defined tasks, no room is left for libertarian attitudes. (Kitschelt and McGann 1995, Werfhorst and Graaf 2004). Socio-cultural professionals are supposed to develop different orientation from managers and technical professionals because one is focused on communication, the other on problem solving. The market position and sectoral location (private or public, exposed or sheltered, service or industry) of the occupational groups often reinforces these tendencies (Kitschelt 1994). Public sector employees who deal with welfare clientele tend to respond more positively to the programs emphasizing solidarity (Knutsen 1995)

Some observers do not go further than noting these structural correlates of new politics, but others argue that there is a genuine realignment producing new cleavages. Globalization can be thought of as a new juncture, that pits new losers against new winners. The ‘entrepreneurs and qualified employees in sectors open to international competition and cosmopolitan citizens’ become opposed to ‘entrepreneurs and qualified employees in traditionally protected sectors, all unqualified employees and citizens who strongly identify themselves with their national community’ (Kriesi at al 2006).

To conclude, contemporary politics in developed nations continues to have the imprint of social structure. One can think of the new politics cleavage as one that expresses educational, occupational, and sectoral conflicts, but lays the stress on its attitudinal elements instead the structural ones. Or alternatively, one can regard it as an attitudinal cleavage that happens to have moderately strong structural correlates. Finally, one may judge that it falls short of a proper cleavage, because open conflict between self-aware social groups plays a marginal role in it. The latter possibility raises the issue of the defining role of ‘groupness’ in cleavage politics, a subject that is discussed in the next chapter.

CLEAVAGES AND GROUPS

There can be no doubt that if all citizens who belong to a particular, socially isolated group vote for the party that claims to represent that group, and nobody else does, then we are dealing with a cleavage-party. (Or, if the group is small, a niche-party.). If one would transform the image above into a definition, that definition would rest on three pillars: social closure, cleavage specific discourse on behalf of the party, and one-to-one relationship between the party and the group. We see the merits of such a definition, but argue against treating any of these elements as necessary conditions. Below we will discuss phenomena that lack one or more of these elements, trying to demonstrate that even if they fall short of the requirements of a maximalist definition, they are related to the cleavage-problematique.
Groups without “Closure”

In the most abstract sense of the word people on the two sides of the cleavage form groups (see e.g. Rae and Taylor 1970, Franklin et al 1992). By default, they share a few social, attitudinal or behavioral characteristics. But do they need to form self-contained, closed communities?

At the level of definition many scholars argue for an affirmative answer, relying on concepts such as boundary and closure. In Rokkan’s and Bartolini’s work ‘boundary’ demarcates territorial or membership groups. Boundaries are locking-in mechanisms that increase the costs of exit and set incentives to in resources and actors (Bartolini 2005:13). Interestingly, both Bartolini and Rokkan apply the concept primarily to territorial, polity-like units, although they mention that this concept is relevant for non-territorial political units, too.

The role of elites in creating arenas for group-interactions is acknowledged by Bartolini, but he still presupposes the existence of a high level prior closure: “It is only in conditions of strong social boundaries and the consequent no-exit options of a given social group, that the political structuring of that group can take place.” (Bartolini 2005: 41)

Bartolini and Mair (1990) employ the related concept of “closure.” According to the authors, the strength of cleavage is shown by the degree of social closure, which corresponds to the lack of mobility across its borders. Group identity and organizational encapsulation combined create barriers to mobility. “The cleavages themselves were social relationships that implied a level of external closure that was progressively reinforced by their behavioural and organizational dimension” (Bartolini and Mair 1990: 99). This emphasis on community relationships squares well with the findings of early researchers of electoral behavior. They found that the principal micro-level mechanism behind long term partisan attachments is the continuous interaction with a politically homogeneous environment (Berelson et al 1954). Socialization in such an environment produces not only predictable and coherent electoral behaviour but also exclusive and salient political identities.

There is a tension, however, between emphasizing the role of politics in creating boundaries (Bartolini and Mair’s position, following Sartori) and the insistence on prior closure. Moreover, the focus on closure in defining cleavages is problematic in itself. The advantage of such a definition is that sets ‘cleavages’ apart from other conflicts. It even draws a sharp division between cleavages and most conflicts related to sociocultural differences, since most of the later cannot produce actual

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8 As Deegan-Krause (2007) put it: “Research on cleavage most often entails the search for self-conscious demographic groups sharing a common mindset and distinct political organization.”

9 Boundaries can filter emotional and affective relations, social rights, cultural messages, economic transactions, legal jurisdiction, credentials, lineage, property, etc., (Bartolini 2005: 16).

10 At the macro level homogeneous environments are produced by the coincidence of cleavage lines (Simmel 1955).

But one may judge the definition to be unnecessarily strict, at least if closure is taken literally. Closed social groups dominate democratic politics only in highly specific circumstances. Certain segmented societies around the world, including a few Western European countries between 1920’s and 1970’s, can be analyzed in this framework, but further applications become difficult. Even at the height of cleavage politics, in the middle of twentieth century, a cleavage with moderate amount of closure, class (and not ethnicity or religion), was the principal organizing force. If one retains the term ‘cleavage’ only for exceptional situations one is left without a proper term for enduring conflicts that structure most modern societies.

In fact the scholars who insist on linking the definition of cleavages to closed groups rarely can specify the minimal level of ‘groupness’ that is required. This is so partly because of measurement problems. Concepts, like identities, self-awareness tend to be “thick” and difficult to operationalize such concepts for many countries is very difficult. It is symptomatic that Bartolini and Mair must work with cultural fragmentation, trade union membership and aggregate electoral results when applying their sophisticated concept to reality.

Even worse, empirical research often ends up measuring dichotomous concepts with continuous proxies. For example, for the center-periphery cleavage distance between residence and the capital city, for the religious cleavage church attendance, and for the urban-rural cleavage the dominance of agriculture in the voters’ area is used (McAllister and White 2007). In these cases groups appear in the definitions, but not in the actual calculations. Clearly, the task is to bring abstract definitions and mundane operationalizations closer to each other. This, in our view, implies both choosing more adequate proxies than in the example above, but also deemphasizing social closure.

By removing social closure as the *conditio sine qua non* of cleavages one does not deny the relevance of the concept itself. Indeed, more inward-looking groups become, more justified it is to label their conflict with the word cleavage. More fluid the relations within and between the sides of a cleavage are, less helpful the geological metaphor becomes. But while scholars of cleavages must on one hand avoid conceptual stretching (that is, applying ‘cleavage’ to any conflict or dimension) they must on the other hand avoid the naïve reification of groups. Identities are fluid and contingent by nature, and all communities are, to some extent, ‘imagined’. It is clearly attractive to think that groups either exist or not (otherwise there is the danger that one discovers ‘groupness’ everywhere), but in fact collective identities and solidarities always depend on current discourses (Brubaker). Therefore expecting political camps to be divided like solid objects is simply implausible.

**Hidden Groups**

According to the Bartolini and Mair (1990) understanding, social structure must be a reference category for the political actors. Przeworski and Sprague (1986)
demonstrate that abandoning class as a reference category leads to a decline in class voting. It is obviously more difficult to maintain groups solidarity if the debates are not about the conflict between specific groups (e.g., the rich and the poor) but between general values (e.g. ‘freedom’ and ‘solidarity’), or government performance. Yet, as noted above, in the framework of post-industrial politics, structural groups often disappear as such reference categories. Political discourse tends to focus on consensual goals and government policies are typically presented as derived from these goals. As competition forces parties to focus on valence issues and on the preferences of the median voter, so does the chance for a group-based rhetoric decline. In the agency-centered accounts of cleavages a group is expected to cease to exist as a politically meaningful category if the politicians do not talk about it, and group-voting should fall apart.

But this contention may be an exaggeration. In fact there can exist a long-surviving discrepancy between the language of politics and the social profile of the party electorates. Groups may have a particular perception of parties even without the support of a group-specific political language.

Group-voting can occur even in the absence of politically salient group identities. This is the case, for example, when citizens support politicians with similar socio-cultural background simply because this is the most easily accessible information they possess. In this case there is no particular need for the elites to present themselves as champions of the groups.

The phenomenon above may be more appropriately labeled as structural voting, and not as cleavage voting. But the term cleavage voting could already apply to cases when social taboos hinder the public involvement of a group in party politics, but the group supports one of the parties because government policies have a discernable effect on the status of the group. Think of

1. Taboo groups, that is minorities that face strong social pressures to remain hidden. In many countries, for example, nearly the entire homosexual population may align itself with a particular party—even if gays or issues of concern to gays are never mentioned by that party—because rival parties pose a threat.

2. Issue taboos related to groups. Because of an individualist conceptualization of citizenship and/or because of the negative image of ethnicity-based politics, citizens in Switzerland, Ukraine or Moldova may find more effective to argue about the foreign policy orientation of their country without any reference to ethnicity or language, even if their preferences on the issue are determined exactly by these factors. In these cases people are conscious of their group membership, but the rules of the political game filter out references to the group.

3. Ideological self image. In case of new politics conflicts, as demonstrated above, social background engenders values that are not perceived by the involved as reflections of their group interests. Observers may find specific groups behind the agenda of ‘new politics’, but the name of these groups rarely appears in the discourse of the respective parties. The role of taboos in, for example, conceptualizing the politics of left-libertarians as representing the interests of the educated must be considerable.
The discrepancy between discourse and character of support may also reflect rival interpretations about the raison d ’être of the party. The party itself may prefer to present itself as the champion of universal causes, while its opponents may want to pin it down to specific (typically small and not very attractive) groups. In this case the criticism leveled against the party by opponents may, ironically, consolidate the support of a core electorate. Accusations, for example, that a conservative party is “clerical,” may actually gain that party the support of the religiously observant, even if the party discourse never mentions denominational issues. The public images about the groups represented by parties structure the identity of voters: party identification means not so much identification with the party as an organization, but with the groups that stand behind the party according to public stereotypes (Campbell et al 1960). The discourse of political debates can help to recreate group appeals abandoned by parties themselves, with cues to the group support of a party provided not so much by the party itself as by its opponents.

At a more general level one may observe that cues provided by the wider cultural-political environment may be instrumental in stabilizing group-party relationships. Citizens learn about the programmatic character of parties by witnessing the campaign endorsement of group-representatives, like religious organizations or trade unions (Brady and Sniderman 1985). This is particularly true in era of fragmented, non-membership organizations.

In the above listed cases it is difficult to build a closure around the groups from above, exactly because group is not a reference category. Therefore we deal here with conflicts that are different from the ideal typical cleavages. But fundamental similarity—political behavior constrained by group-membership—cannot be overlooked. Party-group relations may survive in spite of the discrepancy between language and behavior.

**Groups in Coalition**

According to Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995), cleavage politics entails that members of an identifiable social group adhere to the values associated with that group and vote for a party that is identified with that group. Many empirical operationalizations of cleavages measure the homogeneity of the parties’ electorates. The expectation is for a one-to-one correspondence between working class and socialist parties, religious people and Christian parties, etc.

There are at least two instances when this one-to-one relationship between parties and groups does not occur, and yet, we feel, one can still talk of cleavage politics. The first situation is when the politically most meaningful unit is not the individual, but some aggregate-level unit. Think of a country where neighbourhoods are clearly divided into working class and middle class type. Both types may contain up to 40% individuals who, in terms of their individual attributes, do not fit their immediate environment. And yet, because of the power of the context they live in, their political behaviour follows the majority of their neighbourhood. In such a situation a
class-oriented party can hardly have another aim than to mobilize as many ‘right-type’ neighbourhoods as possible. But even if it succeeds to hundred percent, it will have an electorate that is, at the individual level, mixed. We would still contend that the respective party followed a cleavage-strategy.

The other case concerns the coalitions of groups that may exist within an electorate: the mosaic cleavage parties (Enyedi 2005). Groups that are too small for sustaining their own party may join forces within a larger unit. If the groups maintain their organizational articulation within and outside of the party, then the result is group-based politics, even if the parties appear in electoral statistics as if they pursued a catch all strategy.

Political history knows many examples of stable coalitions of groups with different social character. Across Europe one tended to find worker and bourgeois wings in most Christian democratic parties and even in some liberal parties. Belgian parties used to be coalitions between French and Dutch-speakers for decades. In the pre-WWII Romania the Peasant party was an alliance between the agrarian population and the ethnic Romanians living in Transylvania.

Most often the disproportionate electoral systems are to be ‘blamed’ for the development of mosaic cleavage parties. The existence of alternative channels of representation may also facilitate cross-group alliances in party politics, since then the stakes of party politics are smaller and groups differences can be expressed otherwise. There is also more possibility to keep various groups under a single umbrella when the state structure is fragmented. Both in United States (Ware 2006) and in India (Chhibber 1999) different groups composed the coalition in different states (provinces) and even in different cities. Post-colonial situation is also favourable to wide coalitions managed within dominant parties. In all these cases, because of reasons related to the threshold of power, groups (subcultures) are articulated not by parties but by intra-party units.

Groups can be kept together either due to the mutually beneficial distribution of resources or through a common ideological platform. The first may be a more fragile strategy, but experience shows that it can work for decades. Obviously its success depends on the presence of ample distributable resources. This is the case if the party has access to state resources, most typically in the form of a governing (or otherwise dominant) party. In the second case the cooperation of various groups is facilitated by the existence of a common ideological platform. The latter may be better able to glue the different groups together, eventually even absorbing them into an overarching collective identity. This is what party leaders typically ambition since, as Green et al. (2002: 203) argue, “The long-term success of party hinges on its ability to build a coalition of groups and to cement this coalition by creating partisan attachments that go beyond group attachments”.

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11 The observations above also mean that cleavages may be at work in cases when according to electoral statistics the overall correlation between socio-structural factors and party choice is low.
CLEAVAGES AND AGENTS

There has been recently a shift in the cleavage literature towards more focus on agency and elites. This happened for a number of reasons. Party politics is increasingly perceived to have become autonomous from the people (Katz and Mair 1995). Post-communist transition has been elite dominated and produced democracies that continue to be rather elitist (Mair 1997). Constructivism and political anthropology changed the way social scientists think of ethnicity, race or class. Finally, while bottom-up approaches proved to be good for pointing at the cleavages that are least likely to emerge, they were less successful in identifying the ones that actual emerged out of the several likely possibilities (Deegan-Krause 2007).

Understanding Elites’ Roles

The actions of politicians can be classified into two groups: those that have the aim of capturing the votes necessary for a good performance at the next election and those who go ‘beyond that.’ The actions that belong to the second group constitute the empirical material that agency-oriented cleavage analysis must focus on. These actions may themselves take several forms.

One set of strategies involves the intentional deepening of social identities and the establishment of group-specific organizations. These actions are unlikely to lead to comprehensive social closure under the present social and technological conditions, but they do point in that direction. Even if the development of closed groups is unlikely, it makes sense to differentiate elite actions that are aimed at such groups from those that are not.12

A second set of strategies involves the reframing of competition from one dimension to a different one that (presumably) benefits those who undertake the shift. The parties’ ability to shape preferences, at least in terms of manipulating the saliency of issues, is recognised by at least some rational choice approaches (Riker 1986, Budge 1983). Salience-centered research on media manipulation has also provided some empirical support for these arguments (Cohen 1963, McCombs and Shaw 1972, Zaller 1992, Layman & Carsey 2002). This phenomenon of elite-led shift is also in line with the historical approach in so far as parties and their policy proposals can create “critical junctures” (Colomer and Puglisi 2005: 518).

The two structures are related to the extent that the attempt to shift issue dimensions, while often startlingly effective, may lack endurance unless it is also has some effect.

12 The relevance of elite actions does not mean that political developments follow designed plans. Kalyvas demonstrated that the development of the clerical cleavage and the particization of this cleavage was a result of a number of unintended elite actions (Kalvyas 1994).
on voters’ self-identity. Actors have a role in cleavage creation insofar as they shape preferences, define the principal political alternatives and build the organizational framework for political camps. The cleavage-building task of elites is, somewhat paradoxically, to create structures that constrain further generation of actors.

In light of these options, it seems that elites have at least four options which can be arrayed in a two dimensional matrix:

Table 1. Potential elite options on issue and identity questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Acceptance: Working within existing groupings</th>
<th>Reframing: Persuading citizens of the importance of alternative groupings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Issue Acceptance: Persuade voters that leader represents a desired position on an existing issue divide. (Elites play on the political field presented to them and simply hope to outperform rivals)</td>
<td>Issue Reframing: Persuade voters that a new political divide is most important and that leader represents a desired position (Elites attempt to shape playing field but lack structural anchors for long-term stability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Cleavage Acceptance: Persuade voters that leader share/represent voters’ key identity trait. (Elites play on structural ground presented to them and hope that the structural group—or coalition of groups—proves sufficiently large).</td>
<td>Cleavage Reframing: Persuade voters that an alternative identity trait is more important and that leader shares that trait. (Elites attempt to shape structural ground; success yields long-term support but impact but actually constrains future agency by creating new, enduring cleavage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To some degree this schema privileges the perspective of agency if only to the extent that it suggests that elites must make choices about whether to attempt the process of reframing or not.

Elite-led efforts to shape identity face the most significant obstacles but such efforts have offer two distinct benefits that may in other circumstances prove contradictory. Since Hirschman (1970) it is customary to think of politics in terms of voice and exit. The establishment and encouragement of cleavage-specific organizations and a distinctive self-awareness is on one hand a form of exit. It is a search for an autonomous sphere where there are different players and rulers than in the main system. At the same time, every new addition to this sphere strengthens the voice of the party that represents the cleavage. Thus whereas in ordinary politics a party may appeal to voice for its supporters and encourage exit for its opponents, in this case the party encourages its own voters toward exit (escape from the “others” into organizational encapsulation) and thereby to strengthen the power potentially also toward voice. This may even be the way towards taking over the hostile system.
Efforts of religious conservatives in the US to create a “Moral Majority” (i.e. an exit group of those with similar values that is, at the same time, a successful electoral coalition) offer a case in point.

Cleavage reframing may occur not only through exhortation but through the application of certain policy choices (Lazarsfeld 1968, Berelson 1954, Campbell et al. 1960, Elff 2005). Such possibilities are particularly apparent in time of large scale changes. The United States’ New Deal offers one of the most cited instances of government policy that has shaped group politics. Privatization choices in Central and Eastern Europe may prove with a hindsight to have offered another since parties could reward entire social groups, sectors and occupational groups through specific privatization principles and practices.

Next to discourse and policy, organisation is the most important way of manipulating cleavage structures. In Bartolini and Mair (1990: 240) study organisational density accounted for more than twice of the variation in bloc volatility than cultural fragmentation, and in the Scandinavian case it proved to be the only factor that mattered. In case the physical space already constraints interactions (e.g. ethnoregional cleavages, or mobilization of workers based on purely working-class districts or factories) or if the politicians can rely on the already existing network of cultural, religious, etc. associations, there is less need for extra organization-building. Ware (2006) notes that in certain periods US parties functioned as representatives of predefined sectors of society, as political arms of ethnic, religious and sectional cultures, is spite of the absence of the institution of formal party membership. In the cases of mosaic cleavage parties the crucial task of the elite is to maintain the coalition of groups. This again depends as much on organizational devices (e.g. consociationalism within the groups in the party) as on bridging the differences in ideological terms.

Researching Elites

The elitist perspective requires a specific research agenda whose core activities have not attracted sufficient study or sufficient coordination among the various subdisciplines that are entailed therein. Although the simultaneous analysis of institutional constrains and of the perceptions and interests of actors may help in predicting which conflicts develop into cleavages, it is limited how much agency-oriented understanding of cleavages can promise in terms of prediction. And to the extent that scholars working within this framework focus on short term-elite debates they broaden the cleavage problematique beyond its original (and useful) limits regarding “enduring conflict.” Therefore in this case there is most need for a disciplined research agenda.

The brief catalogue of the repertoire of elite actions above serves also the purpose of laying the foundation for such an agenda. To summarize, the focus of such analyses should be on how parties and leaders communicate with voters, but communication should be understood in the widest possible sense: programs of parties and governments (manifestos), campaign messages, statements made in the
media, chosen symbols, even coalition preferences. Such communication and discourse analysis is rarely done systematically and comprehensively and it is also rarely linked to the cleavage-literature.

The agents that may play a role in forming cleavages definitely include parties but the circle of usual suspects should also go beyond these.\textsuperscript{13} Most importantly, the explanation of political competition should begin with the calculations of political actors, and not with underlying social structures (Sartori 1969, Zuckerman 1975). The unit of analysis must be the process of cleavage-formation. The researcher must demonstrate that at the beginning of the process it was in the power of particular actors which identities are constructed, politicized and particized and what coalition of groups have been created. But it must be also able to show that at the end of the process it was not any more in the power of actors to redraw the lines of opposition. A new generation of actors may add new elements and structures to the conflict, but if the cleavage is solid they should not be able to undo previous decisions.

Despite its weaknesses in prediction and an inclination toward conceptual stretching, agency-centered approaches nevertheless have much to offer. In particular, they are well suited for the analysis of the original development of cleavages. Since Lapalombara and Weiner (1966) and Lipset and Rokan (1967) it is customary in comparative politics to think of social development in terms of critical phases (‘junctures’) that are accompanied by major crises. Following these junctures different alternatives are proposed as solutions and the society is mobilized in the support of one or the other alternative. The behavior of the consecutive generations reflects the dilemmas of the crisis period, although, as the alignment-dealignment-realignment theory emphasizes, with gradually fading enthusiasm. Political actors have a continuous role in the maintenance of cleavages, but their most spectacular function is to define the alternatives, and henceforth the cleavages, following the ‘critical events’.

\section*{CONCLUSIONS}

It sometimes happens that by identifying new complexities, scholars find their way to new and broader frameworks that help to reconcile apparent contradictions. Lipset and Rokkan achieved something akin to that goal in 1967, but in subsequent years the vast (and increasing) production of scholarship on the topic has made it difficult to again reach the same level of clarity. Scholars of cleavage have learned a lot about the parameters of political support (in some cases strikingly precise) in advanced industrialized countries, but they lack an overarching framework. The

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} It is interesting that while most empirical studies on cleavages look at vote, many of the definitions do not include a reference to party. The apparent shift of focus between definitions and empirical studies is well demonstrated by Whitefield (2002). He stipulates that “Political cleavages are conceived of here as strongly structured and persistent lines of salient social and ideological division among politically important actors.” But then immediately goes on saying “Political cleavages are important for political scientists because of their role in providing bases of support for parties…”
\end{footnotesize}
addition of data from new cases in Latin America and Eastern Europe (and, increasingly, from Africa and Asia) has complicated matters even further. In addition to the excellent empirical work made possible by ever newer and more comprehensive data sets, it is occasionally useful to step back and re-examine the conceptual basis and terminology used in the study of cleavages, to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and to find those areas that remain most in need of further attention. Students of cleavage need to give even more serious though to how various explanatory approaches relate to one another, to how cleavages fit in the broader realm of political phenomena, and to the classificatory schemes they use to relate their findings. They need, in particular, to take a closer look at the dynamics of groups qua groups and to the specific opportunities for leaders to create—and not simply to exploit—the enduring conflicts that are cleavages.
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