

expectations. The tendency, particularly in the US, to 'oversell' detente is closely related to the latter issue. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the importance of a comprehensive strategy for detente. Detente cannot be built on agreement in isolated issue-areas; it has to be broadly based.

Thus, by offering a convincing analysis of the rise and fall of detente in the 1970s, Bowker and Williams also manage to say something essential about the general conditions for controlling the fundamentally antagonistic relationship between the superpowers. The problem is, however, that the notion of detente still remains a highly ambiguous one. From one point of view it feels refreshing to read a study such as the present one, which focuses on the empirical matter itself instead of getting mired in fruitless conceptual discussions. Still, it may be objected that the authors, on the whole, fail to address a whole set of important theoretical issues, which all revolve around one crucial question: what *is* detente in a general sense? Is detente a type of relationship which is qualitatively different from other forms of interaction between international adversaries? Can we define detente in other and more general terms than the specific features which characterized the US-Soviet relationship for a few years in the 1970s?

In the first chapter of the book Bowker and Williams devote a mere page to conceptual problems. Here the authors note that detente, apart from signifying a particular historical period, can be understood as a process, a condition or a set of policies. Instead of discussing these distinctions further, Bowker and Williams assert that all usages of the term 'detente' have one feature in common; they describe a relationship between adversaries. It is also possible to discern a minimum and a maximum concept of detente where the minimum alternative simply implies a reduction of tension, and the maximum conception 'adds more positive attempts at cooperation' such as the establishment of codes of conduct (p. 7). As pointed out by the authors, this distinction between a minimum and a maximum conception facilitates the comparison of Soviet and US ideas of detente, but it does not define the concept itself in other than rather vague terms.

To conclude, Bowker and Williams's study provides a succinct and persuasive analysis of why detente in the 1970s came to be and why it went wrong. It seems, however, that some work remains to be done at the theoretical level if detente is to be conceived as something more than a label assigned to superpower relations in this specific period, or just a rhetorical formula.

*Per Jansson, Lund University*

Steven B. Wolinetz: *Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

Books dealing with political parties from the standpoint of a party system perspective are without exception about *change* and *durability*. This is the classical focus of the party system problem, particularly with regard to the West European countries. There are *two* basic questions involved here: one is how to describe whether a party system is characterized by continuity or transformation, the other is how to account for a certain level of stability or instability in terms of a set of explanatory factors. This volume, edited by Wolinetz, is no exception to this standard perspective, although it is different in that it also covers North America.

The first step in the typical party system research programme is to classify party systems longitudinally, preferably by means of a number of case studies of the major European democracies. The second step is to model the relation between

expectations. The tendency, particularly in the US, to 'oversell' detente is closely related to the latter issue. Furthermore, the authors emphasize the importance of a comprehensive strategy for detente. Detente cannot be built on agreement in isolated issue-areas; it has to be broadly based.

Thus, by offering a convincing analysis of the rise and fall of detente in the 1970s, Bowker and Williams also manage to say something essential about the general conditions for controlling the fundamentally antagonistic relationship between the superpowers. The problem is, however, that the notion of detente still remains a highly ambiguous one. From one point of view it feels refreshing to read a study such as the present one, which focuses on the empirical matter itself instead of getting mired in fruitless conceptual discussions. Still, it may be objected that the authors, on the whole, fail to address a whole set of important theoretical issues, which all revolve around one crucial question: what *is* detente in a general sense? Is detente a type of relationship which is qualitatively different from other forms of interaction between international adversaries? Can we define detente in other and more general terms than the specific features which characterized the US-Soviet relationship for a few years in the 1970s?

In the first chapter of the book Bowker and Williams devote a mere page to conceptual problems. Here the authors note that detente, apart from signifying a particular historical period, can be understood as a process, a condition or a set of policies. Instead of discussing these distinctions further, Bowker and Williams assert that all usages of the term 'detente' have one feature in common; they describe a relationship between adversaries. It is also possible to discern a minimum and a maximum concept of detente where the minimum alternative simply implies a reduction of tension, and the maximum conception 'adds more positive attempts at cooperation' such as the establishment of codes of conduct (p. 7). As pointed out by the authors, this distinction between a minimum and a maximum conception facilitates the comparison of Soviet and US ideas of detente, but it does not define the concept itself in other than rather vague terms.

To conclude, Bowker and Williams's study provides a succinct and persuasive analysis of why detente in the 1970s came to be and why it went wrong. It seems, however, that some work remains to be done at the theoretical level if detente is to be conceived as something more than a label assigned to superpower relations in this specific period, or just a rhetorical formula.

*Per Jansson, Lund University*

Steven B. Wolinetz: *Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

Books dealing with political parties from the standpoint of a party system perspective are without exception about *change* and *durability*. This is the classical focus of the party system problem, particularly with regard to the West European countries. There are *two* basic questions involved here: one is how to describe whether a party system is characterized by continuity or transformation, the other is how to account for a certain level of stability or instability in terms of a set of explanatory factors. This volume, edited by Wolinetz, is no exception to this standard perspective, although it is different in that it also covers North America.

The first step in the typical party system research programme is to classify party systems longitudinally, preferably by means of a number of case studies of the major European democracies. The second step is to model the relation between

independent variables and the dependent variable measuring the extent of party system durability either in terms of an explicit comparative model or on the basis of country specific observations pertaining to some implicit comparative model. All studies cover the first step and some reach the second step, but few if any handle the comparative analysis of party systems in terms of an explicitly comparative model. Again, the Wolinetz volume is no exception. Why?

The study of differences and similarities in party systems faces two difficult research choices, viz. the listing of party system properties and the identification of a causal perspective on the set of relevant independent variables that account for the variation in the set of standard properties of party systems. Progress has been made with regard to the second methodological problem. The traditional approach consists of the application of a political sociology framework where the party system (PS) is viewed as determined by the structure of social cleavages in the environment (E):

$$(1) PS = f(E).$$

Party systems are either locked into a long-term rigid cleavage structure – Western Europe – or are freely floating above cross-cutting systems of cleavages – the US. The modern approach is to look at party system continuity as conditioned by both forces of persistency or change in the social environment and the adaptive capacities of parties (A):

$$(2) PS = f(E,A).$$

A number of strategies are available for political parties: the mobilization of an electoral niche à la Rokkan, the turn to a Kirchheimer catch-all strategy or the use of the state power structure to create a symbiosis between party and public authority. The probability of success for an adaptive strategy depends not only on the environment of the social structure but also on the choice of strategy by the other remaining parties in the system. Thus, we have four possibilities theoretically:

	Steadfast party strategy	Adaptive party strategy
Changing social structures	Party system change	Party system durability
Stable social structures	Party system continuity	Party system fluctuation

It must be pointed out that party system instability – change or fluctuations – may not result just from rapid social environment transformation. It may also be due to internal party processes which are unrelated to changes in the social cleavage structure. Equally, the likelihood of party system durability is high when there is adaptive party change in an uncertain environment. When the strategies of parties are fixed in relation to broad trends of change in the social structure, then the probability is high that there will be considerable party system instability. This is all theory which needs to be corroborated in empirical quantitative research.

The first basic question about party systems – their fundamental properties – has not as yet been resolved in any definitive way, as we still do not know what to include and what to exclude. More specifically, what is it that remains stable or is

changed when party systems develop over time? Are we to focus on the number of parties, their social ties, the degree of polarization between the parties on the left and the right – or what? It is embarrassing that this crucial question in party system research is always left implicit. As long as this is the case, it will be possible to write stimulating case studies about party system development in a single country, but for the comparative analysis of the mechanisms of party system change this is a frustrating predicament. Logically, the first fundamental problem in party system research has to be answered before one proceeds to the second one about the proper causal approach.

In any case, each of the eleven case studies in the Wolinetz volume is well written, containing lots of empirical information – old and new – as well as theoretical insights. The post-World War II period up to 1987 is covered. Although the emphasis is on description in these chapters, there is an implicit theoretical framework behind the organization of the data. What unites the case studies is the focus on the implications of the party system for the holding and exercise of *political power*. Perhaps this is the implicit knot in all reflexions on party system stability?

The French system is different as this has developed from instability to coherence. The Italian system is of the symbiotic kind, where the monopoly on state power promotes party systems stability. In the West German system the two large parties have adapted successfully to both extensive environmental changes and earlier strong polarized pluralism by using a catch-all strategy. The Austrian party system exemplifies that two large parties may adapt simply by trying to remain the two major parties in the centre either by the polls or by entering a grand coalition. Not all party systems adapt successfully, as the Belgian system exemplifies. It is not the case that the major Belgian parties did not try to adapt; it is only that they employed a strategy just as petrifying as the implications of the changing cleavage structure. Party system stability may not be the result of party convergence or party collaboration, as the Dutch case shows, where party system continuity is fostered by the fierce competition between the right and the left. The Scandinavian party systems display the possibility of a movement from stability to instability without any basic changes taking place in the party systems, whereas the Irish system exemplifies that party system change and instability may stem just as much from internal as from external party processes. Similarly, the Canadian and American party systems display how party system change may be more a matter of individual party transformation than any systemic alterations.

*Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies* is a most welcome source book on party politics in a power perspective during the last fifteen years. But where does all of this information on single systems leave us comparatively?

There is the risk with edited volumes that the case studies may turn out stronger than the comparative findings often stated in a small concluding chapter. The Wolinetz volume is no exception to this general remark and here we have the only place for a modest criticism of the volume. However, the fault is not with Wolinetz, whose general comparative summary is interesting but hardly innovative. Lacking is a set of theoretical concepts and models with which the reader can build hypotheses about the nature and causes of party system continuity. In order to proceed one step forward it could prove fertile to introduce comparative indices that measure explicitly how much party system change and instability there is. This would require that one solves the basic problem of which party system properties are relevant and how they are to be measured.

*Jan-Erik Lane, Lund University*