

# The Party Paradox

Emanuel V. Towfigh | ICON•S 2022 | Wrocław, 3 – 6 July 2022

Panel »**The Future of Political Parties in Constitutional Democracies**«

# Crisis



Costa Concordia, 14 January 2012 / image credit: Filippo Monteforte/AFP, taken from: The Atlantic

# Alienation

acceptance of the political  
system is declining

# Prevailing Guiding Principle

democracy as a mechanism  
of interest aggregation  
through competition





political parties are a  
**path-dependent result**  
of legal and historical  
circumstances

**(“rational response”)**

# The Engine Analogy



TOTAL



(Ford Mustang GT 5.0 engine)

“Party is **organized  
opinion.**”

*(Disraeli)*

parties are the “makers of democratic government,” and  
“modern democracy is **unthinkable save in terms of the parties**”

*(Schattschneider)*

parties are “**absolutely indispensable and vital**  
for the functioning of the democratic order of the polity”

*(German Federal Constitutional Court)*

“When bad men **conspire,**  
the good must **associate.**” *(Burke)*

It is impossible to say »yes« to democracy  
and »no« to parties. *(Thierse)*



# functions of parties



structuring  
the debate



identifying  
leadership



mobilizing  
electorate



deciding  
on policies



controlling  
decisions

founders of factions ought

**“to be detested and hated”**

*(Hume)*

party affiliation is the **“last degradation of a free and moral agent.”**

**“If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.”**

*(Jefferson)*

Si on confiait **au diable** l'organisation de la vie publique,  
il **ne pourrait rien imaginer de plus ingénieux.** *(Weil)*

party **“is the madness of many,  
for the gain of few.”** *(Swift)*

parties are groups held together through  
the **“cohesive power of public plunder”**

*(Schattschneider)*

# dysfunction of parties



structuring  
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# Alternative Guiding Principle

democracy as a mechanism  
to facilitate disinterested &  
balanced decision-making



Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), "The Judgment of Solomon," Musée du Louvre, Paris

# Thank you!

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