

The Party Paradox

Emanuel V. Towfigh | WCCL | Johannesburg, 5 – 9 December 2022

Workshop »**Democratic Decay: Causes and Remedies**« (Ginsburg/Scheppele)

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



(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
the debate



identifying
leadership



mobilizing
electorate



deciding
on policies



controlling
decisions

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!

Contact: EMANUEL@TOWFIGH.NET



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