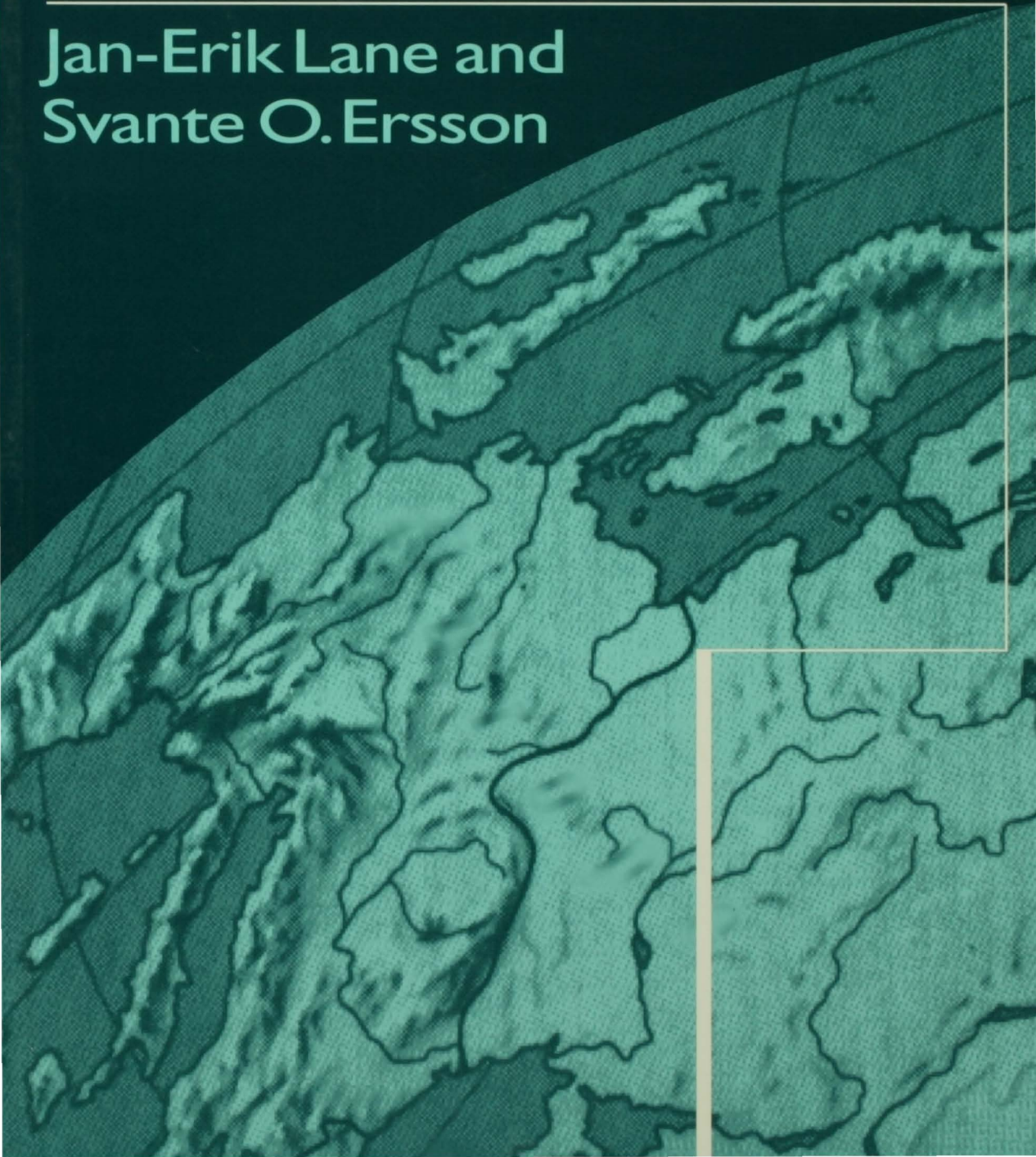


European Politics

An Introduction

Jan-Erik Lane and
Svante O. Ersson



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We dedicate this book to the two scholars from whom we over the years learnt the most in the conduct of comparative politics: Arend Lijphart (University of California at San Diego) and Giovanni Sartori (Columbia University)

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Preface

Is it possible to speak of European politics today given the developmental trends initiated in 1989? We believe so, at least when we decided to take up the task of writing a textbook that would surpass the distinctions between Western, Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe. At the same time, we were aware of the fact that such an approach rested on a hypothesis about convergence that must be regarded as a very contested one. Where one scholar sees similarities others observe differences. And how is one to add it all up, noting similarities in certain aspects of society and differences in others?

In order to stay open-ended about the possibility of a European politics, we placed the convergence hypothesis at the centre of attention. In the social sciences there is an implicit model about social change that the convergence theme is attached to. Focusing on convergence implies not only trying to assess the extent of convergence in various aspects – economic, social, political – but also entails the search for some kind of model of convergence, which would identify conditions for macro changes. The convergence model would contain a few ideas about why and how processes of convergence take place and under what circumstances. There are in the European context a number of forces that fuel convergence, economic conditions such as growing trade and economic integration, social conditions that promote urbanization and third sector expansion as well as institutional conditions such as the democratization wave in the former Communist countries. What we wish to enquire into is how far these macro conditions have brought about increasing similarities in the politics of the European states. It is impossible not to include and underline the convergence implications of the making of the European Union.

However, the convergence trends will not eradicate the many differences in politics between the countries that we have included in this study. The key question is whether the differences between Western and Eastern Europe that used to be so conspicuous are now abating, meaning that we can concentrate on the similarities and differences among all European countries without any division into North, South, West and East. We have included 31 countries in our analysis of convergence, drawing the line between inside Europe and outside Europe along the borders to Russia, Belarus, the Ukraine and Turkey. And the analysis of similarities and

differences has been done by classifying the countries into five sets, three West European categories and two East European ones – tentatively.

We approach European politics in terms of a simple convergence framework, comprising only two elements: (1) Factors that hinder or are conducive to convergence, discussed in Chapters 1–4; (2) Convergence in political institutions, behaviour and culture, enquired into in Chapters 5–9.

Into each chapter we have entered information about the politics and society in at most 31 countries for a clearly specified time period: 1990–5. Since the purpose has been to write a small compact volume, a concentration on certain themes has been a necessity. Thus, among the political outcomes we look at certain key behavioural patterns such as the party systems, the formation of governments as well as the structure of public policies. It may well be premature to assess now how far convergence has occurred in Europe, but the question is no doubt a relevant one although our answer may need to be revised in a not too distant future, as for example the presentation of political culture should be done more thoroughly as more information becomes available.

The book was finalized at the Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung, where Franz Pappi offered a most stimulating environment for comparative research on Europe, given its huge data bases. Various chapters were discussed at seminars, at which a number of suggestions as to improvements were made.

We have used data from the *World Values Survey 1990–1* (Inglehart, 1993), the *Polity II: Political Structures and Regime Change* (Gurr, 1990), the *Central and Eastern Euro-Barometers* (Reif and Cunningham, 1992–5), and the *Eftabarometer* (EOS Gallup Europe, 1992). These datasets have kindly been made available to us via the Swedish Social Science Data Service (SSD) in Göteborg. We are solely responsible for the interpretation of these data.

Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson
Mannheim, February 1996

Introductory Chapter: Convergence versus Divergence

European politics takes on a new meaning following the fall of the Berlin wall. It is no longer adequate to talk about Western Europe contra Eastern Europe, as if they were totally different societies harbouring entirely different political systems. What is emerging in the 1990s is one Europe that covers several parts: the Scandinavian countries, Finland and Iceland in Northern Europe; the United Kingdom, Ireland, the BeNeLux countries and France in Western Europe; Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece in Southern Europe; Germany, Austria and Switzerland in Central Europe; as well as a number of countries in Eastern Europe such as the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The aim of this book is to analyse the politics of all these European countries from one specific angle, namely that of convergence. We will devote much time to documenting similarities and differences between these countries in Northern, Western, Southern, Central and Eastern Europe.

The convergence theme is relevant from several perspectives. First there is the socio-economic one, as one may ask to what extent the catch-up development in the former Communist states is successful. In trying to establish a kind of market regime the former Communist countries copy Western Europe, but does this model work out in practice with the hopes of delivering more affluence to its populations? Second there is the political perspective, as system transition involves not only the insertion of Western economic institutions but also Western political institutions in the form of democracy. How far can the new party systems in East Europe be compared with the party systems in West Europe? Third one may speak of the cultural perspective by looking at the extent to which political attitudes and social belief-systems tend to become more similar between the countries in Europe.

Our basic question is whether political behaviour and political institutions tend to converge to one kind of political regime in all European countries: party government, or representative democracy based on political parties. Answering this question one may start from an analysis of the actual differences among European states as of today in terms of historical legacies, social structure, economic life and output, although politics is never a reflection of the environment. One may then proceed to consult studies about West European politics (Smith, 1989; Pelassy, 1992;

Keating, 1993; Mény, 1993; Guchet, 1994; Allum, 1995) as well as about East European politics (Lovenduski and Woodall, 1987; Deppe et al., 1991; Banac, 1992; Rothschild, 1993; White et al., 1993; Roskin, 1994) in order to assess the extent of similarities and differences. A number of general European enquiries are also helpful (Immerfall, 1994; Steiner, 1994; Gallagher et al., 1995; Hayward and Page, 1995; Therborn, 1995).

One may argue that divergence has been the prevailing angle from which various scholars have interpreted European politics from a macro theoretical perspective. Speaking of divergence versus convergence it is willingly admitted that it is preferable to examine data about key political phenomena at more than one point of time, but we are mainly concerned with looking at similarities and differences between the countries during the period 1990–5.

The European Scene

To us an analysis of European politics should at least cover the major states from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of the former Soviet Union (Archer and Giner, 1971; Giner and Archer, 1978). Admitting that the concepts of Central, Western, Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe may be interpreted in various ways we mainly include states that have a population in excess of 100,000 inhabitants. Thus, we have 33 cases or units of analysis for 1995. Our approach is state centred – that is, we focus on the states in Europe as they have actually existed in this century. Put simply, the frequent and often drastic changes in what have been recognized as states in Europe testify to the basic observation that European politics is characterized by instability, war and conflict.

We have not included a number of small states in Europe such as Lichtenstein, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco and the Vatican State. Access to data has also forced us to concentrate upon a smaller set than the 33 states listed in Table I.1. It should be pointed out that the situation with regard to the Bosnian state is not entirely clear, involving both a federation between Muslim Bosnians and Croats as well as an attempt to find a new state solution after the civil war ended in 1995.

One may note, looking at the number of states from one decade to another, that only 14 of these countries have been independent and recognized as states during the entire century. Bypassing the period of Nazi-German occupation these states are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The overall development of European statehood between 1900 and 1995 has meant almost a doubling of the number of states. A first large increase resulted from the Versailles treaty in 1919. Then the number of states actually shrank up until 1940 when the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States and Austria became connected with Nazi-Germany through the Anschluss of 1938. From 1950 to 1990 the number of states is fixed (26), but the fall of the

Table I.1 *European states in the twentieth century*

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1995
Albania			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Austria-Hungary	•	•								
Austria			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Belgium	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bosnia										•
Bulgaria	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Croatia										•
Czechoslovakia			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Czech Republic										•
Denmark	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Estonia			•	•						•
Finland			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
France	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Germany	•	•	•	•						
Germany DR					•	•	•	•	•	
Germany FR					•	•	•	•	•	•
Greece	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hungary			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Iceland					•	•	•	•	•	•
Ireland				•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Italy	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Latvia			•	•						•
Lithuania			•	•						•
Luxembourg	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Macedonia										•
Montenegro	•	•								
Netherlands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Norway		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Poland			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Portugal	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Romania	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Serbia	•	•								
Slovakia										•
Slovenia										•
Spain	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sweden	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Switzerland	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
UK	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Yugoslavia			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Number	18	19	26	27	26	26	26	26	26	33

Sources: Russett et al. (1968), Banks (1971), *Fischer Welt Almanach* (1995).

Soviet Empire in 1991 and the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991–2 resulted in the foundation of several new states.

What is the logic of politics in these European states? Shall we focus upon a few salient differences between these states formulated by means of divergence models, or can one go about finding out whether there are mechanisms operating within these states that are conducive to conver-

gence with regard to political institutions and political behaviour? Let us see where research stands today.

Macro Interpretations of European Politics

One key question when enquiring into European politics on the basis of the design of a research strategy for the purpose of mapping similarities and differences in the political life of European countries is whether one may identify a couple of fundamental model(s) behind the wide range of country façade. The extensive regime transition processes after the collapse of Communism involve institutional changes that implement democratic politics and a market economy. Is it possible to find more specific patterns of variations that the states in Europe tend to adhere to or to practise?

In the literature on European politics the prevailing mode of interpretation has been that of divergence. A number of well-known models claim that what is interesting when one compares politics in various European countries is to note how they differ on many crucial dimensions.

With regard to state institutions there is for instance the federal model, launched by Daniel Elazar among others, which argues that whether a state has a unitary or federal format is of great importance. Implicit in this theory is a radical distinction between two types of states (Elazar, 1987), but is such a sharp separation really possible to apply to existing states in Europe? Another divergence model makes a similar clear-cut distinction, this time between presidential and parliamentary executives, as for instance with Juan Linz, who argues that the latter performs better than the former (Linz, 1994). Yet, can European presidentialism and parliamentarism be analysed in such a model?

In relation to party systems there is the Giovanni Sartori model, which argues that the combination of fractionalization and polarization distinguishes the party system of one country from another. Understanding how different the party systems can be in various countries involves not only separating the two-party systems from the multi-party systems, but also assessing the extent to which there is large or small ideological distance between the parties (Sartori, 1976). The occurrence of polarized pluralism in a country entails an entirely different kind of political life than merely a high level of fractionalization in the party system.

Model dualism also characterized the famous Duverger analysis of the consequences of election systems for the formation of party systems and government durability. Already in 1951 Duverger stated his idea of a sharp distinction between plurality systems and proportional systems, predicting that the former enhanced twopartism resulting in durable single majority governments and the latter multipartism which lead to unstable coalition governments (Duverger, 1964).

Turning from the input side of the state to the output side, there is the Gosta Esping-Andersen model of the public sector variation. It states that

divergence is the most typical feature in the examination of the public sector in various West European countries. The structure of the public sector in a country reflects the way its welfare regime has been framed and implemented. And there are three fundamentally different welfare regimes in Western Europe (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Yet, it may be worthwhile examining the public sector in all European countries in order to see whether the most recent reform endeavours have brought about more similarities between West and East European countries.

The most comprehensive divergence model is that of Arend Lijphart. Lijphart's general model claims that there are two basically different political systems in Europe, the Westminster type and the Consensus type (Lijphart, 1984). Lijphart listed eight ideal-type characteristics of the two models covering not only federalism versus unitarism as well as executive-legislature-judiciary relationships but also the election and party systems. What is the relevance for the entire Europe of today of the sharp distinction introduced by Lijphart in relation to the analysis of West European politics? Is it true that today the countries in Europe either tend towards the Westminster model or the Consensus model?

Lijphart was well aware of the fact that his two ideal-types in the terminology of Max Weber did not correspond to reality, which was more complex. He asked: 'How do our twenty-two democratic regimes cluster on the two underlying dimensions of the majoritarian-consensual contrast?' (Lijphart, 1984: 215). His answer is the following empirical classification, if selecting only West European countries (Lijphart, 1984: 216-18):

- *Majoritarian*: the United Kingdom, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway.
- *Majoritarian-Federal*: Germany, Austria.
- *Consensual-Unitary*: Denmark, Finland, Iceland.
- *Consensual*: Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, France.

Thus, in reality Lijphart's divergence perspective comprises four models. Besides the distinction between the majoritarian and consensual processes of politics, which cover relationships between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary in addition to a main outline of the party system, there is the classical separation between unitary and federal state institutions. How well do these four categories, combining *Konkurrenzdemokratie* versus *Konkordanzdemokratie* (Schmidt, 1995) with Unitarism and Federalism, fit European realities in the 1990s, when the Communist Model is irrelevant meaning that we must include Eastern Europe among the sets of European democracies? And how do they mix in the new democracies in Southern Europe (Lijphart et al., 1988)?

The divergence models have no doubt pinned down a number of interesting country differences, but what needs to be researched today is whether these models may at the same time have underestimated the extent to which country politics in Europe exhibits numerous similarities.

The main divergence models were launched in relation to the variation in politics within Western Europe, as the differences between West and East hardly needed to be underlined since the East European countries practised an entirely different framework for politics and economics. However, what remains of the relevance and validity of the divergence models today when the Iron Curtain has been removed? Let us focus upon the similarities instead and see where that may lead us.

To us, the starting-point is that the politics of European countries have a number of communalities: (1) parliamentarism; (2) a multi-party system; (3) frequent coalition governments; and (4) a welfare state of some sort. Actually, arriving at such a European model would be conducive to internal coherence and set Europe aside from the other continents. We wish to pursue the analysis of these similarities a few steps further: to what extent are there basic similarities in key political features among states in Western, Central, Eastern, Northern and Southern Europe? Which are the mechanisms involved? The drive towards coherence depends not only upon the transition processes in the former Communist states but also reflects processes of change in other parts of Europe.

It may be noted that an earlier model about European convergence from the 1960s did not pass the test; namely, the idea that liberal market economies and Communist states would grow more and more alike as a function of rising affluence (Tinbergen, 1961; Galbraith, 1967). The Communist welfare state faltered because the planned economies in Eastern Europe failed. The outcome of the Cold War was just the opposite; namely, huge differences in living conditions between Western and Eastern Europe that were perhaps larger in 1990 than ever during the interwar period (Janos, 1994). The countries in Eastern Europe have now turned to a different system model, copying the capitalist democracies in the West in the hope of reducing these vast differences in quality of life. The engine in this system transformation is *constitutional* or *institutional policies*, or the reshaping of political and economic institutions by fiat. However important rules are for social life, we must remember that the critical question is: Are the overall differences in terms of actual behaviour or outcomes between the countries in Europe decreasing over time when one looks at economics and politics?

At the same time one has to pay attention to how the similarities and differences among the countries in Western Europe develop. The new democracies in Southern Europe are also attempting to catch up. How successful have they been since 1975? No doubt their state institutions and their economies have grown to be more like those of other West European states, but how similar is their politics to the countries in Northern, Western and Central Europe (Haller and Schachner-Blazizek, 1994)?

In the literature one may find an emphasis on factors that are conducive to growing similarities. On the one hand, there is literature dealing with

the social consequences of technology development and diffusion (Kaelble, 1987: 140–1). Industrialization at various stages make for more uniform ways of life, breaking down historical or cultural legacies. On the other hand, a body of writing focuses upon the logic of democratic politics which is expressed in games played in similar ways by different players from various countries (Overbye, 1994: 155–7).

Here, one would wish to underline strongly the process of institutional integration in Europe, both economically and politically, chiefly in the form of the establishment of the European Union. Most former Communist countries are already associated with the EU, and it is expected that this process of extending the territory of the EU will continue. However, the possible entrance of several Eastern European states into the EU will depend upon how the economies and the political systems of these countries develop in the coming years. The more stable the East European countries are in supporting a democratic market regime, the more likely is it that they all will become members of the Union. Thus, EU harmonization and increasing regime similarities between the countries in Europe are two processes that sustain each other.

The convergence framework appears to us to be the appropriate one for the assessment of the probability that the European states will become more alike in several major political aspects, such as the state format, the party system, the pattern of government formation and public policies. What, more specifically, is involved in choosing the convergence concept as the foundation for the analysis of a mass of information about society and state in Europe?

The Convergence Approach

Convergence is social change but not all kinds of social change equal convergence. The concept of convergence enters macro social theory, modelling how large social systems, such as societies or economies or polities, change and develop over time (Kerr, 1983; Sztompka, 1993; Chirot, 1994; Langlois et al., 1994). One may find convergence ideas in the major schools of sociology such as Marxism and modernization theory. Basically, 'convergence' stands for increasing similarities.

The literature on convergence is fairly extensive. There are available a couple of good overviews of the various scholarly contributions in this field (Bennett, 1991; Coughlin, 1992; Kalberg, 1993). Assessments of the convergence concept as employed in macro sociological literature have been conducted by Alex Inkeles (Inkeles, 1981). He points at a number of important distinctions between various types of convergence and divergence. And Inkeles also makes it clear that it is vital to specify what elements of the social system one is referring to when discussing convergence (Inkeles, 1981). Corresponding to these distinctions are a number of pitfalls in convergence analysis, some of which are discussed below.

- *Subsystem*: two or more social systems or societies may converge in certain respects but not in others meaning that it is vital that one makes clear what subsystem one is referring to such as the polity, the economy, the family or the social structure. Various subsystems of the most general social system, that is the society, may be identified and there is no given order in which the importance of these various subsystems may be decided. It is possible that convergence takes place with regard to one of them but not in relation to the other. The problem of how one adds or subtracts convergence in one subsystem from divergence in another subsystem has not been resolved. It is extremely dangerous to make generalizations about convergence, if one does not explicitly specify the subsystem one is dealing with.
- *Time*: two social systems or subsystems may converge during one time period but start to diverge during another period of time. It is essential to specify the time frame for convergence. Perhaps convergence is inherently a time bound phenomenon meaning that convergence always takes place between two different points of time. Or one may speak of 'convergence' in two different senses, one thick and one thin. In the *weak* interpretation of the convergence concept, two societies are converging when they are similar in certain respects. According to the strong interpretation, two societies converge if and only if the similarities between two societies increase from one point in time to another point of time. The first concept of convergence only requires that two societies or subsystems are rather similar whereas the second concept of convergence demands much more, namely that two societies or subsystems develop from dissimilarities towards similarities over time. Correspondingly, one may speak of a static and dynamic version of the convergence concept.
- *Goal*: convergence may be general or specific depending upon whether it refers only to growing similarities or if there is a specific goal towards which convergence tends to take place. Two well-known convergence theories, Marxism and the modernization theory, argued not only that societies tend to converge but also that they move towards a common end state, although that goal state differed in these two convergence models. The question of finality and intentionality is a difficult one in the convergence approach. Not only is the nature of the convergence process disputed, some claiming that societies tend towards some specific end state whereas others deny this seeing more of random walks or circularity in developmental trends. The degree of control or governance in convergence is another contested question, which is certainly relevant in a European context: Is convergence driven by major social forces which no one may control or is convergence something that may be accomplished or at least promoted by taking actions in the form of institutional redesign? Maybe institutional policies such as the making of an economic or political constitution are crucial? The approach of the EU to European integration is no doubt founded on such a belief in intended convergence.

- *Causal mechanism*: stating that two social systems are converging in some respects is like taking merely a first step, because one would also wish to know if behind the convergence of two systems there is some mechanism that explains why there are increasing similarities between the systems. The question of the mechanism behind convergence has been much discussed in the literature. Both Marxism and modernization theory underline the crucial role that economic factors play, although, again, the interpretation of the nature of these economic factors is different. The theory of the post-industrial society may be regarded as harbouring a convergence model, predicting major consequences from the fact that many societies are moving from industrialization to another stage, a society based on an economy orientated towards service production.

Our enquiry into the European countries is basically about the thin concept of convergence. This means that we are first and foremost interested in measuring the extent of similarities between the countries in Europe with regard to a few subsystems or societal sectors, as things now stand after the demolition of the Iron Curtain in 1989. We certainly make no assumption about an inner logic of convergence which would drive societies towards a common end state. Our objective is only to enquire into if and how the societies of the countries in Europe are becoming increasingly similar, as well as to examine whether the factors that are conducive towards convergence operate more strongly in the early 1990s than just after the Second World War. In our approach to European politics we use chiefly the *thin* or the *static* concept of convergence.

Our Framework of Analysis

When applying the convergence concept to reality there is the philosophical difficulty of specifying what is to count as a similarity or a difference. When are two social systems similar? It is always possible to find some differences between any social societies or political systems. One can only tell whether certain aspects of society or specific subsystems are similar or different.

When modelling convergence one has to decide from the outset what the focus of convergence is, that is, which properties one wishes to assess concerning convergence. After that decision has been taken the conduct of research on convergence involves three basic steps: (1) selecting the cases, that is, which countries or country sets are to be compared with regard to convergence; (2) assessing the extent to which convergence is actually taking place; and (3) identifying the forces that are conducive to or hinder convergence.

There are two sides of the coin when studying convergence: the cases to

be studied and the properties with which one will measure similarities and differences. One may emphasize either the importance of a detailed understanding of the cases or one may underline the modelling of relationships between properties. Striking a balance between the weight to be given to empirical matters on the one hand and conceptual matters on the other hand we include all European countries but concentrate upon a few dimensions in a country's politics. Thus, we study: (1) the nature of the state; (2) the party system; (3) government formation; and (4) the public sector. The amount of similarities and differences in these important political dimensions must count heavily in an assessment of political convergence.

Democracy in the European context is first and foremost party government. The stability and vitality of democracy in Eastern Europe is connected with how party government operates in the former Communist countries. And the institutions of party government imply two things: on the one hand that electoral politics will focus upon the political parties forming a party system, and on the other hand that government formation is to a considerable extent controlled by the parties, making various kinds of coalitions. Who wins elections in Europe and who forms governments? The European state is an example of big government. This means a large number of public employees as well as big budgets, covering lots of public programmes carrying expenditures.

Although the path to an extensive state has been very different in the West having a market economy compared with the East and its planned economies, both the state in Western Europe and the state in Eastern Europe face the problem of how to mix the public and the private sectors. Is there any convergence in relation to the relative size of the public sectors between countries all over Europe, for instance with regard to the provision of welfare services such as education and health care or in terms of transfer payments (i.e. income redistribution)? The welfare state has been firmly entrenched in almost all European countries. There used to exist a so-called Communist welfare state, but the dismantling of the command economy in Eastern Europe has led to a sharp reduction in its commitments. At the same time the welfare state in Western Europe has matured, stabilizing at a high level of commitments in terms of allocative and redistributive tasks after several decades of public sector growth.

In addition, we include information about attitudes and belief-systems in order to map similarities and differences in political culture. The case for convergence in European politics would be a strong one if there were not only numerous similarities between the country institutions but also with regard to culture. Thus, the spread of democratic politics to Southern and Eastern Europe would result in political stability, only if there is also a civic culture that supports a democratic regime, that is, trust in the politics of party government. In the study of political culture there is a set of models which describe processes of macro change, which – it is argued – characterize all societies in their post-industrial stage, the post-materialism

theme or more generally post-modernity theory (Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Kaase and Newton, 1995).

To sum up, we arrive at the following list of properties that we single out as of special interest in relation to European politics in the early 1990s:

- 1 *State institutions*: state format, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.
- 2 *The party system*: fractionalization, polarization and volatility.
- 3 *Government formation*: coalition behaviour.
- 4 *The public sector*: the welfare state.
- 5 *Political culture*: post-modernization.

It seems to us that any talk about political convergence in Europe would have to be based upon an assessment about how similar or different the countries in Europe – North, South, West and East – are with regard to the five sets of properties listed above. In the thin sense, political convergence would imply numerous similarities in political institutions and behaviour. How can we explain them?

Among the conditions that promote convergence in politics one would include socio-economic forces. Convergence will be driven not only by unintended developmental trends in the economy and the social structure but also by the conscious adoption of similar legal institutions. The EU integration process with its emphasis on harmonization of legal institutions plays a major role here, although it has thus far only been in operation in Western Europe, or more specifically in 12 countries. Although we emphasize the implications of economic integration in Europe, we also remind ourselves about the autonomy of politics. There are, one must underline, forces that work against convergence. To cover these forces we employ the concept of historical legacies, although it is far from a specific notion. Historical traditions sustain ways of life in general as well as specific sets of institutions.

We suggest that a number of factors either promote convergence or hinder it. Factors 2 and 3 below would enhance convergence – we believe – whereas factor 1 below reduces convergence. We single out the following factors that are relevant when accounting for country similarities and differences in key political aspects:

- 1 *Historical legacies*: state formation, economic modernization, and ethnic and religious cleavages.
- 2 *Socio-economic factors*: affluence, economic growth, social structure and social cohesion.
- 3 *Institutional factors*: European integration.

Measuring political convergence by focusing upon present-day similarities in institutions and behaviour makes heavy demands upon access to information. There is still little information available, in particular concerning Southeastern and Eastern Europe. And not all the information is comparable. It has not been possible to include all the states from Table

I.1. Thus, Slovenia, Croatia and the FR Yugoslavia, that is, Serbia and Montenegro, from Tito's Yugoslavia have been included but Bosnia and the FYROM had to be excluded.

Finally, when it comes to our case, Europe, we have grouped the countries in Europe in a special way, which relates to on the one hand the Iron Curtain, that is, the distinction between Western and Eastern Europe, and on the other hand to the seminal convergence process in Europe stemming from European integration, namely, the EC and the EU institutions. Thus, the classification of countries follows the process of European integration starting in 1957 and going up to the transformation of the EC into the EU in 1993. We have the following categories:

CORE EC: BeNeLux countries, France, Germany and Italy.

OTHER EC: Denmark, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain.

OUTSIDE EC: Austria, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.

CORE EAST: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

EAST PERIPHERY: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, FRY and Albania.

Fundamentally, the classification recognizes the great differences between Western and Eastern Europe in terms of affluence. As a matter of fact, the classification starts from one of the most influential divergence models in the social sciences, the modernization approach. What must be researched is whether these differences also make politics different in the West as compared with the East. We remain open to the argument about the autonomy of politics in relation to economics, but first we pin down how extensive the economic differences are between West and East European countries in the early 1990s.

The classification is also based upon the evolution of European integration in terms of the EC institutions and the enlargement of the EC to cover more and more states in Europe. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed by a group of states that may be designated the core in continental Europe. In 1973, 1981 and 1986 the EC institutions were extended to cover other states (George, 1991; Nugent, 1994). Several states in Western Europe were, however, not integrated into the EC framework, as Sweden, Finland and Austria entered the new EU as late as 1995 with Switzerland, Norway and Iceland declining EU membership. Looking back one would wish to know whether EC membership has been attended by convergence among its member states.

When the EU is looking east reflecting upon the possibility of permitting new states to enter its institutions, then it seems as if there is a two-step procedure involved; the first possible enlargement covering a few core Eastern states such as those that have association status today – Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Republics, Romania and Bulgaria – and the second possible extension including the remaining states. There

has been talk about Turkey entering, but this seems to us unlikely, as Europe does end at the Bosphorus, as it were. Looking forward one may expect the EU to invite new member states among the countries that are most similar to its already included members.

A considerable part of the explicit and intended efforts at political convergence have been channelled through the EU framework in the post-Second World War period. By grouping the states in Europe with regard to their relationships to the EU one may test the hypothesis that explicit and intended convergence has been of importance. The contrary hypothesis would be that convergence is driven by latent forces, meaning that socio-economic development matters more than institutional integration. What are the political consequences of the differences in economic development between West and East European countries? The country information is organized around certain statistical parameters, as we attempt to give a quantitative perspective on European politics. Thus, we focus on the mean, the maximum and the minimum scores for each of our groups. The statistical apparatus has been kept at a minimum, but there are a few appendices containing correlation measures.

Conclusion

Social system convergence must start from one point and move towards some other point. That is the essence of the convergence notion. It could concern any kind of social system such as a society, or a subsystem like the polity or the economy. Convergence could be continuous or discrete, depending on whether the process is smooth or involves jumps or leaps. Convergence must occur in terms of certain properties and one needs to be aware of the possibility that two systems converge in certain respects but diverge on other properties. Convergence may be either intended or unintended, recognized or unrecognized, explicit or implicit, manifest or latent. The concept of convergence involves both the notion of similarities and the idea of a development over time. We deal more with the former than the latter.

Assessing basically the extent of similarity we first deal with the fundamental state institutions, which is why we analyse the constitutional fabric of European states. Second, the running of the state requires politicians, who in a European context act through political parties. Third, we focus on the recruitment of governments, where typical of the European context is the coalition government. Fourth, measuring the amount of similarities in country politics one must look at public policies, that is, the public sector. Finally, we enquire into political beliefs and values in order to find out whether institutions and behaviour are backed by a common European political culture.

The extent to which convergence takes place in Europe must be influenced besides onlingering historical legacies by the overall development of the European economy as well as that of the national economies in