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Françoise Boucek

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# RETHINKING FACTIONALISM

## Typologies, Intra-Party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism

*Françoise Boucek*

### ABSTRACT

It is time to think again about the conceptualization of factionalism in political science. Following a brief review of scholarly contributions in the field, I argue that the analytical approach based on typologies and categories of subparty groups is not very useful in explaining intra-party behaviour and the process of change because, by their nature, these are static tools. Building on previous contributions to the study of factions, notably Sartori, I suggest focusing on intra-party dynamics instead of on organizational forms of faction. Factionalism should be viewed in non-exclusive terms, i.e. as a dynamic process of subgroup partitioning. It is a multifaceted phenomenon that can transform itself over time in response to incentives. Based on conclusions from case study research of factionalized parties in established democracies, I identify three main faces of factionalism: cooperative, competitive and degenerative. I suggest that the process of change may occur in a cycle that contributes to party disintegration, as illustrated by the case of the Christian Democratic Party in Italy (DC), which imploded in the mid-1990s under the centrifugal pulls of its factions.

KEY WORDS ■ factionalism ■ intra-party politics ■ Italy's Christian Democrats (DC) ■ Japan's Liberal Democrats (LDP) ■ Sartori

### Introduction

'factionalism is a fact of life within most political parties.'  
(Harmel et al., 1995: 7)

Political parties are not monolithic structures but collective entities in which competition, divided opinions and dissent create internal pressures. In turn, these pressures often trigger the formation of factions that render the unitary

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actor assumption highly questionable. Although widespread, factionalism is still a relatively under-studied phenomenon. In political science, the analysis tends to vary from extremely quantitative to purely intuitive, and cross-national surveys are few. The dominant approach to the study of factionalism as an independent variable has been to devise typologies based on subparty group categories with different features. However, this analytical approach has turned out to be a bit of a minefield.

In this article, I suggest that it is time to think again about the conceptualization of factionalism in political science. Typologies and classificatory schemes are the beginning of a theory. However, with a static view of factionalism these tools cannot capture group dynamics and explain the process of change. They cannot therefore provide convincing and parsimonious answers to key research questions, such as why some political parties contain factions while others do not, why factions become embedded inside some parties but not in others, why factionalism grows and transforms over time and so on.

First, I briefly review the study of factionalism in political science and then map out one way of labelling factions merely to highlight the problems of conceptualization through categories and typologies. I explore the drawbacks of this analytical approach by examining key scholarly contributions in the field. Later, I stress the importance of focusing attention on group dynamics rather than on organizational forms of factions, arguing that factionalism is a multifaceted phenomenon which can transform itself over time in response to incentives. Drawing on conclusions from case study research of factionalized parties in established democracies, I argue that the benefits of factions are often overlooked, and suggest that factionalism can acquire different faces at different times under specific conditions. Three main faces of factionalism are identified: cooperative, competitive and degenerative. I also suggest that the process of change may occur in a cycle that could contribute to party disintegration, as illustrated by the case of the highly factionalized Christian Democrats in Italy (DC), a party that imploded in the mid-1990s (one of the few parties in modern democracies ever to become extinct).

### **The Study of Factionalism in Political Science**

In political science, the dominant analytical approach to the study of factionalism as an independent variable has centred around typologies of intra-party groups with different attributes, dimensions and categories based on variables such as stability, organization, function and role, and occasionally group size and number (Bettcher, 2005; Hine, 1982; Janda, 1979; Rose, 1964; Sartori, 1976; and, to a lesser extent, Belloni and Beller, 1978). In contrast, the study of factionalism as a dependent variable is guided predominantly by analytical perspectives based on behaviouralism and rationalism with or without formal modelling. In this vein, scholars have, for instance, examined

the effects of factionalism and intra-party politics on income distribution (Mulé, 2001), party coalition strategies under minority government (Maor, 1998), legislative politics and government formation (Giannetti and Laver, 2005; Laver and Shepsle, 1996: ch. 12), party government and committee action especially in the US Congress (Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Krehbiel, 1998), legislative gridlock in the Russian parliament (Andrews, 2002) and party policy shifts and government reshuffles (Budge, 1984).

Comparative empirical surveys of factionalism are rare. The last major study, edited by Belloni and Beller and published 30 years ago, covers faction politics in 15 countries, with case studies divided into dominant party systems, alternating party systems and single-party systems. In this study, the editors describe faction politics as 'a neglected subject of study' partly due to 'an inherited bias against faction' (Belloni and Beller, 1978: 13).<sup>1</sup> But most empirical research is dominated by single-case studies of factionalized parties, with much attention centred on: Italy's former Christian Democrats (DC) during their period of dominance (Leonardi, 1973; Leonardi and Wertman, 1989; Zariski, 1965; Zucherman, 1979), Italy's Socialists and post-Socialists (Giannetti and Laver, 2005; Zariski, 1962), Spain's Socialist Party during its long march from defeat in the civil war in the 1930s to power in the 1980s (Gillespie, 1989) and Japan's Liberal Democrats (LDP), for which the focus of explanation has gradually shifted away from the structural features of Japanese society (Baerwald, 1986; Curtis, 1988; Ishida, 1971; Nakane, 1967; Pempel, 1986, 1990; Thayer, 1969) towards institutionalism, although, early on, Leiserson had used game theory to analyse the coalition dynamics of LDP factions (1968). More recently, explanations of LDP factionalism have focused on the impact of institutions such as electoral systems and bicameralism on the career motivations and strategic behaviour of LDP politicians (notably Cox and Rosenbluth, 1993, 1995; Cox et al., 2000) and on the impact of party organizational arrangements (Kohno, 1992, 1997). In addition, there are a few published articles and single book chapters focusing on intra-party dissent and factional conflict in specific parties at different points in time, especially in Britain (Haseler, 1969; Hatfield, 1978; Kogan and Kogan, 1982; Seyd, 1972, 1975, 1987; Turner, 2000), Australia (McAllister, 1991; Mulé, 2001) and the United States (Key, 1949; Kolodny, 1999). There was also a collaborative volume published in the early 1990s examining the linkages between factional politics and democratization in Europe (Gillespie et al., 1995). This said, there is growing scholarly interest and empirical work focusing on European parties, including in the European Parliament (EP), which examines intra-party politics, party cohesion and the role of party factions in legislative politics (see, notably, Hix et al. [2005, 2007] for parties in the EP and Giannetti and Laver [2005] for the Italian *Sinistra Democratica* DS).

Table 1. Summary of key studies of factionalism in political science\*

<i>Author</i>	<i>Context of study</i>	<i>Definition of factions</i>	<i>Role of factions</i>	<i>Conceptualization/ measurement</i>	<i>View of factionalism</i>
18th-century political thinkers Bolingbroke, Hume, Burke, Madison	Constitutional theory. Parliamentary govt.	Same as political party.	Shape government-opposition politics.	Typology based on group characteristics (Hume). Number/size of parties important (Madison) but not operationalized.	Undesirable; anti-party rhetoric (Hume); complicates majority govt (Burke); potentially dangerous to republic (Madison).
V. O. Key	1940s American Democratic South.	Political machines	Represent the means to sustain one-party rule locally.	District-based party dominance.	Encourages favouritism and graft.
Duverger	Study of political parties.	Subparty units; the terms factions, wings, tendencies, rivalries used interchangeably.	Reflect diversity within parties.	Party structure: homogeneous v. heterogeneous parties.	Toleration of diversity in heterogeneous parties but not in 'restricted' parties.
Rose	Main British political parties (1960s and 1970s).	Intra-party units more or less organized. Factions v. tendencies.	Help differentiate the internal structure of Labour (factions) and Conservatives (tendencies).	Stability, permanence and organization for differentiating factions from tendencies are not operationalized.	Implies that intra-party management is more difficult for Labour than for Conservatives.

*Continued opposite*

Table 1. Continued

<i>Author</i>	<i>Context of study</i>	<i>Definition of factions</i>	<i>Role of factions</i>	<i>Conceptualization/ measurement</i>	<i>View of factionalism</i>
Zariski	Intra-party processes in different party systems. Hypotheses raising.	Any intra-party combination/clique or grouping whose members share common identity/purpose and are organized to act collectively as a distinct bloc within a party to achieve their goals.	Articulate shared values, different strategic conceptions, common interests/origins/functions, but can also represent personal or local cliques.	Categories based on factional raison d'être but categories are not mutually exclusive.	Neutral. But factions seen as significant structural features inside parties; deserving of academic study.
Janda et al. (ICPP)	Cross-national survey of political parties in 53 countries (1950–1962).	Zariski's definition (see above) and Huntington (consensus). Party coherence examined in terms of cohesion and factionalism.	Articulate/mobilize separate ideologies, issue disagreements, leaders, strategies/tactics.	Parties coded according to six variables: legislative cohesion, factionalism based on ideology, issues, leadership, strategy/tactics and purges.	Neutral. Objective is to operationalize concept of coherence as understood by Huntington.
Sartori and followers (Hine, Belloni and Beller, Bettcher)	Anatomy of parties; party systems; specific parties.	Sartori follows Hume's dichotomy but factions = sub-units. Fractions used to escape anti-faction bias.	Not clearly specified. Some overlap between different categories of factions. Incentives are important determinants.	Typology: four dimensions (organizational, motivational, ideological and left-right) are interactive (not separate). Fractionism not operationalized.	Fractionism can be positive if it provides competition in sub-competitive party systems.

\*Excludes key studies where factionalism is the dependent variable

## Summary of Key Studies of Factionalism in Political Science

Key studies of factionalism in political science since the 18th century are synthesized in Table 1. For each author, the context of their studies of factions, their definition, role, conceptualization, measurement and view of factions are highlighted in the table. Before political parties came into being and political leaders were still experimenting with forms of government, 'faction' was the term used to describe the main rival groups competing within a polity, such as the Whigs and Tories in 18th-century England, the Jacobins and Girondins in revolutionary France and the Federalist elites in the early American Republic who followed Hamilton versus those who followed Madison in the House of Representatives. In fact, the anti-faction bias dates back to the writings of the American Founding Fathers and other 17th- and 18th-century writers and philosophers, such as Bolingbroke, Hume and Burke. These authors viewed factions either as contrary to the public spirit or as obstacles (albeit inevitable) to majority rule. For instance, Madison (*Federalist 10*) regarded factions as divisive and potentially dangerous to republican government.

However, by the mid-20th century, when political parties had become well established, political scientists came to view factions mainly as intra-party groups, although the negative bias persisted. For instance, linking the use of direct primaries to multifactionalism in the American Democratic South during the 1940s, V. O. Key blamed factions for sustaining one-party rule, for encouraging favouritism and graft among elected officials and for squelching competition between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' (Key, 1949). Explaining the transition from faction to party in the introduction to his study of party systems, Sartori points out that 'party' has a less negative connotation than 'faction' (1976, 2005: 4), which is still true today. For instance, journalists tend to use the terms 'factions' and 'warring factions' (or the two interchangeably and often within the same stories) rather than 'parties' when reporting on rivalries and infighting between political groups in struggling democracies such as Iraq and Palestine. Scepticism about the usefulness of factions in political life is deeply entrenched not just in Western thinking, but also in Muslim theological writing, where the idea of a 'party' carries negative connotations of factionalism and opportunism and is considered un-Islamic (Steve Negus and Dhiya Rasanoweever, *Financial Times*, 4 January 2005).

### Labelling Factions in Different Spheres

To contextualize and illustrate the problems of conceptualizing factionalism through typologies of subparty groups, I map out and label the different spheres in which factions are seen to operate, as demonstrated in Figure 1. A first step may be in dividing the space into the political and non-political

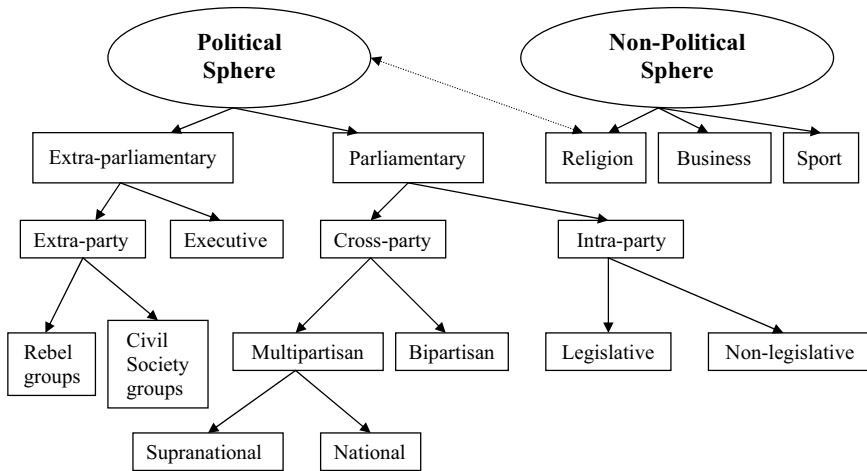


Figure 1. Mapping out and labelling factions

spheres of influence. The media frequently refer to group divisions in non-political organizations as factions; for instance, in business, sport and religion. A sample of business organizations recently described as factionalized includes the Ford Motor Company, BMW and Volkswagen; in sport, Spanish football (Valencia) and British horse racing; and, in religion, the Church of England. To some readers, this dichotomy will seem arbitrary, since religious factional conflicts tend to be highly political or they become politicized. This is illustrated by the sectarian violence opposing Iraq's rival Shia, Sunni and Kurd factions and the Palestinian Hamas and Fatah factions, which are hampering the emergence of democratic politics in these countries, or by the very political character of the Church of England's internal politics over the ordination of women and gay priests, for example. In addition, some of these factions can also be categorized as parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, since they operate at both levels – as political parties but also as militant rival groups that mobilize different groups within civil society and even within families. To this list we could add factionalized groups such as the rebel movement in Sri Lanka, Rwanda's Patriotic Front, Robert Mugabe's Zanu-PF party in Zimbabwe, and so on.

A second step in labelling factions may be to divide the political sphere into the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas and then to subdivide the extra-parliamentary field into factions operating in the extra-party sphere of politics (the Maoist rebel group in Nepal before joining parliament) and factions operating at executive level (the Kremlin under Putin). Meanwhile, the parliamentary category could be subdivided into cross-party and intra-party factions. Cross-party factions can themselves be subdivided into bipartisan (the US Congress in the mid-1990s) and multipartisan (the Russian Duma). Multipartisan factions could be further categorized into national



and supranational factions. For instance, the transnational party federations in the European Parliament (EP), such as the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the European People's Party (EPP), can be conceived as a supranational form of cooperative factionalism whereby MEPs belonging to many different, but ideologically connected, national parties agree to cooperate in EU legislative politics.<sup>2</sup>

The intra-party type of faction is probably the most common and studied form of factionalism in political science. However, this category could be further subdivided into legislative and non-legislative factions (see Figure 1). Well-known political parties containing intra-party factions more or less institutionalized include India's Congress Party and its rival the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Mexico's former Institutional Revolutionary Party (PIR), Britain's Conservatives and Labour, France's Socialists, Italy's former Christian Democrats (DC), Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Prodi's *Sinistra Democratica*, Australia's Labor Party (ALP), Japan's Liberal Democrats (LDP), America's Republicans and Democrats and many parties in emerging democracies. On this map, parties with deeply institutionalized factions, such as the DC and LDP, would feature under both the legislative and non-legislative labels. This is because electoral systems and internal party arrangements motivated LDP and DC factions to decentralize their activities to the grassroots for electoral campaigns, party fundraising and the selection of congress delegates and party leaders.

The point of this exercise is merely to demonstrate the limits of subgroup categories as tools for conceptualizing and explaining factionalism. If faction is to be of any analytical use it needs to be contextualized by juxtaposing an adjective specifying the faction's sphere of operation. Consequently, we can talk about national intra-party legislative factions (LDP, ALP), bipartisan legislative factions (US Congress), supranational cross-party factions (EP), and so on. However, as explained below, this is not the basis on which most typologies of factions have been construed, although Belloni and Beller make the argument in favour of contextualization at the end of their volume on faction politics (1978: 445–8).

### Weaknesses of Faction Classifications and Categories as Analytical Tools

Hume established the tradition of faction classification when he differentiated between two types of groups: 'personal' and 'real'. He asserted that personal factions were 'founded on personal friendship or animosity' (in the small republics of Florence, Venice and Rome) and that real factions were 'founded on some real difference of sentiment or interest' (Hume, 1877: *Essay VIII*). Hume subdivided 'real' factions into factions 'from *interest*, from *principle*, and from *affection*' and opined that, in England, the 'most reasonable, and the most excusable' factions were those dividing 'the *landed*

and *trading* part of the nation' – a line of division that resonates with our contemporary understanding of class cleavages. In contrast, Hume regarded factions of principle as destructive, although in contemporary thinking ideological factions tend to be perceived as less undesirable than factions of interest. But in mid-18th-century England torn by Christian persecution and the separation of Church and State, Hume offered a definition of factions that was mainly subjective, albeit influential, in modern political science.<sup>3</sup>

This said, in his seminal volume on political parties, Duverger followed a different reasoning. Using the terms 'factions', 'wings', 'fractions', 'tendencies' and 'rivalries' interchangeably, Duverger saw the structure and tolerance of host parties to internal diversity as decisive (1951). Factions were mere manifestations of such diversity reflected 'within the party ranks in terms of factions and wings more or less organized'. In totalitarian (or 'homogeneous' and 'exclusive') parties such as communist parties, Duverger claims that 'party solidarity takes precedence over all other bonds' and strict homogeneity is imposed. In contrast, 'restricted' and 'heterogeneous' parties are said to be 'composed of members whose ideas and points of view are not absolutely identical in all their details' and parties are more tolerant towards diversity (Duverger, 1964: 120, 230). In other words, the crucial element in Duverger's thinking on factions is institutional. Political institutions and party organizational arrangements determine the degree to which parties restrict or enable the representation of party diversity.

In the mid-1960s, Richard Rose published an article contrasting the two main British parties – the Conservatives and Labour – in which he identified two different intra-party parliamentary groups: factions and tendencies (Rose, 1964). He defined tendencies as 'stable sets of attitudes rather than stable groups of politicians', which are 'less organised and less permanent than factions', and concluded that 'the Conservatives electoral party [was] pre-eminently a party of tendencies', whereas 'the Labour electoral party [had] been since its foundation a party of factions' (Rose, 1964). Ironically, this situation was reversed in the 1980s and 1990s when the Conservatives became deeply factionalized over Europe under Thatcher and Major, while Labour succeeded in taming its factionalism under Kinnock and Blair. According to Rose, factions differ from the 'ad hoc combinations of politicians in agreement upon one particular issue or at one moment in time and from political tendencies' because factions persist through time and 'are self-consciously organized as a body, with a measure of discipline and cohesion' (Rose, 1964: 106–7, 110–12; 1974: 320). This intuitive dichotomy is not operationalized by Rose, who is silent about how to measure stability, permanence and organization. Since tendencies are defined in terms of time and factions in terms of organizational structure, the boundaries between each type of subparty group are difficult to delineate, making it impossible to discriminate systematically between cases. The key difference between Rose's categories seems to be the degree of institutionalization of intra-party groups within any given party. Hence, factions are strongly institutionalized

groups and tendencies weakly institutionalized groups, which parallels Duverger's reasoning but contrasts with Panebianco's two-dimensional model of institutionalization. The latter seeks to explain the historical development of a certain number of parties by combining the autonomy of parties vis-à-vis their environment and the internal coherence of their organization or 'degree of systemness' (on which more later) (Panebianco, 1988: ch. 4).

The methodological problems of categorization for conceptualizing factionalism became apparent to researchers involved in the International Comparative Political Parties survey (ICPP), a cross-national survey of parties in 53 countries between 1950 and 1962 (Janda, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1993). Taking its lead from Huntington (1965), the ICPP study looked at factionalism through the lens of party coherence, which was defined as the 'degree of congruence in the attitudes and behaviour of party members' and was characterized through two variables: cohesion and factionalism (Janda, 1993). Factionalism was operationalized by coding political parties according to six variables: legislative cohesion, ideology, issues, leadership, strategy and tactics, and party purges. However, the survey revealed that all types of factionalism tended to be interrelated. As Janda noted later (1993), parties containing ideological factions also tend to have leadership factions. It would indeed be surprising if ideological factions emerged free of leaders, given that intra-party actors tend to partition themselves into separate groupings in response to signals from senior party figures with whom they agree and identify and behind whom they align. Leadership is also a difficult variable to disentangle from party purges, since purges are usually the outcome of leaders' reactions to the mobilization of internal dissent.

Categorization also guided Sartori's exploratory chapter on factions in his seminal volume on political parties and party systems, where several hypotheses are raised 'to come to grips with the anatomy of parties' and where a research agenda is suggested (1976: 75). Sartori developed a four-dimensional typology: organizational, motivational, ideological and left-right. Like Hume, he subdivided the motivational dimension into factions from interest and factions from principle, while retaining Rose's tendency 'to indicate the more diffuse, as against the more bounded and more visible, party sub-units – such as the left and right party tendencies' (Sartori, 1976: 74). A long quotation is required to demonstrate Sartori's reasoning:

I shall follow, therefore, the wording of Hume with the understanding that factions of interest subsume two distinguishable referents: Naked *power factions* (power for power's sake), on the one hand, and *spoils factions* (side payment more than power oriented). Hume's factions from principle present a similar problem, albeit a more serious one. The term principle is easily associated today with ideology and ideological principledness. It should be understood therefore, that my fractions of principle include two varieties: *ideological groups*, but also pure and simple *idea groups*, or opinion groups, i.e. groups whose ideas and ideals do not share the other characteristics of the ideological groups. In some respects this distinction is unnecessary. In other respects it is

as important as the one – on which the European literature has long dwelled – between parties of ideology and parties of opinion. (Sartori, 1976: 76–7; 2005: 67–8)

Some of Sartori's labels are puzzling. For instance, a 'side-payment' which he equates with spoils factions is simply a mechanism for settling a bargain between two or more parties. The distinction between 'naked power' and 'spoils factions' seems superfluous given that both relate to the accumulation of political patronage which Zucherman (1979) described as 'factions of patronage'. These are generally understood to be self-seeking groups primarily concerned with the accumulation and distribution of selective and divisible goods, such as party posts, campaign funds, government appointments and contracts, etc. In contrast, ideological factions (or factions of principle) are concerned primarily with policy and agenda-setting. But is there a clear-cut distinction between these two types or is one not the means towards the other? Usually, factions seek representation on party decisional bodies and in government in order to influence policies and decisions.

In Sartori's typology, the distinction between ideological groups and idea groups is unspecified, although idea groups may refer to modern advocacy groups – a view that has resonance in the age of electronic mass communication, where the role of parties as 'channels of expression' (Sartori, 2005: 24) could potentially be exercised through factions. It is not implausible to envisage policy factions becoming the building-blocks towards the construction of 'open-source' parties. By facilitating dialogue between politicians, government ministers, experts, lobbyists and citizens, such factions would have the potential to act as fora for articulating and debating political ideas and for shaping government policies, thus helping to reconnect citizens with political parties.

The main problem with operationalizing factionalism by identifying different features and forms of subparty groups is that many of the selected variables turn out to be interactive rather than separate, as acknowledged by ICPP researchers and by Sartori. The latter recognizes the methodological difficulties in applying his framework and the lack of independence between some of his variables, especially the motivational and organizational (Sartori, 1976: 79). This said, Sartori's contribution to the study of intra-party politics and factions should not be underestimated, and several scholars have followed in his footsteps. For instance, in an article seeking to explain change in European party systems, Hine suggests characterizing factional conflict in terms of three dimensions: organization, coverage and policy/ideology (Hine, 1982). Regrettably to my knowledge, Hine has not returned to this topic of research, although scholars working on factionalism tend to refer to his framework and some have applied it. For instance, in an article explaining the existence of factions of interest in Italy and in Japan, Bettcher adds a dimension (Interest/Principle) to the institutionalization model of Panebianco (1988: 61, Figure 3), which yields a two-dimensional typology of intra-party groups with four categories in separate quadrants: clientele, faction of interest,

tendency and faction of principle (Bettcher, 2005). Bettcher recognizes that parties may experience shifts along the organizational and motivational dimensions, as suggested by Hine, but his descriptive narrative strives to explain dynamics precisely because the argument is anchored in a typology framework which by its nature lacks predictive power and cannot explain change. Typologies and classification schemes are useful tools for exploring concepts and delineating their properties, especially when these imply the interaction between two or more variables to produce a classification scheme such as Sartori's two-dimensional party system classification (Peters, 1998: 17). However, typologies are less useful for understanding dynamics and for explaining adaptation and change.

### Importance of Studying Factional Dynamics

According to Belloni and Beller (1978), dynamics are the most significant aspect of faction politics. The 15 case studies contained in their edited volume demonstrate that there are three different types of factions: factional cliques or tendencies; personal or client-group factions; and institutionalized and organized factions. However, given the great variety of factions in and out of political parties, the editors conclude that if a single unified scheme is to be possible, factions must be defined simply as 'organizational units of political competition', which abstracts out different characteristics and forms of organization, 'without regard to context' (Belloni and Beller: 1978: 447). They suggest that:

[C]ommon characteristics will be determined by the nature of that context: thus, features of the structure, the causes, the functions, etc. of factions will in part reflect characteristics of the organizations of which they are factions. (Belloni and Beller, 1978: 448)

Explaining that 'factions in villages if they exist will be village factions; in Communist parties, factions will be Communist party factions', Belloni and Beller stress that 'what is significant about factions ultimately is not their structural properties but their *activity* and its consequences . . . their dynamics and competitive politics' (1978: 448).

However, to analyse intra-party competition and faction dynamics, we need methods by which to identify factions and to calculate their number and power. Sartori stresses the need to develop such methods, particularly to measure fractionism and to study factions as veto groups, and Taagepera and Shugart acknowledge that no single index can tell how united or how fractionalized a party is internally (1989: 203). However, the effective number of parties index developed by the latter can be adapted to the intra-party arena to calculate the effective number of factions in parties with identifiable memberships (Boucek, 2003a). This measure takes into account each faction's relative size at different points in time using appropriate units of

measurement. Depending on available data for any given party, the unit of measurement may be faction parliamentary memberships (the number of MPs affiliated to each faction), the voting strength of individual factions on party decisional bodies such as party congresses (using motion votes as indicators of factional strength) or on party executives (using individual factions' seat shares) or in cabinet (based on the number and type of portfolios received by each faction) or in legislatures (based on factions' committee memberships and chairs, etc.). While these methods cannot be demonstrated here because of space constraints, the effective number of factions gives operational meaning to the concept of party fragmentation, which is less arbitrary than the one suggested by Lijphart in his study of party systems, which treats each factionalized party as one-and-a-half parties (1999: 69–74).

It is also possible to view factions as veto groups, as Sartori suggests (1976: 80), and to use game theory and coalition theory to analyse the rational behaviour of factional actors and to explain inter-factional dynamics and outcomes in fragmented parties, such as the DC and LDP. However, these are methodological tools, *not* criteria for distinguishing different *types* of factions, as Sartori indicates:

[A]mong the criteria that would have to be added in pursuing a more analytical underpinning, game theory and coalition theory would seem to afford, albeit loosely, the most prominent suggestions. (Sartori, 1976: 79; 2005: 70)

Inasmuch as factions represent voting blocs, games and coalition theory are useful tools for finding out how decisive individual factions can be in controlling outcomes for any party. The structure of intra-party bargaining at different points in time can be revealed by calculating the coalition potential of individual factions of varying strengths using power indices which incorporate the notion of a 'pivotal player'. The power indices developed by Banzhaf (1965) and by Shapley and Shubik (1954) can be applied to intra-party factions with identifiable memberships of varying sizes. Applying these measures in time series can potentially explain how seemingly irrational party decisions may result from maximizing behaviour by individual self-seeking factions (Boucek, 2003b, and forthcoming). Game theory is another useful tool for analysing intra-party dynamics, particularly in bi-factionalized or moderately fractionalized parties where conflicts can be modelled as strategic games between two or three factions each with different strategies (Boucek, 2003c). With these tools, we can extract meaningful explanations of parties' conflict resolution successes and failures. Tools that map out the positions of different factions on different policies can also measure the depth of intra-party splits (Andrews, 2002; Giannetti and Laver, 2005; Hix et al., 2005, 2007), although win-set models are difficult to apply to parties containing more than three factions (Laver and Shepsle, 1996: ch. 12). In sum, all of these methods can be used to study faction dynamics and intra-party

interactions, which may provide substantive explanations for the transformation of factionalism in individual parties.

Does the weakness of categories and typologies of subparty groups as analytical tools mean that the search for a general definition of a faction should be abandoned? Not quite. As a matter of fact, I believe the definition offered by Zariski half a century ago is still valid today and can easily be adapted to produce a general definition of factionalism (1960: 33):

[W]e might define a faction as any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively – as a distinct bloc within the party – to achieve their goals. These goals may include any, several, or all of the following: patronage (control of party and government office by members of the faction), the fulfilment of local, regional, or group interests, influence on party strategy, influence on party and governmental policy, and the promotion of a discrete set of values to which members of the faction subscribe. (Zariski, 1960: 33)

This definition has several advantages. It does not set arbitrary boundaries between different types of intra-party groups. It avoids conceptual overlaps and it makes no normative judgements about the different goals pursued by factions. More importantly, it incorporates the idea of actors' *motivations* – a basic element in explaining behaviour – which typologies regard as discrete properties of intra-party groups. Hence, from my perspective and in parallel with Zariski, factions should be viewed simply as groups within larger groups, which, in this article, I take to be political parties, but could also be political movements, civil society groups, firms, international organizations, etc.

As Belloni and Beller conclude, we should redirect our attention away from the organizational forms of factions towards faction dynamics, since what needs studying if we are to explain outcomes is group dynamics – interactions between factions, host parties and voters – in other words, factionalism and its transformation. Following this vein, I define factionalism simply as 'the partitioning of a political party (or other organization and group) into subunits which are more or less institutionalized and who engage in collective action in order to achieve their members' particular objectives'. Factional objectives may contradict collective party objectives and may change over time in response to new contingencies (new issues, new leaders, new parties, etc.), which has implications for group dynamics and factional cohesion. In addition, the degree to which factions become institutionalized may change over time in response to new incentives (constitutional changes, electoral reform, new party rules, etc.), which may produce new patterns of intra-party behaviour and change the direction of intra-party competition. Depending on their specific design, institutions have the potential to contain factionalism or to encourage its growth. In sum, the political scientists interested in this topic should focus on factionalism as a process rather than on factions as organizational units with predetermined characteristics.



Factionalism is a multifaceted phenomenon which should be conceptualized in unrestrictive terms: that is, as a dynamic *process* of subgroup partitioning, and it is the nature of this process that gives factions their particular characteristics, as explained below.

### Three Faces of Factionalism

Drawing on conclusions from detailed case study research of factionalized parties in mature democracies, in this section I argue that factionalism may acquire different faces in different parties at different times. Moreover, depending on the structure of incentives and on the incidence and importance of internal conflict, it is suggested that destructive cycles of factionalism may occur. Three main faces of factionalism are identified in Table 2: cooperative, competitive and degenerative. Each face is examined in the following subsections.

#### *Cooperative Factionalism*

A factional structure has the potential to increase the aggregate capacity of political parties and to facilitate intra-party cooperation where centripetal incentives exist. By providing a structure of cooperation between separate intra-party groups, factionalism can diversify party appeals and accelerate party integration. To the extent that factions articulate the opinions and policy preferences of separate societal groups and mobilize separate memberships and communities of interests within a single organization, they can play a constructive role in building integrated parties. This type of factionalism often results from a primordial sorting-out process when a democracy or a party becomes established. Political elites and followers with convergent preferences and attitudes, but who belong to separate political groups (but are located on the same side of a salient political cleavage), often emerge as key actors during periods of political change, such as regime change, transition to democracy, party system realignment, party mergers and party splits. A factional structure may have a role to play in enabling these groups to retain their separate identities and memberships during party consolidation and sometimes beyond. In a nutshell, factionalism has the potential to be consensus-building.

Many parties started out as coalitions of disparate groups and fragments. The DC and LDP contained several separate factional alignments at birth. Early DC factions, which included *Cronache Sociali*, *Forze Sociali* and *Parola Nuova*, reflected the diverse groups that, in 1946, gravitated around de Gasperi.<sup>4</sup> These factions retained their identity and autonomy by maintaining separate headquarters, staff and newspapers, even though DC party statutes disallowed the existence of factions (*correnti*). DC factions lived in relative peace during the early years of Christian Democratic rule in Italy,



Table 2. Three faces of factionalism

	<i>Cooperative</i>	<i>Competitive</i>	<i>Degenerative</i>
Factionalism as a process of	Partitioning under centripetal incentives.	Splitting under centrifugal forces.	Fractionalization/segmentation from excessive focus on factional interests.
Factions are	Separate.	Opposed.	Self-serving.
Conditions for existence of factionalism	Transition to democracy. Party formation, splits, mergers. Party system realignment.	Intra-party conflict/dissent/rivalries. Polarized party opinion. Fragmentation-inducing incentives.	Privatized incentives. Clientelism. Machine politics.
Function of factionalism	Consensus building. Aggregates separate groups; blurs cleavages; articulates subparty group preferences and interests; facilitates party consolidation and district-level electoral coordination.	Diffuses conflict internally; facilitates elite circulation; widens voter choice; moderates leaders and policies; empowers party followers. <i>Dangers</i> : Growth in number of factions; factional veto games; fragmented party vote.	Promotes rent-seeking and the exchange vote; structures the division of the spoils; encourages factional jockeying; shifts focus away from party collective goals.
Outcomes	Intra-party harmony. Integrated party. Preservation of subgroup identities in 'big-tent' parties.	Intra-party democracy; balance of internal power; moderate change; party renewal; rejuvenated politics. <i>Dangers</i> : Churning; unstable factional coalitions; intra-party gridlock; policy drift.	Factional capture; instability; decisional stalemate; wasted public resources; corruption → value-destroying brand. Potential party break-up or collapse.
Examples	Italy's Christian Democrats (DC) 1940s–50s; Japan's Liberal Democrats (LDP) 1955–mid-1970s; French Socialists 1970s; Spain's PSOE; Australian Labor (ALP); American 104th Congress.	DC 1960s–70s; LDP mid-1970s; British Labour (1970–80s) and Conservatives (1990s)	DC from late 1970s until implosion in 1994.

thanks partly to de Gasperi's skills in creating a successful mass Catholic party and his centrist approach to governing. In the immediate post-war period, de Gasperi's centrist group acted as a magnet for centripetal competition when the threat of communist subversion seemed plausible.<sup>5</sup> Cooperation was uncomplicated in a moderately fractionalized party whose 'factions behaved like clubs and debating societies' (Leonardi and Wertman, 1989: 92) and whose commitment to the collective endeavour of democratic consolidation outweighed the self-interest of individual factions. However, factional pressures started building up during the mid-1950s. Initially, DC left factions protested against de Gasperi's decision in 1952 to give his faction a grossly disproportionate number of seats on the party executive to compensate for his faction's loss of pivotality under a more fragmented party configuration. However, under his successor, Fanfani, it was the factions on the DC right that mobilized against the leadership in response to Fanfani's 'opening to the left' in the government formation formula.

In Japan, LDP factions are rooted in the 1955 party realignment and merger between the Liberals and the Democrats, whose eight leadership groups coalesced but retained separate memberships. This merger followed a protracted process of inter-party bargaining between all the post-war political parties after the Liberals lost their parliamentary majority in 1953 and the two conservative parties decided to merge when the bargaining context was suddenly transformed by the decision of left-wing and right-wing Socialists to reunite (Cox and Rosenbluth, 1995; and, especially, Kohno, 1992, 1997). This merger had a strong reductive effect on the number of parties and skewed party competition in favour of the LDP, which established itself as the ruling national party in Japan. LDP factions played a role in legitimizing one-party dominance in Japan's nascent democracy by providing a mechanism for internal conflict resolution through factional power-sharing and elite circulation. A factional structure enabled a peaceful rotation of leadership between Democratic leader Ichiro Hatoyama and Liberal leader Taketora Ogata – a plan suddenly aborted by Ogata's death – which ironically helped cement unity inside the new party by blurring the lines between the pre-merger cleavages. A level playing field was effectively established during the leadership contest at the LDP convention in 1956, when powerful politicians from the different factions struck alliances across old party lines. Thereafter, centripetal competition within the LDP was driven by the need for factional district-level electoral coordination under the single non-transferable vote in multi-member districts (SNTV), which enabled factions – indistinguishable on policy grounds – to satisfy their own self-interests without endangering party unity. Faction membership was key to LDP office-seekers' electoral success in terms of endorsement, financial support and career advancement. Moreover, opposition failures to displace the LDP from office reduced the credibility of threats of defection by individual LDP factions, whose payoffs were far higher inside the party than out. However, these incentives did not prevent factional infighting, as evidenced by the

bitter struggle for control of the LDP in the late 1970s between faction leaders Tanaka and Fukuda, which created centrifugal forces inside the LDP.

Other parties that experienced similar phases of cooperative factionalism include the French Socialist Party (PSF), especially under the leadership of François Mitterrand, who was instrumental in bringing the different strands of French socialism and non-communist left-wing politics under a single umbrella in 1971. The PSF was an amalgamation of various left-wing parties and clubs born in the 1960s (Sawicki, 1998). The history of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in Spain is also rooted in factionalism. Although factional struggles crucially undermined the effectiveness of the party's anti-Franco activity, these same struggles were eventually responsible for producing the vital party renovation that enabled the PSOE to compete successfully with other political parties after the death of Franco in 1976 and subsequently to dominate Spanish politics (Gillespie, 1989). However, its main rival, the Union of the Democratic Centre (UDC), which governed Spain from 1977 to 1982, disintegrated under the weight of its factions in the mid-1980s.

Other examples include the Liberal Party of Canada, which traces its roots to the fusion of pre-confederation splinter parties and reform groups such as the *Clear Grits* of Upper Canada (mainly in English-speaking Ontario) and the *Rouges* of Lower Canada (mainly in French-speaking Quebec).<sup>6</sup> Conflict-diffusing institutional arrangements have prevented this cleavage from becoming factionalized inside the Liberals,<sup>7</sup> although abuse of such rules has periodically polarized the party and created costly scandals of political corruption. In Australia, factional cleavages lay behind the formation of political parties, especially the Australian Labor Party (ALP) formed in 1901 from the various colonial Labor parties and the Protectionists and Free Traders who coalesced in 1909 to form the Liberal Party (McAllister, 1991, 2002). In the 1980s, under the leadership of Bob Hawke, factionalism became a strong feature of the ALP, which fulfilled a useful strategic role. The ALP contained a highly organized system of institutionalized factions that maintained separate fee-paying memberships, held regular conferences and elected their own party officials. This factional structure was useful inasmuch as it 'enable[d] the ALP to project as wide an electoral appeal as possible while still maintaining its organizational integrity' (McAllister, 1991, 2002). Hence, factionalism facilitated ALP integration and intra-party management. In contrast, unity within the Liberal Party of Canada was achieved through the party's confederate structure, which grants significant authority to the party leader in managing intra-party conflict (Mulé, 2001) and relies on a decentralized 'franchise model' of organization to diffuse conflict within the organization (Carty, 2004, 2005).

Cooperative factionalism can take a bipartisan form and be a force for good if it reduces political extremism and facilitates cross-party cooperation by enabling members from opposing parties to moderate the stances of their political leaders. Under Downsian party competition, bipartisan factionalism can shift leaders' positions towards the ideological centre, as was the

case in the American 104th Congress (Kolodny, 1999), when a faction of moderate/liberal Republicans (the *Tuesday Group*) struck an alliance with a faction of moderate/conservative Democrats (the *Blue Dog Coalition* mostly from the South) after the 1994 election, when the Republican Party appeared to be moving to the right under new majority Speaker Newt Gingrich, who was keen to implement his radical 'Contract with America' (Kolodny, 1999). In sum, evidence shows that factions with different characteristics (for instance, ideological factions in the American Congress versus district-level electoral factions within the LDP) can be involved in similar dynamics.

It is important to add that there is also an element of human psychology in the partitioning of a party into separate factions and which may reflect cultural norms. In large groups and organizations, people with common traits, strong family ties, powerful community loyalties, or simply common interests and convergent preferences are driven, sometimes spontaneously, to partition themselves into separate groups. Political parties are no exception, especially big-tent parties under two-party dynamics where there is a premium on party unity. Humans are tribal social beings who try to fit in with the group. However, as individuals they have a natural desire to differentiate themselves from the mass. For politicians, factional affiliation can fulfil this need for identity, particularly in 'big-tent' parties, where lack of recognition by voters and co-partisans can be problematic for ambitious office-seekers. In some cases, for instance in Japan, where political office is often handed down from father to son, group allegiances based on family ties and local networks of political patronage can be the driving force behind intra-party factionalism. In sum, as long as it facilitates cooperation, factionalism can be good for parties and for democracy. However, cooperative factionalism can be difficult to sustain in the long run because centrifugal incentives may change the direction of intra-party competition, which can threaten party unity.

### *Competitive Factionalism*

The fractionalization of a party into competing factions, after the formative stage, is often associated with centrifugal competition resulting from internal disagreement or the effects of institutional incentives (or both). In contrast to cooperative factionalism, which indicates coalescing cleavages and fusion, competitive factionalism indicates fragmentation and splits (Table 2). While factional competition is not necessarily a bad thing, it can be difficult to manage. Divergent factional preferences and polarized party opinion create splitting pressures and loosen intra-party ties as factions become opposed rather than simply separate. In addition, too much fragmentation complicates decision-making and the enactment of coherent policy packages.

Evidence shows that political parties often become polarized because of deep-seated issues that are difficult to integrate within party ideology. This type of factionalism can be episodic but destabilizing for parties and for

governments. For instance, in Britain, trade has been such an issue for Conservatives who divided over the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, over 'tariff reform' in 1906 and over Europe following the signature of European Union treaties such as the single European Act in 1987 and the Treaty of European Union in 1992. Although, in the late 20th century, British Conservatives managed to avoid a terminal split, virulent factionalism under John Major was responsible for the scale of their defeat in 1997 after 18 years in power. But European integration has factionalized many other national parties and the issue usually bubbles up to the surface during EU referendum campaigns as prominent politicians on different sides of the cleavage set up separate groups to galvanize support for their respective campaigns. Other divisive issues at the core of parties' ideology include nuclear disarmament (a totemic issue for British Labour) and the introduction of market forces in the provision of public services (British Labour Party, Germany's Liberal Democrats and Christian Democrats), Post Office reform and the introduction of a consumption tax (Japan's LDP) and the governing formulae in DC-led multiparty coalitions in post-war 20th-century Italy (Christian Democrats and Socialists) to name only a few. Intra-party dissent and policy disagreement seldom create mass factional exit because of high start-up costs for new parties, especially in majoritarian democracies where single-member plurality rule (SMP) sets high barriers to entry. This is illustrated by the failures of the British anti-Europe Referendum Party and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) to gain Westminster seats or by the formation of bipartisan factions and subparty caucuses within the US Congress instead of new parties. Moreover, intra-party disagreements tend to disappear as dividing issues fade away from the political agenda, although this type of factionalism can store up problems for the future.

New cleavages can also factionalize existing parties. For instance, it has been claimed, after a decade of multiracial democracy in South Africa, that a cross-cutting class cleavage is beginning to cut across the racial cleavage, raising the possibility that the African National Congress (ANC) may split into rival factions (García-Rivero, 2006). In Russia, once sovereignty disappeared as a unifying issue in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the two grand coalitions – the 'democrats' and 'conservatives' – in the Russian parliament split into multiple factions with quite different political and economic platforms (Andrews, 2002). The outcome was the replacement of a quasi-two-party structure by a quasi-multiparty structure based on 14 parliamentary groups called *fraktsii* or factions. Such extreme fragmentation created a chaotic party system and cycling majorities, which made it almost impossible to pass a coherent legislative programme in the Russian Duma (Andrews, 2002: esp. ch. 5).

If party fragmentation is not kept in check, competitive factionalism may produce negative outcomes that threaten party unity. It is well acknowledged that electoral systems which allow intra-party competition were responsible for institutionalizing factionalism inside the DC and LDP. By making

faction affiliation effectively mandatory for office-seekers, the mechanical and psychological effects of the multiple-preference vote in pre-1992 Italy and SNTV in pre-1996 Japan played a significant role in sustaining factions within the DC and LDP. Given that co-partisans were allowed to compete for votes in individual districts during general election campaigns, and given that DC and LDP faction leaders controlled candidate nominations, list placement (under Italy's old preferential voting system) and the distribution of campaign funding and government contracts, co-partisans competing for the same pool of votes in districts where their parties stood to gain more than one seat, rationalized that joining a faction was the best way to maximize access to these electoral resources (see, for instance, for the DC: Galli and Prandi, 1970; Hine, 1993; Katz, 1980, 1986; Marsh, 1985; Sartori, 1976; and for the LDP: Cox, 1997; Cox and Rosenbluth, 1993; Kohno, 1992, 1997; and for both the DC and the LDP: Boucek, 2003a, 2003b).

This said, factional competition was more moderate inside the LDP than the DC, because district magnitude and LDP internal arrangements provided centripetal incentives and kept fragmentation in check. Moderate-to-low district magnitude (averaging between three and five seats) forced the LDP to optimize its nomination and vote division strategies in each district – a process which was coordinated by faction leaders (Cox, 1997: 51) and that helped create an optimal number of LDP factions (Kohno, 1992, 1997). Factional coordination prevented an excessive dilution of the LDP vote and put downward pressure on the number of observable factions, which fluctuated between five and seven between 1957 and 2000. In contrast, in Italy, there was no built-in mechanism to moderate the competition for district votes, which meant that DC faction leaders came to see the maximization of preference votes as a harbinger of their personal power within the party. Nevertheless, in Japan, pressures to build large campaign war chests intensified factional rivalries and promoted self-serving behaviour (Cox and Rosenbluth, 1993). Hence, a key objective of electoral reform in Italy and Japan in the mid-1990s was the reduction of faction-driven money politics. While the DC imploded before the new election system came into force in Italy, in Japan this objective has been partly realized. New rules on party financing and the workings of the strongly majoritarian mixed-member electoral system, which replaced SNTV in 1996, have deprived LDP factions of much of their *raison d'être* as campaign funding vehicles and has narrowed the scope for co-partisan competition in nomination and district vote division (although money-related scandals remain a problem).

Party organizational arrangements have a big role to play in the management of factionalism. The contrast between the DC and LDP is instructive here, too, because DC internal arrangements compounded the fractionalizing effects of preference voting, whereas LDP rules had the opposite effect. Although factions in both parties gained representation in party executive bodies and in cabinet in proportion to their size, the DC failed to put limits on the principle of factional apportionment, which regulated the selection

of delegates to regional and national party congresses, the formulation and adoption of the party programme, the choice of party leader and the composition of DC-led coalition governments and cabinets. These arrangements created centrifugal incentives, as illustrated by the setting-up of new factions or the splitting of existing ones by power-hungry senior politicians eager to maximize particularistic benefits for their factions. In contrast, the career structure of LDP office-holders prevented excessive fragmentation and instability because it tied politicians to their factions. Since career advancement for MPs was slow and contingent upon faction membership, rank and seniority<sup>8</sup> ambitious politicians were reluctant to leave their factions for fear of losing career and electoral benefits linked to faction membership. Moreover, by limiting the terms of office of its party president to two, the LDP avoided divisive leadership battles over succession and guaranteed some degree of elite turnover. These internal arrangements, combined with opposition failures to dislodge the LDP from office, have so far saved the LDP from destructive factionalism despite periodic bouts of factional infighting. In the late 1970s, a four-faction bloc led by Fukuda refused to override a vote of no confidence in the government. In the mid-1990s, factional defection triggered a nine-month loss of office for the LDP, which had to form a three-party coalition in order to regain office. And during the lower house election campaign in 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi deprived 37 rebel MPs of the party nomination for failing to support a government privatization bill (although the LDP won by a landslide).

In most markets, including politics, competition is good because it sharpens performance. Evidence suggests that competitive factionalism can improve party performance, policy-making and intra-party democracy. By articulating different policy positions, factions can indicate to party leaders which policies are acceptable or which are not (Bowler et al., 1999) and they can facilitate coalition-bargaining under minority government (Laver and Shepsle, 1996, 1999; Maor, 1998).<sup>9</sup> Factions have the potential to broaden choices for voters and party followers by providing a mechanism of internal differentiation between leadership candidates and their respective agendas. Factions can also moderate party leaders' policy stances and promote the nomination of moderate politicians in legislatures and governments. Moreover, a factional structure can empower party grassroots, activists, politicians and the rank and file by giving them a stake in party decision-making. Factions can provide group members with the means to communicate with their leaders and hold them to account. In addition, competitive factionalism may offer long-term management solutions to leaders of complex parties that monopolize government for a long time. By providing a method of elite circulation, factionalism can rejuvenate democratic politics in sub-competitive party systems. However, without adequate safeguards, factional competition can become excessive. Hence, to keep factional pressures under control, leaders need to be vigilant to this risk and to listen to the concerns of dissenting groups within their parties.



*Degenerative Factionalism*

Perverse incentives and mismanagement can cause factionalism to degenerate and, in a worst-case scenario, may destroy a party. The DC is an illustrative example of degenerative factionalism that was a key contributing factor to the party's disintegration in 1993–94 in the wake of judicial investigations into political corruption and the major party realignment triggered by the post-Cold War fall of communism. There are three main dangers attached to giving factions official status as legitimate units of intra-party representation and decision-making: excessive fragmentation, privatized incentives and faction embeddedness.

Delegating power to factions may encourage them to grow, and failure to put a check on this growth risks creating collective action dilemmas inside parties. The fragmentation and diffusion of power complicates the extraction of majorities and may transform factions into veto players. This is what happened to the DC as a result of a leadership decision, in 1964, to adopt a system of internal representation guaranteeing factions shares of government and party power and significant swathes of political patronage in proportion to their size. This rule change was in response to protests by left factions who were disproportionately represented in the DC executive. However, this created incentives for fragmentation as new factions formed and existing factions split. At its peak, at the 1982 National Congress, the DC contained no fewer than 12 institutionalized factions competing for the support of delegates (a fourfold increase in 35 years). By increasing the pivotal coalition power of individual factions, this fractionalized structure made inter-factional alliances mandatory on all sides of the DC spectrum in order to reach agreement by majority voting during motion votes and within separate party decisional bodies. The problem was that these inter-factional coalitions were unstable because of jockeying by leaders of minority factions on the right and centre-right of the party (such as Andreotti, Piccoli, Colombo and Fanfani). The latter would reposition themselves simply to put their faction inside the winning coalition, thus increasing their personal power and position within the DC and payoffs in the next government.<sup>10</sup> The outcome was cycling and non-concurrent majorities in different party fora, which created party decisional stalemate, policy inertia and government instability,<sup>11</sup> and deprived reform-minded DC leaders, such as Zaccagnini in 1976 and de Mita in 1982, of strong mandates for their programmes of party reform.

Dividing the spoils along factional lines risks privatizing incentives. Self-serving behaviour is encouraged by focusing attention away from the party towards the narrow interests of faction leaders. Although the LDP fell prey to similar patterns, the case of the DC is particularly instructive because its factional system rested on complex networks of client–patron relationships and on extensive reservoirs of selective goods which created churning, waste and corruption and embedded factions on the ground. Factional politics



dictated the size and composition of Italian cabinets to such an extent that new appointments and additional government portfolios were often created simply to satisfy the particular interests and demands of DC faction leaders even if these posts carried no particular responsibilities. The practice of politicians exchanging private goods for votes became widespread during the early years of DC dominance as the DC's powers of patronage grew thanks to the 1960s economic boom and the 1970 decentralization programme, which transformed the regions into large depositories of economic power and lubricated the factional system in the grassroots. Faction leaders turned division of the spoils into a fine art. For instance, they would carve out contracts in public construction projects – especially Post Offices and motorways<sup>12</sup> – and in other government agencies and state-holding corporations and public agencies, such as savings banks and broadcasting, where top-level appointments were made strictly on the basis of factional affiliations.<sup>13</sup>

The search for the personal vote plays a big part in embedding factions on the ground. By pushing factions to decentralize their operations, the exchange vote created a myriad of vertical networks of political patronage in local communities, which multiplied opportunities to divert public resources. Complex political machines became integrated into DC partisan activities although these machines acquired different organizational forms in the South and North of Italy (Allum, 1997). As self-seeking factionalism took hold, corruption scandals became a regular feature of DC governments from the mid-1970s, culminating with the 'clean hands' investigation in the early 1990s which led to DC collapse. Extreme factional division of the spoils is unsustainable in the long run because state resources are limited. In Italy, they began to shrink in the mid-1970s because of economic crises and the gradual (albeit slow) privatization of public services just as the DC was starting to lose its grip on government. Eventually, this shrinkage became a source of DC factional quarrels, as illustrated by Andreotti's decision, in August 1989, to eject the left factions' representatives from major public bodies in broadcasting and industry in order to replace them with Socialists following his secret power-sharing deal with PSI leader Craxi.

Factional capture risks triggering a destructive cycle of factionalism, and parties that monopolize power for a long time are particularly exposed to this risk. In the fullness of time, the single-minded pursuit of factional goals creates public bads, such as unaccountable governments and wasted public resources, which can transform a party into a value-destroying brand. Unable to reform and redefine itself under the shocks of judicial investigations and post-communist party system realignment in the early 1990s, the DC lost support at an alarming rate in successive elections and finally imploded under the centrifugal pulls of its factions during its last congress in January 1994.

## Conclusions

Following a review and critique of the study of factionalism in political science, I have suggested in this article that conceptualizing factionalism through categories of different types of intra-party groups is problematic because underlying variables with which to characterize factions are difficult to dissociate and often turn out to be interactive. Consequently, I suggest that it is preferable to take a non-exclusive view of factionalism and to focus attention on group dynamics. Factionalism should be seen as a general process of subgroup partitioning and it is the nature of this process which gives factions their specific characteristics. This means that factions characterized differently under traditional schemes (for instance, ideological factions versus factions of interest) can act similarly – cooperate or compete – and that factions characterized in the same way can act differently. For instance, factions of interest can be cooperative (as illustrated by the district-level electoral cooperation of LDP factions), but also competitive (as rivals in the selection of party leaders and policy programmes and in the distribution of ‘pork’) as well as degenerative (if incentives are excessively privatized). However, there is nothing predetermined about these processes and, through institutional reforms or astute leadership, it is possible for party factions to move from a mode of intra-party competition to one of cooperation.

Case study research of factionalized parties in established democracies suggests that factionalism is a multifaceted phenomenon which can transform itself over time. Three main faces of factionalism have been identified in this article: cooperative, competitive and degenerative. Cooperative factionalism, often associated with party formation and regime change, is essentially consensus-building. By facilitating the aggregate capacity of parties while preserving subgroup identities, a factional structure may be instrumental in promoting intra-party cooperation and in building integrated parties. In contrast, competitive factionalism represents the splitting of existing parties into factions that are opposed rather than simply separate. Such factional competition resulting from intra-party disagreement, dissent, polarized party opinion and too much fragmentation exerts centrifugal pulls inside parties. As long as it is managed, competitive factionalism can be a force for good. It can widen voter choice where it is restricted (for instance in sub-competitive party systems). It can improve intra-party democracy; for instance, by facilitating debate and communication between leaders and followers and by giving dissenters a voice. Factionalism can provide a structure for internal power-sharing and conflict resolution. However, too much factional competition and fragmentation can destabilize parties and create decisional stalemate. Without effective leadership and institutional checks and balances to limit fragmentation, competitive factionalism risks running out of control.

Degenerative factionalism occurs when factions become too numerous and self-seeking and operate mainly as channels for the distribution of patronage.

The resulting privatization of incentives risks producing factional capture and triggering a destructive cycle of factionalism that may end in party disintegration. The DC is a relevant case for inductive theorizing on factionalism because it demonstrates the full range of conditions that produce factional capture and transforms factionalism from a process of cooperation to one of competition and finally to degeneration. Ultimately, the key to maintaining intra-party harmony is to design suitable incentives to align factions with overall party interest and to maintain an effective overall party leadership. By seeking to identify the conditions that allow factionalism to emerge, grow and degenerate inside political parties, this article may stimulate collaborative research among scholars interested in intra-party politics and factionalism. It would be a bonus if evidence derived from case study research of political parties in mature democracies was corroborated with evidence from political parties in emerging democracies.

### Notes

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- 1 In Chapter 2, Raphael Zariski presents a summary of empirical studies of party factions during the 1960s.
- 2 I thank Simon Hix for confirming the validity of this idea in an informal conversation.
- 3 Hume claimed that the people may regard factions as ‘factions of principle whereas for the priests who are the prime movers, they are really factions of interest’, hence self-regarding. In contrast, factions from affection are ‘those which are founded on the different attachments of men towards particular families and persons, whom they desire to rule over them’, hence more akin to contemporary clans, networks, fiefdoms and machine politics.
- 4 These groups included elements of Christian socialism and Catholic integralism, intellectuals from the Milan *Guelfo Movimento*, leaders from the *Popolari* party of the pre-fascist era (whose last leader had been de Gasperi), various Catholic student and trade union associations, and networks of parish priests, academics and former members of the Resistance (Leonardi and Wertman, 1989; particularly chapter 2).
- 5 De Gasperi’s consensual style of politics also helped create a cross-party coalition government to prop up the new Italian republic in 1946.
- 6 This cleavage remains salient in national and sub-national politics in Canada as well as inside the Liberals, as demonstrated by the enduring strength of the separatist movement in Quebec since the 1970s and the electoral success of the provincial *Parti Québécois* and federal *Bloc Québécois* and, as demonstrated by the Liberals’ fiercely contested leadership election convention in November to December 2006, when one contender, Michael Ignatieff, tried to differentiate himself from his rivals by endorsing the concept of Quebec as a nation. He was eventually installed as Liberal leader in December 2008.

- 7 In Canada, non-majoritarian mechanisms neutralize intra-party conflict. Federalism, strong regional parties, traditional alternation of prime ministers between Canada's two linguistic communities, a cabinet portfolio allocation system sensitive to regional interests all contribute to mediating conflict between Canada's regions and separate communities of interest. Other contributing factors include the strong Liberal grip on Canada's extensive patronage system and its confederal structure and intra-party arrangements which grant considerable autonomy to local associations.
- 8 MPs had to be re-elected at least six times to be promoted to cabinet and four times to obtain a non-cabinet post (Khono, 1997: 92–6).
- 9 Maor argues that inasmuch as factions represent semi-autonomous decentralized units of authority, they can offer bargaining advantages to senior politicians because they provide mechanisms for the diffusion of dissent (Maor, 1998). Laver and Shepsle (1996, 1999) argue, assuming parties care about policy and that factions constitute distinct groups of politicians with distinct tastes and preferences, that factions can provide parties with strategic advantages in coalition-bargaining when governments are being formed or dissolved. Then, so long as political competition is not unidimensional according to the portfolio allocation model, senior politicians within parties containing two or three factions have more flexibility (than those in less diverse parties) because they can significantly change the party's overall policy profile by nominating different politicians as spokespersons for particular areas (Laver and Shepsle, 1996: 249).
- 10 This self-serving calculus explains why Fanfani and Andreotti shifted positions on the issue of the governing formula during the 1970s. Fanfani shifted from left to right, while Andreotti shifted from right to left.
- 11 DC-led governments broke up on average every nine months, often because of DC internal politics, factional defections and jockeying by faction leaders such as Fanfani and Andreotti (who was Prime Minister in no less than seven different governments).
- 12 Segments of motorway were personally associated with individual faction leaders. The Arezzo section of the Rome–Florence *autostrada* was associated with Fanfani, one section near Avellino with de Mita, one highway south of Rome with Andreotti, and the *autostrada* from Rome to L'Aquila with Lorenzo Natali. The partially constructed *autostrada* in the North was named 'PiRuBi', based on the names of its factional sponsors Piccoli, Rumor and Bisaglia.
- 13 The most useful reservoir of patronage was the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), Italy's biggest state-holding company set up under Mussolini in 1933, which had 600 holding companies covering iron and steel, shipbuilding, telecommunications and electronics, engineering, road and motorway construction, city planning, the national airline Alitalia, national broadcasting and most of the shares in Italy's three largest banks.

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FRANÇOISE BOUCEK is a Teaching Fellow in Politics at Queen Mary University of London. Her research focuses on political parties and intra-party conflict, including the comparative study of factionalism and its impact on single-party dominance. She is currently writing a book on this subject for Palgrave entitled *Factional Politics: How Dominant Parties Implode or Stabilize* and co-editing a volume for the Routledge ECPR Studies in European Political Science entitled *Dominant Parties: Concepts, Measures, Cases and Comparisons*.

ADDRESS: Queen Mary University of London, Department of Politics, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, UK. [email: f.boucek@qmul.ac.uk]

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