

Interview with Philippe C. Schmitter: A Titan of Comparative Politics

Junichi Kawata*

Philippe C. Schmitter was born in Washington, D.C. on November 19, 1936. He received his baccalaureate degree with honors from Dartmouth College. He is a graduate of the Graduate Institute for International Studies of the University of Genova, and took his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley.

Since 1967 he has been successively assistant professor, associate professor and professor in the Politics Department of the University Chicago, then at the European University Institute (1982–86) and at Stanford (1986–96).

He has been visiting professor at the Universities of Paris-I, Geneva, Mannheim, Zürich and Fudan, and Fellow of the Humboldt Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation and the Palo Alto Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences.

He has published books and articles on comparative politics, on regional integration in Western Europe and Latin America, on the transition from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe and Latin America, and on the intermediation of class, sectoral and professional interests.

His current work is on the political characteristics of the emerging Euro-polity, on the consolidation of democracy in Southern and Eastern countries, and the possibility of post-liberal democracy in Western Europe and North America.

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Professor Philippe C. Schmitter was Professor of Political Science at the European University Institute in Florence, Department of Political Sciences until September 2004. He was then nominated Professor Fellow at the same Institution. He is now Emeritus of the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute. (A few words have been added to the Website of the European University Institute.)

This article invites you to author's two interviews with Philippe C. Schmitter, Emeritus Professor of the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute, Badia Fiesolana, Firenze, Italy. First interview was conducted on 25 June 1984 and second one was held on 2 October 2002. Both were done at his office at the European University Institute.

Needless to say, Schmitter is one of the most original political scientists of his generation. His previous scholarship has continuously opened up new fields in comparative politics. My first encounter with him was about thirty years ago, when I had an opportunity to attend his special lecture on the theory of neo-corporatism presented at the Symposium on "State and Society in Western Europe and Latin America" sponsored by Yale University Council of West European Studies and Council on Latin American Studies at Yale University in July 1980. In 1982 I brought out Japanese translation of his "Still the Century of Corporatism?" (*The Review of Politics*, vol.36, no.4, January 1974, pp. 85-131.).⁽¹⁾

In summer 1984 I had a chance to interview with Schmitter at the EUI. This interview attempted to shed some light on his intellectual roots and to show how he became interested in "neo-corporatist" phenomena, his motive to write "Still the Century of Corporatism?" and his

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view on “neo-corporatist” arrangements in the advanced industrial countries. First interview would be titled “Schmitter’s Neo-Corporatist Theory: Its Development and Future Perspective.”

Second interview was conducted to clarify his position in controversial arguments over neo-corporatism or interests-intermediation politics in these two decades after my first interview and to find his most recent work and academic interest in his own words.

Schmitter told me in the second interview as follows: “I am innovative compared to an awful lot of people, but I am not innovating. I am simply finding ideas in places you forgot to look. I am not innovative, but what I am good at, probably I know a number of languages and I read a lot and I have a way of connecting things with the ideas. The ideas come from what I think is a very primitive but very useful device. That is, what I think is important when you have an area like that and you are not quite sure what the parameters are, you ask yourself, what are the basic dimensions?”

I should be grateful if the readers would find our dialogue illuminating Schmitter’s wide-range and long-perspective academic concerns and activities. He has been still running at full speed on the horizon of comparative politics.

FIRST INTERVIEW

KAWATA: Would you please tell me your initial reason for studying and researching corporatism?

SCHMITTER: I went to Geneva in 1959 and there I studied international law, international economics, and diplomatic history. Then I went to Berkeley to study for PhD in Political Science. At Berkeley I

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ended up working with Ernest Haas. Somewhere in the earlier part of my life when I was an art student, I had lived in Mexico for about a year and half and learned Spanish and had decided that I wanted to go to Brazil. I don't know why. I just had a fixation on Brazil. So, when I returned to the United States, I worked with Haas as a research assistant and this research was motivated by theoretical work from the so-called neo-functional approach to regional integration. And, at the same time, I was preparing myself to work on Brazil. Eventually, I wrote several articles with Haas on various aspects of Central and Latin American integration and how they differed from European integration. In the course of these pieces, there were two things that combined to orient me towards corporatism.

The first is the neo-functional approach to regional integration. An example of this approach was the strategy following Jean Monnet, but you find it earlier in the writings of David Mitrany and others. It involves a peaceful transformation of international system which uses combination of functional international organizations plus interest groups which canalized a sort of conspiracy against the established state of sovereign national states. It is not an anarchist conspiracy, but a non-governmental conspiracy against the system.

Now you may or may not know my personal background as a Quaker. I am a pacifist. I had a brief service in the NROTC, a training program for naval officers at Dartmouth College and a lot of problems because of that. I have always been interested in what you might call peaceful forms of political struggle, particularly ones that transform the political system. And in neo-functionalism I found one

possible mode of transformation. Moreover, that theory assigns a particular importance to interest groups — importance which is quite different than that in the orthodox literature of pressure groups or the orthodox literature on international relations.

At the same time, I was a student of Professors Seymour M. Lipset and David E. Apter, both of whom were then working on modernization in the Third World. So the two notions came together. Basically, what I did in Brazil was to study its political modernization from the perspective of organized interests rather than political parties. But this was connected with that earlier work I had done on regional integration — which means that more than most people who work on comparative interest groups or parties, I tend to pay more attention to international factors.

After I came back from Brazil, I spent some time in Berkeley to write my dissertation and took a job at the University of Chicago⁽³⁾ in 1967. Later, somewhere in the early 1970s, I decided to take my preoccupation with corporatist theory and go to Portugal which, of course, at that time was still an authoritarian regime. So I went there for a year and wrote a monograph on Portuguese corporatism⁽⁴⁾ and got involved in writing other things about Portuguese political development. When the Portuguese Revolution broke out in 1974 that put me in the midst of subsequent process of democratization.⁽⁵⁾

About this same time, I went to back to Switzerland and taught at Geneva as a visiting professor. I think that I more or less consciously decided to finish working on Latin America and to shift my attention to Western Europe, especially Southern Europe although I continued to serve as a sort of “go-between” for Europe-

ans and Latin Americans.

KAWATA: It is quite interesting for me to know your academic backgrounds to understand and evaluate your job in depth. I have found out that you had such a background for writing a very influential article “Still the Century of Corporatism?” Would you tell me more direct motives for writing that article?

SCHMITTER: Well, you have to distinguish between the motives that I had in writing something and the motives people have to read it and use it. These may have no connection whatsoever. I had agreed to write an essay before I left the United States for the journal *The Review of Politics*. All the other articles of that special issue were on corporatism in Latin America. Now, I had always a very strong opinion as the result of my experience in Brazil and Argentina that corporatism was not the product of any particular political culture or normative ideals that are indigenous to that part of the world. To me, it was the result of a choice by policy-makers that was imposed artificially upon these societies and not something that came out of Latin America’s political culture and imposed itself “naturally” because of social values.

I had completely forgotten that I promised to write that article. I was teaching international relations in Geneva and working on the first of my articles on Portugal. The editor, Frederick Pike, reminded me gently of my promise. Frankly I did not know what to do. All my books on the subject were left at Chicago. So, I decided that its main theme would be the contrast between the state corporatism I had studied in Brazil and Portugal and neo-societal corporatism that, I began to realize, had been emerging within Western Europe.

The basic idea was to juxtapose the two types of corporatism while pointing out their similarities. The Portuguese had been pointing this since the 1950s and 1960s. They had a corporatist system which was the product of the Fascist interwar period, but if you look around Western Europe, you could find similar arrangement in countries that were not authoritarian at all.

The associative structures of Sweden, Norway and Austria look very similar in spite of their different and much more competitive party systems. But I did not have my own sources to demonstrate this because I was in Geneva. So I went across street to the Public and University Library in Geneva and tried to find the necessary sources. And it turned out, somewhat by accident, that Switzerland is the perfect place to do this because (unbeknownst to me) during the 1930s Switzerland was the site of just such a debate. It was a very liberal country and yet it had begun to experiment in the corporatist arrangements. They had the ideological problem of explaining how they could be promoting from below what Mussolini next door was promoting from above, i.e. by the state. In Switzerland there were four or five ideologues or theorists of Swiss corporatism during this period. When I went to the Library, I could tell that no one had taken out their works for thirty or forty years. Now they are known about a little bit because of my work, but the Swiss themselves are unaware of them or prefer to forget about this period of their political life.

So I began using this long-forgotten debate and developing a counter-initiative set of ideas. The article ended up juxtaposing authoritarian (or state) and societal (or liberal) corporatism and both

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were contrasted with the reigning orthodoxy in political science, namely, that capitalist development brought about liberal pluralism. None of these conceptual notions had anything specific to do with the oil shock that occurred at the same time, although it certainly had its independent effect upon the two “genetic” models.

Within the discipline of political science, European scholars had begun to be aware that the unilateral importation of American models to understand their polities was less and less credible. The shift began with differences in political parties and moved on to systems of interest representation. It became part of a broader paradigm shift. Young European political and social scientists were rebelling against the hegemony of the American model, and corporatism was part of that rebellion. Quite accidentally, as far as I am concerned, since that was not my original purpose.

KAWATA: By quite accident? In general the settings of the proliferation of corporatist literatures around 1973 or 1974 were conventionally understood as the general crisis of economics or of the state around that time. I think it is not false. But, if we wish to read “Still the Century of Corporatism?” in distinctive way, your attention to Swiss is quite suggestive. I understand your main theme in that article is a juxtaposition of different kinds of modern corporatism including Latin American and Iberian corporatism. You sharply distinguish yourself from earlier theorists of corporatism. In the midst of many contemporary theorists of corporatism, how do you place yourself in the whole spectrum?

SCHMITTER: I suppose that two things are most distinctive about my approach. The one concerns my previous work on authoritarian re-

gimes. This makes me more sensitive to the differences between authoritarian or state corporatism and liberal or societal corporatism because I had studied the Portuguese, Brazilian and Argentine systems first. Most of my counterparts have only looked at Europe.

Second, I suppose that I am much more sensitive to the ways in which international factors influence domestic institutions and domestic structures, given my background in Vienna and Berkeley.

What happened was that several articles came out about at the same time as mine: Howard Wiarda⁽⁶⁾ on Latin America, Gerhard Lehmbruch⁽⁷⁾ and Paul & Winkler⁽⁸⁾ on Europe. Leo Panitch⁽⁹⁾ subsequently jumped on the bandwagon. These scholars came to corporatism from many different perspectives. My interest went back to a long-standing concern with pluralism and interest intermediation. So, mine was less of an attempt to build the concept into a broader range theory such as Marxism or Conservatism. I have been more convinced than most of these who write about neo-corporatism that it has its own “middle-range” dynamic and not just product of previous cultural or economic factors. For me, there is a very important degree of political autonomy in how the system of interest intermediation operates.

Corporatist arrangements are not simple instrumental choices. Nor are they “cultural products.” They are affected by political culture, but they are not produced by political culture. On the other hand, they are not simple “functional” things you can create when you need them. It is that instrumentalist assumption which you sometimes get from neo-Marxists such as Leo Panitch.

I have been pushing for a long time, along with Wolfgang

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Streeck, a sociologist of organizations, this emphasis on the autonomy of interest associations. When they gain some autonomy both from their members and from the state, they begin to develop a dynamics of their own which can not be explained by either the stage of capitalist development, or the nature of political culture. They are not only shaped by member interests, but also shape and distort these interests.

Something which I and Wolfgang have been stressing all long is that you can not study this behavior as a dependent variable. It is also an independent variable. If you take most of the neo-Marxists, for them neo-corporatism is product not just of capitalism but of capitalists. They thought of it as a very self-conscious instrument which the capitalists have used to subordinate the working class.

On the contrary, I have always been of the opinion that corporatism by itself can not tell you which classes are going to benefit from it. It is quite conceivable to me that corporatist arrangements are more threatened by capitalists than by workers. I have always said that this depends on the conjuncture. In certain circumstances, the corporatist arrangements will be beneficial for capitalists and, in another circumstances, they will be more significant benefits for workers. We cannot predict from the arrangement itself who initially created it and, sometimes, it is the class that supported it which does not benefit from its unintended consequences.

KAWATA: We can see your distinctive perspective for neo-corporatism in your mention. The distinction between your notion and neo-Marxists' one of neo-corporatism is very persuasive. You stress the autonomy of organized interests. Your concept of neo-corporatism as a

“system of interest intermediation” reflects this problematique. Later you deliberately replaced the term of “interest representation” by “interest intermediation”⁽¹⁰⁾ as a key concept to understand corporatist arrangements. Let me know your reason to change the concept in detail?

SCHMITTER: Well, I think that is very obvious. The concept of representation in political theory has been a very ambiguous and relatively new term — three or four hundred years old at most. Basically, as it was further developed in the American literature and, particularly, in its pluralist variant. It implied that actors, particularly individual citizens, always knew what their interests were and they would seek to join together to articulate those interests. In a sense, the associations were seen as passive receptuals. They were seen as merely formal locations where actors who already had interests would come together to act collectively and try to influence policy.

Now, I thought that two things were wrong with that. First, it did not recognize the independence of the associations or organizations which were doing the collective articulation. They very often had to tell the members what their interests were. It simply is not true that the capitalists or workers know what their interests were having received this information from social structure or from general societal norms. Interest groups have their autonomy vis-à-vis their members and they can use it to teach their members what their interests are.

Secondly, in order to pursue longer-term collective interests, associations had to breach differences between short-term and longer-term interests. The implication of the pluralist “passive” con-

ception was that interest politics was always condemned to be short-term and myopic.

Under certain conditions — particularly when corporatist structures are accorded their organizational monopolies, hierarchical orderings, etc. — associations can pursue interests which are not simply some total sum of the perceived interests of their members. They have something to add to the political process. You can have a model of interests politics, which presumes that the actors and the system know what their interests are. And the organizations of interests are just simply putting those together trying to find common denominators. Even more potentially significant is the extent to which interest organizations can go further and actually control or “govern” the behavior of the members. So you can say that they not only influence the interests of the members but also that associations can control their behavior. That comes with the incorporation of interest associations into the structure of the state. They not only make policy in a much more integral way than they do in pluralist or pressure group systems but they also become co-responsible for the subsequent policies, for implementing them and for insuring that their members will comply with the policies chosen. It seems to me obvious that for a long time in some countries trade unions have been in the business of not merely representing workers’ interests, but also of controlling workers’ behavior. They enter into contracts that insures the subsequent behavior of workers which will be compliant with regularly negotiated contracts whether bi- or tri-laterally.

In some countries, most obviously Great Britain and the United States, the power of trade unions to do this is very limited. But, by

and large, in the corporatist systems of central Europe and Scandinavia, unions have been in the business of insuring compliant behavior by their members in exchange for policies that benefit them.

That became a major theme in our “Organizing Business Interests”⁽¹¹⁾(OBI) project because the central question we were asking in that project was whether business associations (either employers’ or trade associations) were involved in the same process as trade unions. Have they begun to control collectively investment behavior, pricing behavior, waging setting, the use of technology, etc. by their members? If and when that happens, interest associations on both sides of the class divide will have become very different than in the classical “passive” model of representation. Professional associations have been doing this in Europe since the early middle ages. In its most extreme form, such organizations of class, sector or profession form “private interest governments.” So, in order to capture those two changes, I think that it is important to use the new concept of “intermediation.”

KAWATA: Well, how do you foresee the future of neo-corporatist arrangements?

SCHMITTER: I think that there are four core problems that face contemporary corporatist arrangements. The one every body is now sensitive to is the vulnerability of these arrangements to the business cycle. I had forgotten about the business cycle, perhaps because of Keynesianism and the notion of an advanced and stabilized capitalism without plausible alternatives. This is also true for most Marxists. We all assumed that the business cycle was somehow broken by Keynesian macro-economic arrangements. That is obviously not

true. Corporatist arrangements are still vulnerable to it but in paradoxical ways. So, some cases have been strengthened by a downturn; others by an upturn. There is a whole literature about whether or not corporatism is a so-called “fair-weather product,” something which only works when the system is generating surpluses which can be divided easily among bargaining partners so that nobody will lose and those who win more will not win too much.

There is another set of problems that are independent of the business cycle. Highly corporatist countries generate contradictions caused by its centralized nature. There is a tendency over time in this system for wages to become more equal across sectors and status groups, and this sets up tension between different groups within classes as well as tension among capitalists over the benefits of greater flexibility in the labor market. Globalization tends to resolve this tension in favor of granting large, international competitive firms greater flexibility — and of absolving them from the constraints of corporatist agreements.

What has been observed in a number of countries, Austria as well as in Sweden and the result of Scandinavia, are great pressures towards more decentralized form of corporatism in which the bargaining is not between the main interests represented by peak association of capitalist and labor, but by more depressed and specialized regional and sectoral associations.

The third type of problems has been emphasized by people like Claus Offe.⁽¹²⁾ This emphasizes the extent to which existing corporatist arrangements are threatened by a shift among wide publics in political conflict away from functional and class-defined issues to-

wards style of life, ecological, pacifist and other kinds of issues. Over these issues, corporatist associations are usually split so that the trade union movement, for example, in Germany and elsewhere is divided over issues like atomic energy and gay marriage. The idea is that the Western polities are shifting their axis of political conflict from the traditional Left-Right continuum to a more multi-polar and cross-cutting spectrum that divides people along new types of cleavage. Most importantly, many of these new issues have a territorial rather than a functional component. That is to say, where you live and who your neighbors are becomes more important than whether you are a capitalist or a worker. Pollution issue is one good example. There are also stronger inter-generational cleavages according to age groups.

So, if it is true that the Western polities are shifting their axis of political conflict away from the functional issues which the corporatist systems were more or less designed to deal with towards non-functional-based issues which these systems are not so capable of coping with, then you get the emergence of single issue movements and new political parties. Presumptively, what is happening is that corporatist arrangements will become increasingly irrelevant because the main issues over which people are struggling are not going to be decided by trade union bargaining with employer associations, but by a more complex process of pluralist pressure politics among single-issue movements, and newly created parties. I, personally, am less convinced of this argument, but it is frequently advanced.

The fourth problem is related to the whole question of legitimization and, particularly, with legitimization according to the perspec-

tive of liberal democracy. Even if the first three were not true, corporatist arrangements would still in the long term face the problem of legitimating themselves, i.e. of justifying why such formal organizations exist, how decisions are made by them, and how to distribute benefits and their costs.

Modern democratic theory has long been silent on these subjects at best. It has not really been revised to account for obvious empirical developments. And the basic assumptions of liberal democratic theory are against corporatism. Almost all of these theories are individualistic. They presume that individual citizens are the only relevant actors. But corporatism deals with organized collectivities.

Secondly, most democratic theories assume that decision-making systems are based on elections and parties, and on making decisions by something called majority rule. Corporatist systems do not make decisions by political parties and do not make them by majority rule. They involve an extremely complicated system of bargaining among organizations weighting influences and making compromises by exchanging trade-offs. The big question in the realm is whether democratic theory can and will be changed to account for and justify corporatist practices. I do not have the answer, but much of the discussion about “governance” seems to be precisely relevant.

There are signs that, in certain countries, already at the level of the citizenry and at the level of ideologues, people are already beginning to think about an “organized democracy” of post-individualistic and post-liberal arrangements that are less sensitive to political party competition and majority rule. If that happens, we may see in next decade a new form of legitimization for corporatist arrangements

that could be called “democratic corporatism.” Up to now, one can talk seriously and convincingly about democratic corporatism. Democratic theory simply does not have a secure and valued place for most of its arrangements. So these are four very serious problems for the future of corporatist arrangements.

I would add a fifth one which is more relevant to those countries that do not yet have them. My suspicion is that it has become increasingly difficult to establish corporate systems *ex novo*. For that I think two reasons. The first is the changing role of the state. I did base partly this on observations drawn from my experience in Italy over the last two years. What the Italians did in the so-called “Accòrdo” of 1984 was to attempt to lay the basis for an enduring-style of corporatism. This depended, however, on satisfying a rising volume of demands upon the state for its initial establishment. If you look at the history of previous corporatist arrangements, they began precisely in order to keep the state out of particular aspects of class relations and only later and gradually included fiscal policy and other things such as welfare policy. This was also true of the Swedish, the Austria, and the Swiss arrangements, etc. All started as deliberate attempts to prevent direct state regulation of wages, and prices or investment policy. Over time, the Swedish, Austrian and even the Swiss state got involved in other issues such as welfare promotion which also seem to get their parliaments but only when the subsequent changes required direct parliamentary approval.

What I see now in Italy and, I think, Spain and Portugal in a new kind of corporatism where the role of the state is initially much greater than it was in previous cases. This means that the

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cost of corporatism has risen and it also means that the need for public revenues has been much higher at the initial stages. Therefore, it is bound to be more politically controversial.

The other problem, ironically, is one created by us, i.e. by those who have written about corporatism. Actors are now much more aware of what they are doing than they were in the past. The literature on corporatism has entered into the decision to create or maintain such arrangements. It is much easier to enter into an arrangement when you do not think is corporatist. Now, the higher level of intellectual awareness by trade union and business association leaders makes factors of timing and sequence more salient — and that makes them.

KAWATA: It was quite interesting for me to have your talk, and I would conclude by saying that you will offer the greatest promise for the future of theoretical development in comparative politics. I deeply appreciate such a wonderful time you have shared with me.

SECOND INTERVIEW

KAWATA: I am very glad to have an opportunity to interview you again. It continues to be a special privilege for me to talk with you, to learn about your academic works after our 1984 interview. Then you showed me three perspectives on the future of neo-corporatism in future. First of all you stressed that the visibility of neo-corporatist arrangements depended on the matter of business-cycle, something that neo-Marxists like Leo Panitch and Bob Jessop had neglected. A second possibility you mentioned was the likelihood that the corporatist arrangements or bargaining would be more or

more decentralized and move from bargaining between national peak associations representing social classes to the intermediate or meso-level of negotiations involving economic sectors or sub-national regions. And the third possibility was that neo-corporatist arrangements would become increasingly restrained by purely political factors, independent from the business-cycle.

SCHMITTER: I should have put it differently. The problem with regard to neo-Marxist interpretations is that they simply did not understand the implications of new corporatist arrangement for class relations. This stemmed in part from their deeper rejection of the very idea of class compromise, especially among those who considered themselves revolutionary Marxists but more analytical Marxists continued to insist — as they had initially — that neo-corporatism was simply imposed by the capitalist class who used their control over the apparatus of the state to bring about centralized and comprehensive bargaining between capital and labor. Hence, for them, neo-corporatism had to be an intrinsically biased arrangement that disfavored the interests of the working class. By now they must know that this is not true — useless one continues to insist that their “true” interest lie with a revolutionary transformation of capitalism constituents. The empirical evidence clearly shows that where class relationships are embedded within neo-corporatist bargaining structures, there prevails a more balanced distributions of benefits not only between social classes but also economic sectors. The greatest proof lies in fact that it has been capitalists not workers who have recently defected from neo-corporatism. Workers and workers’ organizations — trade unions — have done their best to defend them in most instances

and they continue to do so this day — when and where they can.

KAWATA: What do you think about the business cycle and the impact of globalization on neo-corporatism?

SCHMITTER: The business cycle instinct to capitalism, of course, changes the power basis underlying these arrangements. So, capitalists are primarily interested in them only when the cycle is high, employment is full and this tends to generate worker militancy, wage increases and inflationary pressures. Correspondingly, labor is more favorable when the cycle turns down. So there is an intrinsic problem with perpetuation of such arrangements due to the differential impact upon the relative power of the bargaining actors. But, quite independent of this, globalization and increased international competition have made capitalists less and less interested in corporatism, and more and more interested in its reverse, ie. “free collective bargaining at the plant or firm level” under pluralist auspices.

First they walked out of, refused to enter, or rejected comprehensive agreements similar to those in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Austria. Then, they attempted to move bargaining to the level of economic sectors. And, where possible, they descended to the level of individual firms. Their eventual objective — where possible — has been to eliminate collectively negotiated contracts, a situation that prevails for most of the labor force in “pluralist” systems such as that of the United States. Where the balance of organized class and sectoral interests permitted it, the preference of capitalists was to get rid of neo-corporatist arrangements because they were perceived as limiting the flexible exploitation of labor necessary to compete in the more liberalized and globalized marketplace.

Nothing could have more dramatically demonstrated that neo-corporatism had never been such a capitalist trick and that there were very important reasons why a well-organized working class would prefer it as a means for ensuring greater job security, protecting a higher level of insurance against social and economic risk and simply resisting pressures for a decline in wages and working conditions.

Academics promptly lost interest in neo-corporatism and many predicted that it was of declining importance and might even disappear completely. To the pressures of globalization and the decline in inflationary pressures (due in large part to the importance of cheaper goods from China and the other Third World countries) were added significant changes in the ideology of the state itself, namely, the growing hegemony of neo-liberal economic theory and the rejection of Keynesianism. We, students of neo-corporatism, tended to neglect the importance of ideology and the dependence of neo-corporatism on some sort of Keynesian approach to advanced capitalism and concentrated our attention on organizations, whether or social classes or state agencies. We never considered the possibility that neo-liberal ideology would become so hegemonic that it would manage to capture the program of Social Democratic or Labor parties and even trade unions.

KAWATA: Has “neo-corporatism” been already dead? Or, did it have its own cycle?

SCHMITTER: I admit that I personally became quite uninterested in neo-corporatism, perhaps because I implicitly accepted the argument about its demise. I think now I was wrong. I should have remem-

bered my previous argument that corporatism has its own cycles — roughly on a twenty-five year basis. I had earlier written an article with the title “Le corporatisme est mort, Vive le corporatisme!” imitating what the French used to say when one king dies and it replaced by another king. So what I said then was that one particular variety of corporatism is dying, but it would eventually return in another guise. And this is what has happened, first in the Netherlands and Ireland in the early 1980s and, later, in several Scandinavian countries that had previously rejected it. There was a marked revival of neo-corporatism, not of course in the United States and Great Britain where it has never taken root, but in other European countries and even a few Latin American ones.

KAWATA: Keeping an eye on the “organizations” and “associations” which liberal democratic theory based on the notion of individuals or voluntary collective action found it difficult to grasp, you have successfully continued to proposed an alternative, unique corporatist theory in response to globalization, hyper-capitalism, and neo-liberalism. In last interview you nevertheless predicted that neo-corporatism would be increasingly challenged by “new social movements” arising from environmental or ecological problems. How has this kind of movement changed the party system, electoral arrangement, and nature of neo-corporatism?

SCHMITTER: I did not see it then, but I did predict that such a transformation would eventually be forthcoming. This was guided by the following hypotheses. With the increased salience of these new issues, the fundamental patterns of cleavage would change from conflicts between social classes to conflicts between producers and

consumers or between people who live in different locations, e.g. those who live downstream and those who live upstream from some source of pollution — in other words, between insiders and outsiders. One likely possibility is that these cleavages — which are not just environmental but also rooted in gender and other political causes such as peace and human rights — would cut across pre-existing social classes and status groups and therefore undermine their ideologies and programs. Political parties would have a very difficult time dealing with them because their members and followers would be internally divided. New parties would emerge where the electoral system did not prohibit them, e.g. Green parties, anti-immigrant parties based on the distinction between national insiders and foreign outsiders. More saliently, since these new parties have only limited appeal at the fringes of politics, all political parties would decline in credibility and membership and various social movements and civil society organizations would fill the vacuum.

I think we all now recognize that the 1980s were a period of fundamental shift in the composition of conflict within advanced capitalist society. One idea advanced by Claus Offe was that this would lead to the “definitive” death of corporatism because these new movements: (1) were obviously based on different cleavages and (2) were rooted in interests and ideals that were much more difficult to organize into the sort of singular, monopolistic, hierarchical organizations that provided the basis for previous neo-corporatist arrangements. They are much more spontaneous, non-bureaucratic, oriented towards direct political action and diverse in their proposed solutions. In other words, new social movements would naturally

gravitate toward the pluralist rather than the corporatist model. Even if you did still try to incorporate them into the bargaining process, this would have the effect of displacing the centrality of capital and labor interest that had always been the bedrock of neo-corporatism. So, as Offe argued, the emergence of new social movements would effectively eliminate it.

My idea — following the cyclical hypothesis — has been that these movements will change the nature of corporatism, but not eliminate its existence. Over time, many of these groups will become less like movements and more like associations. They will adopt permanent and bureaucratic structures. They will have more normal and passive members than they do at the beginning. And they may even reach agreements among themselves to form organizational hierarchies and specialized niches of representation. New forums and sites of neo-corporatist policy-making will emerge that (1) include consumers, ecologists, feminists and various other groups, and (2) these arrangements will switch their focus and incorporate new issues, losing their fixation with the conflict between capital and labor and so-called incomes policies that was their substance during the 1970s and 1980s.

KAWATA: Was the outcome different from how you expected it would be?

SCHMITTER: Yes, in one regard. Countries whose organizational structures for representing capital and labor were pluralist, e.g. Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland, began experimenting with and sometimes even institutionalizing national-level corporatist mechanisms.

The most famous case occurred in Netherlands after 1982 when

class representatives signed so-called Wassenaar Agreement. It has subsequently been repeated, although I gather that it has recently faltered. That agreement became a sort of model for the rest of Europe for a while and the Netherlands — having been an economic basket case in the 1970s — suddenly emerged with the lowest level of unemployment, the highest level of part-time work, lowest rate of inflation, one of the highest growth rates while sustaining a very comprehensive system of social welfare. While the Wassenaar was credited with much of this superior performance, it also gradually changed its composition to include consumers associations, women's groups, and other interests representatives inside its corporatist bargaining system. So, the result is not just a bargain between capital and labor, but a more complicated and multi-dimensional agreement between associations and movements that can speak for a wider range of interests. The same evolution has occurred in Ireland during the 1990s.

KAWATA: Is your idea of “private interest government” applicable to new social movements?

SCHMITTER: Apparently, although I did not think so initially. In many European countries (the Netherlands is a pioneer in this field), firms and associations sign agreements with the environmental groups and with the state to behave in certain ways with regard to a particular river or with regard to a particular threat of pollution. They are creating a kind of quasi-government in the environmental arena based on these agreements which, of course, themselves have a relatively autonomous internal structure and even have the capacity to fine members that misbehave — not to mention, the sanction of public

disclosure. These are recognized by the state but they operate pretty much on their own. Behind such developments, there is a code word: namely, the idea of “governance” rather than “government.”

When Wolfgang and I wrote that article,⁽¹⁴⁾ we did not have at our disposal the concept of “governance.” Or we might have called it “private interest governance” rather than “private interest government.” And since then, “governance” has become fashionable at all levels of policy-making from the European Union to the national and sub-national — even to the local and municipal. Everyone is talking about governance and usually adding the prefix “good” to it. It would seem that it is in the nature of modern politics that many of the policies demanded by citizens cannot be implemented satisfactorily without the participation, if not of individual citizens because that is impossible, but of organizations that provide the information and are capable of controlling the behavior of their members. That is essentially what we called a “private interest government.” Now, they are called “governance arrangements.”

So the state enters in the sense that it provides information to an agenda and a framework for action. It may even transform some of the agreements reached consensually between public and private actors into public law and therefore enforceable by courts, but this is not always necessary since some of them may be self-enforcing. Basically, it is a format that encourages groups representing different citizen interests to negotiate with each other and state agencies and, hopefully, to reach agreements by consensus.

KAWATA: Do you think that your concept of “private interest governance” is much more suitable for the European countries than for

other industrial advanced countries?

SCHMITTER: It cannot be an accident that most of the examples I can think of come from continental Europe, or that it is a favored theme of the European Union. The reason for this probably has to do with the kinds of intermediary interest organizations which developed there over time and by tradition. The practice, incidentally, in German is called “Staatsentlastung” which means to offload policy responsibilities from the state to semi-public institutions.

This is a long German tradition but other countries have followed it more recently. The idea is that there is an important role for the state but the actual administration and even in some cases, the making of policies, should be transferred to non-state associations. This has become a “policy habit” on the European continent, although less so in France, and even less so in the Southern Europe where the notion of “service publique” is stronger. But these countries are quickly catching up.

The “governance” theme provides an ideological cover for much of this kind of activity — without the need for a heavy German concept. That is partly because civil society in these countries is much better organized and has strong and monopolistic organizations, so when you have an environmental group in these countries. And there tends to be not as much competing environmental groups as there is in the United States and they tend to have resources. Sometimes, of course, they get official recognition and material resources from the state. They are not all private and voluntary organizations, but are sort of semi-private due to their privileged access and state contribution.

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So the state decides which organization deserves to represent, say, the environment. It may provide some funds to get the organization started and to continue to subsidize its functioning. The state may even introduce an ear-marked tax, for example, an environmental levy, some of which goes to financing the organization. It is not at all uncommon that out of these agreements come resources for those who enter into them in the form of quasi-taxes or something like that. That is continental Europe.

It is obvious that this kind of behavior is very antithetically opposed to the neo-liberal model, which, in its most extreme form, does not even recognize any actors other than individuals, firms, and the state. So the whole area that I have called “interest intermediation” is, as far as neo-liberals are concerned, an unnecessary and dangerous practice. Associations acquire autonomy from their members and the agreements they reach created additional policy rigidities.

So, in the present struggle right now, Germany has emerged as a model country for this sort of behavior and it is not surprised that American neo-liberals keep complaining about German rigidities — especially in the labor market. And these regulations and controls definitively affected the behavior and, hence, the competitiveness of German firms. According to neo-liberal ideology, this should make them less efficient and innovative and create higher levels of unemployment and lower rates of job creation. In the allegedly “better” Anglo-American variety of capitalism, firms are free to pass the cost onto someone else. So it looks like their firms which are more efficient and capable of gaining market share. And the respective per-

formance of pluralist vs. corporatist economic systems in the 1990s seemed to confirm these expectations. On the continent of Europe (or, better, of the northern edge of the continent of Europe) such costs are internalized by a combination of public regulation and bargained negotiation.

KAWATA: Continental European model! Good! By the way, what kind of the form will the problem of the legitimization take in such an organized “post-individualistic” democracy? Is that the Third Way indicated by “governance?”

SCHMITTER: The legitimation of neo-corporatism has always been a problem and that interferes with its becoming a “model” to be emulated. It has always had to disguise itself under another label due to its unfortunate association with Fascism. Nobody likes to use the word, although it has acquired a reasonable academic respectability. Politicians and general public ignore it. In all my wanderings to different countries and conferences, the only people who are manifestly content with its practice are the Austrians — and they disguise it as “Social Partnership.” And even there it has become increasingly controversial. Jörg Haider and his so-called Freedom Party owe much of its success to criticizing it and the “cartel-like” situation it has perpetuated between the two leading parties.

It may take some time before “organized, post-individualistic” democracy finds its proper legitimizing formula, but it will come eventually — if, as I suspect, its policy performance and compatibility with capitalism prove to be at least as good as pluralism and neo-liberalism. In the meantime, “governance” will have to do. It is a respectable word.

KAWATA: Does the term of “governance” connote the democratization of corporatism?

SCHMITTER: I definitely would not call it “democratization.” It is just a conventional ideological “covering term,” at least in Europe. Its advantage, so far, is that it means quite different things to different people — and still sounds good to all of them. So, when politicians in the United States talk about “good governance,” they are usually picking up the initial meaning attached to the term by the World Bank where it means non-corrupt exercise of power based on the assumption that civil society organizations would be less corrupt than state agencies. This has little or nothing to do with democracy — especially since virtually none of the participating organizations either practice citizenship or are accountable to it. In Europe, “good governance” involves the systematic incorporation of organized interests into policy-making and implementation, focusing primarily on class- and sector-based associations of capital and labor and, more recently, of representatives from social movements. Corruption is not the issue: concentration in the pursuit of consensual solutions is — and that does have greater democratic implications.

I cannot say much about the situation in Japan. The “classic”⁽¹⁵⁾ evaluation — the one by T. J. Pempel and K. Tsunekawa — is that Japan has “corporatism without labor” — something sounds like an oxymoron to most students of it. Still Japan looks like a very well-organized society, but it is not clear to me how much of this “order” is rooted in associations. It also has a single party dominant government and one of the most extraordinarily centralized politics on the face of the earth. That combination is not familiar to me, al-

though it suggests that macro-level “national” corporatism might be possible, but not at the sub-national (regional, provincial, municipal) levels where there is insufficient autonomy and discretion to make the investment worthwhile.

KAWATA: The interpretation of Japanese governments is in dispute, but detailed discussion is not possible here. Well, assuming that Japan would be “as is,” tell me more about the differences and similarities of “a very well-organized society” between Europe and Japan.

SCHMITTER: Let’s say there is a similar pollution problem in some location, somewhere in both Europe and Japan. In the former, it might become the object, an independent arrangement approved by the state in which associations representing firms, workers, consumers, local residents and environmental groups would be convoked and encouraged to reach a “governance” arrangements that might also include a role for these organizations in monitoring the results and even sanctioning deviance. In federalist cases, say in Germany or Switzerland, this might be established at several levels or arrangements with. Perhaps an inter-level coordination mechanism to deal with spill-overs and externalities. Elsewhere, say, in France, Greece or Portugal the best one might hope for would be a national government.

For comparative purposes, the Netherlands might be a good country to look at. Admittedly, it is not as large in population or area as Japan, but does have a very high population density, has to worry a lot about water and pollution, and has a very well-organized civil society. Which helps to explain why it has been a pioneer in the development of local environmental pacts? In other words, it

demonstrates that a polity may be territorially centralized, but functionally decentralized. So that, if you are talking about school systems, water use, sewage distribution or garbage collection, the local level becomes operationally determinant. These matters, within national and supra-national guidelines, are, by town or country, councils and other kinds of functional units. The same is true of much of Scandinavia.

So when you see a European country that looks on paper to be as centralized as Japan, as soon as you start studying its practical policy problems you discover it is not so centralized. My impression of Japan is that it is very centralized in both territorial and functional terms and that may limit the potential for such meso-corporatist arrangements.

KAWATA: Do we have to take account of other dimensions when we give consideration to the topic of centralized or decentralized government?

SCHMITTER: Yes. But first we should distinguish between two strands of what Americans call “liberal.” It is very important to understand that modern democracy is not only democratic but also liberal. And the American system is more liberal than democratic. Which means that it is more orientated around the idea of limiting government by checks and balances and making sure that large majorities do not overwhelm minorities — especially minorities owning productive property — rather than empowering citizens as a whole to use public power to achieve collective goals. Which also explains why Americans seem so obsessed with “rights” that are considered indisputable and inviolable. A less liberal and more democratic system would be

rather different. Its conception of “rights” would be more substantive than formal, i.e. rights to do something rather than rights to be protected from something. “Liberal democracy” is not an oxymoron, by any means. But it is the product of a rather accidental coincidence in British history that was subsequently transmitted by colonialism to the United States, Canada, Australia and other Commonwealth countries.

That individualistic vision subsequently got transformed into something called pluralism, when American political scientists began to realize that permanent organizations had emerged and largely displaced individuals as the effective citizens in liberal democracies. Its basic assumption is that these organizations behave no differently than individuals, hence, there is no need for a fundamental revision of democratic theory—just a modest extension to include what were originally called “pressure groups.” One starts with individuals with their many different interests and adds organizations that also have many different interests, and they all compete with each other to influence public policy. The outcome is about the same—provided that the competition among interests is fairly conducted. A corporatist conception of democracy introduces a major change in the paradigm by asserting that organizations are not the same aggregation of individual interests. Not only do they have interests of their own, but they play a major role in informing individuals of what their interests (and passions) are or should be.

KAWATA: American political scientists know the trend of “organization-ization,” and they use a concept like “the privileged position of business” for expressing this trend, don’t they?.

SCHMITTER: Yes, and I suspect you are thinking of Charles E. Lindblom.⁽¹⁶⁾ That is a slightly different version of pluralism — a more critical one. It says that there are a multitude of groups but they are not at all equal in their capacity to influence politics. Lindblom even inserts the state as a significant actor normally captured by business interests: whereas, most American pluralists never even mention its existence. The government (not the state) is simply an arena within which the multiplicity of interests compete with each other and which subsequently registers (and implements) the winning outcome. Lindblom admits that the state actually intervenes to influence (and not just register) the outcomes and that it is usually beholden materially and ideologically to the interests of capitalists, but he does not endow it with a “corporate” interest of its own, nor does he argue that it often helps some groups to get organized and makes it more difficult for others.

There is a very famous statement which I have used once or twice by E. E. Schattschneider⁽¹⁷⁾ who was one of the more original thinkers of American political science. And he says, the problem with the pluralist world is that it is a choir of self-interested persons that sings with an upper class accent. Charles Lindblom is repeating this observation that was made, I think, already in 1930s.

KAWATA: How much is the recently fashionable “institutionalism” useful to explain the macro tendency, European or American, towards a very well-organized arrangement of societal interests?

SCHMITTER: As you know, there are historical institutionalists, there are sociological institutionalists and there are rational institutionalists. I believe you are referring to the last category. They would

have us believe that all institutions are optimally rational choices that minimize transaction costs and distribute burdens fairly — as they also presume markets operate when demand and supply reach an equilibrium. Everything I have been saying here and elsewhere, implies that these basic premises are not just misleading but wrong. They cannot provide the base — the micro-foundations — for a science of interest politics (which is what I have been trying to do since I entered the business over forty years ago). They make assumptions about individuals, their autonomy in forming preferences and engaging in action and their sources for obtaining information about their preferences that refer to a world that I do not recognize. That is to say, persons (and, for that matter, organizations that cannot be reduced to the simple aggregation of individual actions) in my world have historical memories and socially embedded identities. They are offered some opportunities and prevented from choosing others by the state. They live in a social and political world which is already populated with political organizations and already distorted by state agencies.

Now, that is not to say that a book like Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965) is not extremely insightful. For certain purposes it is a reasonable first approximation. But, basically, it is a model of how associability would work in a world which does not exist. No one chooses to join or not join an association in the rationally individualistic way he describes. Any empirical research would immediately reveal this. But having his parsimonious model can be initially very useful in helping to identify the factors that operate in the "real-existing" world with its centers of social power,

collective identity and political coercion.

Historical institutionalism comes much closer to the mark (although it lacks the elegance and parsimony of economic reasoning). So I suppose that, if you have to label me, I should be called a practicing historical institutionalist.

KAWATA: I know you have developed the concept of “private interest governance” to substitute corporative interest intermediation for pluralist’s interests “representation.” By the way, how do you think the relationships between “private interest government” and the community, the market, or the state? Concerning the market, we have to take the trend of neo-liberalism into consideration. With respect to the community, communitarian value or “social capital” should be considered. In relation to the state, Lowi’s “sponsored pluralism”⁽¹⁸⁾ should be taken into examination. Tell me something about your ideas.

SCHMITTER: Well, what Wolfgang and I in that article were trying to do is to suggest that no one model for the production of “order” works. So a model based entirely on market principles, societal norms, or state, coercion will not suffice. What works in reproducing order in modern capitalist and for that matter contemporary democratic societies is some kind of interaction between market and state. And that interaction varies considerably — hence, the notion of “varieties of capitalism” and “types of democracy.”

Now the concept of “social capital” has been around for some time and is an implicit critique of the crude liberal or totally individualistic model of society. It begins with the notion that people are born and socialized into different social locations and they ac-

quire different social resources. Robert D. Putnam picked up the term from James S. Coleman and has attempted to relate it to a wide range of “good” political practices such as trust and moderation.⁽¹⁹⁾
⁽²⁰⁾

What we were trying to do was to assert that there were for not just three models that interrelated to produce a modern democratic capitalist society. We added “associability.” Associations are not communities. Some of them may be, but most are more instrumental and, therefore, behave very differently from primary ascriptive units of family, work, and location. They are certainly not explainable only by market phenomenon and rational choice. That is my critique of Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action*. He claims to use the logic of market to explain associability. It does not work. There are all kinds of associations out there which you cannot possibly explain on Olson’s terms. Too many people join and too many people support them, too many people give them money, too many people act when should be “free-riding.” Why would anyone “rationally choose to” “save the whales” or “oppose vivisections?” Nor can this sort of behavior be explained in terms of community norms and it is definitely not the result of state coercion. The state may give associations or movements some subsidies or accept them as partners by recognizing them — but that does not explain why they emerge in the first place and subsequently recruit supporters. So that was what we were trying to do, to emphasize the significance of associative order not as the best model and certainly not as the dominant model.

Now, obviously the next step is to try to explain differences in the mix of the “ordering mechanisms” that make up order in spe-

cific countries. What factors produce a more liberal democracy with greater domination of market type mechanisms as opposed to a “non-liberal” or “de-liberal” or “corporatist” country? In Continental Western Europe the logic of associability is markedly more powerful — as has been the role of the state in producing and re-producing order. We discussed this above. And when certain arrangements do not work well, collapse or are challenged, they shift in participants and take on new subject matter. The underlying basic logic of bargaining and consensus formation remains. A private government or governance system continues along with the usual public one.

KAWATA: I understand that the logic of associability still works quite powerfully. In the democratization process, which you have been continuously studying with Guillermo O'Donnell and Juan Linz, the transition from “sponsored authoritarianism” to “sponsored pluralism” must be successfully attained with efforts to make the populace concerned more civic. It might also require more liberalization of private activities in the market. Does the consolidation of newly born democratic countries need such a polyarchical liberalism?

SCHMITTER: Good question. I am just writing about this right now. I will first have to decompose it and then give you an answer by trying to put these elements back together.

First, the question is whether or not democratization is in some fundamental way (conceptually, hypothetically, empirically) the same in Eastern Europe as in Southern Europe and Latin America. Many, many people, especially those who were specialists in the study of communism said “No.” “Communism was different, therefore, post-Communism will be different” was their (implicit) slogan.

There was no reason to believe in analogies between, say, post-authoritarian Brazil and post-totalitarian Poland.

Second, the temporal context within which the regime changes in the East took place is one in which there was a multi-dimensional simultaneity of major transformations — so much so that they even like to use the word “revolution” for their transformations. These countries changed not just their political regimes, but also their economic institutions, their international alliances, their distributions of social status and wealth — all at the same time — and they were supposed to make it much more difficult.

The third argument is that somehow or another during its long duration communism managed to produce a particular kind of culture, a particular kind of “Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist” mental state that would not go away soon and would be antithetic to both the inequalities of capitalism and the freedoms of democracy.

KAWATA: Do you agree with these arguments?

SCHMITTER: No. I disagreed with all three of them. Or, better said, I agreed with the one about simultaneity, but denied that this would have the necessarily negative consequences they presumed. Autocratic communism is not the same thing as autocratic capitalism, yes, but that may not be as important as they think mainly because many of those countries were no longer really totalitarian societies or even communist polities by the time that these simultaneous transformations occurred. The party had already lost its *de facto* monopoly of power and the economy was already more open to and competitive with Western capitalist ones. This was most obvious in Poland and Hungary and less so in the Czech Republic and Roma-

nia. These countries were not as similar as these Sovietologists were claiming and, therefore, the range of what was going to happen was more likely to look very much like what we had already seen elsewhere.

Now, with ten years of retrospective wisdom, I think I have been proven right. Not only have the countries in Central and Eastern Europe democratized much faster than did those of Southern Europe and Latin America, they have now relatively stable and well-consolidated democracies. I have not met anybody who believes that countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary or Slovenia are going to move back to autocracies. I do not even believe that countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus or the Ukraine for that matter are moving back to autocracy. So, exactly the opposite happened than they predicted. They thought it would take much longer and they thought it would even be impossible. Why they were so wrong is still a debatable matter.

KAWATA: Who consolidated democracy?

SCHMITTER: Well, that is the second issue. And it has been also considerably discussed. Basically there are three or four competing theories. The main theory, coming from students of democracy particularly in the developed countries, is political parties. So, if you get the parties right, you will later get democracy right.

The second answer is that the most important condition for the consolidation of democracy is a suitable political culture. That is to say, people must be prepared to compromise, they must recognize the majority vote, they must feel part of the same community or nation. Therefore, we cannot expect a consolidation of democ-

racy, even if the parties are right, until we have ample evidence that the Poles, Hungarians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, or Russians have somehow a democratic political culture.

The third answer is a bit more ambiguous, and it argues that you cannot consolidate a democracy until you first have a nation state. So you must have national identity, somewhat different than a political culture and you need some kind of well-trenched state structures which can tax and which can punish people legitimately.

KAWATA: What is your answer?

SCHMITTER: My answer is none of the above. I am not against having a democratic political culture and I recognize that post-communism poses some specific normative problems, but I do not believe you need a democratic political culture beforehand. And I do not believe that you have to have a strong state and sense of nationality. Most Western European polities had neither of these before they became democratic. It was the practice of democracy — even quite imperfect democracy — that eventually produced a “democratic” or “civic” political culture and sense of national unity. So I start off by presuming that you can consolidate democracy without democrats and you can consolidate democracy without a national state. You can make both by practicing it — which is not to say that this is inevitable. You can have a relatively weak state with a weak even divided sense of nationality, but if you can just muddle through with some form of democracy long enough, you can strengthen both. What you need to practice democracy is simply groups of citizens who are willing to play according to certain rules. So the trick to consolidating democracy is to reach agreement on a mutually accept-

able set of rules for political competition and conflict regulation. And if the people practicing those rules are not democrats, I frankly do not care, as long as they compete in elections in a particular way, as long as they allow independent forms of association and as long as they allow open competition between interests and ideals.

And they may even not have a strong sense of being part of the same nation, but as long as they accept to play by those rules. So you can be a Turk in Bulgaria, and you know you are a Turkish minority, you know the government is probably dominated by the majority nation, but if you agree to play by those rules and vote for anybody or any party as far as I am concerned, once you get those rules in place and get tricked into playing by them, you have some chance of making non-democrats into democrats and non-nationals into nationals. And the trick to that is something like what I call “contingent consent,” i.e. you are willing to play according to those rules because you are convinced that the people who win will not remove or even significantly reduce your assets so that you can play again and, maybe, even win the next time.

KAWATA: “Contingent consent?”

SCHMITTER: Yes, “contingent consent.” That is the core of democracy. To get contingent consent you need another property: “bounded uncertainty.” You need certain kinds of pre-set limits. And the mutually acceptable rules produce those limits. That does not mean you already have consolidated democracy. You may not. You may even be a Turk in Bulgaria who would prefer to be a citizen of Turkey. But you are still willing to play in the Bulgarian game, provided that there is a reasonable expectation that your party can participate and

may even be part of that government — and that is too costly, complicated or uncertain to shift to playing in the Turkish game.

Another reason for playing according to the new rules is the existence of what I call “partial regimes.”⁽²¹⁾ “Political parties” and “parliamentary elections” are simply two (highly interrelated) partial regimes. And I do not privilege them in my work. On the contrary, I have argued that parties are not what they used to be and competitive elections have become less capable of ensuring the accountability of rulers. Parties are no longer “heroic” in either their origins or behavior. They may still be prominent symbolically and elections structured by them are still considered by most citizens their most important form of participation in politics, but people do not have the same identification with them nor are they willing to invest as much resources in them. Most now depend on public financing and various other state-furnished assurances in their role of nominating candidates and conducting electoral campaigns — and things much more than they did in the past.

So I do not assume that parties alone can do the job. And that is where I start talking about interest groups, social movements, and local governments. There are a lot of other institutions out there that can play a role in these “partial regimes.” Those “partial regimes.” It is finding the rules for those “partial regimes.” That is what you do when you consolidate democracy.

KAWATA: I understand that “contingent consent” and “partial regime” are key issues for consolidating democracy. Since 1990s you have published many influential articles about the European Union. You know, the EU has decided to extend their membership to other ten

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countries whose “contingent consent” to it is now fragile. The EU is generally said to face difficult problems at the societal level as well as political level in future. There will arise the deeper social cleavages in the unification process among and within the state, causing the problem of social exclusion which damages a harmonious development of social citizenship. Do you think it is difficult for them to bridge over many difficulties caused by ethno-politics and transitions from authoritarianism and to develop contingent-consensual partnership in the future Euro-polity?

SCHMITTER: Well, let me give you just a quick personal history here. When I was a graduate student, I had the privilege of working with an excellent scholar, Ernest B. Haas who was (and still is) one of the leading theorists on regional integration. I was not interested in Europe at that time, but I was interested in his “neo-functionalism” theory. I used and modified it and wrote a number of articles, some with him, some not with him, trying to look at Central America and South America. At that time (the 1960s and 1970s) there were a large number of regional organizations emerging all over the globe. So I took this European theory and I applied it elsewhere. And I immediately came to the conclusion that it will not work there. Either the Euro-centric theory had to be abandoned or modified significantly. I took the latter course at the time and then promptly forgot about the topic of regional integration. Before doing so, I did write a number of articles using this particular approach which, incidentally, is one of the reasons why I got interested in corporatism in particular and interest politics in general, because that was the basis of the neo-functionalism approach.

When I returned to teach in Europe at the EUI, I paid no attention to the EU at all. From 1981 to 1985 Europe was boring. Nothing was going on. I was much more interested in democratization in other places as well as the continuing saga of neo-corporatism.

But all of a sudden, I do not remember the exact moment, but it came a revelation: it was not just national political regimes in Southern Europe and Latin America that were in transition — so was the European Union. It was in repeated transition because of enlargement to include, first, Great Britain, Ireland and Denmark, then the Northern European countries, then the Southern European countries. It was in transition because of monetary unification. And it was obvious that its existing institutions could not absorb all these changes. It had to change these institutions, i.e. it had to undergo a regime transformation.

So, I discovered another case of transition — tight under my nose. It was a different transition but the main message of our little green book with O'Donnell⁽²²⁾ was apposite. One has to think politically in a different way during a regime transition because of the element to much greater uncertainty. This I had learned before from Machiavelli. It was his main message. As he put it, one needs a different science of politics in “female” as opposed to “male” times when there were no agreed upon rules and power relations were in constant flux (“Fortuna” as he called it). You have to begin with different premises and to analyze how rules are created rather than how established rules affect the behavior of actors (which is what 90% of political science is all about). Now, it suddenly occurred to me, that this was also true of the European Union. And, the big

question for me was (and still): Will the European Union become more democratic if and when it responds to this dilemma? And this provided me with a novel focus: How does one democratize a polity as incomplete, diverse and multi-layered at the EU.⁽²³⁾

Then, as often seems to happen with me, I got involved in polemical discussions with other scholars about whether there even was a “democracy deficit” and, if so, what could realistically be done about it.

KAWATA: Not a few people who work on the European Union believe that there is no democracy deficit. Are they right?

SCHMITTER: Yes, they are right in a sense. That is to say, there are not large masses of people out there demanding the democratization of the European Union. Their argument is that the European Union is simply an intergovernmental organization like many others, a bit more advanced, but nevertheless it is basically an agreement between sovereign nation states which control the process, and will allow it to go no further than a certain limit which they will agree upon unanimously. It is inconceivable that the EU could in any sense transform, much less replace the national democracies of its member states, and this “vicarious” basis was sufficient to ensure the legitimacy of the EU. According to this approach, nobody can claim that the UN is democratic in any conventional sense — which does not interfere with its pursuit of global objectives. And there are hundreds of regional-level organizations that are also not democratic — and no one expects them to be.

From that perspective, the problem of democracy in the European Union lies at the national level. Its member states are not suf-

ficiently articulated, both in terms of political parties and legislature, a little bit more in terms of interest groups, to deal with European issues and to explain to their publics why it is necessary to impose supra-national rules on allegedly sovereign polities.

For example, recently an EU directive was issued that shortened the length of hunting season and limited the number and type of birds and animals that could be shot. Now, imagine trying to get the Italians or the French to accept such restrictions. These two countries have huge numbers of hunters who are used to hunting, let's say for two months, and then all of a sudden this thing called Brussels comes and tells them that you can only hunt for one month and what's more, you cannot shoot that kind of bird, etc. Moreover, these hunters are very well-organized in national and local associations. The "democratic" answer for intergovernmentalists is that the deficit is inside Italy and France. Either their governments should not have agreed to the new restrictions or should have stood up better for the rights of their hunters against the pretensions of this thing called the European Union.

I believe, on the contrary, you have to democratize the European Union because it is already a functioning supra-national polity that does not depend on unanimity of member agreement and constrains those national governments to enter into complex compromises that may not be acceptable to their respective citizenries. Unfortunately, no one knows how to do democratize it and given its *sui generis* nature this cannot be accomplished by merely copying the institutions of existing democracies — even the most federal of them. What is important is that a discussion about this issue should be-

gin sooner rather than late. It may not be feasible to democratize the EU now, but it will be inevitable at some time in the future and we should start thinking seriously about how to do it. In the meantime, there is a real problem of legitimacy at the European Union level and, while there may not (yet) be a mass movement calling for its transformation into a democracy (or for its dissolution) there is an awful lot of growing dissatisfaction, not merely with what the EU does, how it does it.

So there, I have been trapped between “intergovernmentalists,” who say you do not need democracy and “federalists” who think that what is necessary is a constitutional convention, Philadelphia-style, that should draft and ratify a definitive set of rules. I was against the idea a constitution for Europe. I thought that the Convention was a mistake — and now we know that it was. I think the way you democratize the European Union is “*petit à petit*” (little by little) by introducing most reforms in existing procedures and practices — often without the need of a new treaty. I call it “democratization by stealth.” So I find myself out there jammed between on the one hand intergovernmentalists who say you cannot do it and federalists who say “yes” you could not only do it but you can do it all at once with this wonderful thing called a federal constitution for Europe.

KAWATA: How about the future outcome of the EU enlargement?

SCHMITTER: I think that it reinforces the existing trend toward a new form of polity that I have called a “condominio” in which there is not one European Union but a multiplicity of functionally differentiated arrangements among different sub-sets of countries — without a

single “state-like” sovereign at the center. When I presented this idea to a working group of the Commission, the participants hated it. They recognized the more modest outcome (which I called a “consortio”) in which different member states temporarily accept different rights and obligations with regard to a common “acquis communautaire” because this leaves open the likelihood that eventually uniformity will emerge and something like a European supra-national state will prevail. Telling them that the EU might never resemble existing forms of political organization was not welcome.

KAWATA: Thanks. Final question is how you foresee the situation of social exclusion or poverty caused by the EU’s “democracy deficit.”

SCHMITTER: Well, I think for most people, issues of social exclusion are not European. They are national and sub-national. That is to say, the real bases of social exclusion are rooted in racism and the EU has virtually no responsibility for that. Its policies in this arena are virtually non-existent. If anything, it exemplifies a cosmopolitanism at the symbolic level that is an anathema to xenophobic groups within the member states who are constantly trying to make it responsible for trends in migration and settlement that are not the result of its policies. Moreover, racism in Europe is not the same in different countries. Anti-Arab prejudice exists in both France and Italy, but its political expression and salience is quite different. Which is why, to the extent that there is a European policy with regard to social exclusion, it is at best symbolic. There is the famous European Convention of Human Rights with its Court in Strasbourg and, more recently, there is the incorporation of a bill of rights in the Lisbon revised treaty (this point has been added for this edit.). Both

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are supposed to combat social exclusion, but who spends money, who writes the detailed proscriptions and who puts offenders in jail? That has to be national, sub-national, and often very, very local.

But that is not the only answer. There is this principle called “subsidiary.” If you think in terms of social inclusion and exclusion, you quickly arrive at the conclusion that you cannot do some things at the European level—but you can do some other thing. That is why I wrote an article on European social citizenship in which I advance a proposal for the European Union to begin to eliminate poverty in its member states. In part because one should recognize that poverty is aside-product of the European Union. The European Union makes a lot of people wealthy, but, in certain instances, it has definitely created victims, and not just beneficiaries. This has become more evident due to enlargement and particularly in the case of Eastern enlargement. It is very different than the Southern enlargement to Spain, Portugal and Greece because this time it is not coming with proportionately as much new money in so-called structural funds for less developed regions. EU agricultural policies have been predominantly oriented to wealthy producers of grain and sugar and these will not provide major benefits for the far larger (and less productive) number of farmers in Eastern Europe. So I came up with the idea of shifting EU redistributive policies for agricultural and structural funds do direct cash payments to those EU citizens (or families of citizens) making less than 1/3 of the average European personal income. I have no illusions that member states benefiting from the existing distribution of agricultural and regional funds will accept such a change, but I thought I should propose it. For some

time, I have been in the business these days of throwing out reform proposals that I think are sound and desirable — knowing that no “real-exiting” politician is going to take them seriously. I consider it an appropriate “hobby” for an aging political scientist.

KAWATA: I wish we could have more time to continue this interesting conversation. But, since we have already used up our agreed-upon time, we would like to close this interview now. Thank you very much for your original and creative talk.

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