

Political clientelism and the media: southern Europe and Latin America in comparative perspective

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The media systems of southern Europe – of Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal – share a number of characteristics which distinguish them from the rest of the European Union. These characteristics can also be found, indeed usually in more extreme forms, in the media systems of Latin America. These similarities are not surprising, since there are historical connections between the two regions and obvious parallels in their political development, particularly in the fact that, in both, the conflict between liberal democratic and authoritarian traditions continued through most of the 20th century. We will attempt here to develop a theoretical understanding of these parallels, focusing particularly on the concept of political clientelism. We will focus on the four European countries mentioned, plus three cases in Latin America – Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

A number of qualifications should be introduced at the outset. First, none of the political systems considered here is purely clientelistic. In each country, clientelistic relationships coexist in a complex relationship with other forms of political organization. Their centrality varies: they are probably most central in Mexico and least so in Italy (the most developed of the seven countries economically, and the one with the longest experience of liberal democracy), which has highly developed mass political parties and an active civil society, albeit one closely related to the party system. In the final section we will consider a number of forces that

have in recent years eroded the strength of clientelism in these countries, and are likely to continue to do so.

Another important qualification is to note that, though we will often contrast the countries of southern Europe and Latin America with those of northern Europe and North America, clientelist relationships exist to some degree in all modern societies (Legg, 1975). This has been dramatized recently by the political scandal in Germany, which is often referred to as a scandal 'à l'Italiana'.

Finally, a discussion centered around clientelism inevitably brings normative issues to the fore. The literature on political clientelism notes that it rarely has substantial legitimacy: universalistic ideologies are hegemonic in public discourse even where their institutional embodiment is uneven. Certainly in the case of the news media, as Mancini (2000) points out, the ideals of neutral professionalism based on Anglo-American media history are widely accepted by journalists around the world, even where the actual practice of journalism departs radically from them. The concept of clientelism is useful in media analysis, in part precisely because it illuminates normative issues of media performance in a democratic system. Lest the discussion should appear overly negative, however, we should say that there is much that is appealing in the journalism of the countries discussed here; the newspapers of southern Europe, for example, are impressive in their attention to public affairs, the sophistication of their political analysis and their political diversity. There is also an interesting question, which we will not attempt to explore in this article, about whether clientelism may in certain circumstances play a positive role in the historical development of democratic politics. It is commonly noted, as we shall see, that clientelist relationships tend to undercut the development of horizontally organized mass political parties, particularly those representing the working class. But it is not clear that this is always the case. Certainly post-war Italy is in many ways a dramatic success story in the consolidation of democracy, and it is an interesting question to what extent its strong political parties – including the strongest Communist party in the West – emerged despite clientelism or through it. There are probably similar complexities in the historical role of patron–client relationships in the media.

Common characteristics of Latin American and southern European media systems

We will focus on five major characteristics: low levels of newspaper circulation, a tradition of advocacy reporting, instrumentalization of privately-owned media, politicization of public broadcasting and broadcast

regulation, and limited development of journalism as an autonomous profession.

Low levels of newspaper circulation

Perhaps the most obvious distinction between the media of the four Mediterranean countries and the those of the rest of western Europe is their low level of newspaper circulation (and a corresponding importance of electronic media). Mass circulation newspapers have not developed in any of the countries of southern Europe. Italy had the highest circulation rate of the four countries under consideration, at 111 per thousand population in 1989/90, and Portugal the lowest, at 47.5 per thousand. The rest of western Europe ranged from 150 per thousand (France) to 623 (Denmark). In most of Latin America, as well, mass circulation newspapers have never developed. UNESCO circulation figures for Latin America for 1996 showed rates (probably inflated) of 97 per thousand in Mexico, 49 per thousand in Colombia and 40 per thousand in Brazil.

Tradition of advocacy reporting

Most of the countries covered here have traditions of advocacy journalism. In contrast with the Anglo-American model of professional neutrality, journalism in southern Europe and Latin America tends to emphasize commentary from a distinct political perspective. There are counter-tendencies, stronger in some countries than others, that arise from diffusion of the Anglo-American model and from traditions of passive reporting that can be an adaptive strategy in periods of dictatorship. But in general journalism in these countries tends to emphasize opinion and commentary, and newspapers to represent distinct political tendencies. This characteristic, it should be noted, is not restricted to southern Europe or Latin America, but is also characteristic of most of continental Europe, though over the last decade or so the movement away from advocacy journalism has probably been faster in northern than southern Europe.

Instrumentalization of privately-owned media

There is a strong tendency in all seven countries for media to be controlled by private interests with political alliances and ambitions which seek to use their media properties for political ends. In Italy, for example, the Milan daily *Il Giorno* was established by the state-owned oil company ENI to support the interests of the state sector, and was close to sectors of the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties (Bechelloni, 1980; Mancini,

2000; Mazzoleni, 1991; Poggioli, 1991). Giovanni Agnelli of Fiat controls *La Stampa* and *Corriere della Sera*, Carlo DeBenedetti of Olivetti controls *La Repubblica* and *L'Espresso* and Raul Ferruzi of Montedison Chemicals controlled *Il Messaggero* for many years. Each is a player in Italian politics, and on occasion major struggles have erupted – often to be resolved by party bargaining – over control of the press. At one point a secret masonic lodge made a bid to take over *Corriere della Sera*, as part of a broader political plot. Private television, meanwhile, is dominated by Silvio Berlusconi, who is also a party leader and former Prime Minister. Berlusconi also controls *Il Giornale*, and made an unsuccessful attempt in 1989 to take over *La Repubblica*.

The Greek situation is very similar: industrialists with interests in shipping, travel, construction, telecommunication and oil industries dominate media ownership, and a long tradition of using media as a means of pressure on politicians continues. As Papathanassopoulos (2000) notes, 'give me a ministry or I will start a newspaper' is a traditional political threat in Greece.

Spain is a somewhat different case. In Spain the media are increasingly dominated, not by industrialists with their primary interests outside the media, but by two broad multimedia conglomerates (Bustamante, 2000; Dader, 1998; Reig, 1998) which, however, do have strong political alliances. For many years the dominant company was PRISA, whose interests include *El País*, SER radio and cable and satellite television, and whose owner was close to socialist President Felipe González. A rival media empire is now emerging around the former state telecommunications monopoly, Telefónica de España, which was privatized under the conservative Partido Popular government. This conglomerate includes the private television company Antena 3, the radio network Onda Zero and a satellite television platform. *El Mundo*, a newspaper which made its name breaking a number of major scandals involving the PSOE government, is partly owned by Telefónica and is similarly aligned with the Partido Popular government. The two media empires have become intense rivals, as much in the political as in the commercial world. The conservative newspaper *ABC* and the Catholic Church's radio network COPE are also aligned with Telefónica in this conflict, leaving few national media outside it. Major banks also have ties to these conglomerates, and Spanish journalists and media analysts often describe them as major powers behind the scenes.

In Portugal the transition to democracy began with a two-year period of revolutionary upheaval during which the media were for the most part taken over by radicalized journalists who conceived them as instruments of class struggle (Agee and Traquina, 1984; Pimlot and Seaton, 1980). Ownership of much of the media passed to the state when the banks were nationalized, and by the early 1980s, effective control had to a significant

extent passed to the political parties. In the late 1980s state-owned media were privatized. One of the principal media conglomerates is owned by F. Pinto Balsamão, a former Prime Minister and leader of the (conservative) Social Democratic Party, though instrumentalization of the media in Portugal is perhaps less intense today than in the other countries of southern Europe.

In Brazil, instrumentalization is most evident in the case of the regional media: regional newspapers and broadcasting companies are typically owned by local oligarchs who use them to solidify their political control (Amaral and Guimarães, 1994; Costa and Brener, 1997; Motter, 1994). The four major national newspapers, based in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, operate more independently, though 'a paper's outlook often reflects personal feuds or friendships between owners and political leaders' (Vanden Heuvel and Dennis, 1995: 107), while the dominant television network, TV Globo, is strongly affected by the political views of owner Roberto Marinho (De Lima, 1988).

In Colombia, the press which was originally born as privately owned united family control with political affiliation in an almost indissoluble manner (Fonnegra, 1984; Rey, 1998: 164; Santos Calderón, 1989). The families that owned the newspapers were the same that dominated the Liberal and Conservative parties, and the press was first and foremost a vehicle of party politics. Most Colombian presidents have had backgrounds in journalism; the most legendary figure in Colombian journalism is Eduardo Santos, publisher of *El Tiempo* and President from 1938 to 1942. In the 1960s and 1970s this pattern began to change, as industrial groups began to enter the newspaper industry, although often still with a combination of political and economic motivation. Television licenses, meanwhile, particularly those involving news programs, have been allocated by the dominant parties to interests close to them – many to the so-called *delfines* – children of former presidents (Rey, 1998).

In Mexico newspapers have been highly dependent on state patronage, and their owners generally associated with factions of the until 2000 ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Adler, 1993b; Fregoso Peralta and Sánchez Ruiz, 1993; Hallin, 2000; Lawson, 1999; Orme, 1997). The dominant private television company, Televisa, meanwhile was more or less openly allied with the ruling party until the death of Emilio Azcárraga, Jr in 1997 (González Molina, 1987; Hallin, 2000; Lawson, 1999; Orme, 1997; Trejo Delarbre, 1985).

Politicization of public broadcasting and broadcast regulation

All public broadcasting systems are to some degree subject to political influence (Etzioni-Halevy, 1987), and disputes over the independence of

public broadcasting are general to the history of European media. Most countries in western Europe have succeeded in developing institutions which separate public broadcasting from the direct control of the political majority. The countries of southern Europe, however, have not moved as far in this direction. Italy has moved the furthest. The Italian public broadcasting company RAI was essentially under the control of the ruling Christian Democratic party in the 1950s and 1960s, but in the 1970s, when a broader coalition was formed and the 'historic compromise' allowed the Partito Comunista to share in the *lottizzazione* – the division of political power and benefits – control of RAI was divided among the parties, with the Christian Democrats retaining control of one channel, the 'secular parties' the second and the Communists the third. In recent years the board of directors of RAI has been reduced in size, making proportional representation impossible, a move which is likely to require a degree of depoliticization of appointments to the board.

Spain and Greece, meanwhile, are the two countries remaining in western Europe in which the ruling party directly controls public broadcasting. In both countries the management of the news divisions of public television changes with a change in government, and the news is at important moments mobilized to support the government politically (Bustamante, 1989; Díez Nicolas and Semetko, 1995; Rospir, 1996). In Greece, news and editorial judgements are expected to be in close agreement with, if not identical to government announcements across a whole range of policies and decisions. It should be noted that the Spanish and Greek political systems tend more toward majoritarianism than the strongly consensual Italian system. A governing board appointed by parliament according to proportional representation therefore results in government control in the former, while it results in power-sharing in the latter. Portugal similarly has had a public broadcasting system in which the government majority had effective control (Traquina, 1997). In 1995, however, Opinion Councils were established, including representatives from listeners, media professionals and 'socially relevant groups' in an attempt to counterbalance government influence, though unlike German Broadcasting Councils, which also represent 'socially relevant groups', they have only an advisory role. It is too early to judge their effectiveness. Similar patterns prevail with the agencies that regulate commercial broadcasting.

Latin America, of course, has primarily commercial rather than public broadcasting. Colombia is a partial exception, with a mixed system in which, for most of the history of television, transmission facilities were state-owned, and time was allocated to privately-owned production companies. Colombia also has had more public debate than most Latin American countries about the need to establish politically-independent and broadly representative institutions for the governance of broadcasting. The

Consejo Nacional de Televisión, established in 1985, had representation from civil society as well as the political parties; neither it nor its successor, the Comisión Nacional de Televisión, however, is generally judged as genuinely independent (Fox and Anzola, 1988; Rey, 1998). In Mexico, the Office of Radio, Television and Cinema is a branch of the Interior Ministry (Secretario de Gobernación) and is thus under direct political control. In Brazil, similarly, broadcast regulation is under the control of the Ministry of Communication, and recent presidents have used broadcast licenses as an important form of political patronage, doling out hundreds to politicians in return for support on key political initiatives (Costa and Brener, 1997; Motter, 1994).

In all seven countries politicization of regulatory bodies coexists with relatively weak regulation of private broadcasters, in the sense that few public service obligations and few restrictions on commercialism are imposed, and many regulations are laxly enforced. Traquina (1995) dubs the Portuguese approach to the introduction of commercial TV 'savage deregulation', and this term would seem to apply to the rest of southern Europe as well, as market logic has in recent years been allowed to develop essentially unchecked – as it has over a much longer period in Latin America. In Italy and in Mexico, for example, commercial television monopolies were allowed to develop without government intervention (Sergio and Kaplan, 1988; Zolo, 1999); from 1976 when the Constitutional Court ruled against RAI's broadcast monopoly until 1990 political division prevented the Italian parliament from passing new broadcast legislation. In Greece, meanwhile, license applications are not adjudicated, and large numbers of radio and TV stations continue for years in legal limbo (Papathanassopoulos, 1997). In this sense, as Rey puts it, 'states have been too big for the small and too small for the big things' (1998: 103).

Limited development of journalism as an autonomous profession

The instrumentalization of the news media by oligarchs, industrialists, parties or the state obviously implies that journalistic autonomy will be limited. Journalists will at times have to defer to their political masters, to 'render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's'. It is thus no surprise that a survey of journalists in Italy, Germany, Great Britain and the United States (Donsbach and Patterson, 1992) found Italian journalists substantially more likely to report that pressures from senior editors or management were 'very' or 'quite important' as limitations on their jobs: 27% of Italian journalists described pressures from management as important, as opposed to 15% in Great Britain, 13% in the USA and 7% in Germany. Italian journalists were also more likely to report that their work was changed by others in the newsroom for political reasons. Parallel research in Spain

(Canel and Piqué, 1998) showed 21.9% of journalists describing 'pressures from my boss' as an 'important' or 'very important' part of their jobs, while 4.9% put pressures from owners in these categories. Another survey of Spanish journalists found 69.3% disagreeing that 'journalists are independent of political power', and 76.6% disagreeing that they are independent of economic power (Ortega and Humanes, 2000: 168). Asked whether 'journalists exercise their profession freely nowadays or are they subject to intervention?', 7.9% of Greek journalists said they exercised it freely, 65.7% that they were subject to intervention, and 24.3% that they censored themselves. In addition, almost 75% responded that the 'line taken by owners of media enterprises' determined the 'image and politics of the mass media' (V-PRC Institute, 1998).

Comparable data are not available for the other countries covered here, but the literature on journalism in these countries suggests that journalists would report similar limits on their autonomy to varying degrees. Fonnegra (1984) titled one chapter of his book on Colombian journalism, 'The press is free; the journalist a slave'.

Moving from the individual to the institutional level, we could say that journalism in southern Europe and Latin America is not strongly developed as an autonomous institution, differentiated from other institutions – the family business, the political clique, the party – with a distinctive set of professional values and practices. This is manifested in a number of ways. In some cases, it is shown in the overlapping of journalistic culture with that of party politics. 'Italian journalists', writes Mancini (2000: 266) 'are advocates, linked to political parties, and very close to being active politicians themselves.' Precisely the same can be said of Greek journalists. It is not a coincidence that since 1990 the number of journalists who have become members of the Hellenic Parliament has increased, and journalists ranked high in the preferences of voters in the 2000 elections.

Limited professionalization is also manifested in the limited development of institutions of journalistic self-regulation, like the press councils which exist in much of northern Europe. One particularly extreme manifestation is corruption, which has been absolutely central to the operation of the media in Mexico (Orme, 1997) and Colombia (Fonnegra, 1984), but probably is present at a lower level in all seven countries. More than half of the Greek journalists surveyed by the V-PRC Institute (1998) felt that there were many corrupt journalists.¹

Explaining the southern European and Latin American model

How do we explain this pattern? One historical fact often cited about each of these countries is that the press for most of its history has been an advocacy press, created more for the purpose of making politics than

making money. This is true virtually everywhere if one goes back far enough. But certainly the press in southern Europe and Latin America retained its central advocacy function for a relatively long period. This history is important in understanding the patterns discussed here, but not adequate to account for them by itself: the survival of politically-oriented journalism is also characteristic of many northern European countries, which are in other ways quite different.

Of course in northern European countries, where the advocacy press also persisted, it coexisted with a mass circulation commercial press, and there was considerable mutual influence between the two. In southern Europe, as well as Latin America, the press never developed as a cultural industry with a mass market sufficient to provide an independent economic base. Bechelloni (1980: 233–4) writes,

In Italy . . . all cultural undertakings were economically fragile, requiring, with some exceptions, help from the state or from private patrons in order to survive. This had two important consequences: there never were many economically self-sufficient cultural or journalistic enterprises, and intellectuals and journalists . . . always lived in a state of financial uncertainty and hence enjoyed little autonomy. The state, which was in control of this situation, always had ample opportunities for maneuver and interference . . .

This too seems to be a crucial piece of the puzzle, and we will return to the relation between journalism as an institution and the media as cultural industries presently. But it also does not seem a complete explanation. It may explain why the news media would be vulnerable to falling under the sway of outside social forces, but we still need to know more about what social forces were at work and how they shaped the news media as institutions.

Bechelloni mentions the role of the state, and this is another possible explanation for the pattern observed above. All seven countries have a history, not only in the media industry but in general, of weak development of private capital and dependence of the latter on an interventionist state. 'Ever since the middle of the nineteenth century, nothing could be done in Greece without it necessarily passing through the machinery of the state' (Vergopoulos, quoted in Mouzelis, 1980: 248). In the Latin American case this is connected with the Import Substitution Industrialization model of economic development. In each country the media have been dependent, sometimes heavily so, on subsidies from the state. Beyond this, the fact that the state plays a central role in the economy is crucial to understanding why capitalists are so deeply involved in politics that they will waste their money starting or buying newspapers: political influence is crucial to success in business. Once again, however, we must keep in mind that many other European countries have large and active state sectors, including press subsidies, which have existed in most of western Europe (they have

been highest in Italy, France and Spain in the 1980s but also high in Sweden, Norway, Austria, Denmark [Humphreys, 1996: 103]).

Democracy, clientelism, civic community and rational-legal authority

Another characteristic which these seven countries obviously have in common is a late transition to democracy. Liberal institutions were only consolidated in Italy after the Second World War, in Greece, Spain and Portugal from about 1975–85, in Brazil beginning in the 1980s, with Mexico currently in transition and Colombia, though it has not suffered dictatorship since the 1950s, in a state of civil conflict that suggests its political history is still in flux. This is of profound importance to understanding the media systems in the two regions. The transition to democracy is of course a complex process. It is not simply a matter of lifting censorship and holding competitive elections, but involves the transformation of many political institutions – including the mass media – and of the relationships among political, social and economic institutions. These transformations are often slow and uneven, and for that reason a knowledge of political history is crucial to understanding current institutions. North (1990) has called this ‘path dependence’ – the influence of historical institutional patterns on the present, the persistence of the past in the ‘incremental evolution of institutions’.

In the remainder of this article we will try to tie the media system characteristics summarized above to a deeper analysis of common patterns in the political development of southern Europe and Latin America, building on the concept of clientelism. The concept of clientelism has not been much developed within media studies. We suspect, however, that it is of broad relevance, important to understanding the political economy of the media not only in southern Europe and Latin America but also in eastern Europe, the Middle East and much of Africa and Asia. One advantage of the concept of clientelism is that it gets us beyond a common dichotomy that limits the sophistication of our thinking about the political economy of the news media, the dichotomy between the liberal perspective, for which democratization of the media is purely a matter of the elimination of state interference, and the critical political economy perspective, which has focused on the control of media by private capital, but has until now not been very sophisticated in its analysis of variations in the relation of capital to the state, political parties and other institutions. Political and economic institutions do not develop separately, and it is crucial that we develop analytical tools that cut across this dichotomy.

Clientelism refers to a pattern of social organization in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange

for deference and various kinds of support. It is a particularistic and asymmetrical form of social organization, and is typically contrasted with forms of citizenship in which access to resources is based on universalistic criteria and formal equality before the law (Charalambis, 1989, 1996; Eisenstadt and Lemarchand, 1980; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; Fox, 1994; Gellner and Waterbury, 1977; Kourvetaris and Dobratz, 1999; Leal, 1977; Legg, 1975; Mouzelis, 1980; Roniger and Günes-Ayata, 1994). Clientelistic relationships have been central to the social and political organization of all seven countries covered here. In Italy it is referred to as *clientelismo*, in Greece as *rousfeti*, in Spanish-speaking countries as *casiquismo* or *caudillismo* and in Brazil as *coronelismo*.

The greater prevalence of clientelism in southern than northern Europe is intimately connected with the late development of democracy. Both are rooted historically in the fact that autocratic, patrimonial institutions were strongest in the South. The social structure in southern Europe was based on large-scale landholding, while in the North more egalitarian landownership patterns often existed in the countryside, and the cities, with their emergent merchant and artisan classes, were more important. As Putnam (1993) points out in his analysis of the differences between northern and southern Italy, the cities, which often enjoyed periods of political autonomy, were the incubator for new, more horizontal forms of social organization – communes, guilds, mutual aid societies, business partnerships. Cooperative institutions were also widely formed by independent farmers in the small states of northern Europe (Katzenstein, 1985: 169). In the cultural sphere, meanwhile, the counter-reformation tradition, with its emphasis on hierarchy, prevailed across the South, while the more egalitarian protestant tradition flourished in the North. Both patrimonial structures and the counter-reformation tradition were transplanted from the Iberian peninsula to Latin America, where they combined with the racial inequalities which resulted from conquest and, in Brazil, slavery.

The emergence of clientelism represented not simply a persistence of traditional hierarchical social structures, but a response to their breakdown, in a social context in which individuals were isolated, without independent access to the political and economic center, e.g. through markets, representative political institutions or a universalistic legal system, and in which 'social capital' was lacking. 'Clientelism evolved as a correlate of modernity' (Roniger and Günes-Ayata, 1994: 24), providing mechanisms for social actors to gain access to resources as modernization disrupted traditional institutions. The classic form of clientelism is dyadic, based on individual relations of dependence. But as national political institutions developed, including parties and centralized administration, clientelistic relationships combined with them to create a more complex, pyramidal form of clientelism, the Mexican PRI being a classic case of such an institution (Cornelius, 1996; Purcell, 1984). The importance of clientelist

relationships, as noted above, varies in the seven countries considered here; all are complex mixtures of clientelist and more liberal or civic forms of social organization.

Clientelism and the development of the news media

Clientelism affects the development of the news media in many ways. We will begin here by discussing the relation of capital to the state, since it is at that level that we see the broader differences in political structure which affect the media. We will then move to the effect of clientelism on journalistic practices.

Clientelism, rational-legal authority, and democratic corporatism

Economic elites in southern Europe and Latin America, as we have seen, are often deeply enmeshed in party politics, and this encourages instrumentalization of the news media. The politicization of business is a result not only of the important role the state plays in the economy, but of the nature of the political process. In northern Europe and North America, clientelist relationships have been displaced to a large extent by rational-legal forms of authority and, especially in the smaller continental European countries, by democratic corporatist politics, both of which decrease the need for economic elites to exert particularistic pressures and form partisan alliances.

In the United States, for example, partisan control of public policy, which in the 19th century had important components of clientelism, was counterbalanced fairly early by the growing power of the courts, followed late in the 19th century by the growth of professionalized administration (Skowronek, 1982; Weibe, 1967). These forms of social organization certainly did not eliminate the influence of capital on public policy; indeed their effect was in many ways precisely to institutionalize it, although they have at times opened avenues for other interests to enter the process as well. The rules of 'due process' connected to these institutions do, however, make the rules of the game relatively predictable, transparent, and equitable at least among similarly placed actors, and they thus decrease the importance of personal connections and partisan alliances.

In countries with a history of clientelism rational-legal authority is less strongly developed. The judiciary and administrative apparatus is more party-politicized (Colomer, 1996; Pasquina, 1996; Rossetti, 1994), and there is often a tradition of evasion of the law.

Even the nobles [in Southern Italy in the 19th century] had become accustomed to obstruction, and thought governments could be fairly cheated without moral

obliquity, so long as the cheating were successful. . . . Instead of recognizing that taxes had to be paid, the attitude was rather that if one group of people had discovered a profitable evasion, then other groups had better look to their own interests. (Denis Mack Smith, quoted in Putnam, 1993: 143)

The persistence of a culture in which evasion of the law is relatively common means that opportunities for particularistic pressures also are common: governments can exercise pressure by enforcing the law selectively, and news media can do so by threatening selectively to expose wrongdoing. Legal proceedings against media owners are fairly common in the seven countries studied here. In Spain charges were brought against Jesús de Polanco, owner of PRISA, once his Socialist allies were out of power, and Antonio Asensio maintains that he was threatened with prison if he did not sell Antena 3 television to Telefónica de España. Juan Villalonga, installed as head of Telefónica after its privatization, similarly came under investigation for securities trading irregularities after falling out of favor with his political allies. Berlusconi has faced charges in Italy; and in Mexico tax charges were brought against the owner of *El Universal* after his paper began to distance itself from the ruling party.

The North American liberal model, with its strong emphasis on formally universalistic institutions like the market, the legal system and professionalized administration, is one contrasting model to the Mediterranean and Latin American political models. Another is the democratic corporatist model which prevails especially in smaller nations of northern Europe (Katzenstein, 1985). Rational-legal authority is also strongly developed in these societies, but a central role is played by political bargaining among highly organized groups representing labor, business, farmers and other social interests. Elements of clientelism can enter into the relations of these groups with their members or with the state, but they tend to be broadly representative of particular social groups, and their participation in the political process is very much rule-governed, thus, once again, diminishing the importance of particularistic pressures and alliances.

Clientelism, in contrast, 'seems to undermine the horizontal group organization and solidarity of patrons and clients alike – but especially of clients' (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984: 49); it 'cuts across and prevents the development of horizontal, class-type political organizations' (Mouzelis, 1980: 263). Some elements of democratic corporatist bargaining have been introduced in the countries studied here, especially Italy, whose consensus system shares a good deal with consensus systems in northern Europe. But the broad, unified 'peak organizations' that characterize the classic democratic corporatist systems² have been slow to develop in southern Europe, and slower still in Latin America.

These general patterns of political organization are manifested specifically in the institutions for the regulation of the media, which in liberal countries like the USA and Great Britain tend to be independent agencies

with professionalized staffs separated from direct government control, and in democratic corporatist countries tend to combine administrative rationality with corporatist representation (including representation of highly organized journalists' unions and media owners' associations). In southern Europe and Latin America, meanwhile, these institutions tend to be more party-politicized, more subject to particularistic pressures, and weaker in their ability to enforce regulations.

Clientelism and the development of the press

The limited development of the mass-circulation press in southern Europe and Latin America results from a complex of interrelated historical conditions: slower industrialization and urbanization, the delayed development of democratic institutions and lower literacy rates, the last of these in turn related to the strength of an authoritarian political culture which viewed popular enlightenment with suspicion. The literature on clientelism, and contrasting literatures on the development of civil society, have not developed much in the way of specific arguments about communication; but they do contain some interesting hints that might point us toward ways of deepening our understanding of the social origins of the mass press, and the reasons for its failure to develop in certain contexts.

Putnam (1993: 174), for example, drawing on Coleman's (1990) analysis of the formation of social capital, and referring to the development of civic institutions in northern Italy during the Renaissance, writes:

Networks of civic engagement facilitate communication and improve the flow of information about the trustworthiness of individuals. . . . [T]rust and cooperation depend upon reliable information about the past behavior and present interests of potential partners, while uncertainty reinforces dilemmas of collective action. Thus, other things being equal, the greater the communication (both direct and indirect) among participants, the greater their mutual trust and the easier they will find it to cooperate.

Horizontal forms of social organization seem to require wide sharing of information, and there is surely a connection between their development and the creation of specialized institutions for producing and circulating such information; this of course echoes Tocqueville's argument about the connection between newspapers and associations.

In clientelist forms of social organization, on the other hand, information tends to be treated as a privately-held resource, to be exchanged only within particularistic relationships. The service of providing patrons with information

was highly valued in situations of distrust and contest between members of the same social stratum. It confirmed, on the one hand, the loyalty of the

dependents who 'do not keep anything hidden from the patron', as the Spanish proverb goes, establishing trust among the partners to the relationship while, on the other hand, making it possible to cement the patron's position vis-à-vis other powerful persons. (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984: 74)

Clientelism also tends to blur the lines between the public and private domains, privileging the private, with the result that politicians in cultures tending to clientelism will tend to see as intrusions into private affairs kinds of reporting that would be taken for granted in more liberal societies. And if clientelism treats information as a private resource, it also places a premium on public demonstrations of loyalty to the patron. This can be seen in the way the media have traditionally treated the President (and ruling party presidential candidates) in Mexico (Adler, 1993a; Mraz and Arnal, 1996).

Clientelism and the profession of journalism

Clientelism tends to break down the autonomy of social institutions, and journalism is no exception. It forces the logic of journalism to merge with other social logics – of party politics and family privilege, for instance. And it breaks down the horizontal solidarity of journalists as it does of other social groups.

The notion of journalistic professionalism, which forms the basis for journalists' claims of autonomy, is connected with the idea that journalists serve a public interest that transcends the interests of particular political parties, owners and social groups. In the United States, the rise of journalistic professionalism was closely tied to a general shift, beginning in the Progressive era, away from partisanship and toward a belief that neutral experts could serve the public as a whole. In the democratic corporatist countries of continental Europe, the highly organized system of political bargaining, which arose partly in response to the political and economic crises of the 1930s, also rested on a notion that a common national interest transcended particular interests and provided a basis for their agreement. The journalistic culture of these countries combines a tradition of advocacy journalism with a strong development of professional culture, which is manifested both in relatively strong journalistic autonomy and in highly organized systems of ethical self-regulation (Weibull and Börjesson, 1992), which are absent in countries with a stronger history of clientelism because of the overriding importance of political interests (and, incidentally, in liberal societies because of the overriding importance of commercial competition). A sense of a public interest transcending particular interests has been more difficult to achieve in societies where political clientelism is

historically strong, and this contributes to the difficulty of developing a culture of journalistic professionalism.

Forces for change

In all seven countries, significant social forces are undermining clientelist relationships. Most of these forces are not new, though in many cases they have accelerated in the last decade or two.

The most basic is a complex of changes related to urbanization, industrialization and the growth of the middle class and of civil society. All of these societies experienced substantial urbanization and industrialization, in most cases particularly strongly in the 1960s. Media historians often note that society – particularly urban, middle class newspaper readers – became more sophisticated and independent-minded, as did journalists, who generally come from similar social backgrounds. Neither these cultural changes – in part presumably related to rising levels of education – nor their relationship to changes in the news media have been studied with much precision or sophistication, but the conventional wisdom about their existence is probably correct. One manifestation of the change is the student movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, often followed in the 1970s and 1980s by a proliferation of social movements and non-governmental organizations – and new forms of news media. This is true for example of Italy, where the proliferation of social movements and civic organizations in the 1970s coincided with a proliferation of pirate broadcasting and the introduction of the more reader-oriented newspaper *La Repubblica* (Poggioli, 1991), as well as in Mexico, where the student movement was followed by the growth of the independent press sector in the late 1970s. In the other five countries similar cultural changes are usually seen as responsible for the transition in the 1970s or 1980s toward more democratic rule.

Another important factor is commercialization, which is connected in Europe with the introduction of private television and in Latin America with the shift from Import Substitution Industrialization to neoliberalism. It involves privatization of state-owned media, in some cases loosening of state regulation of media, increased competition, and a change in the orientation of media management from politico-ideological to economic ends.

Clientelism and commercialization are not in all cases incompatible. Indeed, clientelism is a social formation characteristic of market societies. In China and in eastern Europe, for example, clientelism flourished in the media as market relationships were introduced. When Mexican media owners make a profit by selling publicity to politicians, or Greek industrialists use newspapers to pressure politicians in support of their

other business enterprises, clientelistic relationships are obviously serving commercial ends. In the case of Greece, it could be argued that the commercialization of television has not so much eliminated the game of particularistic political pressures associated with clientelism, as changed its form. The erosion of the state monopoly on broadcasting, the expansion of privately-owned media with wide reach, and the introduction of market-oriented, 'tabloid' forms of reporting have given media interests new means to put pressure on politicians (Papathanassopoulos, 1999). A similar story can probably be told about Latin American countries, where neo-liberal reforms have made the media less dependent on the state – and therefore potentially a more powerful political instrument.

However, the logic of media markets clearly can under certain circumstances undermine clientelistic relationships. It can make media organizations less dependent on political subsidies, substitute marketing for political criteria in the making of news decisions, and discourage identification with particular political positions. It may also make media enterprises too expensive for most politicians to afford, or even for most industrialists to buy purely for political motives. Most accounts of the recent conflict between Juan Villalonga and his allies in the Spanish government, for instance, note that the commercial success of Telefónica, particularly as it has entered global markets and transformed itself increasingly into a multinational corporation, has threatened the influence of President Aznar and his party over the company.

Finally – as the example of Telefónica suggests – internationalization or 'globalization' may under certain circumstances undermine clientelism. One important instance is the effect of the common legal framework of the European Union, which tends to impose a universalistic rational-legal framework (one that is at least at this point heavily skewed toward market-oriented policies) on individual countries. When the Spanish government, for example, attempted to favor its media allies in setting technical standards for digital TV decoders, the rival company appealed to Brussels which ruled against the government. The diffusion of global journalistic culture also probably undermines clientelist ties of journalists to political factions.

These forces have already led to substantial change in all the countries mentioned here, in many cases transforming systems that were once classically clientelist – Colombia in the 1970s, for example – into quite complex hybrid forms. Clientelist relationships are likely to continue to be eroded in all seven countries, and eventually they may be of interest only to media historians. At present, however, we believe that in order to understand the media systems of southern Europe and Latin America and the historical processes under way in these systems, the concept of clientelism remains crucial.

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Notes

1. Martínez Soler (1980) described a significant level of corruption in the Spanish press of the 1970s. It has no doubt diminished, but some journalists and scholars believe that payments to journalists from outside interests – particularly from bankers – do still exist. Italian journalists are extremely well-paid. But Mancini (1993) notes that they do benefit from certain favors as a result of their political connections.

2. It could be argued that strong parties, trade unions and other such organizations provided another means, besides the market, of funding media which would be independent of both the state and of politically ambitious individual owners.

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