The partisan and his opponent
A study of French and Hungarian party activism

Cultural institutionalist approaches to the consolidation of newly established democracies state that this process depends not only on good institutional design, but also on the internalisation by key political actors of a specific set of norms. This squares with a tradition in political philosophy that conceives of a democratic regime first and foremost as a way of life or form of society nourished by the ethical commitments of its members. This article proposes to examine these commitments empirically, comparing the discourses of grass-root partisans in a new and an old European democracy, France and Hungary. The results allow highlighting that, while Hungarian partisanship displays more blatant democratic deficits, forms of disrespect for the norms of political pluralism are also present in France. In discussing these results I draw broader conclusions on the role that the internalisation of democratic norms by party actors may play in furthering or undermining democracy over time.

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