Political Parties and Democratic Developmental States

Vicky Randall*

This article focuses on the contribution, actual or potential, of political parties to the project of a ‘democratic developmental state’. In the classic developmental state, individual hegemonic parties often, though by no means always, played a key role. However, on the available evidence, parties make a very limited contribution to the emergence of new democratic developmental states, in terms of either democracy-building or policy-making, recruitment, ensuring accountability or policy implementation. Reasons include weak institutionalisation and the prevalence of clientelism. External assistance, nevertheless, is likely to be limited in impact and, given the importance of autonomous party development, should ideally be indirect.

1 Introduction

The original developmental states tended to be authoritarian. However, in the wake of democratisation’s ‘third wave’, we are moving towards a revised, more inclusionary, understanding of the developmental state. As part of this understanding there is a new emphasis on process as well as on policy, and specifically a concern with making the state not only effective but also accountable. In this context, political parties, which had come to be seen as fairly marginal players in the politics of developing countries, are receiving renewed attention. This article focuses on their contribution, actual or potential, to the project of a ‘democratic developmental state’.

The number of parties in developing countries and the literature about them have both grown apace. However, there has been surprisingly little discussion of what such parties should actually do, most of which relates to democracy-building. The existing discussion suggests that, even with respect to democracy, parties’ contribution is by no means unproblematic; individual parties may often place obstacles in the way of democratic deepening or consolidation. Even so, there is a near consensus that political parties are essential to democracy, at least outside of very small countries. But we need to know more – especially if they are to be a necessary part of the political landscape – about parties’ contribution to other aspects of the political process. An earlier literature assigned significant state- and nation-building roles to parties, but it is less clear what role parties can or do play in today’s changing political context, and specifically in fostering or sustaining the new-style developmental state.

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Published by Blackwell Publishing, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.
Whilst it is not intended in this article to pursue very far the question of what kind of ‘development’ a developmental state promotes, one further element of changing context has to be noted here. The classic developmental states assumed a major role within their economies, if not directly as entrepreneurs then by channelling investment funding and the like. But in the wake of neo-liberal ascendancy, however much the indispensability of some role for the state is once more recognised, any contemporary form of developmental state is likely to be much less directly interventionist. This has implications for what it is hoped parties can contribute to such a state.

The discussion begins by examining the role played by political parties in the earlier developmental states. It then considers the position of parties in emerging multi-party democracies, and the possible contribution they could make not only to democracy-building but to promoting a developmental state and relevant aspects of good governance. It suggests that, on the available evidence, parties have generally not lived up to expectations. Reasons for this include the character of political parties, in particular their weak institutionalisation, which is in turn related to the nature of party systems and the wider social and political context. Finally, it considers the possible implications for international democracy-assistance efforts to strengthen political parties in the developing world.

2 Parties in the earlier ‘developmental states’

In two of the original four ‘developmental states’ in East Asia – Hong Kong and South Korea – political parties played virtually no part in the countries’ economic achievements. However, in Taiwan and Singapore their role was central, though in each case we are, of course, talking about one-party rule. Whilst active on the Chinese mainland, the Kuomintang (KMT) had been a ‘predatory’ party, but in Taiwan, chastened by defeat, it reinvented itself and became much more self-disciplined. Most relevantly, it deliberately ‘provided political space for technocrats to implement a series of industrialisation strategies’ (Tun-jen, 2001: 19), which helped to generate Taiwan’s dazzling 9.75% annual rate of growth from 1961 to 1981. Similarly, the People’s Action Party (PAP), in power in Singapore since 1959, fostered rapid economic growth as ‘a critical aspect of managing one-party dominance’ (Jesudason, 1999: 145).

Whilst no one disputes the credentials of these originally identified developing states, there is less agreement on which additional states to include in the category. Elsewhere in Asia other possible cases would be Malaysia, and more recently China and Vietnam. In all of these, hegemonic or single ruling parties have played a significant developmental role. In Malaysia, the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), within the ruling party coalition, the Barisan Nasional, has dominated first Malayan and then Malaysian politics since independence in 1957. It played a considerable part in orchestrating economic growth, through state planning and the adoption in 1971 of the New Economic Policy aimed at rapidly expanding the economy as a way of containing ethnic tensions. In China and Vietnam, more obviously, ruling communist parties have helped to bring about the recent phenomenal growth rates.

In Latin America three possible cases of developmental or proto-developmental states are Brazil and Mexico, prior to the 1980s, and Chile under Pinochet. Whilst political parties were of little relevance in Brazil, and none in Chile under Pinochet, the
hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico presided over and to some extent facilitated its ‘economic miracle’ from the 1940s. Although it has been argued that a developmental state would hardly be possible in Africa, one suggested exception is Botswana. This has been continuously ruled, since independence in 1966, by the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), albeit within a formally competitive party system. The BDP to some degree incorporated the developmental vision of its founder, Sir Seretse Khama. From being one of the poorest countries in the world, Botswana has become an upper middle-income country, according to World Bank classifications: between 1982 and 1991 its annual growth rate exceeded 10% (Taylor, 2002). All this is to a significant degree due to the party’s ‘technocratic priorities of growth and stability’ (Du Toit, 1995: 12, cited in Taylor, 2002).

This brief survey reminds us, then, that political parties have frequently, though by no means necessarily, played a major role in establishing or sustaining developmental states in different parts of the developing world. They have done so for a variety of reasons, especially nationalism, but also because of the need to integrate potentially antagonistic communities and to maintain legitimacy. They have also contributed to the developmental state in different ways, notably by supplying the necessary vision and leadership, by allowing a technocratic elite – either bureaucratic or one straddling the party-state divide – a degree of autonomy, by providing an institutional framework for political and organisational co-ordination, and/or by increasing state legitimacy and maintaining political stability. However, a common feature of such parties has been their dominant position within the prevailing party system, either as hegemonic parties within a nominally competitive system, as in Mexico or Botswana, or as ruling parties within single-party systems.

3 Political parties, development and democratic transition

Of course, there were always plenty of instances of dominant political parties that lacked any kind of developmental vision or capacity. That is to say, there is no automatic association between one-party rule and developmentalism. Moreover, in some putative developmental states the persistence of these autocratic party systems came to be seen as a problem not only for political development but for further economic progress. The PRI in Mexico is a good example. The party’s interest in maintaining its political hegemony arguably inhibited the kinds of reforms needed to reduce corruption and increase state efficiency. As Leon (1998: 15-16) comments: ‘While badly necessary, a deep reform of the Mexican state has not been pursued by the major political actors because, aside from being costly politically, it is not profitable for them in the short run … The challenge usually is left para mañana.’ In a similar vein, Magaloni et al. (2006) argue that the party leadership deliberately crafted Mexico’s famous ‘ejido’ land reform, continuing from the 1950s up to 1991, in such a way as to reinforce peasant dependence on the party. The reforms were not gauged to increase agricultural efficiency or contribute to overall economic growth.

But at the same time, and more fundamentally, the whole premise of a hegemonic or one-party state has become much less politically acceptable in the post-Cold War era and the wake of democratisation’s third wave. There is less willingness to tolerate the costs, for instance in terms of human rights abuses and restricted political participation,
and an increasing expectation, not least amongst external donor agencies, that both the pursuit of economic development and the activities of political parties will take place within a democratic context. Reflecting these concerns, the notion of a developmental state has been revisited and revised: ‘A developmental state is now broadly understood as one that evinces a clear commitment to a national development agenda and does so in an inclusionary way’ (Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2006 – emphasis added).

To some extent parallel with these changing perceptions have been changing assumptions about the developmental role of the state. In stark contrast to the concept of the classical developmental state, during the 1980s the tenets of the neo-liberal ‘Washington consensus’ led to a tendency to see the state itself as the primary obstacle to development (understood largely as economic growth). In 1989 a World Bank report on sub-Saharan Africa heralded a shift in thinking, with a recognition that the state still had an important if no longer central role to play in promoting development. Today, in the ‘post-Washington consensus’ era, there is a renewed emphasis on institutional capacity and on states in some sense ‘owning’ their national development strategies. Nonetheless, invocation of the old-style interventionist state now sounds distinctly anachronistic.

Rather, contemporary writings and prescriptions suggest three versions of the state’s developmental role. The first, articulated in the 1989 World Bank report, is the state as facilitator of neo-liberal reforms and manager of the ensuing economic system. The second is the state playing an important part in a process of development not so narrowly centred on economic growth but including social provision, poverty reduction and so forth. Third, however, is a somewhat more nationalistic state pursuing economic reform, including integration into the global economy, at its own preferred pace rather than simply at the behest of international pressures and agencies, as in India or Malaysia.

To the extent that the state should be playing a developmental role, there is also a concern with ensuring ‘good governance’. The concept of good governance has been taken up and variously inflected by a host of different agencies. It is seen as a process extending beyond state structures to involve a range of non-state bodies and fora, and with local and global as well as national dimensions. Most relevant to the achievement of a new-style developmental state, however, are requirements for state legitimacy, a capable bureaucracy to deliver effective economic management, freedom (or sufficient freedom) from corruption and mechanisms of government accountability.

The question for us, then, given the desirability of the (new inclusionary) developmental state and of those aspects of good governance that can help to sustain such a state, is: what part do or could political parties play in their realisation? In the context of genuinely competitive party politics and the near global acceptance of market-centred economics, we cannot expect individual parties to emulate the role played by parties in some of the classical developmental states. But what contributions, positive or negative, can they make?

4 Parties’ contribution: what we know

Political-science interest in parties in developing countries has gone through various stages. Parties were initially seen as key elements in the emergence of democratic
polities with competitive elections, but as the trend towards authoritarian rule became clearer, parties, or dominant parties, tended to be re-cast, still positively, as potential agents of national integration, political stability and in some cases modernisation.1 Increasingly, however, it became apparent that, especially in tropical Africa, ruling parties were failing to deliver these benefits. By the 1980s, then, there was widespread disillusion with political parties, which were seen as typically weakly institutionalised, personalist, clientelistic and dependent upon the state. In his overview chapter on parties in Africa, Tordoff (1984: 120-1), referring to a ‘decline of party’, depicted them as of only marginal political importance. He cited, for instance, Roberts’ (1982) characterisation of the FLN in Algeria as ‘performing essentially a public relations function’ on behalf of the state bureaucracy. Tordoff could identify at best a residual set of positive functions parties could perform. These included providing a source of regime legitimacy, sometimes promoting political participation and, most significantly perhaps, contributing to political coalition-building through the distribution of patronage. Similarly Mainwaring, describing the weakness of parties in Latin America from the 1960s, observed: ‘This pervasive discrediting of parties has had a side effect of the delegitimation of scholarly work on parties’ (1988: 91).

What rescued the subject of political parties for scholarly research was democratisation. In contrast to the preceding period, the last two decades have seen a proliferation of studies, to some extent paralleling the proliferation of new and reincarnated political parties unleashed by new democratic openings. But the coverage of this expanding literature is inevitably uneven. There has, in particular, been perhaps surprisingly little systematic or extended discussion of the political functions – or dysfunctions – of such parties.

To the extent the question is raised, it has tended to be in terms of parties’ contribution to democracy-building. They are seen as key players in this process. To cite two recent comments, Burnell (2005) argues: ‘Political parties are crucial for long-term political development in emerging democracies’, whilst Rocha Menocal (2006) maintains ‘it is extremely difficult to imagine a democracy that can function without them’. Interestingly, the assumption has been that parties play little role in the earliest stages of democratic transition; this may actually underestimate their contribution.2 Most attention has been directed to parties’ contribution to democratic consolidation.

There has been little attempt to pin down systematically the different ways in which parties could potentially contribute to this process but, drawing mainly on the existing Western-oriented party literature,3 Randall and Svåsand (2002a) suggest analysing parties’ contribution in terms of representation, integration into the democratic process, aggregating and channelling political interests, recruitment and

1. Huntington (1968) provided some of the theoretical underpinnings for this approach which was applied in particular to ruling parties in tropical Africa, as in Zolberg’s account (1966) of five West African states, and Coleman and Rosberg’s edited volume (1964). Somewhat later, Story (1986) developed a rather similar analysis for the PRI in Mexico.
2. Individual parties have assisted in at least three ways. First, opposition or pro-democracy parties have formed, whilst still risking authoritarian reprisals; second, parties have participated in the pact-making process; third, and exceptionally, former ruling parties have themselves taken the initiative in introducing liberalising reforms.
(democratic) training of political leaders, making government accountable and organising opposition. To the extent that parties singly or collectively contribute to these different democracy-building processes, they help to ensure the survival and consolidation of the democratic regime, in at least two broader respects. By instilling appropriate attitudes and expectations in the public and by contriving through their own actions to ‘give substance to constitutional rules and thus confirm and enlarge on the formal outcome of transition’ (Pridham, 1990: 22), they contribute to the institutionalisation of democracy. Secondly, in all these different ways, they bolster regime legitimacy, accumulating a reservoir of good will to help tide fragile new democracies over bad times (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995).

When it comes to assessing parties’ contribution to democratic consolidation in practice, however, a few parties tend to be singled out for praise – such as those in Chile’s conservative and centre-left coalitions. However, there is generally a sense of disappointment. Of course, as already observed, almost by virtue of their existence and the at least nominal choice they present to the electorate, parties help to sustain the democratic process. But they are upbraided with failing to provide the electorate with meaningful choice, with failing to instil democratic values – for instance, through internal party procedures – and with offering either ineffectual, or alternatively irresponsible, opposition.

Take, for example, the function of representation, certainly of central importance in a democracy. Representation is a complex concept, and there is, moreover, surprisingly little discussion in political-science literature specifically about representation via parties. Parties often promote a form of descriptive representation, in terms of both leading party positions and candidate selection, for instance in respect of ethnicity, caste and, increasingly, gender. But if we ask to what extent parties in developing democracies ‘represent’ people’s substantive interests, the answer must generally be very little. Although some parties – examples might include Mexico’s PRI and South Africa’s ANC – offer scope for more corporatist forms of group representation, the predominant idiom of representation remains clientelistic. This means that, whilst particular short-term interests of clients or supporters may be served, it is at the expense of any explicit identification or promotion of the longer-term interests of different social sectors.

5 Parties, democratic developmental states and good governance

Even with regard to what might be seen as their defining function, their contribution to democracy, parties in these countries fail to live up to expectations. But, beyond their contribution more directly to democracy-building, what can be said about parties’ role in promoting democratic developmental states, in the terms discussed earlier? For convenience’s sake, analysis will be organised around a number of sub-headings.

The first is parties’ contribution to policy. And here we can begin by asking how far parties actually do help to impart a nationalist, developmentalist thrust to governmental policy-making. Although accounts of classic developmental states tend to stress the necessity of the state bureaucracy’s (embedded) autonomy, as Pempel (1999),
amongst others, has noted, the overall vision and political thrust were likely to come from outside the bureaucracy – the spider-in-the-web analogy. As already emphasised in the context of both post-third-wave politics and post-Washington consensus economics, individual political parties would not be expected to play such a central, spider-like, role in inspiring and directing policy. Parties might, however, be expected to help bring a nationalist and developmentalist discourse into government, one that raises horizons beyond the immediate and short-term.

In practice, in developing countries today, all political parties will say they favour development, but they are typically very short on specifics, and this is not party leaders’ primary concern. There is indeed often a sense, including amongst the public at large, that national governments have very little control over macroeconomic policy because of apparently inevitable processes of economic globalisation, as represented in pressures from international donor agencies and foreign short-term investors. In this situation, as described with reference to Bolivia by Mandaville (2004), party leaders will look to derive support and legitimacy more from the patronage aspects of policies and their implementation. It is in the already stronger developing economies that governments, and some political parties, are more likely to think through and promote distinctive developmental strategies. Possible examples include the ANC in South Africa and UMNO in Malaysia, both, for the record, relatively dominant within their respective party systems.

There is currently little direct information concerning parties’ input into developmental strategy, but various indirect indicators support the view that it is strictly limited. Thus, it is frequently observed that in developing democracies there is a lack of meaningful ideological differentiation (in a left-right sense) amongst political parties. This should not be overstated: for instance, in certain Latin American countries, including Chile and Brazil, there is clear ideological distance between the main parties or party blocs. Currently there is much interest in the recent apparent ‘Left turn’ in the region, although typically this has not been party-led: an exception is the Movement Towards Socialism (MÁS) in Bolivia led by Morales.

A second indicator is party election manifestos and programmes. As yet there is no project for systematically collecting and analysing these, comparable with the work of the Manifesto Research Group focused on developed democracies (Budge, 1994). However, with inevitable exceptions generally including communist parties, a much repeated finding within individual countries across the developing regions has been how similar those that exist tend to be. So Wanjohi (2003: 251) relates how:

… nearly all party manifestos in Kenya look alike, often using the same phraseology, and even identical paragraphs … The larger parties are often keen not to produce their policies and other documents too early before an election for fear that others will simply copy those documents with impunity.

In Indonesia, Sherlock (2004) finds that ‘Party leaders feel no embarrassment in stating openly that all parties’ platforms are “the same” or “almost the same”’, whilst Hughes (2002) describes parties contesting elections in Cambodia, with largely indistinguishable platforms that randomly re-combine ‘triads’ of liberal values like
'Democracy, Justice, Equality'. Similar comments have been made about parties in Jamaica, Botswana, the Philippines and the different countries of Melanesia.

It should, of course, finally be acknowledged that in those instances where parties are more disciplined and have a distinctive programme, the consequences will not necessarily accord with the values of good governance advocates, or of developmentalism. Thus, most Islamic parties explicitly state their commitment to establishing *Sharia* law. In 1986 in Pakistan two Jamaat-e-Islami Senators successfully steered a Shariat bill through the Senate which eventually became law. This policy ‘input’ could be considered problematic from a development perspective on a number of grounds including its anti-secularism and arguably negative implications for women’s human rights.

Also relevant to the question of party influence on policy is the way that parties treat the legislature, and the extent of party discipline. If a party is to influence policy, its parliamentary caucus needs to be loyal. But in many developing countries the impression is that party leaders primarily want to be in the legislature as a means of gaining access to state resources, either because they are already in the ruling party or because they will gain by defecting to it. The problem of ‘carpet-crossing’ is endemic, despite bans in a number of countries. It is rife in South Asia; even though Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all officially prohibit ‘floor-crossing’, enforcement is another matter. In African countries, there is little attempt, legal or otherwise, to restrain this aspect of party practice. In Senegal, for instance, as electoral competition became more meaningful in the 1990s, opposition leaders regularly showed themselves willing to be included in the government (Gavan, 2001). Party switching is also reportedly common in the Philippines, Bolivia and Ecuador. In Brazil around one-third of legislators in the Chamber of Deputies switch party during every four-year term (Desposato, 2006).

A second relevant aspect of parties’ political role is the recruitment of effective rulers, that is, providing the personnel of government, which in turn is relevant to the making of policy and political oversight over its implementation. Whilst by no means the only channel for recruitment, parties in democracies normally play a major role. A central concern here is the basis on which individuals are selected by parties and promoted as candidates for public office. In developing countries a range of criteria will be in play and sheer ability may well be one of them. However, other criteria often loom much larger. A pressing consideration is often what a candidate, through their own resources or personal networks, can contribute to campaign expenses. Thus, in his case study of local selection procedures for party candidates in Ghana, Ohman (2004: 239), noting the salience of such considerations, further observes ‘very seldom did anyone mention that the person needed to be loyal to the party, and never was the issue discussed of how the aspirant would behave in parliament, if selected’.

Third, parties can potentially be an important means of ensuring accountability, providing effective oversight and scrutiny of the government/executive’s conduct and decisions as well as of the state bureaucracy’s role in implementation. Here it must be recognised that messages concerning the proper role for parties are somewhat mixed.

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4. However, recently some Islamic parties, such as Morocco’s Party of Justice and Development (PJD), have modified this to talk instead about ‘using Islam as a reference point’ (Riley, 2006).
The implication of the earlier developmental-state literature was that the technocratic elite and state bureaucracy should be largely left to get on with things. In the ‘new developmentalism’, this might be thought to depend a little on whether the country in question is seen to ‘own’ its national development strategy or whether, as is often the case in the economically weakest states, it has been virtually imposed by external agencies. The good governance agenda also tends to stress accountability and scrutiny, reflecting lack of faith in the intrinsic calibre and honesty of government and bureaucracy. In any event, neither expectation is generally satisfied: typically, parties provide quite inadequate scrutiny and yet do intervene for short-term political ends.

One aspect of this is providing effective opposition. In practice, however, as already suggested, there are many factors working against the likelihood of political parties providing effective opposition, including poor party discipline and the sanctions, and inducements, exercised by those in power. In the more specific case where governments have been pursuing economic policies that are largely externally-driven, opposition deputies have often lacked the requisite levels of technical competence to challenge them properly (Bangura, 2004).

It has further been hoped that parties, within competitive systems, could help to expose and combat government corruption. Parties do indeed regularly pledge to fight corruption in their electoral appeals. By so doing they help to propagate an anti-corruption discourse. In power, ruling parties often do oversee anti-corruption programmes, which, however, tend to be targeted at their former ruling political adversaries. But, given the salience of patronage-based relations within the party and the growing incidence of ‘reverse clientelism’, discussed below, as a means of party funding, political parties in general are more likely to be contributing to government corruption than stemming it.

Finally under this head, parties could in principle monitor the implementation of policy, checking on the role of administrative agents. In practice, however, given the clientelistic logic so often pervading party politics, it is more likely that influential (ruling) party figures, whether nationally or at regional or local levels, will seek to influence policy implementation in ways that reward and retain their followers. Low-level, poorly paid government employees will find it difficult to resist. Whilst this is widely recognised anecdotally, detailed studies are rare. But Wade (1985: 485) and also Widlund (2000) have shown how, in south India, party leaders exercise decisive informal influence that can lead officials to behave ‘almost exactly contrary to the ostensible objectives of their job’.

Finally – in a proto-democratic context – parties have a real contribution to make to the legitimacy not just of the current government but of the system of government or regime. The fact that a government emerges through an electoral contest between political parties ought in itself to enhance its legitimacy. It helps to buy a margin of popular tolerance when governments run into difficulties or make mistakes. Of course, this depends at the least on contesting parties being willing to accept the results of the election. In the much publicised 2006 presidential elections in Mexico, the losing

5. As noted in Africa by Githongo (2006).
6. Or, as recently alleged by ex-President Obasanjo’s opponents in Nigeria, against rival parties in impending elections.
candidate of the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), Manuel López Obrador, refused to accept the, extremely narrow, victory of Felipe Calderón, candidate of the National Action Party (PAN), claiming widespread polling irregularities. Still more disturbingly for the reputation of democratic government in Bangladesh, by the end of 2006 the leader of the Awami League opposition party and its allies, Sheikh Hasina, was threatening to boycott the imminent parliamentary elections there.

Nor do parties, as institutions, and in comparison with other elements of the political system, generally enjoy high levels of popular legitimacy themselves. Available evidence suggests typically low levels of trust in parties (as opposed to faith in democracy as such). This is especially apparent in Latin America as measured through the 1980s and 1990s by the Latinobarometro survey: by 2002 (Sabatini, 2003: 139) across 17 Latin American countries, on average only 14% of respondents claimed to have ‘some’ or ‘a lot of’ confidence in political parties. Rates do appear to be somewhat higher in Africa and South Asia. Of course, it is difficult to know what exactly is being measured. As Carothers (2006) points out, parties, especially ruling parties, because they are intertwined with government, tend to be blamed for many deficiencies, such as poor public services, that they have very limited control over. Even so, it seems that in this respect parties do not, characteristically, add to the overall legitimacy of the system, but may be one of its ‘weakest links’.

6 Explaining parties’ performance

If the discussion so far suggests that political parties’ contribution to the possibilities of a democratic developmental state is generally limited or even negative, why should this be? The immediate answer lies in the character of the parties, which in turn, however, reflects and combines with key features of their context.

6.1 Weakly institutionalised

Evidently, the huge number and range of parties, together with the far from complete information and present limitations of space, mean that what follows are mainly generalisations, with significant exceptions. Similarly, it is not possible here to offer a full inventory of party characteristics. But many of the relevant features are summed up in the observation that, generally speaking, they are weakly ‘institutionalised’. This term has been widely but imprecisely employed. In earlier work with Lars Svåsand (2002b), I have sought to distinguish its different dimensions: internal versus external and structural versus attitudinal. Here I will focus on those aspects most relevant to the matter in hand.

Internal structural aspects of institutionalisation include scope, rule-boundedness, and resources. Scope refers primarily to the party organisation’s territorial reach. Even though in a growing number of countries (for instance Ghana and Turkey) national laws

7. As measured by Afrobarometer, in a number of African countries, the corresponding rates were 51% in Nigeria, 42% in Malawi, though a more respectable 63% in Ghana (Bratton, 2001)
8. According to the State of Democracy in South Asia survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, in 2004, it was highest in Bangladesh and lowest in Pakistan (Suri, 2007).
require party organisations to be nation-wide in their territorial scope, in practice even ‘national’ parties have only a limited organisational presence in terms of geographical spread, relying at best on extra-organisational linkages at election times. Increasingly parties are likely to have formal rules of some kind, and again in some exceptional cases these are broadly adhered to, but more typically the salience of clientelism and the dominant role of the party leader/founder means that formal rules have little bearing; there may indeed be little awareness of what they are.

Organisational resources are clearly vital. In the Western literature party membership has traditionally been considered particularly important: concern is currently expressed about the rate at which Britain’s old-established parties are losing members. In the developing world, it is not only very difficult to get reliable figures, but, when these are collected nationally, variations are so great that it is evident that membership can mean very different things. Rates are often calculated taking membership as a percentage of the total votes the party received in the previous election. Table 1 gives details for a number of cases where information is available. There are parties with relatively low membership rates, but where recruitment is a relatively elaborate procedure and a certain amount is expected from membership. But much more typically, including in parties with sometimes astronomically high

Table 1: Party membership rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat-e-Islam (Pakistan)</td>
<td>3,349,436</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP (Brazil)</td>
<td>1,607,393</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Labour Party (South Korea)</td>
<td>2,733,769</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>61,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN (Mexico)</td>
<td>8,303,417</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>220,000</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPM (India)</td>
<td>19,69,5767</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>796,073</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC (South Africa)</td>
<td>10,878,251</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>440,708</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers’ Party (Brazil)</td>
<td>8,800,000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPP (Taiwan)</td>
<td>3,471,429</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMT Taiwan</td>
<td>3,190,081</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,090,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP (India)</td>
<td>86,562,209</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>30,000,000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNO (Malaysia)</td>
<td>2,483,249</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a) Actually the vote for MMA, an alliance of four parties dominated by Jamaat-e-Islam. And 15,000 applies to full members only; b) figures for the following election, and they are described as ‘active’ members; c) refers to following election.

Organisational resources are clearly vital. In the Western literature party membership has traditionally been considered particularly important: concern is currently expressed about the rate at which Britain’s old-established parties are losing members. In the developing world, it is not only very difficult to get reliable figures, but, when these are collected nationally, variations are so great that it is evident that membership can mean very different things. Rates are often calculated taking membership as a percentage of the total votes the party received in the previous election. Table 1 gives details for a number of cases where information is available. There are parties with relatively low membership rates, but where recruitment is a relatively elaborate procedure and a certain amount is expected from membership. But much more typically, including in parties with sometimes astronomically high

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9. Two receiving especially favourable mention are Brazil’s PT and Chile’s Christian Democrat Party (PDC).
membership rates claimed, membership requirements are almost non-existent. In fact, people may be paid to join.

Still more crucial is party funding (see Austin and Tjernström, 2003). As in developed democracies, party funding is a major problem. It has grown with the increasing cost of election campaigns, itself fuelled by party competition and rising media costs. Membership dues are rarely significant. In Latin America and South-East Asia there is a trend towards state funding, but this has not got far in other developing regions. With or without state funding, a key source of party funding has to be private donations, which increasingly appear to take the form of ‘reverse clientelism’, discussed further below, in which party leaders exchange favours for financial support from wealthy sponsors.

The internal attitudinal dimension concerns loyalty to the party or its value system, which can be a vital source of cohesion (see Levitsky, 1998), especially where more strictly organisational mechanisms are weak. This has been a notable feature of a range of parties in Western democracies, although the trend over time has been towards more pragmatic, catch-all electoralist parties. In many cases such transcendent loyalty has been nurtured by party activists and followers’ extensive involvement in a range of ancillary organisations, so that their party attachment has been embedded in a whole way of life. In the developing world, such an attachment has certainly been evident in many of the most important political players. Typically, however, these have been parties originating in mass social and political movements and experiencing a long formative phase in opposition, although Mexico’s National Action Party (PAN) and the Brazil’s Workers’ Party (PT) do not quite fit this pattern. Otherwise, the logic of clientelism, in particular, tends to preclude, or certainly to erode, party attachment of this kind.

The external structural dimension has to do with decisional autonomy. This is most obviously compromised in the numerous instances where the party has been created by the prevailing government or regime, but can also suffer when it is excessively dependent on its sponsoring movement/organisation. Examples of the latter probably include India’s BJP, heavily reliant on its original sponsoring organisation the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS, or National Volunteer Corps) and its wider ‘family’ of Hindu communalist associations, and Jordan’s Islamic Action Front, formed by the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood in 1992 (Jonasson, 2004).

An important aspect of the external attitudinal dimension simply concerns support for the party. Once more with significant exceptions, political parties tend to lack deep social roots. Obviously one contributory factor is the prevalence of clientelism. In particular, increasing electoral clientelism in the context of growing party competition is seen to be encouraging very short-term instrumental attachments amongst voters.

10. Including, for example, India’s Congress Party and South Africa’s ANC, based on movements for national liberation, or India’s BJP and the Islamic Action Front in Jordan based on religious movements.

11. One possible measure for this is party identification. There are problems with this concept and a shortage of reliable data. Levels of party identification in Western countries are typically reported to be relatively high, though the trend is downwards. Available evidence (Mainwaring, 1988; Norris, 2004), however, suggests that levels of party identification tend to be much lower than in Western countries.
7 Explaining party institutionalisation

Weak party institutionalisation can in turn be attributed to further characteristics of parties, and of the wider context in which they have formed and developed.

7.1 Party origins

First is the question of how parties have originated, since a party’s origins are likely to have significant bearing on its subsequent development (Panebianco, 1988). Of course, it is often difficult to say exactly when they originated, given the discontinuities associated with intermittent political repression. But one can still suggest that the pattern of party origins has significantly differed from Western models. Parties have tended to originate in three main ways.

One group has emerged out of social movements, especially, though not only, movements for national independence. Some such parties are based on religious movements – as with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, and some Islamic parties. Some have to an extent been based on the movement for democracy itself, for instance the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe. Many such parties have been relatively well institutionalised and have played or could play a significant role; however, important as they are, they are also somewhat exceptional, especially in more recent times. Second are a group of parties much less frequently encountered in democracies, those formed by a prevailing or possibly outgoing regime. Recent instances include the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) formed by Zia ur Rahman and the Jatiya party formed by General Ershad in Bangladesh, and the Pakistan Muslim League sponsored by Musharraf. Third are the very large number of so-called ‘personalist’ parties, created largely as the political vehicle for a single individual. Whilst this individual may possess personal ‘charisma’, at least as important is that they should own or have access to resources, primarily funding, though media outlets can also be valuable. Well-known examples include Fujimori’s party Cambio-90 in Peru, and in Thailand the party of the media mogul Taksin Shinawatra, Thai Rak Thai. It is unlikely that either regime-based or personalist parties will, as independent institutions, play a significant state-building or governance-enhancing role.

7.2 Clientelism

The prevalence of clientelism is highly relevant to the character and performance of parties in developing democracies. Not only are parties embedded in clientelistic societies; they are, typically, heavily prone to clientelistic practices of one kind or another. This is true of all the main regions of the developing world and almost all the

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12. Clearly this does not exhaust the possibilities. Parties are often formed as the result of existing parties combining, or alternatively splitting. The tendency for factions to split away is one reason for the growing number and fragmentation of parties in the South Asia region.
countries, though not all parties within them.\textsuperscript{13} Explanations often distinguish between demand and supply factors, with poverty and dependence as part of the former and the absence of a professionalised state bureaucracy contributing to the latter, but these may also be exacerbated by political institutional arrangements.\textsuperscript{14}

Within parties clientelism occurs in three main forms: first as a system of patronage linking leaders and subordinates within the party, and second as an exchange of favours for votes or support between the party’s representatives and citizens at large. Whilst the nature of such favours varies, with the expansion of competitive party politics, the long-term trend appears to be for greater concentration on ‘electoral clientelism’, or outright vote-buying. Third, as suggested by Kitschelt (2000), is ‘reverse clientelism’, which, as noted, seems to be extensive and on the rise.

Clientelism can play a positive role in party-building and linking parties with their social ‘roots’, especially in the early stages. However, it tends to undermine more long-term processes such as regularised processes of internal decision-making and supporters’ identification with the party or its platform. To this extent it constrains the kind of political roles parties are likely to play. Moreover, rather than showing respect for the formal boundaries and rules governing other political institutions, clientelistic parties tend to exhibit almost an ‘extractive’ approach towards them.

7.3 Party systems

The character and possibilities of particular parties are also shaped by (whilst contributing to) their respective party systems. Drawing in part on traditional classifications, party systems can be distinguished first in terms of the number of effective or relevant parties and the degree of ideological polarisation between them (Sartori, 1976) or, following Mainwaring and Scully (1995), in terms of an institutionalisation-inchoateness axis.\textsuperscript{15}

In South Asia there is a trend towards increasing fragmentation (Suri, 2007). In tropical Africa, by contrast, observers (Bogaards, 2000; van de Walle, 2003) have pointed to the prevalence of the ‘predominant’ party system, in which there is genuine competition but one party, whether the former ruling party or the former opposition, continues to be clearly dominant over several elections.\textsuperscript{16} Party system institutionalisation is generally low in developing countries; in Latin America it tends to be lowest in cases of ‘extreme pluralism’, in terms of both the number and ideological spread, as in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995).

The precise implications of party systems both for parties and for their political role are not easily determined. But highly fragmented systems, whether or not entailing

\textsuperscript{13} Possible country exceptions include Chile. Party exceptions include the National Action Party (PAN) (at least formerly) in Mexico, Brazil’s Workers’ Party (PT) and Pakistan’s Jamaat-e-Islami Party.
\textsuperscript{14} Such as certain electoral arrangements, strong presidential systems and federalism.
\textsuperscript{15} Their criteria include the degrees of institutionalisation (organisation and social-rootedness) of the component parties but also the degree of stability in the rules and nature of inter-party competition and of legitimacy accorded by political actors to parties and the party system.
\textsuperscript{16} On the basis of election results in the more than 40 sub-Saharan African states, van de Walle finds ‘the emerging modal party system in the region consists of a dominant party surrounded by a large number of small, highly volatile parties’ (2003: 298).
classic ideological polarisation, tend to be associated with fragile coalitions and regime instability, (even) less transparent policy-making and bargains struck behind the scenes. Thus Morgan et al. (2003: 8) describe how ‘the manoeuvring required by Melanesia’s fragmented party structures has mostly excluded policy-making and law making from the public and transparent realms of parliamentary debate, to in camera cabinet, party room and “resort” discussions, which leave the public, many partisans and even members of the government unaware of the implications and means of political machination’. In predominant party systems the conduct of ruling parties can vary enormously – they may themselves play something of a developmental role (South Africa’s ANC is a possible example) – but it is clearly very difficult for any other party to contribute substantially. The general assumption must be that institutionalised party systems are more conducive than inchoate ones to a positive contribution from parties, although if taken too far, as in Venezuela by the 1990s, this can lead to ‘ossification’, where parties dominate the legislature and other political fora to an unhealthy degree whilst losing touch with a changing society (Coppedge, 1994). 17

7.4 Broader context

Beyond these more immediate determinants, the importance of contextual factors must finally be recognised. First is the prevalence in such societies of poverty and inequality. Poverty obviously constrains the resources available to parties, especially non-governing parties, and more generally instils in political actors a zero-sum approach to political power, as reflected in the prevalence of ‘floor-crossing’ referred to earlier. Extreme social inequality also gives rise to the clientelistic relationships prevalent in society at large and within political parties.

Second is the background of colonial rule and political authoritarianism. To some degree parties, as a form of institution, were imposed by departing colonial rulers, rather than developing organically. Frequent subsequent periods of authoritarian rule meant that party development was disrupted, with negative consequences for party organisation and the possibilities of party ‘institutionalisation’.

Third is the set of circumstances surrounding the (re-) introduction of competitive party politics. In political terms, reduced Western support for authoritarian regimes and more positive pressures for democratic opening have meant that in a number of cases, especially in Africa, rather than representing the outcome of a gradual internal political process, in which political parties may have played some part or at least had time to establish themselves more securely, ‘founding’ multi-party elections arrived at extremely short notice. 18 At the same time, following developments in the mass communications media, party leaders in many developing democracies, especially in Latin America, have found it easier to appeal directly to the electorate, reducing their reliance on the intermediary of party organisation. This in turn has made election

17. A somewhat similar process may have been developing in Jamaica, although without the underpinning of oil revenues, and there are also currently moves to counteract it.
18. Bratton and de Walle (1997: 4), for example, note that in sub-Saharan Africa no more than four years elapsed ‘between the beginning of the political protest movement in 1990 and 1993’s feverish round of elections’.
campaigns increasingly expensive, encouraging recourse to ‘reverse clientelism’. In Western Europe similar changes have been associated with a trend away from old-style mass membership parties to ‘catch-all’ or ‘electoral-professional’ parties, but at least in this context parties are relatively well-established and rooted. In developing democracies where parties are less well established, the impact has been more damaging.

8 Remedying party performance: external agency assistance

So far a fairly damning picture of political party competence and contribution to developing democracies has been presented. Before considering possible remedies, and in order to place this assessment in proper perspective, we should briefly reflect on the perspective from which parties have been appraised. As is increasingly recognised, the tendency has been to portray and measure parties in developing countries in relation not simply to a Western party model, but to a model based on an idealised and outdated understanding of Western political parties. More relevant still, Western political parties have not necessarily made a major contribution to processes of government and governance. In a seminal article reviewing the main political functions associated with political parties in contemporary democracies, King (1969) was sceptical as to how far parties actually performed these functions even at that time. A similar assessment today would be likely to generate much greater scepticism.

The question nonetheless arises whether there are things that international agencies can or should do, in terms of either strengthening political parties in developing democracies or enabling them to play a more constructive role. Carothers has recently provided a detailed and systematic assessment of democracy-related assistance to political parties in developing democracies. He notes that parties are hard to help and concludes: ‘Very broadly speaking there is an absence of evidence of transformative effects of party aid’ (2006: 163), although there are instances of modest effects.

Given the importance of institutionalisation as a necessary – if not sufficient – condition for parties to play a more effective and independent role in national politics, we must remember that institutionalisation is precisely about autonomous development, about acquiring a degree of independent life, and moreover that it is partly ‘a product of time’ and of slow-growing traditions (Scarrow, 2005: 6). For this reason, arguably the most significant contributions that external assistance can make in this respect are likely to be indirect. Thus, various initiatives such as those of the UNDP (2005) in capacity development for MPs could encourage a more disciplined and policy-oriented parliamentary party. Again in different ways citizens could be encouraged to expect more of political parties – one of the conclusions of Morgan et al. (2003: 13) reflecting on the problems of weak party institutionalisation in Melanesia. They see a need to ‘conceptualise strategies for targeting local people’s expectations of representation and reciprocity from their MPs’. Still less directly, external assistance in developing the capacity and institutional autonomy of state bureaucracies could help to reduce the opportunities for party clientelism. And yet more broadly, as suggested in the Bolivian case study, it would be helpful if international lending and monitoring procedures were more flexible, permitting national elites a greater sense of policy ownership.
9 Conclusion

In the wake of third-wave democratisation and neo-liberal ascendancy, our conception of the developmental state must be reconfigured. Its new setting must include a framework of competitive party politics, essential for democracy. But this prompts the question of what, beyond this minimal democratic function, political parties can or could contribute to a developmental state project.

The analysis presented here suggests that in general that contribution is likely to be extremely limited, whether in terms of shaping and elaborating the guiding policy discourse, political recruitment, ensuring accountability, monitoring implementation or providing legitimacy. This is a consequence in the first instance of what political parties are like, in particular of their weak institutionalisation. That in turn is a reflection of the manner of their creation, and the prevalence within them of different dimensions of clientelism, and the nature of the prevailing party systems. All these are to some extent a consequence of the specific context of party formation – poverty and inequality, the background of colonial intervention and subsequent authoritarianism and the more recent circumstances surrounding the re-emergence of competitive party politics.

Two kinds of partial exception have been indicated, but in both cases these imply some limitation of the prevailing norms of liberal democracy. First, it is clear that, in classic developmental states, single ruling parties often played a prominent role. Similarly, there are cases now where, within a formally competitive party framework, one party predominates and helps to sustain a developmentalist project. In Botswana’s BDP and Malaysia’s UMNO, this is a long-standing role, whereas in South Africa the ANC has assumed it only recently.

Second, we have seen that strongly institutionalised parties are better placed to play an effective developmental role, but that prospects for greater party institutionalisation in developing democracies are not generally good. The more institutionalised parties tend to be those with roots in the pre-transition era, often originally based on movements for national independence, social revolution or both. These were movements and then parties which attracted loyalty and nurtured identification, in situations where there was as yet minimal access to state resources to provide other motives for activism and support. It seems – though it would be good to be disproved – that there is much less chance of such parties emerging now. One possible exception, however, are Islamic parties, where these are based on extensive social movements and formed to some degree in opposition to authoritarian regimes. But should such parties be in a position to influence policy, their developmental agenda might well include illiberal elements.

I have also suggested, however, that we should not be over-hasty in rushing to judge parties’ performance, or to measure them up against a model of Western political parties that is largely mythical. We need to understand the constraints and imperatives that drive them and more generally the importance, if parties are to become more institutionalised or assume a greater responsibility for development policy, of respecting their autonomy. The most effective assistance we can provide in these circumstances is likely to be indirect.

first submitted October 2006
final revision accepted May 2007
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