

## **Case Study One: Political Parties, Their Social Ties And Role In Political Change**

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### **Overview**

This is a case study of a form of political institution, political parties, linking society and state. There is a great variety and number of political parties in developing countries; there has also been a tendency to study them in terms of western experience. By the 1980s the consensus was that their political role was marginal, although since then there has been a growing emphasis on their role in democratization. This case study considers the main features and sub-types of political parties in developing countries; it explores their interaction in party systems; it examines the way that parties relate to their 'social base' and civil society organizations; and it analyses parties' political role, in particular their contribution or otherwise to the building of democracy.

This case study comprises the following sections:

Introduction

Parties as institutions

Parties and party systems

Parties and their social base

Parties' political role and democratization

Conclusion

### **Introduction**

Parties are political institutions linking society and state. As such they are of the greatest political relevance to the relationships explored in parts two and three of the book. Not only are they a revealing reflection of state-society relationships but in the right circumstances they themselves may help to shape these relationships, that is, they can constitute an independent not merely a dependent political variable.

The great number and variety of parties make all attempts at definition perilous but the following is a good start. Parties are 'associations formally organized with the explicit and declared purpose of acquiring and/or maintaining legal control, either singly or in coalition

or electoral competition with other similar associations over the personnel and the policy of the government of an actual or prospective sovereign state' (Coleman and Rosberg, 1964 : 2). Whilst this is helpful, clearly in the real world there are many ambiguous cases where parties overlap with social movements, civil society organizations, guerrilla movements or indeed government institutions including the military (as in Iraq's Ba'ath Party).

Political scientists have devoted endless attention to western political parties but until recently much less to parties in the developing world. There has also been a tendency to analyse parties in the developing world in terms of features and issues arising in the western political parties literature. When developing countries first gained political independence, parties were expected to contribute to the building of democracy. As this expectation appeared increasingly unrealistic and with the new preoccupation of writers like Huntington (1968) with 'strong government' (see Chapter 1, page 21), parties were instead seen as potential agents of state and nation-building. When this expectation in turn was, with some notable exceptions, largely disappointed, there was a tendency to write off parties in developing countries; they were perceived as organizationally weak and only marginal political players. It was only from the 1980s with the new focus on democratization that they became the subject of renewed attention with the central question once more being their contribution to democracy.

This case study begins by considering the main features, and sub-types, of parties as institutions, with a few examples to illustrate. But political parties inevitably operate within broader 'party systems' and the second section discusses the relationship between parties and party systems, as well as the kinds of factors shaping party systems. The third section then returns to the question of the links between parties and society, the nature of their social base and of the party's relationship with it. In the fourth section the focus is on what parties *do* in the context of state-society relations, and more specifically, complementing the discussion in Chapter 14, their contribution to democratization.

### **Political parties as institutions**

Political parties in the developing world are often implicitly contrasted with those in western democracies. The general perception is that parties in developing countries are organizationally weaker, more dependent on individual leaders and the informal processes of clientelism, less ideological or programmatic, and less securely 'rooted' in society, than

their western counterparts. The phrase often used to sum up these features is that they are 'weakly institutionalised' (for a critical discussion of the concept of party institutionalization see Randall and Svåsand 2002a).

These features are attributed in part to the socio-economic context of party-building. In developing societies there are factors like the weakness of an independent middle-class, and extreme social inequality giving rise to a hierarchical political culture, which are prejudicial to the consolidation of democracy in general (see Chapter 14). But even more than in the developed world, parties are also faced with severe resource shortages, exacerbated by the needs of increasingly expensive electoral campaigns. Although there is growing interest in the possibility of state funding for parties, in practice they remain chiefly reliant on either the personal fortunes of their leaders or donations from wealthy individuals, giving rise to the dangers of 'reverse clientelism' in which donors exercise inappropriate influence over party decision-making (for an excellent survey of party finance see Austin and Tjernström 2003).

Party institutional weakness also reflects the political and historical context: long periods of authoritarian rule have often disrupted party development and have meant for other parties a very close and debilitating association with the state. Thirdly, however, it is exacerbated by the effects of 'globalization'. As Burnell (2006: 2) observes, 'the context which globalization now provides to the development of parties and party systems all around the world, and in new democracies specifically differs profoundly from the international environment that faced political parties in the formative days of today's long established democracies'. Thus reduced western support for authoritarian regimes and more positive pressures for democratic opening have meant that rather than representing the outcome of a gradual internal political process, 'founding' multi-party elections have often arrived at extremely short notice, encouraging a proliferation of 'instant' and frequently ephemeral new parties. It has also been argued that the apparent inevitability of processes of economic globalization has diminished scope for meaningful ideological differences between parties that could have helped them to develop a distinct identity. Finally globalization has been associated with striking developments in mass communications. In the west this has contributed to the change from old style mass membership parties to 'catch-all' or 'electoral-professional' parties, with an increased focus on the personality of the party leader. In many developing countries the impact has been

more dramatic. For instance in Brazil, where parties are generally perceived to be weak and fragmented, Mainwaring (1995: 396) argues that the powerful television industry poses 'a particularly formidable challenge to political parties.' Another illustration is the rise, from nowhere, (and fall) of the Thai Rak Thai party in Thailand (see below), whose media mogul leader, Thaksin Shinawatra has been regularly compared to Italy's Silvio Berlusconi.

There is certainly much truth in this perception of weakly institutionalized parties. We should however remember that they are often being compared, implicitly at least, with a particular type of western party, sometimes referred to as the 'class-mass party' as typified by the Labour Party in Britain or Germany's Social Democratic Party. These parties were never particularly representative of western parties in general and have in any case changed considerably over recent decades. Second of course this perception does not do justice to the variety of parties to be found within the developing world, and even within its constituent countries.

Within the developing world, and especially as a consequence of the last wave of (re-) democratization, there are well over a thousand political parties: indeed in most developing countries, parties of some kind can be found. Although some political leaders, such as Chavez in Venezuela, have sought to capitalize on 'anti-party' sentiment, promoting a kind of populism that exists above or beyond parties, even they often develop something resembling a party as a vehicle for their political ambitions. Many parties are extremely new, a response to democratic openings; others are new incarnations or amalgamations of older parties; whilst yet others, on any reckoning have a long and continuous history. Such are India's Congress Party founded in 1888 (see Chapter 21a), Mexico's PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) founded under another name in 1929 (Chapter 22c) and South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) likewise founded under another name in 1912 (Chapter 20b). Some of these long lasting parties are of course but pale shadows of their former selves, for instance Zambia's UNIP which occupied a dominant position both in the struggle for independence and in the first quarter century afterwards (see web case study 2).

These parties also vary in the way they were formed. Some of the strongest, most institutionalised parties, for instance India's Congress Party, the ANC in South Africa and

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FRELIMO in Mozambique are based on movements for national independence or liberation. This is also true for a number of parties in tropical Africa, that following independence in the 1960s eventually became single ruling parties, some of which, like KANU in Kenya and Chama Cha Mapinduzi in Tanzania, have survived the recent return to multiparty democracy to remain major political players. Another strong party, Mexico's PRI, was originally based on a movement for social revolution.

A second more numerous category of parties have been sponsored in some sense by government, or the state, itself. In the past this included parties like the Arab Socialist Union formed by Nasser in Egypt in 1962, and its successor the National Democratic Party founded by Sadat in 1978, and the National Renewal Alliance (Arena) formed by the military government in Brazil in 1965. More recent examples are 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.

At the other extreme, a great many, by implication very weakly institutionalized, parties have been formed by politically ambitious, and often wealthy, individuals, as vehicles for their own personal advancement. That has been true for instance of the parties that sustained President Collor in Brazil, and President Fujimori in Peru. A striking recent example in Thailand is the Thai Rak Thai Party, the vehicle of business tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, which gained an absolute majority in the parliament elected in November 2000 even though it had only been formed a few months before (Gunther and Diamond 2003).

Given the variety of parties in the developing world, it would be very useful to be able to categorize them in terms of a relevant and accepted typology. Unfortunately for the moment such a typology is not available and constructing one would be no easy task.

Western political science, beginning with Duverger (1954), has tended to focus on organizational features, distinguishing between *cadres* parties set up by 'notables' to get them into parliament, with limited organization, *mass* parties either, as in communist parties, cell-based and highly disciplined or in the class-mass type referred to above, enjoying a degree of internal democracy, pragmatic *catch-all parties* that originally evolved

out of class-mass parties and, most recently, reflecting developments in communications technology and electoral competition, the streamlined *electoral-professional* party.

But while these categories are not irrelevant to the developing world, neither do they capture either the range or the most representative types of its parties. Recently Gunther and Diamond (2003) have produced a new provisional typology of the world's parties. It posits five broad types, based on organizational characteristics and, within these, further sub-types based on their ideological character and their strategic orientation, that is whether they abide by pluralistic norms or aim at hegemony. The typology includes three particularly relevant innovations: the first is to introduce, within the general category of mass party a new sub-type, the proto-hegemonic *fundamentalist party*, examples being Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and Turkey's Welfare Party (see Chapter 7).

Second, it introduces a new type of party, the ethnicity-based party. This is not a mass party because, typically, it is organizationally very limited and more interested in accessing state resources than in ideology or policy. Within this latter category they distinguish two sub-types. The *ethnic party* is primarily concerned with just one ethnic group. Numerous such parties are to be found in Asia, for instance India's Telegu Dasam Party representing the Telegu-speaking people and the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) and its offshoots representing the Tamils (see Chapter 21a) and in tropical Africa, although given the often very large number of ethnic groups in a single African country, parties that represent only one such group are relatively unusual (it is unusual in Zambia for instance - see web case study two). The *congress party* brings a range of ethnically-identified groups together. India's Congress Party and the United Malays National Organization in Malaysia are cited as examples, although, certainly in the Indian Congress case, this seems to understate the role of organization and ideas, at least in the past.

Third, within the electoralist type of party, Gunther and Diamond introduce a new sub-type, the *personalistic* party, to apply to parties like the Thai Rak Thai Party mentioned above. (See Box 1.1 for Gunther and Diamond's categories and parties they could apply to.) Overall this typology is undoubtedly a great advance in getting us to think in a more systematic way about how parties vary. The trouble with it is first that it still remains in some ways western-oriented and second, as the authors acknowledge, that all categories represent 'ideal types' and actually existing parties tend to straddle across them. For

instance many seemingly ethnic, or multi-ethnic, parties in Africa are actually mainly vehicles for individual political leaders, though these are hardly the high-tech, professionalized organizations evoked by the term 'electoralist'.

**Box 1.1: Typology of parties in developing countries**

**elite-based parties,**

A *traditional local notable party* ( some conservative parties in Latin America)

B *clientelistic party* (seen as emerging to replace A)

**mass-based parties,**

C *Leninist* (communist parties but also Taiwan's Kuomintang prior to democratization),

D *pluralist nationalist parties,*

E *denominational mass-party* (predominantly Roman Catholic?),

F *fundamentalist party.* proto-hegemonic religious party (eg FIS in Algeria)

**ethnicity-based parties;**

G *ethnic party* (just concerned with own ethnic group),

H *Congress party* ( best examples are Congress, UMNO in Malaysia)

**electoralist parties;**

I *programmatic party* (sub-type which is a bit more ideological eg DPP in Taiwan),

J *personalistic party* Fujimori's and Collor's parties, and Thai Rak Thai Party

(Source: adapted from Gunther and Diamond, 2003)

**Parties in party systems**

In any case individual political parties need to be understood in the context of party systems – that is the interactions between a set of parties – that help both to shape and constrain them. Party systems like parties vary considerably, and different ways of classifying them have been advanced. In this context the thinking of Giovanni Sartori (1976) has been seminal. His approach to classification involves the number of parties, the degree of ideological polarisation and whether the system is competitive or authoritarian. By numbers he is not referring to literally how many parties there are. In developing countries, especially when competitive elections have only recently been (re-)introduced, there are often a great number of parties. For instance 26 parties contested the first competitive elections in Côte d'Ivoire in 1990; more than a hundred parties were formed and 38 parties contested in Indonesia's 1999 General Election (see Chapter 20a).

Some of these get 'shaken out' over time. But in any case what matters for taxonomic purposes are 'relevant' parties. For Sartori, these include the strongest in terms of votes and seats but also those with either 'blackmail' or 'coalition' potential. (Many scholars studying party politics in Latin American or African settings have preferred to follow Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) formula, based on the distribution of seats between parties, for calculating the number of 'effective' parties.)

The typology that results from Sartori's approach is set out in Box 1.2, with suggested examples of national party systems fitting the different categories. Obviously many developing countries in the past were 'one-party systems', either *de iure* (by law) or *de facto* (in effect) and some still remain, including the communist party-states of Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and of course China. Within the general context of authoritarian systems these are distinguished from those where one party is hegemonic and 'other parties are allowed to exist but as second class, licensed parties' (Sartori 1976: 230), for example Mexico up until the 1990s and Singapore, where the People's Action Party (PAP) has ruled continuously since 1959.

**Box 1.2: Typology of party systems (based on Sartori)**

*Within authoritarian frameworks*

One party (party-state) - (Communist countries, Taiwan up to 1990s, Zimbabwe)

Hegemonic party - (Mexico 1920s-1990s, Singapore)

*Within competitive frameworks*

Predominant party – (South Africa from 1994), India 1950s-1990s, Tanzania)

Two party – (Colombia from 1950s, Costa Rica, Jamaica 1950s on, Ghana 2000 on)

Limited pluralism (3-5 parties) – (Chile 1930s-1973 and 1990s onwards, India 1990s on)

Extreme Pluralism (6-8)– (Peru, Brazil, Benin)

Atomized

More or less competitive party systems have been a persistent feature of a number of developing countries including Costa Rica, Jamaica, India, Sri Lanka, Botswana and Mauritius, and in many others, as described in Chapter 12, they have been restored or introduced more recently. In Latin America in particular can be found convincing examples of two party (Costa Rica and Colombia), limited pluralism (Chile) and extreme pluralism

(Brazil, Peru) systems. Elsewhere the dimension of ideological polarisation is more difficult to map on, since the model is plainly concerned with ultimately class-based ideology along a left-right spectrum. As discussed below, even in Latin America, such ideological distinctions are diminishing but in other parts of the developing world they have less resonance or may be competing with other bases for identification, for instance religion, ethnicity or caste.

But on the other hand Sartori's concept of the *predominant party system*, in which there is genuine party competition but one party continues to be clearly dominant over several (we can dispute how many) elections has proved very useful, especially in regard to tropical Africa. There many observers (for instance Bogaards 2000; van de Walle 2003) have pointed to a tendency either for the originally ruling party to remain dominant in practice (as in Tanzania) or for the opposition party (often some kind of coalition) that succeeds in defeating the former ruling party then to use all the advantages of incumbency to consolidate its rule, raising fears of a new predominant party system in the making (as in Zambia, see web case study two). Analysing election results in the over 40 sub-Saharan African states, van de Walle concludes 'the emerging modal party system in the region consists of a dominant party system surrounded by a large number of small, highly volatile parties' (p298).

Whilst this Sartori-style typology is helpful, Mainwaring and Scully (1995) suggest that for developing countries a further crucial criterion must be the degree to which the party system as a whole is 'institutionalized'. They suggest two polar types, the institutionalized system and the inchoate system with actual party systems lying at different points somewhere between. For instance in Latin America, Chile comes close to the institutionalized pole while Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador tends towards inchoateness.

Mainwaring and Scully suggest four measures of party system institutionalization: stability in the rules and nature of inter-party competition; parties should have 'somewhat stable roots in society'; political actors should accord legitimacy to parties and the party system; and parties should have effective organizations. Two of these measures refer back to the constituent parties. At this point we should note a potential contradiction: individual strongly institutionalized parties are not necessarily conducive to party system institutionalization, since they may produce a very imbalanced party with one party

predominant, as in the case of Tanzania cited above (see Randall and Svåsand 2002a: 8-9).

Obviously the factors determining the character of individual party systems, whether in terms of the number and cohesion of relevant parties or of system institutionalization, are numerous and varied. To some extent we must see the character of party systems as historically determined or 'path-dependent'. But they may more specifically be affected by features of a country's other political institutions or constitution.

Here particular attention has been paid to the type of *electoral system* prevailing. Traditionally plurality systems based on first past the post (FPTP) have been thought to promote two-party or predominant party systems by awarding the electoral winner a disproportionately large number of seats whilst Proportional Representation systems promote systems with a larger number of effective parties and greater ideological polarisation. And in some instances this has also been the case in developing countries: in Iraq the choice of a PR system helped to ensure that ethnic and sectarian concerns dominated party formation and voter behaviour, thereby serving to entrench 'the logic of electoral politics as an identity referendum' (Dawisha and Diamond, 2006: 96). However in tropical Africa where the number of countries employing plurality and PR systems is roughly balanced, analysis suggests that PR has had little effect in modifying the trend to predominant systems, suggesting that other factors, especially the overwhelming logic of presidentialism discussed below, have been much more important (Bogaards 2000). It is also necessary to distinguish different forms of plurality, and PR, systems. For instance the usual form of PR is a closed list system, as in South Africa. Brazil however has an open list system, which, it has been suggested, encourages individual politicians within parties to cultivate their own personal following, thereby contributing to intra-party factionalism and weak party system institutionalization (Mainwaring 1998). (See Box 1.3 for details of electoral systems for a selection of developing countries.) Relevant too, under PR, are rules establishing thresholds in terms of vote share below which parties cannot be represented in parliament – set for instance relatively high, at 10 per cent, in Turkey and the Seychelles. In South Africa by contrast no threshold is imposed.

**Box 1.3: Electoral systems in selected developing countries**

Bangladesh	FPTP
Barbados	FPTP
Benin	List PR
Brazil	(Open) List PR
Chile	List PR
Ghana	FPTP
India	FPTP
Indonesia	List PR
Jamaica	FPTP
Kenya	FPTP
Malaysia	FPTP
Mozambique	List PR
South Africa	List PR
Taiwan	SNTV (Single Non-Transferable Vote)
Tanzania	FPTP
Turkey	List PR

(Source : IDEA web-site 2004 )

The character of the party system will also be affected by *laws or Constitutional provisions* imposing requirements on parties. Recently there has been growing scholarly interest in the possibilities of using such measures to restrain ethnically-based conflict and combat party fragmentation (Reilly, 2006). For instance a number of African countries including Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria proscribe the formation of parties based on religion, region or ethnicity. Many countries, including Turkey, Nigeria, Indonesia, Colombia and Ecuador, require parties to demonstrate a 'national' character, with offices in a certain proportion of regions and/or districts. Again in many countries for instance India from 1985, and more recently Bolivia, the Philippines, Thailand and South Africa in a bid to strengthen party discipline, measures have been passed banning defection of MPs from one political party to another unless they are prepared to seek re-election under their new affiliation.

More fundamentally, however, the character of the party system will be affected by the *system of government*. Presidential systems prevail in Latin America and in sub-Saharan Africa where of 45 countries with multi-party systems, only four qualify as parliamentary (van de Walle, 2003). As noted above, strong presidential systems, in which executive powers and patronage are concentrated in a directly elected president, are more likely than parliamentary systems to be associated with party systems in which the opposition is weak and fragmented and parties, including those supporting the President, are weakly institutionalized (Zambia is a good example). This is not an iron law, of course, and in Latin America there are countries like Chile where a strong presidency coexists with a stable, institutionalized party system.

### **Parties and their social base**

A further factor that could be expected to shape party systems is the nature of the society they operate within. This section explores parties' links with their social base, including social groupings and civil society associations. Strong roots in society are seen as a defining feature both of individual and of party system institutionalization. But in addition to identifying which groups or associations parties have links with, we need to consider the character of those links.

Within western political science the Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model has been very influential in the analysis of bases of support for political parties. That model, however, strongly reflects, as it was intended to, the experience of western Europe. Lipset and Rokkan identified a series of social cleavages that could serve to structure party systems: between church and state, centre and periphery, urban and rural sectors and labour and capital. They implied that with economic development and growing national integration, class-based cleavages would increasingly come to the fore. At the same time their 'freezing thesis' hypothesized that party systems would be strongly imprinted by the main cleavages that had been politicized at the time they came into being, that is, in western Europe, on the eve of mass suffrage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

In practice, when applying this approach, analysts have primarily concentrated on electoral behaviour, as a guide to 'cleavages'. A number of studies have considered how far the model illuminates electoral behaviour in Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Dix 1989) and in Asia, especially India (Chhibber and Petrocik 1990, Heath and

Yadav 1999). Latin America is the region where the character of cleavages and tendency for class-based cleavages to grow in importance has come closest to the Lipset/Rokkan scenario. Chile has been singled out as an almost classic instance (Scully 1995). Even then, the observation is that, for a number of complex reasons, including the fact that the restricted scope for departure from neo-liberal economic policies limits the credibility of left-tending discourse, Latin American parties now increasingly pursue a 'catch-all' electoral strategy and the volatility of their electorates is growing. This is even true of Chile (Munck and Bosworth 1998). Very recently observers have noted a 'turn to the Left' in Latin American politics but generally and with the possible exception of the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) party, founded in 1997 and led by Morales in Bolivia, this has not been expressed through the vehicle of political parties.

In Africa and Asia Lipset and Rokkan's 'freezing thesis' helps to explain the long-lasting impact in many countries of political divisions formed on the eve of national independence, especially the persistence of support for parties based on nationalist movements, such as India's Congress Party. But beyond this, the specific predicted pattern of social cleavages has little relevance. There is general agreement that in Africa 'ethnicity' (for a detailed discussion of this concept see Chapter 6) has a primary role in shaping patterns of electoral support. Even if we accept that parties representing a single ethnic group are relatively rare and, given the very large number of ethnic groups prevailing in some African countries, unlikely to make much headway, it is clear that such groups are the main units out of which blocks of party supporters are assembled.

In much of Asia, and indeed of the Middle East, social divisions are more complex and even cross-cutting, based on ethnic, religious and class-caste differences. India epitomises this complexity, compounded by its federal system of government. India's caste system (see Chapter 21a) is a distinctive feature of its social structure, with continuing relevance for patterns of party support. The Congress Party which remained electorally dominant at national level into the 1990s, drew support from all sectors of society, though analysis has shown that at state (provincial) level it rested on particular, and locally varying, caste groups. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a Hindu nationalist party obviously seeks to appeal in general terms to the 83 per cent of the population who are Hindu, but its original support base was amongst the upper castes and northern 'Hindi heartland'. But the 1990s have also seen the formation of state-level parties based on

particular caste blocs, notably the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in the state of Uttar Pradesh, whose support comes mainly from the *dalits* ('untouchables').

Whilst the emphasis in the preceding paragraphs has been on the social, or electoral, base of political parties, this is not to imply that such social divisions in some sense created the parties. It is politicians who mediate in this process, politicizing and mobilizing around some cleavages rather than others. Moreover, as Lipset and Rokkan concede without pursuing the point, over time some parties create their own political cleavages within society. For instance, the party founded by Colonel Juan Peron in 1946 is credited with having created the powerful Peronist/anti-Peronist cleavage that has divided Argentinian society to this day.

Moreover to demonstrate more or less stable patterns of voting support for individual parties is not necessarily to show that they have deep roots in society. In particular, where political parties make little attempt to project distinctive ideologies or programmes and instead rely on clientelistic relationships to reach and mobilize voters, how rooted can the party be? Thus Chabal and Daloz (1999: 39) argue that in tropical Africa, on the whole voters 'do not vote because they support the ideas, even less read the programmes, of a particular party, but because they must placate the demands of an existing or putative patron'.

But some parties also have more direct links with social movements or organizations. The classic mass-based party in the Europe-centred literature has been the social democratic party with strong ties with the trade union movement. For a range of reasons, some of which are explored in Chapters 3 and 16, the scope for development of substantial and politically independent trade unions has generally been limited in developing countries. Rather than unions helping to form parties, in the case of the PRI in Mexico and Communist parties and the Congress Party in India, parties have themselves formed and sought to control union federations, while in Argentina Peron dismantled the union-based Labour Party which had helped bring him to power and replaced it with his own Peronist party in which unions played a prominent, but never properly institutionalized, role (Levitsky, 2003). An interesting recent departure from this pattern is the Workers' Party (PT) formed in Brazil in 1980. Its leader, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva ('Lula') who became President of Brazil in 2002, began his political career organizing an independent union of

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metalworkers in the major auto-manufacturing suburbs of São Paulo. In Africa, trade unions have also played a role in struggles of national independence or democratization. For instance the ANC in South Africa has strong ties with the trade union federation COSATU, while in Zambia, the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions helped to form the democratic opposition party, the MMD. In both cases however, since the parties attained power and pursued policies of economic liberalization, party-union relations have worsened (see Chapter 20b and web case study two).

Indeed as a generalization, parties' links with civil society organizations tend to be either in some sense 'top-down' or fairly tenuous. Many of the more institutionalized parties (for instance Mexico's PRI, India's Congress Party, the National Congress Party (NDC) established by the former military ruler of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings) have established different kinds of affiliated organization, for youth, peasants/farmers, women and so forth, with varying degrees of independence and vitality. But significant links with more autonomous civil society organizations are less common. In many cases, both in Latin American and in African countries, such associations played an important role in movements for national liberation and/or democracy, and in the transformation of such movements into political parties. But thereafter there has been less incentive from the perspective of either the party or the association to retain a close relationship (on Africa, see for instance Widner 1997).

This of course raises the question of what is to be included as a civil society association (see Chapter 9). In the case of parties based on more particularistic, ethnic, or especially religious, identities, links with social associations are often stronger. For instance in India the BSP, representing the interests of the 'dalits' in the state of Uttar Pradesh has been described as a 'trade-union turned party', or the political arm of a Backward and Minority Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF), although both have been dominated by their founder Kanshi Ram and his protégé Mayawati (Pai 2002). India's BJP has particularly close links with the militant Hindu Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS) which originally set it up and with its *parivar* (family) of social organizations of which by the 1990s there were over 2000.

In the context of democratization studies, there has been growing interest in prospects for democratization in Islamic countries, with attention beginning to focus on Islamic political

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parties. Here a central question is seen as being the extent to which such parties are independent of the sectarian social movements and organizations which have tended to give rise to them. The main Islamic party in Turkey has been through many incarnations and name changes. Certainly traditionally it was closely tied to particular religious orders, which helped deliver votes and were also an important source of leadership, and to Islamic business houses – the 'Anatolian tigers' (Yesilada 2002). However opinions are more divided concerning the currently ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) formed after the party split in 2001, with writers like Özbudun (2006) maintaining that it is moving closer to a classical vote-maximizing 'electoralist' party model. Turkey's experience may however be exceptional: since the time of Ataturk there has been a strong state commitment to a secular constitution, whilst recent aspirations to join the EU have reinforced the impetus for democratization. In a number of other cases Islamic parties retain strong links with their underpinning social movements – for example the IAF (Islamic Action Front) in Jordan is embedded in the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, extraordinarily influential not only within mosques, but schools, professional associations and charitable activity (Jonasson 2004)

### **Parties' political role and democratization**

Given the diversity of parties and of party systems in which they function it is neither easy nor meaningful to make many generalizations about the political part they play. Strangely enough it is not a question frequently asked. As noted, early accounts tended to see parties as agents of democracy-building. Almond and Powell's structural-functional model (see Chapter 1, p19) saw them as institutional vehicles of interest articulation and aggregation. Subsequently there was more emphasis on the part they could play in nation-, and state-building but thereafter and until the rediscovery of parties' contribution to democratization in the 'third wave', the question was rarely put. An exception was Tordoff who in his discussion of political parties in Africa (2002, first edition 1984) identified a number of political functions they could perform. Nowadays the focus is typically on the contribution both of parties and of party systems to democratization and especially to democratic consolidation, although some other questions, for instance about their role in governance, are beginning to be asked.

The emphasis on parties' nation-building role coincided with the emergence of single ruling parties in a succession of erstwhile multi-party systems in Africa not long after

independence, and perhaps also with the spectacle of one-party or hegemonic party states such as Mexico and Taiwan, and India's dominant party system, not succumbing to the military coups endemic in their region. In Africa it was argued, especially it must be said by the party leaders in question, that competitive parties were divisive and unsuited to their societies where the priority was to build a sense of national unity. Ruling parties could help construct a national discourse or culture through for instance education and deployment of resonant symbols but they could also, through judicious distribution of patronage, help to integrate different segments of society and build stable coalitions of co-opted elites. At the same time Huntington, developing his 'strong government' thesis, suggested that the most important institutional means of building a strong government – or state- was the political party (whether in a competitive party or one-party context was of secondary significance); the party 'created' the state.

In the event first recognition of the weakness and corruption of many ruling parties and then the ultimate widespread collapse of one-party or hegemonic party rule, as much from its own internal contradictions as from external pressures, seems to have largely discredited this way of thinking. And yet it would be wrong to ignore the historical contributions to nation- and state-building not only of India's Congress Party (in contrast to the weakly institutionalized parties of Pakistan, see Chapter 22a) but of parties like Mexico's PRI or Mozambique's FRELIMO. As Chapter 20b describes, it can be plausibly argued that the ANC is currently making such a contribution in South Africa.

Political parties, whether in competitive or in one-party systems, and for better or worse, often have an important political recruitment function, providing and socializing or training the personnel of government in a more or less orderly and peaceful way. Parties can also have a policy-making role, both helping to formulate policy and overseeing its implementation. In practice it is questionable how far parties, as institutions distinct from their leaders, do shape policy, in any part of the world and especially given external constraints on economic policy options but the likelihood is least in a developing world context ( see Randall, 2007). One exception is Brazil's Workers' Party, which has prioritised mechanisms to ensure internal democracy and in the local urban authorities where it has come to power has had considerable impact on policy (Branford and Kucinski 1995), although now that its leader has become President and depends on coalition partners for a majority in the legislature, inevitable strains are appearing.

With the renewed interest in democratization, there is a virtual consensus that parties do or should play a vital role in this process, especially in the consolidation phase.. But it is more difficult for parties to contribute in the initial stages, when facing repressive authoritarian regimes. However some parties, such as the opposition Democratic Progress Party (DPP) in Taiwan are credited with having helped to catalyze the democratization process. Moreover, although single ruling parties are more typically seen as obstructing than initiating transition, in some cases, including on some accounts Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT), and Mexico's PRI, they have themselves helped to launch the process.

How do parties contribute to the building of democracy? Here the literature is less clear but drawing on a range of sources Randall and Svåsand (2002a) have distinguished a number of different if overlapping ways they could do this (see Box 1.4). *Representation* and *integration* are processes acting primarily on the electorate, *aggregation* and *recruitment and training* are more centrally about linking the electorate with government or the state, while *making government accountable* and *organizing opposition and dissent* are primarily oriented towards government.

**Box 1.4: Party contributions to democracy/democratic consolidation**

1. (Oriented towards the electorate)

*Representation*: expression of people's demands; simplifying and structuring electoral choice

*Integration*: integration of voters into the system, political education

2. (Linkage-related)

*Aggregating* (and channelling) interests

*Recruitment and training* of political leaders

3. (Government-related)

*Making government accountable*: implementing party policy, exercising control over government administration

*Organizing opposition and dissent*

(Source: Randall and Svåsand 2002a : 4)

The extent to which parties actually *represent* the constituencies they claim to stand for has already been touched on in the preceding section. There is a general and difficult philosophical question about how people's true interests are to be expressed and identified, in any system. Leaving this aside, we must recognise that even in established democracies, where parties do produce manifestos and to varying degrees incorporate internal democratic processes, such representation in practice may be limited given the relative independence of the party leadership – Michel's 'iron law of oligarchy' (1962)-, the need to appeal to groups beyond their traditional social base and so on. In the context of developing countries, performance of this representation function is still more questionable. The interests of women in particular tend to be underrepresented by the parties (see Chapter 8). Parties generally lack distinct membership criteria or coherent programmes, relying implicitly on clientelistic exchanges to hold the party together and link leadership with its social base. A distinction is often made between *descriptive* and *substantive* representation. In some parties, especially those identifying themselves with particular ethnic or religious communities, great importance attaches to party leaders and candidates for legislative and government office themselves belonging to those communities. As described in Chapter 8, in the context of global gender equity programmes, many parties, especially in South America, have taken measures, including the introduction of different forms of gender quotas, to improve the descriptive representation of women. In some cases, as recently in Iraq, legislative quotas for women, have been written into constitutions, thereby compelling parties to select women candidates. But despite the intrinsic and symbolic importance of descriptive representation, it is no firm guarantee of improved substantive representation.

Similarly, political parties in developing countries vary in the extent to which, beyond getting them to vote, they help to *integrate* people into a democratic political system. Whilst some parties, like the (Peronist) Justicialist Party (JP) in Argentina, seek to induct members and supporters into a distinctive political culture and we have seen that others (such as the PRI, India's Congress, Ghana's National Democratic Congress) have spawned a whole network of affiliated bodies through which to involve groups like women, youth, and farmers, it does not follow that the supporters are thereby socialized into democratic values and behaviour. As usual there are exceptions including Brazil's Workers' Party, Taiwan's DPP, Mexico's Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and on some

accounts South Africa's ANC, in which there has been a conscious focus on the introduction of democratic practices.

The function of *aggregation* clearly overlaps with that of representation but entails combining and reconciling the 'interests' or demands that have been variously represented and feeding them into the policy-making process. The suggestion so far has been that parties in developing countries and working within the logic of clientelist politics only play a limited representative role, which may or may not be supplemented by various civil society organisations or the media. Doherty (2001) argues forcefully that when it comes to aggregation, parties are uniquely well positioned – particularly in comparison to civil society organizations. At the same time we have already noted the limited extent to which parties produce explicit and coherent programmes.

The *recruitment* function has already been touched on but the preceding discussion suggests that this will not typically entail significant socialization of the resultant political elite into democratic norms and practices.

We come finally to ways in which political parties can help to *make government accountable*. A distinction can be made here between *vertical* accountability, making government accountable to society and *horizontal* accountability, making the executive branch of government accountable to other central political institutions, including the legislature (which has a role to play in both vertical and horizontal forms of accountability). The effectiveness of the first, vertical, form of accountability depends to a large extent on how well parties perform their representative and aggregating roles, allowing social groups to convey their demands and to assess government performance against its promises. Horizontal accountability through the legislature requires an effective organized opposition. For many commentators such an opposition is absolutely crucial for a functioning democracy. Again the record is variable but party systems in developing countries often fail to deliver in this respect. We have seen that there is particular concern that dominant party systems, especially prevalent in tropical Africa, cannot generate effective opposition. Parties, or the leaders of parties, not included in government, rather than working with other excluded groups to forge an effective alliance, tend to be more interested in being co-opted into government and gaining access to its sources of patronage.

All in all, to the extent that parties perform these democracy-related functions they can be said to help to institutionalize democracy and to provide stability and legitimacy for the democratic regime. But it is also possible that individual parties themselves, when they are for instance, weakly institutionalized tools of ambitious politicians or alternatively over-institutionalized and with privileged access to resources, or where they are corrupt, may form part of the problem for democratic consolidation. Beyond the contribution of individual parties, the overall party system will have a bearing: it is generally assumed that dominant party systems, whilst they may provide some political stability are less conducive to democracy. Mainwaring and Scully (1995) further conclude from their survey of party systems in Latin America that the more institutionalized the (competitive) party system as a whole, the greater its contribution to democratic consolidation, an argument that seems borne out for instance by the contrast between Pakistan and India. Striking a dissenting note, however, Stockton (2003) uses the contrasting cases of South Korea, with weakly institutionalized parties, and Taiwan, both of which have arguably reached the consolidation stage, to question whether an institutionalized party system is really necessary for consolidation.

Whilst in recent years the main questions asked about the role of political parties in developing countries have centred on their contribution to democracy-building, interest is beginning to extend to the part they can or do play in processes of governance and conflict prevention. To some extent this picks up on earlier debates about parties' contribution to state and nation-building, with the difference that now there is an assumption that the parties concerned are or should be operating within the context of a competitive party system. What input, for instance, do parties make in respect of government policy? Randall (2007) suggests that typically that contribution will be slight and that moreover it is likely to be most significant in the case of effectively dominant political parties – such as the ANC in South Africa, or UMNO (United Malays National Organization) in Malaysia. Again in the interests of good governance, hopes have been expressed that parties, within competitive systems, could help to expose and combat government corruption. Parties do regularly pledge to fight corruption when appealing to prospective voters, and this at the least helps to propagate an anti-corruption discourse. However in practice, given the significant role of party patronage in maintaining party cohesion and the growth of 'reverse clientelism' as a basis of party funding, they are more likely to be contributing to government corruption than preventing it.

### **Conclusion**

Political parties potentially have a significant role to play as institutions linking society and state. In practice presentation of a case study of parties and their role is hampered both by the great variety of parties and by the tendency to analyse them in terms of an outdated model of western political parties. The general observation has been that political parties are more weakly institutionalized in the developing than in the western world, although there are numerous and important exceptions. Parties also need to be studied in relation to party systems – both the number of effective parties and the degree of party system institutionalization. One party or hegemonic systems are increasingly rare but amongst the growing number of competitive systems, many, especially in tropical Africa, are dominated by a single party. Again with important exceptions, parties in developing countries tend to lack deep roots in society. Outside of Latin America where parties often form along social class lines, the building-blocks of party support tend to be groupings defined by ethnicity or region, caste and religion. Party links with independent civil society organizations tend to be weak.

By the 1980s the emerging consensus was that parties played a marginal role in the politics of developing countries; they were dependent rather than independent variables. But this was to neglect the very important role individual parties such as India's Congress, Mexico's PRI and Taiwan's KMT had played in nation- and state-building over several decades. More recently the focus has been on parties' contribution to democratization. When we try to pin down the different potential ways in which parties could help to build democracy, it is often difficult to argue that parties do make a substantial contribution on these lines. Even so, there are first obvious exceptions; second we must remember that in an era of social class de-alignment and expanding mass media there has also been much talk of the 'decline of party' and of parties' democratic role in western democracies.

Given the apparent weaknesses of political parties in developing countries and especially their disappointing performance in relation to democracy-building, there has been growing interest amongst western agencies in forms of party assistance. Organizations like the *stiftungen* in Germany have long been active in this field but it has recently been expanding. Leaving aside the question of whether external agencies *ought* to be intervening in this way, it is evidently an extremely challenging task. Carothers (2006: 162)

who provides an excellent overview of the activities and achievements of these agencies and remains convinced of the ultimate value of what they are trying to do, nonetheless concludes that 'It rarely has transformative impact both because of the difficulty of the task and the inadequacies of much of the assistance'. Ultimately the main hopes for change in individual parties and party systems must stem from developments within the countries themselves.

### Questions

1. To what extent and in what ways are political parties 'rooted' in society in the developing world?
2. To what extent is it possible to generalize about political parties in the developing world?
3. What are the main factors shaping party systems in developing countries?
4. Discuss, with examples, the contribution political parties can make to nation- and state-building in developing countries.
5. What do political parties contribute to the democratization process in developing countries?
6. Assess the overall importance of political parties to politics in developing countries.
7. How best can external agencies provide assistance to political parties in developing countries?
8. Discuss the pros and cons of state funding or subsidies for parties in developing countries.
9. Assess the role of ideology in shaping the character and agenda of political parties in developing countries.

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**Web links**

[www.psr.Keele.ac.uk/parties.htm](http://www.psr.Keele.ac.uk/parties.htm)

and

[www.gksoft.com/govt/en/parties.html](http://www.gksoft.com/govt/en/parties.html)

have links to the home pages of a range of political parties across the world

[www.nimd.org](http://www.nimd.org) is the web-site of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

[www.cdi.anu.edu.au](http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au) is the website of the Centre for Democratic Institutions in Australia, which is concerned with peaceful party development, though it also works with parliaments.