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Co-opting the state: how weak parties can make stable party systems

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ABSTRACT

Conventional understandings of party system institutionalisation assume that institutionalised parties are necessary for interparty competition to stabilise. However, this approach neglects the role of the state in shaping party competition. Using survey data from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, it is shown that weakly institutionalised parties can lead to institutionalised party systems if parties are able to successfully co-opt the state and use state resources to supplement party deficiencies. By developing a relationship that intertwines parties with the state, parties in young democracies do not need to institutionalise for stable party systems to form.

KEYWORDS Party institutionalisation; party system institutionalisation; clientelism; patronage; South Asia; party politics

Introduction

Conventional understandings of party system institutionalisation (PSI) assume that party systems will be stable if political parties are well-institutionalised. For Hicken and Kuhonta (2014, pp. 3–4), PSI is directly related to institutionalised parties, claiming that ‘the stability of interparty competition must necessarily depend on the presence of cohesive and ideological organizations’. Mainwaring and Torcal (2006) similarly claim that stability in interparty competition is primarily achieved through the development of parties’ programmatic linkages to society.

The common assumption is that party systems become stable through the development of ideological or programmatic linkages built around the polarisation of a societal cleavage. In turn, to build these programmatic linkages, formal party organisations are required to shape cleavages and infuse values in society. Based on this causal chain, PSI is dependent on parties being well-organised and strongly rooted in society through ideological

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affiliation. These two concepts, party organisation and societal rootedness, are at the core of party institutionalisation and many conceptualisations of PSI assume them to be the underlying cause of stability.

Using South Asia as a case study, this article challenges this conventional understanding that PSI is dependent on the institutionalisation of individual parties. Rather, it is argued that party systems can assume relatively stable and predictable patterns of inter-party competition if parties are capable of developing a relationship with the state which can provide the resources necessary to sustain themselves. In this way party systems can become stable without parties developing well-institutionalised organisations. In South Asia, it is argued that three systems can be seen: an institutionalised party system born out of parties' intimate relationship with the state (Bangladesh), an institutionalised party system made up of institutionalised parties (India), and a more fluid party system where parties are only moderately institutionalised and have been incapable of co-opting the state (Pakistan).

In the first section, the dominant paradigm surrounding PSI is discussed and critiqued. Thereafter, an alternate set of hypotheses examining parties' relationship to the state is presented. This is followed by an elaboration of the case selection, data and methods used. Finally, the results are summarised in four parts (party organisation, linkages, clientelism, and party patronage), which is followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

Reviewing the literature

An institutionalised party system is

one in which actors develop expectations and behavior based on the premise that the fundamental contours and rules of party competition and behavior will prevail into the foreseeable future. In an institutionalized party system, there is stability in who the main parties are and how they behave. (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006, p. 206)

This is the most commonly accepted definition of the concept with most scholars agreeing on stability as a core feature of PSI (Casal Bértoa, 2018, p. 66). Particularly, there is an expectation that there should be stability in who the main actors are in a party system. Systems lacking institutionalisation are those that experience the frequent entry and exit of new parties with recurrent changes in the choices available to voters. In such systems, voters face significant challenges in identifying the party which most closely aligns with their interests and lack many of the heuristics that would ordinarily be used to cast their vote.

Mainwaring and Scully's (1995, pp. 4–5) seminal work which revived interest in PSI identified four dimensions to the concept: stability in interparty competition, the stability of parties' linkages with society, the legitimacy of

parties and elections, and party organisations with reasonably stable rules and structures. However, this four-dimensional conceptualisation has been critiqued for its failure to disentangle several related, but distinction phenomena. This is partly related to the conceptual nesting of party institutionalisation as a component element of PSI. Two of the four characteristics of institutionalised party systems identified (party rootedness and party organisation) are directly related to the institutionalisation of individual parties as opposed to the system of interaction.

The perception is that, as individual parties constitute the party system, the institutionalisation of the distinct components as well as the institutionalisation of patterned interaction among them contribute to the overall institutionalisation of the system (Meleshevich, 2007, p. 16). Indeed, many scholars still treat the institutionalisation of parties and party systems as interchangeable and synonymous concepts (Casal Bértoa, 2017, p. 404). However, as Randall and Svåsand (2002, pp. 8–9) point out party systems can be unevenly institutionalised across parties and particularly in newer democracies, some parties may be significantly more institutionalised than others. Further, based on Sartori's definition of a party system, systems constitute something more than individual parties as 'the system displays properties that do not belong to a separate consideration of its component elements' (Sartori, 1976, p. 43). It is therefore misleading to assume that institutionalised parties will necessarily mean that the party system is institutionalised.

Further, it is possible for the two concepts to diverge. Parties can be institutionalised while the system within which they function is not. Similarly, it is possible for party systems to be stable (i.e. institutionalised) while parties are not. As Luna (2014, p. 413) argues, party systems can be characterised by 'contradictory configurations' where inter-party competition is stable, but parties are weakly rooted in society. Likewise, interparty competition can be stable even where parties exhibit a lack of formal party organisation (Hellmann, 2014, p. 54).

Later work by Mainwaring addressed some of this by revising his conceptualisation of PSI to focus exclusively on stability in interparty competition as the core of PSI with the justification that it 'does not intrinsically require the other three previous dimensions' (Mainwaring, 2018, p. 4). This reconceptualization removes factors relating to party institutionalisation (party rootedness and organisation) as components of PSI and makes a better distinction between the two. However, the underlying causal assumptions remain with the acknowledgement that these 'dimensions are underpinnings that facilitate PSI' (Mainwaring 2018, p. 4). Although PSI has been conceptually narrowed to focus primarily on stability in inter-party competition, the assumption remains that the primary way for a party system to become institutionalised is through institutionalised parties.

While conceptually related, party and party system institutionalisation do not necessarily have to converge. However, as Mainwaring (2018) claim,

programmatic linkages and well-developed party organisations have a clear role in facilitating PSI. How then, without these dimensions structuring party competition, is it possible for party systems to stabilise into a predictable pattern of inter-party competition with the same parties at the core of the party system? Alternatively, how can stable party systems form in lieu of institutionalised parties?

How weakly institutionalised parties can draw on the state to compete

The role of the state in structuring party competition is a significant factor unacknowledged by the literature on the causes of PSI. Often, parties are conceptualised as actors distinct from the state, functioning as a bridge between the state and society. However, this neat separation is not always true in practice and particularly in the case of new democracies, parties often originate within the state (van Biezen & Kopecký, 2007, p. 237). This historical origin is significant as it often defines future party development as the political culture and institutions formed during a historical turning point tend to persist long past their immediate creation (LaPalombara & Weiner, 1966, p. 14). Consequently, the way in which parties relate to the state at significant historical junctures have a major influence on the trajectory of future party-state relations and the development of both.

This is particularly true for countries with a history of authoritarian rule. In such cases, the history of civil–military relations and ties to the past define the context within which political parties develop. In such systems, parties with ties to the previous regime often survive, and at times thrive, under new systems of electoral competition. Such authoritarian successor parties, parties that emerge from authoritarian regimes but operate after the transition to democracy, often receive significant benefit from their ties to the previous regime (Loxton, 2018). In this way, civil–military relations in the aftermath of authoritarian rule can define how parties relate to the state and shape the environment in which party systems form. This can be seen in the cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan, where the civil–military relationship at the return of multi-party elections had a defining effect on the development of the respective parties and party systems. In Pakistan, the military's economic and political dominance over the state has continued and has been used to undermine the development of the political parties (Siddiq, 2011, p. 153). In Bangladesh, the authoritarian origins of both the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have defined parties' relationship to the state and their dominance over it (Suykens, 2017).

There are many advantages or 'authoritarian inheritances' that such parties can benefit from including a strong party brand, a record of effective governance or a well-developed party organisation. Perhaps the most important

advantage that such parties can draw on is the relationship developed with state institutions, which can provide significant support for such parties. Additionally, patronage networks built during authoritarian rule can provide a basis from which to mobilise support. In new democracies, this close relationship with the state can prove a significant benefit for parties lacking societal roots or a well-developed party organisation. Further, this relationship can provide parties with the opportunity to build the organisation through party patronage and enrich supporters who in turn fund the party.

There are many ways in which parties can use the state to their electoral advantage. More authoritarian means could include harassing political opponents, manipulating the electoral rules, or suppressing voters through a variety of ways. Less coercive methods commonly used are clientelism and party patronage, which form the focus of this paper. These methods are employed in both democracies and electorally competitive authoritarian regimes and it is argued that through the use of state resources to support parties, party systems in several countries have assumed a stable format despite the relative weakness of parties. In these cases, parties have focused on strategies for finding ways to intertwine themselves with the state rather than developing the party organisation and building societal linkages – as is the commonly assumed path for electoral success. Through using an informal relationship with the state, parties in such systems can leverage this relationship to supplement their deficiencies.

Katz and Mair's (1995, p. 17) cartelisation thesis first introduced the idea of the 'interpenetration of party and state' as the latest stage in the development of European political parties. In this final stage of party evolution, cartel parties are characterised by the professionalisation of politics and the decline in party membership as they become intertwined with the state. These parties act as 'semi-state agencies' relying on state resources to maintain the parties and informally collude by distributing patronage among the main parties to fend off challengers (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 16). An important distinction to make, however, is that Katz and Mair's cartelisation thesis is directed at well-organised, established parties in advanced democracies. In many emerging democracies, it is not that parties evolve and merge into the state, but rather that they emerge *from* the state, or build the party organisation out of their privileged access to state resources.

Parties can use their relationship with the state to supplement weakly institutionalised parties in two main ways: clientelism to supplement weak societal linkages, and party patronage to build the party organisation. Clientelism occurs when parties offer 'material benefits only on the condition that the recipient returns the favour with a vote or other forms of political support' (Stokes et al., 2013, p. 13). This is a commonly used practice in many democracies to target voters and is one of the primary ways in which parties use the state to support the party through the distribution of public goods to tie

voters to the party. This can be particularly problematic in emerging economies where the state is often one of the largest employers in the country and controls a significant share of the overall economy. In such cases, parties with few resources have an incentive to act as gatekeepers and a favourable relationship with parties will have significant appeal for elites and voters alike.

While clientelism is primarily directed at gaining electoral support for the party, parties must also build a party organisation to effectively govern. One of the means of achieving this is party patronage which ties political elites to the party. Party patronage is a form of party-state linkage whereby parties use their relationship with the state as an organisational resource to build and maintain the party organisation by tying political elites to the party through offers of jobs and power in government (Kopecký & Mair, 2012, pp. 7–8). Understood in this way, patronage is not concerned with vote-gathering, but rather with building the party's organisational network. Through their power to appoint individuals to state institutions and distribute state jobs, parties can tie activists and political elites to the party to build the party organisation and its networks. This is both necessary to effectively control the state and to contain challengers. By keeping ambitious elites in the party fold with patronage, parties can prevent the emergence of challengers and thereby consolidate their hold on power. Further, by leveraging their relationship with the state, parties can thus build two types of support necessary for electoral success – that of political elites and of the electorate. If parties are capable of effectively leveraging their relationship with the state to supplement party deficiencies, it is not necessary for them to build the party organisation and its linkages in the way that is commonly assumed necessary for institutionalised party systems. Based on the literature and discussion above, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Institutionalised parties with strong linkages and a well-developed party organisation are a sufficient condition for an institutionalised party system.

H2: Parties lacking significant institutionalisation, but which have co-opted the state to supplement party deficiencies are a sufficient condition for an institutionalised party system.

H3: Parties lacking significant institutionalisation, and which are incapable of co-opting the state, will be unable to form an institutionalised party system.

Case selection

Aside from India, PSI has not received significant scholarly attention in studies of South Asia. Yet, the region is intriguing as it challenges conventional understandings of the causes of party system stability and change based on the dynamics discussed above. Conventional explanations for understanding systems usually emphasise ideological cleavages and the effects of

electoral systems (Chhibber & Kollman, 2004, pp. 14–15). However, with the possible exception of India, ideological cleavages in South Asia remain superficial and parties are more pragmatic than ideological. Further, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan all employ similar first-past-the-post systems allowing for this factor to be controlled. Instead, the defining feature explaining variation lies with how parties relate to the state and the extent of their institutionalisation.

Despite the relative lack of party institutionalisation, there has been a semblance of continuity in who the main parties of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are since the 1990s. This was an important turning point in South Asian politics and largely defines contemporary party systems. This period saw the return of multiparty elections to Pakistan in 1988 and Bangladesh in 1991. In India, this was also a significant juncture in its party system with the 1991 election seen as the start of a new phase ending Congress' predominance over a fractured opposition and the formation of a new cleavage around the 'three Ms of Indian politics' – Mandal, Mandir and Market (Yadav, 1999, p. 2394). This is not to say that these party systems have been perfectly stable during this time. Changes have occurred, but at the core, there has been continuity in who the main players are that structure party competition.

Since 1991, the Bangladeshi party system has been dominated by the BAL and the BNP (Amundsen, 2016, p. 52). In Pakistan, until the 2018 election which brought Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to power, politics largely centred around the parties of the Sharif and Bhutto dynasties since the multiparty elections of 1988. The Indian party system has a wider range of competitors and has seen important changes at the regional level, but at the core, the two main national parties around which the party system is structured have remained the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) although their coalition allies have often changed. The approximate relationship between party and party system institutionalisation for the three countries since the early 1990s is illustrated below (Figure 1).

India's party system since the 1990s in some ways represents the traditional path towards an institutionalised party system. At the regional level, and in terms of coalition partners, the Indian party system remains more complex, but at the core, the party system has stabilised around a binodal configuration of competition between the two major alliances led by the INC and BJP (Schakel et al., 2019, p. 330). Competition between the INC and BJP forms the focus of the Indian component of this study as it largely defines competition for government formation at the national level. For a more nuanced discussion on the role of India's federal system and regional parties see Ziegfeld (2016). The INC has a long history and strong party brand which has firmly rooted the party in society. While showing an element of personalisation in the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, the party is still

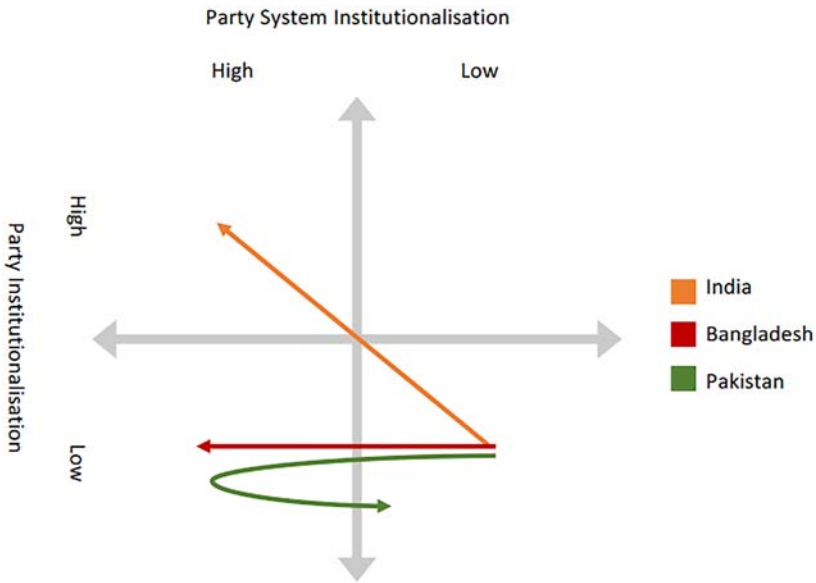


Figure 1. Party system development since early 1990s.

organisationally complex. Likewise, the BJP has grown into a vastly complex organisation with extensive links across society. Its electoral success in recent years can be attributed to the strength of the party organisation and its effective mobilisation of voters and party activists through its strong ideological appeal.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan, the same parties have persisted as key players despite the presence of highly personalised parties with relatively poor levels of organisation. Particularly in Bangladesh, the main parties have not changed significantly since 1991 (Blair 2010) and until the emergence of the PTI, the main competitors had largely stayed the same in Pakistan (Rollier, 2020, p. 121). This defies the commonly held assumption that party systems stabilise through the institutionalisation of parties which embed themselves in the political system by developing programmatic linkages to society through political activism carried out by the party organisation. With neither significant programmatic linkages nor well-developed party organisations, how is it that these parties have persisted? The answer may lie with their relationship to the state.

Although Bangladesh and Pakistan are somewhat imperfect democracies, studying PSI in semi-democratic systems is not without precedent. As Hicken and Kuhonta (2014, p. 5) argue, a significant number of institutionalised systems have historical roots in semi-democratic regimes and institutionalised party systems may or may not be consolidated democracies. Indeed, they argue that semi-democratic conditions may be a contributing factor

to the institutionalisation of party systems in East Asia. While it may be contested as to what extent elections in Bangladesh and Pakistan are completely free and fair, scholars increasingly concede that democracy should be understood on a spectrum rather than a dichotomy. With features of both democratic and authoritarian institutions, Bangladesh (Riaz, 2019) and Pakistan (Adeney, 2017) can be classified as hybrid regimes.

Data & method

Data was collected using expert surveys based on a framework of questions from the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (Kitschelt, 2013) and the Political Parties Database (Poguntke et al., 2018). While there are limitations to using experts, such as the problem of respondents' biases, these limitations can be offset by using a multiple-rater design and aggregating responses to minimise error as employed in this study (Maestas, 2018, p. 586). Experts were selected based on their knowledge of political parties in one of the three countries included in the study. A total of 37 valid responses was anonymously collected from academics and civil society organisations researching parties. These questions relate to four clusters of topics: the party organisation, the strength of parties' linkages, the extent and targets of clientelism, and the extent to which party patronage is prevalent in each country. These clusters of indicators either relate to party institutionalisation (party organisation and strength of linkages) or to party behaviour which uses access to state resources (clientelism and party patronage) to supplement deficiencies in party institutionalisation.

To understand the extent to which party organisations are valued as institutions distinct from individual actors three measures are examined. The first indicator examines the diffusion of power in candidate selection and is used to determine whether candidates are selected by a small group of powerful leaders or through a more complex mechanism that considers branches of the party. Two further measures consider the expansiveness of the organisations by examining the extent to which permanent party offices are maintained throughout the country, and the extent to which parties maintain an informal presence in the community. To determine the strength of party linkages, respondents were asked to evaluate the strength of parties' relationship with six types of civil society organisations on a scale of 0 (no linkages) to 4 (very strong linkages).

To understand clientelism, respondents were asked two sets of questions: whether parties engage in clientelist practices towards each of the six types of interest groups, and the extent to which parties engage in four types of clientelist practices that rely on access to state resources. The interest groups and forms of clientelism are listed in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#). Finally, to determine the extent to which party patronage is prevalent in each country,

Table 1. Averaged responses on the strength of parties' linkages to different sectors of civil society. Responses range from a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent).

	Bangladesh		India		Pakistan		
	BAL	BNP	INC	BJP	PML (N)	PPP	PTI
Unions	3.11	2.11	1.79	2.56	0.86	2.29	1
Business	3.33	2.89	2.14	3.19	3.43	1.71	2.43
Religious organisations	2.89	3.22	1.15	3.69	2.88	1.25	2.38
Ethnic, linguistic or caste-based organisations	2.67	1.78	2.53	2.41	2	2.88	1.63
Urban/Rural organisations	2.5	1.88	1.85	2.5	2.5	3.13	2.38
Women's organisations	3.13	2.5	2	2.53	1.71	2.38	2.13
Average	2.94	2.40	1.91	2.81	2.23	2.27	1.99

respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which appointments in nine different state sectors are made on the basis of rewarding party loyalty rather than merit.

Results

The two main themes in the literature on party institutionalisation centre on party organisation and the strength of party linkages (Casal Bértoa, 2017, p. 408). For a party organisation to be institutionalised, it needs to have value and lasting power beyond individual leaders. Parties lacking formal organisation are those which act on an *ad hoc* basis and are often based in personalism with a leader-centric organisational structure. In such parties, 'activists often find their career advancement prospects blocked by arbitrary decision-making, nepotistic practices or the whims of a few leaders at the top' (Chhibber et al., 2014, p. 492). Established rules and norms govern an institutionalised party and these processes should be routinised to guide decision-making and constrain individual leaders. Similarly, complexity in the organisation beyond individual figures shows the extent to which a party functions as an institution guided by rules and norms rather than individual leaders.

Table 2. Averaged responses on the extent to which parties engaged in clientelism using state resources. Responses range from a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent).

	Bangladesh		India		Pakistan		
	BAL	BNP	INC	BJP	PML (N)	PPP	PTI
Preferential public benefits	3.14	2.67	3.00	2.82	3.38	3.38	3.00
Preferential employment opportunities	3.00	3.20	2.18	2.00	3.25	3.25	2.75
Preferential government contracts	2.86	3.00	2.29	2.35	3.38	3.00	2.63
Preferential regulation	2.80	2.75	2.24	2.41	3.25	3.13	2.75
Average	2.95	2.90	2.43	2.40	3.31	3.19	2.78

Party organisation

The institutionalisation of a party is limited as long as it is used as the personal instrument of a leader or a small group of elites. An institutionalised party should have value in its own right beyond these elite figures. A good way to determine this is to examine how power and decision-making is spread in an organisation. A highly centralised party will be more personalistic and based on the whims of individual leaders, while a party with shared decision-making structures and bargaining between the various levels of the party will be guided by processes and values beyond individuals.

One of the important functions of a party is to put forward candidates for elections and the processes for deciding candidates is one of the ways to understand how power is distributed. Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the balance of power within parties when selecting candidates for national elections (Figures 2–4).

Generally, the parties are regarded as quite centralised. In Pakistan, there is near unanimous consensus that the balance of power for candidate selection lies with core leaders for all parties. Similarly, candidate selection in Bangladesh is regarded by most as centralised in party leaders, with the BNP seen as slightly more open to bargaining between different levels of the party. In India, the balance of power in candidate selection is seen as more decentralised with a near even-split between respondents who see power lying primarily with party leaders and those who see it as an outcome of bargaining, or a decision made by regional branches. While this may be a consequence of India's size and diversity, this itself shows the complexity of the two organisations and the value that the party

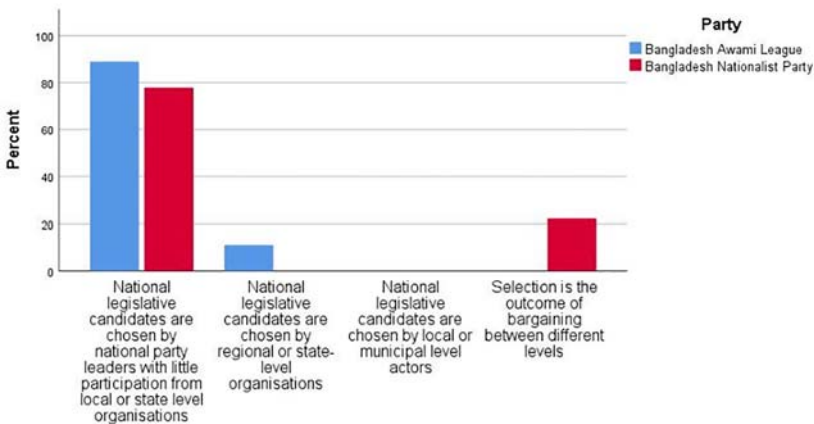


Figure 2. Which of the following four options best describes the following parties' balance of power in selecting candidates for national legislative elections? – Bangladesh.

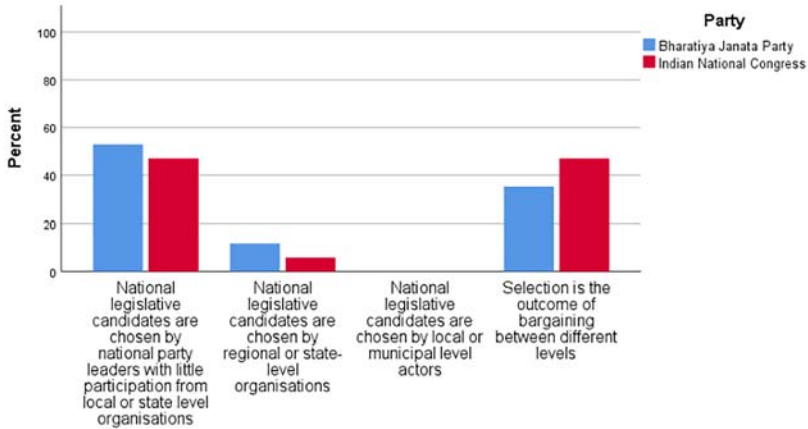


Figure 3. Which of the following four options best describes the following parties’ balance of power in selecting candidates for national legislative elections? – India.

brand holds beyond individual leaders, which is consistent with H1 and what is expected of institutionalised parties.

A second way of measuring the organisational complexity of parties is to look at the extent to which parties organise throughout the country. The more extensive a party’s network of offices across the country, the more organisationally complex it can be considered. Local branch offices can maintain a presence in the community serving as the local representatives of the party as well as providing a formal structure with which party activists and supporters can coordinate. As shown below, respondents were asked to evaluate

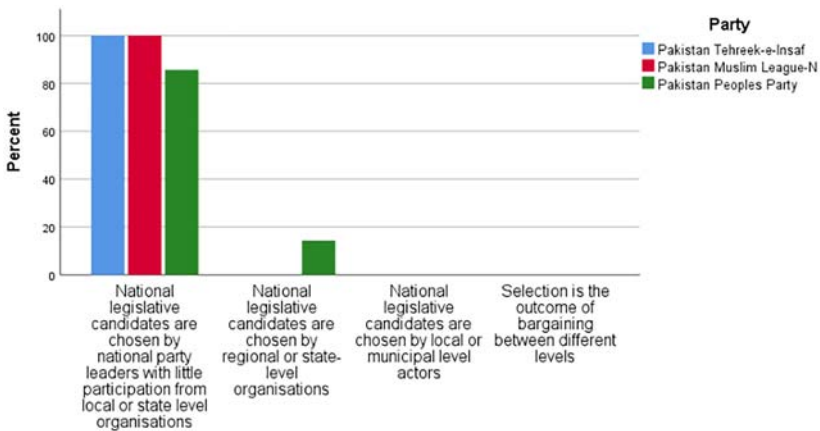


Figure 4. Which of the following four options best describes the following parties’ balance of power in selecting candidates for national legislative elections? – Pakistan.

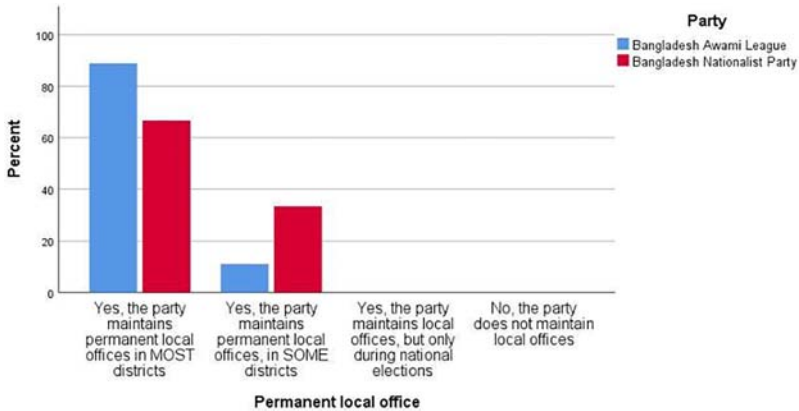


Figure 5. Do the following parties maintain offices and paid staff at the local or municipal level? If yes, are these offices and staff permanent or only during national elections? – Bangladesh.

whether parties maintained permanent offices and paid staff in districts across the country (Figures 5–7).

All parties, with the exception of the PPP, are regarded by a majority of respondents to maintain permanent local offices in most districts. An interesting observation is that in each country, the ruling party is seen as the most territorially expansive. This is likely a testament to the increased resources available to ruling parties through their access to state resources and these local offices will play an important role in distributing benefits and maintaining links in the community.

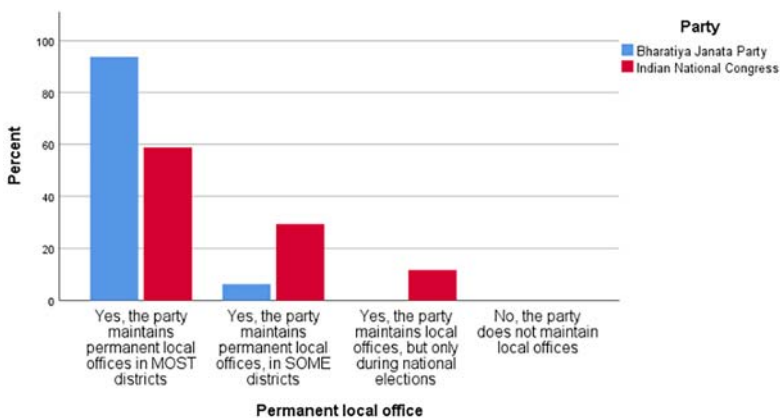


Figure 6. Do the following parties maintain offices and paid staff at the local or municipal level? If yes, are these offices and staff permanent or only during national elections? – India.

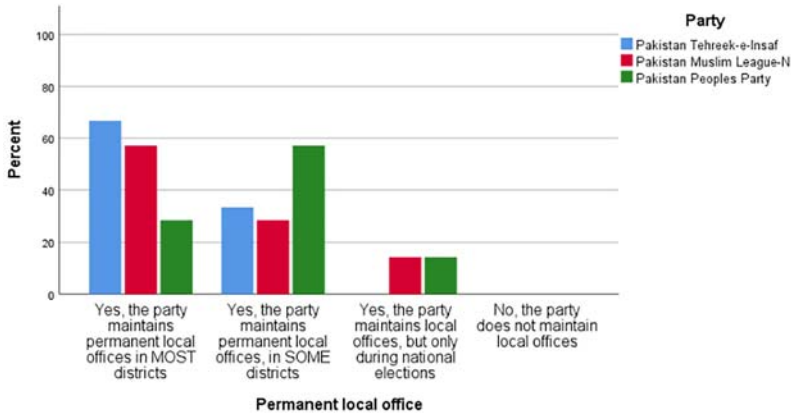


Figure 7. Do the following parties maintain offices and paid staff at the local or municipal level? If yes, are these offices and staff permanent or only during national elections? – Pakistan.

Beyond formal party offices, parties also interact with the community in more informal ways which often forms part of strategies to build party linkages. This can include social and leisure activities organised by parties to build linkages with a community. This is a more nuanced approach, but it reveals a lot about the nature of the linkages that parties have with their supporters (Figures 8–10).

Parties in Bangladesh, although scoring quite high for their formal presence perform slightly lower for their informal community relationship building. The BJP is regarded by all respondents as having a strong community presence and again, this shows the strength of the party organisation. The INC performs slightly better than their formal presence. The majority of respondents regard Pakistani parties as having a permanent presence in communities. Interestingly, the PPP which was regarded as the least territorially expansive in terms of formal offices, scores very highly for their informal community presence.

These measures consider the routinisation and institutional capacity of the different parties as organisations. However, the ultimate aim of the party organisation is to help establish the party and its ideals in society to gain electoral support. Institutionalised parties should also be firmly rooted in society.

Strength of linkages

For parties to remain competitive in a party system, it is important that they are rooted in society with strong linkages which tie voters to the party. Parties with strong linkages to voters and interest groups have greater lasting power

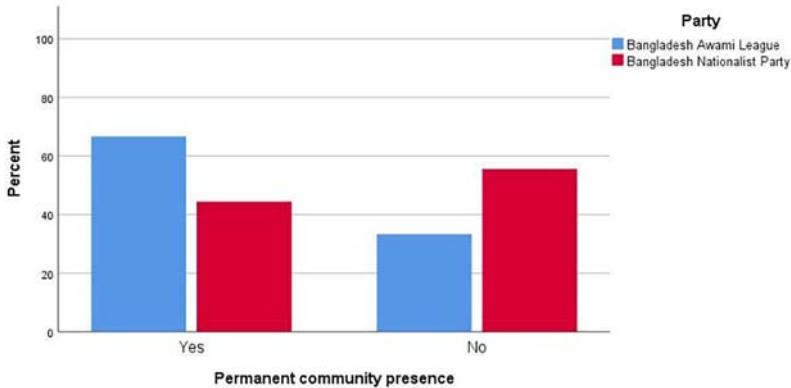


Figure 8. Do the following parties' local organisations maintain a permanent social and community presence by holding social events for local party members or sustaining ancillary social groups such as party youth movements, party cooperatives or athletic clubs? – Bangladesh.

and through their linkages can better represent political interests and maintain power. Parties with stronger links, as well as a diversity of links, can be considered more institutionalised.

This societal rootedness is often built through the development of linkages with interest groups which support the party and help connect parties to voters. To determine the strength of parties' linkages to society, respondents were asked to evaluate the strength of linkages on a scale of 0 (no linkages) to 4 (very strong linkages) for six categories of interest groups. Respondents

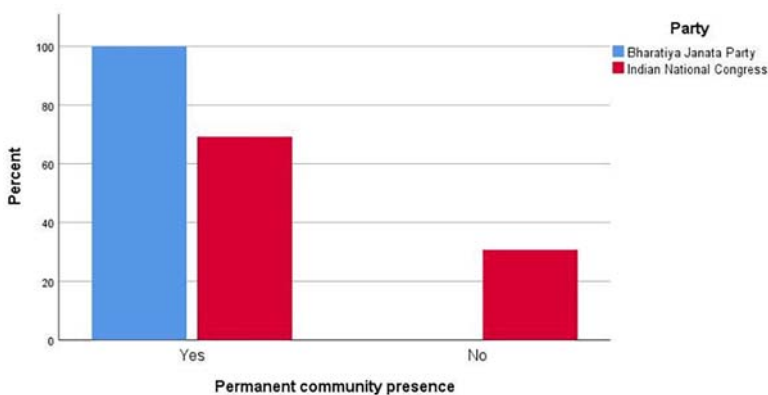


Figure 9. Do the following parties' local organisations maintain a permanent social and community presence by holding social events for local party members or sustaining ancillary social groups such as party youth movements, party cooperatives or athletic clubs? – India.

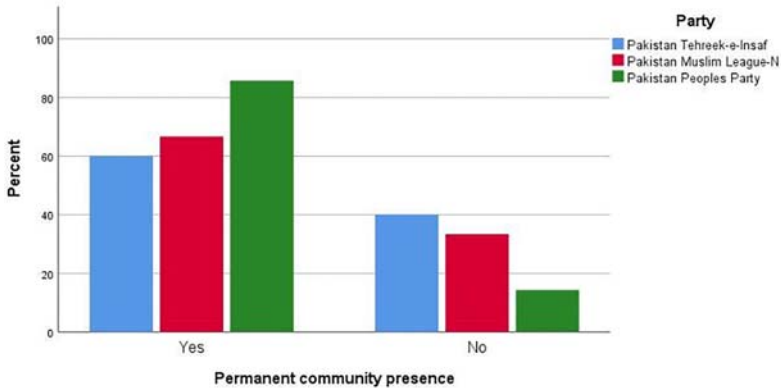


Figure 10. Do the following parties' local organisations maintain a permanent social and community presence by holding social events for local party members or sustaining ancillary social groups such as party youth movements, party cooperatives or athletic clubs? – Pakistan.

were asked: 'do the following parties have strong linkages to one or more of the following civil society organisations, and how strong are the linkages between these organisations and the party?' Responses are summarised below by averaging responses for each party and each category of interest group. A score closer to 4 indicates stronger linkages while 0 indicates no linkages. Respondents were asked to evaluate the strength of parties' linkages for the country in which they are an expert. Consequently, comparisons between countries should be made with caution (Table 1).

Both Bangladeshi parties received a relatively high score, but there is a clear difference between the ruling BAL and the opposition BNP. For every category other than religious organisations, the BAL was regarded as having stronger linkages than the BNP – often by a significant margin such as for trade unions. Interestingly, the BAL has strong linkages with both unions and business unlike in Pakistan, for instance, where there is a clearer pro-business or pro-worker distinction.

The difference between the BJP and INC is stark. The BJP received high scores for several categories, particularly for business and religious organisations – where the result approaches the maximum score of 4. Again, the ruling BJP curiously shows strong linkages across classes with a broad coalition of support from both business and unions. Much like Bangladesh, the ruling BJP is seen as having stronger linkages in nearly every category – apart from ethnic, linguistic or caste-based organisations where the INC's linkages are incrementally stronger. Indeed, the INC's linkages to ethnic, linguistic or caste-based organisations are considered their strongest among the various categories.

Pakistan proves curious as it is the only case where the ruling party's linkages are considered weaker than opposition parties. Indeed, this is the

case for every category and in most categories, the PTI's linkages are seen as significantly weaker than either the PML (N) or PPP. This defies conventional explanations for parties' electoral success and the explanation could lie with the popularity of PTI's leader Imran Khan rather than the strength of the party. Additionally, unlike India and Bangladesh where there is a clear variation between the ruling party and opposition, the difference between the overall strength of parties' linkages in Pakistan is marginal. There is, however, variation within each category. Particularly between the PML (N) and PPP there is clear variation in the origins of their support. The pro-business PML (N) also receives support from religious organisations, while the secular PPP is known for its land reform policies and enjoys the support of rural organisations and unions. In turn, the PTI's support is scattered with no particularly strong linkages in any category distinguishing the party.

The strength of parties' linkages, however, cannot be fully understood without considering the nature of the linkages. Voters associate with parties for various reasons including ideological affinity, traditional ties such as by being co-ethnics, or through clientelist inducements. Clientelism as a tactic has been used in many young democracies to build linkages between parties and voters. Particularly in cases where parties are ideologically thin or lack deep roots in society, clientelism may be an appealing tactic for supplementing weak linkages.

Clientelism

Clientelism does not necessarily have to rely on the redirection of state resources, but it often does. Parties with access to state resources can offer a range of inducements to elicit the support of voters. This can include the provision of public benefits such as housing or public goods to only party supporters, or the offer of employment in the public sector to individuals or their family. Another tactic is to target voters indirectly by offering government contracts such as public works projects or preferential regulation to businesses in exchange for the support of their employees. In this way, parties can tie the economic wellbeing of their supporters to the electoral success of the party. In developing economies where the state is heavily involved in the economy, aligning with the party in power can have significant benefits.

The extent to which parties engage in clientelism can help contextualise parties' linkages. Parties heavily engaged in clientelism likely draw much of their strength from these clientelist linkages. To show this, respondents were asked questions about whether parties offer voters preferential access to various services provided by the state as an inducement to obtain votes. Respondents were also asked to identify the types of voters targeted with

these inducements. Engaging in clientelistic practices towards a specific group has a positive effect on the strength of linkages and is statistically significant for linkages with religious organisations ($X^2 = 19.167$, $df. = 4$, $p = .001$), ethnic, linguistic or caste-based organisations ($X^2 = 12.390$, $df. = 4$, $p = .014$) and women's organisations ($X^2 = 17.061$, $df. 4$, $p = .002$).

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the extent to which parties give or promise to give supporters preferential treatment or access to public goods in four areas controlled by the state as an inducement to obtain votes. These four areas focus on preferential access to public benefits, employment opportunities, government contracts, and government regulation. Responses were recorded on a scale of 0 (no effort at all) to 4 (a major effort). Responses have been averaged with the assumption that the scale can be regarded as continuous (Table 2).

Intriguingly, in both Bangladesh and India, the two main parties are regarded as about equally clientelist. However, for the BNP and INC this clearly has not translated into the strong linkages of the ruling BAL and BJP. There are two possible explanations for this. First, to successfully entice voters and maintain clientelist networks, a party would need access to state resources to deliver the promised inducements. In this sense, incumbent parties with control over state resources have an advantage over opposition parties as these resources can be used to build linkages.

The alternative explanation lies with the party organisation and the strength of clientelist networks. Clientelism is usually only effective if parties have mechanisms in place for determining whether voters targeted by clientelism have indeed turned out to support the party (Kitschelt & Singer, 2018, p. 56). This requires an organisational network of local brokers to monitor turnout and mobilise clients. Converting clientelism to stronger linkages thus requires some organisational complexity and strength. It should be recalled that in the section of party organisations, the BAL and BJP were also seen as the most territorially expansive parties with the vast majority of respondents stating that these parties maintain permanent party offices in most districts.

Again, Pakistan proves a curious case with both opposition parties seen as more clientelist than the ruling PTI. However, it should be recalled that Pakistan's parties were relatively similar in terms of the overall strength of their linkages. Despite highly clientelist behaviour, Pakistan's parties seem unable to convert this into strong linkages. There are two possible explanations for this. First, for clientelism to be effective as previously mentioned, a certain level of party organisation is necessary to successfully convert clientelism into lasting linkages. As seen in the section on party organisation, Pakistan's parties are regarded as comparatively less territorially expansive than the parties of India and Bangladesh. The difference in formal organisation is, however, incremental and Pakistan's parties make up for this with stronger informal ties to the community.

A more plausible explanation is that Pakistan's parties are insufficiently intertwined with the state to successfully tie voters to the party through clientelism. Without significant discretion over the allocation of state resources, a party's ability to build linkages through clientelism will be more limited. Conversely, parties well-intertwined with their state will be more capable of leveraging their access to state resources to build linkages through clientelism.

Party patronage

In countries where party patronage is high, parties are more clearly intertwined with the state. In such cases, party members take up roles in state institutions, giving them discretionary power over policymaking and the allocation of resources. Party patronage both ties political activists to the party through rewarding them with state sector jobs and supports the party's ability to engage in clientelist practices. The ability to pack state institutions with party members thus both gives parties greater control over these institutions and is an opportunity to build networks of dependents interested in maintaining the party's continued rule. Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which the practice of making public sector appointments on the basis of rewarding party activists is prevalent in each country (Table 3).

As an indicator of the extent to which parties are intertwined with the state, party patronage provides an important context for the measures discussed previously. In Bangladesh, state institutions are seen as highly politicised with several sectors approaching the maximum of 4. Several important sectors such as the judiciary, military and police, as well as regional and local administration receive extremely high scores. As both highly clientelist and extensively intertwined with the state, the strength of the ruling BAL's linkages take on a new meaning. This aligns with H2 which states that parties capable of co-opting the state will be able to supplement their deficiencies and consequently, allow for the formation of an institutionalised party system. Through clientelism and party patronage, Bangladesh's parties have used government power to shift economic benefit primarily to their supporters, excluding opponents and creating dependencies among supporters (Suykens, 2017, p. 207). Consequently, through parties' co-optation of the state, the party system has stabilised.

India by comparison, shows far more professionalisation of state institutions. Only a small amount of appointments in state institutions are done on a political basis and some of the most important sectors such as the judiciary, military and police, and foreign service all receive low scores. The lack of party patronage is a good indication of the independence of India's state institutions and the separation of parties and the state. India's parties are consequently less dependent on the state and as they are also less clientelist, it can be assumed that the nature of their linkages come from a more genuine affiliation with the parties. Particularly in the case of the BJP, it is clear that the

Table 3. Averaged responses on extent to which appointments in the state sector are made primarily as a means of rewarding party loyalty. Responses range from a scale of 0 (not at all) to 4 (to a great extent).

	Bangladesh (<i>n</i> = 8)	India (<i>n</i> = 15)	Pakistan (<i>n</i> = 7)
Economic	3.38	1.94	3
Finance	3.5	1.69	2.43
Judicial	3.86	1.19	2.14
Media	3.25	1.8	2.29
Military and Police	3.63	1.25	2.43
Foreign Service	2.75	0.93	1.83
Culture and Education	3.38	2.63	2.43
Healthcare	2.38	1.33	2.57
Regional and Local Administration	3.75	2.75	3.43
Average	3.32	1.72	2.51

party is organisationally complex and has strong linkages independent of its ability to provide access to state resources. This aligns with H1, which states that the presence of institutionalised parties will be a sufficient condition for the formation of an institutionalised party system.

This does not, however, mean that parties do not use their access to state resources for their own benefit. One sector receiving a comparatively high score is regional and local administration. This is a sector likely used to reward rank-and-file party members with employment. So, while this data shows that parties cannot or do not rely on party patronage to wholly maintain the party organisation, parties do to some extent make use of state employment to reward followers. This should also be nuanced with the acknowledgement of India's regional parties which are known to rely on clientelism (Ziegfeld, 2016).

Pakistan shows a low to moderate amount of party patronage. The highest scores are in regional and local administration, the economic sector and healthcare. These are the more relatively apolitical sectors, but also sectors which likely employ a large number of people. Particularly for regional and local administration, this may provide parties with opportunities for rewarding rank-and-file party activists with employment as well as providing the facilities necessary for coordinating clientelism. However, more critical sectors like the foreign service, judiciary and the media receive relatively lower scores. Although not as professional as India, Pakistani parties are not seen as heavily intertwined with the state as Bangladesh. As proposed by H3, if parties lack institutionalisation and are incapable of co-opting the state, an institutionalised party system cannot be formed.

Conclusion

Three types of systems can be seen. In India's party system the BJP and INC largely exist independently of the state. The two parties are organisationally

complex and particularly for the BJP, their linkages are far less reliant on clientelism and the access to state resources that the party can provide. In this case, the party system can more clearly be seen as structured by institutionalised parties with continuity arising from the strength of individual parties. This conforms to H1 and the dominant assumption that the institutionalisation of parties underpins PSI. While institutionalised parties are not a necessary condition for stable party systems, their presence is sufficient.

By contrast, in Bangladesh, we find a system in which parties are heavily intertwined and dependent on the state. This is particularly the case for the ruling BAL. In this party system, parties are highly personalised and the party organisation is largely a means of distributing clientelism. In this case, rather than developing the party organisation, the strength of parties comes from their close relationship to the state. Stability in Bangladesh's party system is a consequence of the intertwining of parties and the state. As stated in H2, if parties lack institutionalisation but are able to co-opt the state to supplement their deficiencies this a sufficient condition for the formation of an institutionalised party system.

Finally, without institutionalised parties or the successful co-optation of the state and its resources, a party system will not be able to stabilise as stated in H3. Pakistan's party system shows a partial attempt at co-opting the state with partially institutionalised parties. The two old established parties, the PML (N) and PPP, are seen as highly clientelist yet in terms of party patronage, we can see that the state retains relative independence. This independence of the state explains why their clientelism is not as effective as that seen in Bangladesh. Without strong party organisations and insufficient control over state resources to supplement their deficiencies, Pakistan's parties suffer from relatively weak linkages. Considering Pakistan's history of military involvement in politics and its strong bureaucracy, it is understandable how the parties have been unable to intertwine themselves with the state as the military continues to wield significant economic and political power. While the PML (N) and PPP have been able to establish themselves as important parties in the Pakistani party system through their use of state resources, they have found themselves insufficiently intertwined. This would explain why the Pakistani party system shows greater fluidity and why it was possible for the PTI to disrupt the party system that previously centred around the PML (N) and PPP.

There are thus three systems: an institutionalised party system born out of parties' intimate relationship with the state (Bangladesh), an institutionalised party system made up of institutionalised parties (India), and a more fluid party system where parties are only moderately institutionalised and have been incapable of co-opting the state to prop up the parties (Pakistan). Parties' relationship with the state clearly have a significant effect on their ability to remain electorally competitive and for an institutionalised party

system to emerge. Bangladesh's experience illustrates this well. On the surface, Bangladesh's parties appear to be institutionalised, however, a closer investigation reveals that this is largely dependent on their relationship with the state. In this case, rather than developing the party organisation, both of Bangladesh's main parties focused their efforts on co-opting the state. Out of this, the parties were able to build linkages based on clientelism which could sustain the parties' electoral support and through party patronage could tie political elites to the party. In Pakistan by contrast, where parties were insufficiently capable of co-opting the state due to the strength of state institutions, the two historic parties, the PML (N) and PPP, have been unable to fight off a challenger – the PTI.

If parties are capable of intertwining themselves with the state, their access to state resources can be used to supplement the deficiencies that would otherwise undermine their ability to remain electorally competitive. In such a party system, stability arises out of the strength of parties' relationship to the state, rather than the extent to which individual parties are institutionalised. If a party can capture the state, challengers can successfully be fought off and continuity in the system will prevail. In this way, the institutionalisation of individual parties is not a necessary condition for party systems to stabilise as conventionally accepted.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, A. Schoeman. The data are not publicly available due to privacy considerations of research participants.

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