Political Engineering and Party Politics in Conflict-Prone Societies

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Comparative scholarship suggests that democracy in ethnically-diverse societies is likely to be fostered by the development of broad-based, aggregative, and multi-ethnic political parties, rather than fragmented, personalised, or ethnically-based party systems. However, surprisingly little scholarly attention has been given to how party fragmentation can be addressed or how broad-based parties can be sustained, despite some remarkable recent experiments in conflict-prone societies such as Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, Kenya, Thailand, the Philippines, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Papua New Guinea aimed at influencing party system development. Drawing on these and other cases, this article identifies four strategies of 'party engineering' that have been used to promote broad-based, cross-regional, or multi-ethnic political parties in new democracies around the world.

Key words: ethnicity; democracy; centripetal; political engineering

Introduction

Because they channel, aggregate, and express political demands, political parties play an important role in the management of conflict in societies divided along cultural, linguistic, religious, regional, or other lines. However, the impact that parties have on the actual expression of conflict varies depending on the way in which such cleavages are expressed by the party system. Ethnically-based parties, for example, typically claim to represent the interests of one group alone. By making communal appeals to mobilize voters, the emergence of such parties typically has a centrifugal effect on electoral politics, thereby aiding extremists and heightening ethnic tensions. The role of ethnic Serb and Croat parties in undermining the consolidation of democracy in post-war Bosnia is a case in point. By contrast, multi-ethnic parties need to appeal to a broader support base, and thus tend to have a more centrist impact, aggregating diverse interests and de-emphasizing mono-ethnic demands. India's Congress Party is often held up as a classic example of the advantages for social integration and conflict management of a broad-based governing party committed to national cohesion and stability.

Political parties are thus intimately linked to the rise and fall of conflict in ethnically plural societies.[1] But despite the impressive body of scholarship on constitutional engineering that has appeared over the past decade, there has been

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surprisingly little attention given to the ways in which multi-ethnic parties can be developed and sustained. Political parties have typically been viewed as social phenomena beyond the scope of deliberate institutional design. There are several reasons for this. Because political parties in theory represent the political expression of underlying societal cleavages, parties and party systems have not usually been thought amenable to overt political engineering.[2] While some authoritarian states have attempted to control the development of their party system (for example, the mandated 'two-party' or 'three-party' systems that existed under military rule in Nigeria and Indonesia, or the 'no-party' system recently abandoned in Uganda), most democracies allow parties to develop relatively freely. Because of this, parties are generally understood to remain beyond the reach of formal political engineering in most circumstances.

Recent years, however, have seen some ambitious attempts to influence the development of party systems in a range of conflict-prone emerging democracies, including Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, Kenya, Thailand, the Philippines, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Papua New Guinea. In the discussion of these and other cases that follows, this article presents an initial examination of the various institutional and political strategies for encouraging the development of broad-based, cross-regional, or multi-ethnic parties and party systems that have been used around the world. Indeed, it marks one of the first attempts that the author is aware of to survey mechanisms for promoting multi-ethnic parties in divided societies. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to step back and look at the relationship between parties, ethnicity, and democracy more generally.

Party Politics and Ethnic Conflict

One reason that democracy is inherently problematic in conflict-prone societies is because of the pressures for politicization of identity issues. In societies divided along ethnic lines, for example, it is often easier for campaigning parties to attract voter support by appealing to ethnic allegiances rather than issues of class or ideology. This means that aspiring politicians have a strong incentive to mobilize followers along ethnic lines, and unscrupulous leaders who 'play the ethnic card' can be rewarded with electoral success. As rival parties respond in kind, a process of 'outbidding' can take hold, pushing the locus of political competition towards the extremes.[3] In this way, democratization itself can too easily lead to an increase in ethnic tensions and, in some cases, the outbreak of ethnic conflict.[4]

The extent to which this occurs depends significantly on the extent to which a country's party system is ethnically-based or not. One reason that political stability is more prevalent in mono-ethnic societies than in multi-ethnic ones is due to the way parties form, develop, and campaign in ethnically-divided societies. Specifically, 'in ethnically divided and multi-ethnic societies, political parties tend to form around ethnic allegiances. This is particularly the case in multi-ethnic states where ethnic groups are not heterogeneously dispersed throughout the country, but live in specific geographic regions'.[5] A recurring feature of democratization in multi-ethnic states in Africa, Asia, and the former Soviet Union has thus been the rapid emergence of

parties that draw their support exclusively from one ethnic group or region and are committed to the realization of nationalist or separatist agendas. Given that such parties mobilize support by making powerful emotional appeals to issues of identity, history, and survival, it is not surprising that violent conflict is often a direct result of the appearance of such 'ethnic parties'.

A particular danger-point is when a society is in the throes of rapid political change, for it is at this point that exclusive ethno-nationalist appeals are often the first recourse of would-be politicians.[6] In such circumstances, the easiest way to mobilize voter support at election time is often to appeal to the root insecurities of the population, turning electoral politics into a contest between sectarian parties on identity issues. There are many examples of this. Post-communist elections in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s resulted in the victory of extremist nationalist parties, committed to (and achieving) the break-up of the federation. The 1993 elections in Burundi, which were supposed to elect a power-sharing government, instead mobilized population groups along ethnic lines and served as a catalyst for the ethnic genocide that was to follow. In Bosnia since the Dayton Agreement (1995), the major parties continue to cultivate ethnic identities and voters have continued to elect them to power, despite the efforts of the international community. In each of these cases, ethnic politics has had a negative impact on democratization. As Gunther and Diamond write: 'The electoral logic of the ethnic party is to harden and mobilize its ethnic base with exclusive, often polarizing appeals to ethnic group opportunity and threat...the ethnic party's particularistic, exclusivist, and often polarizing political appeals make its overall contribution to society divisive and even disintegrative'.[7]

For this reason, scholars and policy-makers alike have frequently identified the need to build broad-based, aggregative, and multi-ethnic political parties if the routines of peaceful democratic politics are to be consolidated in fragile multi-ethnic states. Horowitz, for example, has consistently advocated the need for broad multi-ethnic parties or coalitions as a key factor in managing ethnic conflict.[8] Similarly, Huntington argues in *The Third Wave* that fractionalized and ethnically-exclusive party systems are inherently damaging for democratic prospects and are, consequently, found widely in failed democracies.[9] A particularly dangerous form of party system is that of 'polarized pluralism' featuring competition between extremist movements. Under such conditions, the logic of elections changes from one of convergence on median policy positions to one of extreme divergence. Politics becomes a centrifugal game.[10] Such fragmented party constellations are empirically far more likely to experience violence and the breakdown of democracy than more moderate multipartism based on a few 'catch-all' political parties.[11] Indeed, almost all cases of violent civil war in recent years have featured mono-ethnic political parties striving to implement ethnically-exclusive agendas.[12]

The issue of party system aggregation is separate from, but related to, that of ethnic parties. Not all ethnic parties are extremist, just as not all programmatic parties are centrist, and party system fragmentation does not necessarily lead to polarization. The level of *institutionalization* of party politics has a key intermediate effect on both outcomes. By moderating and channelling political participation,

well-institutionalized parties are widely seen as key components in managing incipient conflicts and building a stable democracy.[13] Mainwaring and Scully argue that party system institutionalization depends on four factors: the regularity of party competition, the depth of parties' roots in society, the extent to which parties and elections are widely accepted as the means of determining who governs, and the strength of parties' internal organization. By contrast, in inchoate party systems, 'party organizations are generally weak, electoral volatility is high, party roots in society are weak, and individual personalities dominate parties and campaigns'.[14] With the exception of electoral volatility, these are also some of the defining characteristics of political systems based around ethnic parties, which typically have low levels of ideological coherence and programmatic commitment, lack a well-developed organizational structure and membership base, and depend on clientelistic mobilization for their electoral success, often relying upon a single charismatic leader.[15] Thus, although it is certainly possible for ethnic parties to be successfully institutionalized themselves, they tend to be associated with weaker levels of party system institutionalization overall.[16]

   In spite of the weight of empirical evidence in favour of aggregative party systems in general, and the bleak assessment of ethnic parties in particular, a number of prevailing approaches to conflict prevention assume and even foster the presence of such parties. For example, the guidelines of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) explicitly affirm the right of ethnic minorities to form their own parties and compete for office on an ethnic basis.[17] In Latin America, restrictions on indigenous groups traditionally hampered their ability to form ethnic parties, but this practice has changed in recent years, resulting in the emergence of new Amerindian parties.[18] The international community has also demonstrated a strong preference for facilitative rules that enable ethnic parties to emerge. For example, major UN-supported transitional elections in Namibia (1989), Nicaragua (1990), Cambodia (1993), Mozambique (1994), Liberia (1997), Bosnia (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002), Kosovo (2001), Sierra Leone (2002), Rwanda (2003), and Iraq (2005) all utilized relatively permissive proportional representation systems. While making election administration easier, in deeply divided cases like Iraq this had the effect of fragmenting the legislature and encouraging ethnic polarization.[19] By contrast, in much of post-colonial Africa and Asia, where new democracies have been literally torn apart under the pressures of tribalism and ethnic mobilization, more effort has been put into retarding or restricting the ability of ethnic groups to form parties in the first place. It is important to recognize this disparity at the outset, as the divergent experiences of different world regions reflects a similar divergence in thinking regarding the best means of ameliorating the dangers of ethnic politics.

   The scholarly literature identifies several competing approaches to building sustainable democracy in ethnically-diverse societies. One is to recognize the importance of ethnicity in the political system directly, and to make ethnic groups the building blocks of politics – through, for example, ethnic political parties – that can then be guaranteed representation in a 'grand coalition' government. This 'consociational' approach is widely associated with the work of Arend Lijphart, and represents probably the best known strategy for managing ethnic tensions in a democratic system.[20]

Consociationalism emphasizes the need for divided societies to develop mechanisms for elite power-sharing if democracy is to survive the travails of ethnic or other conflicts. The mechanisms for ensuring sustainable power-sharing arrangements are encapsulated in four key features: grand coalition governments in which all ethnic groups are represented; proportional representation of different groups in the distribution of legislative seats and in the civil service; segmental autonomy via federalism or similar devices; and a power of veto over key decisions by minority groups. In terms of electoral arrangements, consociationalists argue for proportional voting systems that enable ethnic groups to be represented in parliament in proportion to their numbers in the general community, allowing ethnically-based parties to form the basis of government. Adroit political leadership is key to the success of such arrangements: ethnic demands are kept in check by elite-level negotiations between the leaders of the various groups. This approach assumes the presence of ethnic parties in divided societies; indeed the basis of consociationalism is that all significant ethnic groups are free to compose themselves into their own parties and be represented proportionately in government.

Lijphart developed this institutional prescription from a detailed examination of the features of power-sharing democracy in some continental European countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland), and there is disagreement over how far these measures can work when applied to ethnic conflict in developing countries, if at all.[21] Critics also question the assumption that ethnic elites and ethnic parties are willing to act moderately, and that the replication of deep social divisions in the legislature via ethnic parties is a good thing for divided societies, given that much of the evidence from divided societies suggests otherwise. In post-war Bosnia, for example, the main ethnic groups are represented in parliament in broad proportion to their numbers in the community as a whole, but because the major parties are ethnically-based and can rely exclusively on their own community for their electoral success, they have little incentive to act moderately on ethnic issues, and every incentive to emphasize sectarian appeals. The result at successive elections from 1996 has effectively been the institutionalization of ethnic politics, with most electors voting along ethnic lines and the major nationalist parties gaining support almost exclusively from their own ethnic group. Similarly in Guyana, a society polarised between citizens of African and Indian descent, democracy has been undermined by 'ethnic census'-style voting, despite the use of a highly proportional electoral system.[22]

In contrast to consociationalism, an alternative approach to managing ethnic conflict seeks to move the focus of politics away from ethnicity towards other, less volatile, issues by fostering inter-ethnic cooperation and 'making moderation pay'.[23] To do this, politicians need to be made responsive to cross-ethnic pressures, rather than acting solely as the representative of one group alone. Supporters of this approach advocate policies that promote the development of broad-based parties or coalitions of parties, encouraging voters, parties, and candidates to transcend ethnic considerations as the defining point of political competition.[24] This involves crafting institutions which de-emphasize the importance of ethnicity in the political process and undermine the potential for mono-ethnic demands, such as the use of 'vote-pooling' electoral systems that make politicians dependent on several different

groups to gain election; devolution via non-ethnic federalism, in order to proliferate points of power; and the development of non-ethnic or multi-ethnic political parties or coalitions of parties. This broad approach has been dubbed 'centripetalism', because the objective is to make the focus of political competition centripetal rather than centrifugal.[25] A centripetal political system or strategy is designed to focus competition at the moderate centre rather than the extremes by making politicians do more than just shop for votes in their own community.

In my own work on democracy in divided societies, the term 'centripetalism' is used as shorthand for three factors which collectively help to promote accommodative politics in divided societies. These are:

1. the provision of *electoral incentives* for campaigning politicians to reach out to and attract votes from ethnic groups other than their own, thus encouraging candidates to moderate their political rhetoric on potentially divisive issues and forcing them to broaden their policy positions;
2. the presence of an *arena of bargaining*, in which political actors from different groups have an incentive to come together and cut deals on reciprocal electoral support, and hence perhaps on other more substantial issues as well; and
3. the development of *centrist, aggregative, and multi-ethnic political parties* or coalitions of parties that are capable of making cross-ethnic appeals and presenting a complex and diverse range of policy options to the electorate.[26]

It is this third factor – centrist, aggregative parties and coalitions – that is the subject of this article. How can such party systems be encouraged to develop? The author's preliminary research on this subject has identified four distinct approaches to the challenge of building multi-ethnic parties and party systems. The first attempts to constrain the development of ethnic parties by cross-national party formation rules which require parties to demonstrate a broad organizational base. The second attempts to use the design of electoral rules to reshape the party system. The third tries to strengthen parties from the top down via measures to build greater internal party discipline and organizational capacity. The final approach involves international interventions to influence party systems in post-conflict democracies. A brief description of these approaches follows.

Constraining Ethnic Parties

The most common approach to the engineering of parties and party systems in conflict-prone societies is to introduce regulations which govern their formation, registration, and behaviour. Such regulations may ban ethnic parties outright; make it difficult for small or regionally-based parties to be registered; or require parties to demonstrate a cross-regional or cross-ethnic composition as a pre-condition for competing in elections. In Turkey, for example, parties must establish regional branches, hold regular conventions, and field candidates in at least half of all provinces to be eligible to contest national elections. Similarly, Nigeria requires parties to display a 'federal character' by including members from two-thirds of all states on their

executive council, and by providing that the name, motto, or emblem of the party must not have ethnic or regional connotations. Nigeria has also experimented with other more restrictive party system regulations, ranging from the mandatory two-party system under the military administration of President Babangida to the current rule that parties must win at least five per cent of the vote in local elections before they can compete nationally.[27]

Cross-regional party registration rules have also been common in Latin America, including states such as Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru. In a comparative study, Johanna Birnir found that spatial registration rules were a key contributor to the presence or absence of indigenous political parties. In Mexico, for example, parties must have at least 3,000 affiliates in ten out of the 32 states, or 3,000 affiliates in at least 100 of the 300 federal districts. In Ecuador and Peru, parties needed to have officially inscribed membership levels in at least half of all provinces. In all cases, however, indigenous groups are concentrated in particular regions, meaning that such rules represent substantial barriers to the formation of indigenous parties in particular. Birnir argues that the presence of such rules helps to explain the absence of indigenous parties in Mexico, and the delay in the formation of such parties in both Ecuador and Peru, both of which have recently eliminated such requirements.[28]

South-east Asian states such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia also place cross-regional thresholds on party formation.[29] In the Philippines, political parties must have regional offices in at least nine of the 16 regions of the country, and must gain support in more than half of the cities and provinces where their candidates run.[30] Similar provisions were introduced in Thailand's ambitious 1997 constitutional reforms, designed to restructure its political system and reduce party fragmentation. New parties must establish a branch structure in each of four designated regions, and must show they have at least 5,000 members drawn from each region within six months of being registered. As a result, there has been something or a transformation of the previously weak and unstable Thai party system into one dominated by the Thai Rak Thai party (literally, Thai Love Thai) created by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra – solving some old problems but creating new ones in their place.

Indonesia – one of the world's largest and most ethnically-complex states – has taken the attempted political engineering of its party system even further. With the fall of former President Suharto and the transition to democracy in 1998, over 200 new parties mushroomed in Indonesia, raising concern among political elites that the emerging party system was too fragmented, with too many parties, for democratic government to work effectively. Many blamed the weak and polarized party system of the 1950s for the failure of Indonesia's nascent democracy then, and were determined not to see it happen again.[31] At the same time, there was an overriding concern, particularly since the breakaway of East Timor in 1999, about the threat of secessionism to the territorial integrity of Indonesia, and the concomitant dangers of regional parties providing a springboard for separatism. Building a consolidated party system was thus seen as an essential step in countering secessionism and building a consolidated democracy.

To achieve these twin goals – building national parties while resisting separatist ones – Indonesia's political engineers developed a complex package of incentives and restraints on party system development. On the one hand, all political parties were required to demonstrate a national support base as a precondition to compete in the 1999 elections. Intending parties had to demonstrate that they had an established branch structure in more than half of Indonesia's (then) 27 provinces, and within each of these provinces also had to have established branches within over half of all regions and municipalities. These rules were ultimately interpreted relatively liberally, and 48 parties competed at the 1999 elections, although only seven gained significant representation (three of which, GOLKAR, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, and Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, had been the only legally-permitted parties under Suharto's reign).

In addition to the provisions encouraging cross-regional membership, there were strong systemic pressures for party amalgamation: parties that failed to gain more than two per cent of seats in the lower house of parliament, or at least three per cent of all seats in both houses combined, had to merge with other parties to surmount these thresholds in order to contest future elections. To the surprise of some observers, these provisions were enforced in the lead-up to the 2004 elections, meaning that many small parties had to amalgamate with others. The 2004 party formation laws went even further than the 1999 ones: new parties had to establish branches in two-thirds of Indonesia's provinces and in two-thirds of the municipalities within those provinces, while each local-level party unit needs at least 1,000 members (or at least one-thousandth of the population in smaller municipalities). Given that there are now 30 provinces and over 400 regencies in Indonesia, these are onerous requirements. As one commentator noted, if the laws are enforced, 'parties may, instead of collecting dues from members, be paying them to sign up in future'.[32]

While the Indonesian laws appear to have been relatively successful in their over-riding aim of preventing separatist parties, encouraging multi-ethnic party formation is easier said than done. Many countries in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere have consti-tutional or legislative requirements which explicitly ban 'ethnic' parties from competing in elections, or which require parties to be 'nationally-focused' or similar. For example, in Tanzania the *Political Parties Act 1992* requires that parties be 'national' in nature. A similar law in Ghana requires parties to demonstrate a 'national character' before they can be registered, by having branches in all ten regions of the country, and precludes names or symbols which have an ethnic, religious, or regional connotation. Togo, Senegal, and a range of other African countries have similar rules on their statute books. Elsewhere, countries like Turkey have long banned Islamic parties. However, in most cases these are essentially aspirational provisions that are not capable of being enforced effectively. What ultimately makes a party 'ethnic' is not the nature of its composition or even the fact that most of its votes come from one group, but the fact that it makes no attempt to appeal to members of other groups.

A more drastic approach to precluding the development of ethnic parties is not just to place restrictions on their development, but to ban political parties altogether. This was a frequent justification for the mandated one-party systems that existed in

much of Africa until the early 1990s. The most recent manifestation was Uganda's 'no-party' system imposed by President Yoweri Museveni in 1986, citing the way in which political parties had inflamed racial and ethnic conflict. Prior to this, politics in Uganda featured a complex inter-weaving of ethnic and party politics, with parties mobilizing votes on the basis of ethnicity, region, and religion. The instability that this created was widely seen as having led to the Idi Amin dictatorship in the 1970s. Surveys showed strong public support for the 'no-party' system, despite the fact that it has allowed the governing National Resistance Movement to monopolize power.[33] But in 2004, following sustained international pressure, these restrictions were finally lifted, paving the way for the resumption of multi-party politics. Especially given the apparent tendency of such arrangements to degenerate into de facto one-party rule, it is clear that in democratic settings, party systems cannot be fashioned by government fiat alone.

Electoral Systems and Party Systems

A second approach to political party engineering has been to use the electoral system to try to refashion the party system. There are several ways of doing this. One of the most common is to dictate the ethnic composition of party lists. In some countries, this has enabled a more deliberate strategy of multi-ethnicity than would have been possible otherwise. In Singapore, for example, most Members of Parliament are elected from multi-member districts known as Group Representative Constituencies, which each return between three and six members from a single list of candidates. Of the candidates on each party or group list, at least one must be a member of the Malay, Indian, or some other minority community, thus ensuring a degree of multi-ethnicity on party slates.[34] Similarly, some have argued that the closed-list proportional representation system used in South Africa's 1994 elections enabled the major political parties to embrace a multi-ethnic approach there by making sure minority candidates and women were placed in winnable positions on the party list.[35] In Bosnia, however, reformers have moved in other direction, adopting open-list voting – a move supposed to increase accountability between voters and their representatives and provide space for moderate or non-ethnic candidates, but which comparative experience from other countries suggests can actually impede cross-ethnic behaviour.[36]

Another approach to reducing the number of parties has been to use technical electoral barriers like vote thresholds, which prevent the election of many small parties in parliament. Probably the most extreme application of this is in Turkey, where parties must attain at least ten per cent of the national vote (and constituency-level thresholds also apply) before they can be represented in parliament, thus discriminating strongly against smaller parties, especially those with geographically-concentrated support bases.[37] This has led to some extreme vote-distortions: at the 2002 Turkish election, won by the Justice and Development Party, so many smaller parties failed to clear the ten per cent threshold that 46 per cent of all votes were 'wasted'.[38]

Other electoral system innovations can be used to counter party fractionalization and encourage inter-party cooperation and coalition. One example is the use of

vote-pooling electoral systems in which electors rank-order candidates, and votes are transferred according to these rankings. These systems can encourage cross-party cooperation and aggregation by making politicians from different parties reciprocally dependent on transfer votes from their rivals. For example, the single transferable vote system used at Northern Ireland's crucial 1998 'Good Friday' election enabled 'pro-agreement' Republican and Unionist voters to give their first vote to their communal party, but to transfer their secondary preference votes to pro-agreement non-communal parties – thus advantaging the 'moderate middle' of non-ethnic parties and altering the dynamics of a seemingly intractable conflict. Variations on this system have been adopted in both Fiji and Papua New Guinea in recent years. A similar system was also considered (but ultimately not implemented) in Indonesia. In each case, encouraging the development of a more aggregative party system was one of the primary goals of the electoral reforms.[39]

A final option for promoting cross-ethnic parties is to introduce distribution requirements that require parties or individual candidates to garner specified support levels across different regions of a country, rather than just their own home base, in order to be elected. First introduced in Nigeria in 1979, distribution require-ments have so far been applied to presidential elections in large, ethnically-diverse states in order to ensure that winning candidates receive a sufficiently broad spread of votes, rather than drawing their support from a few regions only. The original formulation in Nigeria's 1979 Constitution required successful presidential candidates to gain a plurality of votes nationwide and at least a quarter of the votes in 13 of Nigeria's then 19 states. In 1989, this provision was made even more onerous, requir-ing a president to win a majority overall and at least one-third of the vote in at least two-thirds of all states in the Federation. In the event that no candidate meets this requirement, a runoff election is required.[40] The Kenyan Constitution provides a similar threshold, requiring successful candidates to win a plurality of the vote overall as well one-quarter of valid votes cast in at least five of the eight provinces.

Indonesia's 2004 presidential election used a combination of these devices. Only parties winning at least five per cent of the vote or three per cent of the seats in the parliamentary elections could nominate candidates for the presidency, sidelining smaller parties. Presidential and vice presidential candidates had to run together as teams; as a result, most major parties chose a combination of Javanese and outer islands candidates in order to maximize their appeal. The election was conducted over two rounds of voting, and first-round winners had to gain over 50 per cent of all votes as well as at least 20 per cent in half of all provinces to avoid a second-round runoff.[41] Again, the aim of these provisions was to ensure that the winning can-didate not only had a majority of votes overall, but could command cross-regional support as well. In this respect, the presidential electoral law shares a common cen-tripetal logic with Indonesia's new party formation laws, which aim to promote parties with a cross-regional support base. In the event, the winning candidate, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, won a landslide first-round majority, so the distribution requirements were not directly tested.

There is significant disagreement among scholars as to the utility of such measures, with some interpreting them as impotent or even harmful interferences

with the democratic process, while others see them as potentially important mechanisms for muting ethnic conflict and ensuring the election of broad, pan-ethnic presidents.[42] The empirical evidence to date reflects this divergence of opinion. In Kenya, for example, President Daniel arap Moi consistently subverted requirements that he receive cross-country support by manipulating tribal politics to ensure the continuation of his presidency, even as his own popularity was falling. Yet the current Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki, won a landslide victory in 2002 under the same system. Similarly in Nigeria, despite serious problems with the workings of the system in the past, the transitional May 1999 presidential election which swept Olesegun Obasanjo to power appeared to work largely as intended. At the election, Obasanjo ran on a cross-ethnic platform and in fact gained greater votes outside his own region than within it – precisely because, it appears, he campaigned on a cross-regional, multi-ethnic platform. At the 2003 election Obasanjo was re-elected with 62 per cent of the total vote, almost identical to his 1999 margin, under the same provisions.[43] In Indonesia, the new laws attracted relatively little attention, as it seemed unlikely that any candidate could win a first-round majority.

Top-Down Approaches to Party Building

A third approach to political party development in conflict-prone parties is the 'top-down' approach, which carries the expectation that parties can be 'built', to a certain extent, not from below (as is usually the case), but from above. This approach usually focuses on increasing party discipline and cohesion in parliament as a means of stabilizing party politics, in the hope that more disciplined parliamentary parties will lead to a more structured party system overall. One way to do this is to restrict the capacity of members to change parties once elected. This practice, which was once widespread in many Asian countries, has been curtailed in recent years by the introduction of 'anti-hopping' provisions in states like India, Malaysia, Thailand, and Papua New Guinea. These have made it difficult or impossible for a politician elected under one party label to change allegiance to another party once in office.

However, such restrictions have little sway over party defections that take place outside the parliamentary arena or between elections. They also do little to combat the related problem of multiple endorsement, where the same candidate may be nominated by several parties, or where parties endorse multiple different candidates running within the same electorate. In such cases, more ambitious institutional innovation is required. One such institutional innovation has recently been enacted in Papua New Guinea, one of the world's most ethnically diverse (and under-researched) countries. With over 800 indigenous languages and thousands of competing tribal groups, stable government has proved extremely difficult since the country's independence in 1975. However, a package of constitutional, electoral, and party reforms was introduced in 2001 with the aim of stabilizing executive government and building a more coherent party system.

Under new rules, all political parties must be legal organizations with financial members, a party constitution, and allow internal competition for party leaders before they can be registered. To address the chronic under-representation of

women in Papua New Guinean politics, parties that put forward female candidates for election will be able to recover most of their election expenses. The provision for party registration is tied to a new system of party funding, under which each registered party will receive 10,000 kina (about US$3,000) per parliamentary member per year. The intention of these reforms is to move parties away from being purely vehicles for personal advancement and encourage intending candidates to stand for election under a party banner rather than as independents. To stabilize the country's unruly executive government, restrictions are also placed on the freedom of Members of Parliament to change parties once elected. Politicians elected with party endorsement must vote in accordance with their party position on key parliamentary decisions such as a vote of confidence in the prime minister, or face a possible by-election. These reforms represent a serious challenge to established political practice, especially for independents (whose allegiances have often shifted in return for a ministerial position or similar inducement in the past). The final and potentially most important reform has been a change from a first-past-the-post to a 'limited preferential' electoral system, with voters limited to a maximum of three preferences. As well as ensuring that winning candidates have to gain much broader support, this encourages aligned candidates to cooperate with each other. A study of six by-elections held in 2004 found significantly lower levels of electoral violence under the limited preferential system than had been the case at previous elections.[44]

External Interventions

A final approach to political party engineering has been for external actors to attempt to intervene directly in the development of party systems in new or transitional democracies. This often involves channelling technical or financial assistance from international donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or multilateral agencies to party organizations in states where the international community has taken a prominent role, such as countries emerging from a period of violent conflict. Building coherent party systems in such post-conflict societies is particularly difficult, as parties often form around the very same cleavages that spurred the original fighting, leading to a polarized political system and the continuation of the former conflict through the electoral process.[45] Increasing awareness of the problems of polarized or otherwise dysfunctional party systems created by this process has lately spurred multilateral bodies such as the United Nations – which have traditionally been wary of direct involvement in party politics, preferring more traditional kinds of development assistance – to take a more active role in assisting political party development in some post-conflict countries.

The most ambitious actors in this field have been the international democracy promotion organizations that have proliferated over the past decade.[46] Because they are not bound by the same strictures as multilateral agencies, some of these agencies have attempted to intervene directly in order to shape party systems in what are seen as desirable directions. In Bosnia, for example, the US-based National Democratic Institute openly and actively promoted and assisted putatively multi-ethnic parties such as the Unified List coalition in preference to nationalist parties

such as the Serbian Democratic Party or the Croatian Democratic Union at the 1996 elections.[47] Also in Bosnia, a range of related reforms to the electoral system and other areas introduced in recent years by the OSCE have attempted to undercut nationalist parties by changing voting procedures and, in some cases, barring individual candidates from election.[48] Kosovo too has seen overt attempts by the international community to mandate multi-ethnicity in the political system.[49] However, despite some inflated claims to the contrary, the success of such interventions so far has been modest, and ethnic parties continue to dominate the Balkans' political landscape.

The vexed problem of transforming armies into parties after a protracted period of conflict continues to trouble international interventions in this field. As one survey of post-conflict elections concluded: 'Democratic party building is proving to be a slow process. In all the [post-conflict] countries, political parties are organized around personalities, narrow political interests, and tribal and ethnic loyalties'.[50] In Kosovo, for example, the ongoing worry that previous ethnic conflicts fought by armed forces would be replicated in the form of new ethnically-exclusive and violence-prone political parties prompted the OSCE to introduce a network of 'political party service centres', intended to support the territory's nascent political groupings and help move them towards becoming more coherent, policy-oriented political parties.[51] Whether such an approach to external party-building is actually feasible, however, remains to be seen. Historically, the most successful example of such a transition is probably the armies-to-parties transformation wrought by the United Nations in Mozambique, where a special-purpose trust fund and some creative international leadership succeeded in bringing the previous fighting forces of Frelimo and Renamo into the political fold.[52] Recent proposals for political party assistance in Afghanistan have also focused on this kind of approach.

Conclusion

It is today widely recognized that parties play a crucial role not just in representing interests, aggregating preferences, and forming governments, but also in managing conflict. However, the capacity of parties to manage incipient or actual conflicts depends crucially on the nature of the party system and the structure of individual parties. This much is now generally accepted. Despite this, viewing parties as malleable entities that can be engineered in the same manner as other parts of the political system remains controversial. While strategies to influence parties and party systems are not new, parties have traditionally been assumed to develop organically, rather than being designed in the manner of other, formal, political institutions.

Overall, the comparative experience suggests that it is difficult to sustain multi-ethnic parties in divided societies without some explicit intervention in the party system. In recent years, such 'political engineering' has become an increasingly common means of influencing party system development, particularly in ethnically-plural societies. In contrast to earlier decades, most of the recent innovations in this field have taken place in new democracies, rather than established ones, and have featured essentially centripetal rather than consociational approaches to party

system reform. Particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, these centripetal approaches have focused not just on providing incentives for multi-ethnicity, but also on limiting political fragmentation and building more aggregative and stable political systems overall.[53]

Some of the attempts to reduce political fragmentation surveyed in this article have clearly succeeded in this (limited) aim. Indonesia, for example, has experienced both a reduction in party numbers and a change in the nature of its party system since 1999. While hundreds of new parties appeared on the scene prior to the 1999 elections, only six achieved significant representation. While voting patterns for the major parties followed broad regional lines, the new provisions also played an important role in fostering more nationally-focused parties than would otherwise have been the case. At the 2004 elections, most major parties received electoral support across western, central and eastern Indonesia – a significant outcome, given Indonesia's history and deep regional fissures.[54] Thus, while Indonesia's 2004 parliament remains politically fragmented, the new institutional arrangements do appear to have encouraged a more coherent party system, with greater focus on national issues, than would have been the case otherwise.

But retarding political fragmentation has costs as well as benefits. In Indonesia, the new laws benefit incumbent parties by restricting the level of political competition, and place real barriers on new entrants into the political marketplace. In Thailand, the 1997 constitutional reforms which aimed to combat political instability and fractionalization contain so many incentives favoring strong parties that they may have worked too well, upsetting the balance of Thai politics. In particular, the new rules of the game helped to cement the dominance of Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai party in Thai politics, at least until the bloodless coup of September 2006 which removed Thaksin from power. In Turkey, vote thresholds and bans on ethnic parties have not been able to constrain a further fragmentation of the party system nor stymie the rise of Islamist parties.[55] Similarly, the presence of vote-pooling electoral systems has not been enough to stave off political crisis in Northern Ireland or in Fiji.[56]

Many party system reforms also have profound impacts on the political expression of ethnicity, and thus on the potential for ethnic politics. In some cases this has been an unanticipated by-product of the party system reforms, but in others it was a primary impetus from the beginning. In Ecuador, for example, spatial registration rules were aimed at countering regional divisions and party fractionalization, but had the unintended consequence of locking indigenous groups out of power.[57] In Indonesia, party laws aimed at making regionalist or separatist parties unviable have made it almost impossible for regional movements to compete in electoral politics. The new presidential electoral laws only strengthen this approach. Similarly, Papua New Guinea's constitutional reforms have, at their heart, the aim of reducing the instability of the political system created by that country's exceptional degree of social diversity. While these restraints on political fragmentation appear to be working, they also carry many risks. If ethnic groups are unable to mobilize and compete for political power by democratic means, they will likely find other ways to achieve their ends. Restrictions on regional parties that

end up encouraging extra-constitutional action by aggrieved minorities will have exacerbated the very problems they are designed to prevent. A balance therefore needs to be struck between encouraging national parties, which is in general a positive thing, and restricting regional ones, which can have clear downsides.

In the absence of a more comprehensive evaluation of the success of such reforms, three broad conclusions suggest themselves. First, political engineering has clearly evolved from being focused upon formal constitutional rules to include less formal organizations such as political parties. Second, developing countries are at the forefront of this movement, and (as the diffusion of the Nigerian system to Indonesia shows) in recent years have been clearly the most influential innovators in this field. And third, because many of the new democracies in the developing world are also ethnically plural societies, they face the twin challenge of opening up the space for political competition while restricting the politicization of ethnicity. States such as Indonesia are trying to simultaneously manage ethnic divisions *and* consolidate democracy – an experiment in political engineering that is likely to have important lessons for other conflict-prone societies grappling with these same issues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

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10. See Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
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12. See Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).
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21. For a survey of this debate, see Timothy D. Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996).
22. See Ben Reilly and Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Conflict in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).
23. Donald Horowitz, 'Making Moderation Pay: the Comparative Politics of Ethnic Conflict Management' in J.V. Montville (ed.), *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), pp. 451–476.
24. See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (note 1); Benjamin Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies: Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
25. Sisk (note 21); Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies* (note 24).
26. Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies* (note 24), p. 11.
27. Rotimi Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001).
28. See Jóhanna Kristín Birnir, 'Stabilizing Party Systems and Excluding Segments of Society?: The Effects of Formation Costs on New Party Foundation in Latin America', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2004), pp. 3–27.
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32. Ibid., p. 488.
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