PROGRAMMATIC POLITICS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Why do we care?

The development of programmatic politics is important for a number of reasons. In clientelistic party systems:

1. Elections rarely generate debate over important issues such as economic policy.
2. Elections are more likely to foster corruption and neo-patrimonial politics.
3. As a result of 1 + 2, the quality of policy, scrutiny and accountability is lower in clientelistic political systems.
For a political party to be defined as fully programmatic it needs to meet the following criteria:

1. A strong link between the party and its constituents;
2. The internal organization of the party is rule-based and democratic; and,
3. The policy-making process and the platform that result reflect the engagement of the party members.
Research

Case studies

1. Brazil (PT, PSDB)
2. India (BSP, BJP)
3. Ukraine (NSNU, PR)
4. Zambia (MMD, PF)
Three main contributions

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   - historical patterns of discrimination may result in an overlap between ethnic and socio-economic groups.
   - a particular party campaigns on a coherent policy program but also relies on symbols and ideas that are connected to one or more community.
   - need to distinguish between ‘ethnic-programmatic’ parties and ‘civic-programmatic’ parties.
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2. A programmatic party does not make a programmatic party system.
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   - programmatic parties have advantages over their rivals, but a small number of such parties may have little impact if they do not win power, and compete against established ethnic and clientelistic parties.
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3. Not all programmatic parties are as likely to inspire the sustainable transformation of the party system.
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   ▪ Two key factors: (1) the types of linkages that parties construct to voters and (2) whether or not they build strong ties to civil society groups.
Four variants of programmatic party development:

1. When fledgling programmatic parties don’t establish links to ethnic communities and do form strong ties to civil-society groups, they are most likely to emerge as institutionalized civic-programmatic parties. PT Brazil.

2. When programmatic parties integrate the support of an ethnic group but also emerge with strong ties to civil-society, they are most likely to emerge as institutionalized ethnic-programmatic parties. BJP India.
Four main variants of programmatic party development:

3. When programmatic parties don’t initially integrate particular ethnic groups but also fail to form strong ties to civil-society groups, they will probably become *non-institutionalized civic programmatic parties*. BSDP Brazil, Congress India.

4. When programmatic parties do build strong linkages to an ethnic group and only develop a limited relationship to civil-society organizations, the most likely outcome is a *non-institutionalized ethnic-programmatic party*. PF Zambia.
Policy Recommendations 1

Structural Determinants

- Promoting “civic programmatic” parties is easier in urban areas than rural ones, but the reverse may be true for “ethnic programmatic” parties.

- By implementing programs that improve and equalize media access, party assistance providers can begin to ameliorate some of the reasons that rural areas tend to feature less policy-based politics.
Policy Recommendations 2

Party Genesis

- Working with new or young opposition parties should be prioritised.
- Party assistance programs could help to stimulate the development of programmatic politics by helping to identify representation gaps.
- Building strong connections between civil society organizations and political parties can galvanize programmatic development.
Policy Recommendations 3

Party Institutionalization

- Party and party system institutionalization can be promoted through legislative and electoral rules that enable party leaders to enforce party discipline.

- But the goal of generating more stable and effective parties must be balanced against the need to encourage parties to make their leaders accountable to party members and activists.