

Party system types and party system institutionalization: Comparing new democracies in East and Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This article is an overview of the types and level of institutionalization of party systems in seven young democracies in East and Southeast Asia. By applying Alan Siaroff's typology of party systems, the analysis demonstrates that the party systems in Asia do not converge on a single format. The party systems under consideration also differ in the level of institutionalization. Party systems in Thailand, the Philippines and especially South Korea are stuck in an inchoate state. Even though there is considerable variation among the cases, the party systems in Indonesia, Mongolia and Taiwan can be considered as well institutionalized relative to the rest of Asia and moderately institutionalized when compared to Latin America. Furthermore, weak institutionalization correlates with volatile structures of party competition and cooperation in Thailand, whereas in South Korea and the Philippines party systems seem to be paradoxically stabilizing in a situation of protracted under-institutionalization, as both cases combine more or less stable party system patterns with weak institutionalization.

Keywords

party systems, institutionalization, representative democracy, East Asia, Southeast Asia

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Introduction

During the past two decades East and Southeast Asia have seen numerous transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy. Democratic transitions have taken place in the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1987), Mongolia (1990), Thailand and Taiwan (1992), Cambodia (1993), Indonesia (1999) and East Timor (2002). However, most scholars agree that many of these transitions did not result in consolidated liberal democracies (Case, 2009; Croissant, 2004; Reilly, 2006; Rodan and Jayasuriya, 2009; Shin and Tusalem, 2009). While South Korea and Taiwan have succeeded in consolidating their new political regime at a relatively high level of democratic quality, deep political crises and chronic instability remain virulent in other countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and East Timor. Even though these crises cannot be attributed to a single factor alone, many students of Asian politics point to the incapacity of party systems in the region to accommodate social and political tension. Their feeble institutionalization and the lack of adequate opportunities for political representation and participation within political parties are seen as major obstacles to democratic governance in most East and Southeast Asian countries (Dalton et al., 2007; Hicken, 2006, 2009; Reilly, 2006; Tan, P. J., 2006).

In fact, there are strong theoretical arguments in favour of the contributions that parties can make to democracy: stable configurations of well institutionalized and both moderately polarized and fragmented party systems can promote the effectiveness and efficiency of democratic institutions and thereby contribute to the functioning and legitimacy of the democratic system at large. At the same time scholars frequently reassert the difficulty of consolidating democracy if highly fragmented and polarized party systems have failed to establish a strong institutional linkage with society (Gunther and Diamond, 2003; Gunther et al., 2007; Katz and Crotty, 2006; Morlino, 1998; van Biezen, 2004).

Until recently, there have been only few comparative analyses of party system types and party system institutionalization in transitional democracies in Asia (Hicken, 2006; Reilly, 2006; Ufen, 2008b). Most of the available literature consists of single case studies or analyses only a small number of cases and research criteria.

The present article aims to contribute to a better understanding of party politics in all seven young democracies in East and Southeast Asia: East Timor, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. These seven democracies emerged during the third wave of democratization that began in 1974 (Huntington, 1991). All countries have experienced a minimum of two competitive multiparty elections and are classified as democracies in the Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2010 (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009).¹ Electoral authoritarian regimes in the region such as Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia (which returned to authoritarian rule in 1997) are excluded from the analysis. Also not part of the case sample is Japan, whose democratic regime emerged during the 'second wave of democratization' following World War II.

The period analysed reaches from the first fully competitive legislative election – democracy's *founding election* – in each of the countries up to the 2009 election in Indonesia. East Timor could only be included in the first part of the analysis, since much of the survey data needed to compute the index of party system institutionalization is not yet available. Also, the indicator of electoral disproportionality for the Philippine elections of 2001–2004 and for the Mongolian election of 2008 could not be computed

Table 1. Case sample and period of analysis

Case	Period analysed	Year of democratic 'founding election'	No. of elections	Regime type (BTI 2010)
East Timor	2001–2007	2001	2	Democracy*
Indonesia	1999–2009	1999	3	Democracy
Mongolia	1990–2008	1990	6	Democracy
Philippines	1987–2004	1987	6	Democracy
South Korea	1988–2008	1988	6	Democracy
Taiwan	1992–2008	1992	6	Democracy
Thailand	1992–2007	1992 (Sept)	6	Democracy

*Not included in BTI 2010; classification according to Freedom House and Polity IV. Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2009), Freedom House (2009), Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers, 2009).

because reliable data on seat distribution per party are still not available either. While data for a limited time series are presented here for party system types, party system institutionalization is only a snapshot with the most recent data available. The analysis is guided by two main research questions: First, what types of party systems have emerged in the aforementioned countries and how stable are they? Second, how well institutionalized are these party systems?

Party system types

Party systems are 'structures of party competition and cooperation' (Pennings and Lane, 1998). The distinction among party systems according to differences in their structural properties has a fairly long tradition, dating back to the very early times of party research, but in the past twenty years or so, several new classificatory schemes have been developed (Wolinetz, 2006). The oldest typologies make distinctions only on the basis of the number of parties in a party system. Today, most researchers agree that looking at additional attributes is necessary in order to grasp what a party system is really about, namely party competition and cooperation.

The criteria applied in the more recent literature can be categorized along two dimensions (Niedermayer, 1997: 106). The *electoral* dimension encompasses features such as the number and relative size of parties (fragmentation and asymmetry) and the patterns of their political orientation and behaviour (ideological position, polarization and strategies for electoral competition). The *governmental* dimension focuses on systemic elements as, for example, rigidity during government formation or changes in coalition patterns. While Sartori's (1976) typology of competitive party systems – arguably the most important one to this day – and Siaroff (2000) concentrate on electoral criteria, other typologies, such as Peter Mair's (1997), consider mainly governmental criteria.

Sartori distinguishes party systems according to the number of relevant parties, i.e. those parties with coalition or blackmail potential (Sartori, 1976: 123). He differentiates four types of competitive party systems: predominant, two-party, limited pluralism and extreme pluralism. The latter two types are then further differentiated by the criterion of

Table 2. Siaroff's typology of party systems

Typological criteria	Operationalization
1. No. of parties	
2. Relative parliamentary strength of parties	<p>(a) Number of parties winning at least 3% of the filled parliamentary seats [P3%\geq]</p> <p>(b) Sum of the percentage of seats for the two parties obtaining the most seats in parliament [2PSC]</p> <p>(c) Ratio obtained by comparing the seats of the party with the largest number of seats to the seats of the party with the second-largest number of seats [SR1:2]</p> <p>(d) Ratio obtained by comparing the seats of the party with the second largest number of seats to the seats of the party with the third largest number of seats [SR2:3]</p>
Party system types	
[1] Two-party systems	
<i>Moderately fragmented multiparty systems</i>	
[2] Two-and-a-half-party systems	P3% \geq 2-3; 2PSC \geq 95%
[3] Moderate multiparty systems with one dominant party	P3% \geq 3-5; 2PSC = 80-95%; SR1:2 < 1.6; SR2:3 \geq 1.8
[4] Moderate multiparty systems with two main parties	P3% \geq 3-5; SR1:2 \geq 1.6
[5] Moderate multiparty systems with a balance among the parties	P3% \geq 3-5; SR1:2 < 1.6; SR2:3 \geq 1.8
	P3% \geq 3-5; SR1:2 < 1.6; SR2:3 < 1.8
<i>Extremely fragmented multiparty systems</i>	
[6] Extreme multiparty system with one dominant party	P3% \geq 6; SR1:2 < 1.6
[7] Extreme multiparty systems with two main parties	P3% \geq 6; SR1:2 < 1.6; SR2:3 \geq 1.8
[8] Extreme multiparty systems with balance among the parties	P3% \geq 6; SR1:2 < 1.6; SR2:3 < 1.8

Source: Adapted from Siaroff, 2000: 70-1.

ideological distance between the parties into moderately and extremely polarized systems (Sartori, 1976: 130–217). Even though this typology has been tremendously influential, its analytical value has been questioned in recent years. Ware (1996) and Mair (1997) rightly point to the fact that Sartori's types no longer suffice to differentiate party systems, because there seems to be no polarized pluralism any more. For example, West European party systems overwhelmingly tend towards the category of moderate pluralism, which diminishes the discriminatory power of his typology.

Based on Sartori's approach Alan Siaroff (2000) has developed a new typology which considers (a) the number of political parties, (b) the absolute and (c) relative size of the two largest and (d) the relative size of the second and third largest parties. The criteria allow Siaroff to establish a typology with eight types, seven of which break up Sartori's categories of moderately and extremely fragmented multiparty systems.

While Siaroff has been criticized for misinterpreting rather volatile patterns of party competition as stable properties (Wolinetz, 2006: 58), his typology enjoys a number of important benefits: it is systematically constructed, methodically clear cut, easy to use and serves as an important heuristic for unravelling the otherwise crowded categories of multiparty systems. In addition, the data needed for its application are much more easily obtainable than, for example, data on the blackmail and coalition potential of political parties, especially in very fractionalized systems.

Party system institutionalization

In contrast to the research on party system formats, comparative analysis of party system institutionalization is a relatively new subfield of party (Mainwaring, 1998, 1999; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). Samuel Huntington defines institutionalization as a process through which organizations and procedures achieve stability and gain sufficient significance to surpass their function (1968: 12). In the words of Angelo Panebianco, the process of institutionalization describes 'the consolidation of the organization, the passage from an initial, structurally fluid, phase when a new-born organization is still forming, to a phase in which the organization stabilizes' (1988: 18). Party systems are institutionalized:

[...] when 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 and Torcal, 2006: 207)

A frequently used measure for party system instability is the index of electoral volatility (Pedersen, 1979), but in order to systematically measure the extent of party system institutionalization, additional indicators are needed. In a conceptually innovative and empirically rich study on Latin America, Mark Jones has developed the concept of party institutionalization further (Jones, 2007). His index of institutionalization measures party system institutionalization across four dimensions: stability of patterns in interparty competition; party roots in society; the legitimacy of parties and elections, and party organization.

Table 3. Four-dimensional index of party system institutionalization

Dimension	Indicators	Operationalization
1. Pattern of inter-party competition	1.1 Vote volatility	Average sum of all gains and losses in votes of all parties between elections, divided by two; ranges between 0 and 100 (Pedersen, 1979: 4)
2. Party roots in society	1.2 Seat volatility	See above, calculated for seats
	2.1 Party ID 2.2 Party distance	Percentage of population that possess some form of identification with a political party 100% of legislators (lower/single house) who believe that political parties are distant from society
3. Legitimacy of parties and elections	3.1 Party indispensability	Percentage of people who state that political parties were indispensable for the functioning of the country
	3.2 Party confidence	Percentage of population that had a great deal of or some confidence in political parties
	3.3 Clean election	Rating elections on a scale of 1 (clean) to 5 (not clean), average
	3.4 Vote = real choice	Rating elections offer voters a real choice between parties and candidates on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)
4. Party organization	4.1 Party age	Percentage of parties \geq 10 years (at least 10% of seats)
	4.2 Party continuity	Percentage of parties \geq 25 years (at least 10% of seats) Percentage of legislators who consider their party organization to be continuous between elections

Source: Adapted from Jones, 2007: 5–13.

In well-institutionalized party systems there is a stable pattern in intra-party competition: continuity in what the relevant political parties are and what level of electoral support and legislative representation they can win. Furthermore, in institutionalized systems of political parties, the relevant political parties are well linked with society and have strong organizational roots among their respective electorates. In contrast to the first dimension, the indicators of this second dimension do not measure the behavioural aspect of party-voters-linkage, but the attitudinal side of that relationship, i.e., whether voters actually identify themselves with political parties and if party politicians believe their parties are distant from society. The third dimension also focuses on the attitudinal aspect of party-voter-relations but on a more basic level. It takes into account a 'basic prerequisite for an institutionalized party system' (Jones, 2007: 9): the extent to which political parties and elections are viewed as legitimate means and organizations by the electorate. Finally, the fourth dimension captures the extent to which political parties possess meaningful intra-party organizations and organizational durability and autonomy.

In each dimension, institutionalization is measured by a number of indicators. The dimensional indicators are aggregated into a single measure for the respective dimension. These scores are then added up and divided by four to create an aggregate Party Institutionalization Index (PSI). The lower the electoral volatility, the stronger party identification and the higher citizens' appreciation of parties and elections, the longer parties exist and the more stable their organizational structures have become, the higher a party system's degree of institutionalization (Jones, 2007). An inchoate party system, on the other hand, is characterized by instability of relations both among the system units and between parties and society.

Historical origins of party systems in contemporary Asia

The history of party systems in Asia is relatively brief. The first parties formed at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the Kuomintang (KMT, 1912) in China and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP, 1921). As in other regions, the emergence of early parties in East Asia was a reflection of economic and social change that reached the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Chu et al., 2007; Ockey, 2005; Ufen, 2008b).

For the better half of the twentieth century, the authoritarian political context in most countries prevented the emergence of a pluralist party system. Nevertheless, there have been significant differences between authoritarian regimes with regard to the political contexts in which parties developed. In Taiwan and Mongolia, the ruling parties did not allow the emergence of any other genuinely autonomous political party outside of KMT and MPRP until the transition to democracy began in 1986 and 1990, respectively.

Contrary to the single-party authoritarianism in those two countries, Suharto's 'New Order' regime in Indonesia tolerated the existence of two 'official' opposition parties (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP; Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI) apart from the governing party, Golkar. As a consequence of its late independence, East Timor is a special case. The decolonization process from Portugal, starting in 1974, led to the establishment of five main political groups, two advocating either a close association with the

former colonial power (KOTA and Labour), one party arguing for integration with Portugal before attaining full independence (UDT), one demanding complete independence (FRETILIN) and one striving for accession to Indonesia (APODETI). While the Indonesian annexation of the island immediately following independence in 1975 precluded the development of a stable Timorese party system, neither could the Indonesian Golkar party gain a foothold on the island (Saldanha, 2007: 70).

The authoritarian order in Taiwan, Mongolia and, to a lesser extent, in Indonesia was marked by the existence of relatively well institutionalized regime parties, which played a major role as instruments of political mobilization and integration. The authoritarian regimes in the Philippines, Thailand and South Korea all lacked strong parties. Although the 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way, 2002) of military rule in Thailand and South Korea permitted the organization of political parties outside the ruling pro-military parties, restrictive party regulation placed severe constraints on the emergence of stable political parties and party systems in both countries (Jaung, 2000; McCargo, 1997). The two-party system of the first Philippine democracy, founded in 1946, collapsed following the declaration of martial law by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972 (Thompson, 1995). The pro-Marcos Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (New Society Movement, KBL) did not develop into an organizationally mature institution but remained a façade party.

With the liberalization of the authoritarian order, new possibilities for the development of more pluralized and meaningful party systems emerged in these countries. When East Timor regained its independence from Indonesia in 2002, most of the parties that had come into existence prior to the occupation had already re-emerged in the founding election of 2001. With the exception of East Timor, the most dramatic rupture with the existing party structures under authoritarian rule occurred in the Philippines. Without Marcos as its leader KBL fragmented into several smaller parties. Even though important pre-Marcos political parties such as the Nationalist Party and the Liberals re-emerged from the transition, neither party was able to regain the political relevance it had enjoyed in the period before Marcos' martial law regime.

Contrary to the Philippines, the party system in Thailand did not change much during the transition to democracy in 1992. In fact, most of the political parties that had contested the March 1992 election and supported the military also ran in the September 1992 election. The first post-military cabinet, formed under the leadership of the Democratic Party (founded in 1946), consisted of pro-military parties ('devils') and others who had supported the return to parliamentary democracy ('angels', see Murray, 1996).

All other cases under consideration show a mixed pattern of continuity and change. In South Korea, semi-competitive elections in February 1985 triggered a process of party system reorganization. One month before the election, several opposition groups formed the New Korea Democratic Party. The NKDP and the ruling party of the Fifth Republic (1980–87), the Democratic Justice Party became the nucleus of Korea's post-authoritarian party system (Stockton, 2001). In Indonesia, Golkar and PPP managed to survive the transition towards democracy, even though Golkar lost its hegemonic status. In Taiwan, segments of the so-called *dangwai* movement ('outside the party') in 1986 constituted the country's first truly independent opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whereas the KMT continued its political dominance up to the

2000 presidential elections. In Mongolia, the post-communist MPRP managed to hold on to power by transforming itself into a democratic party and still dominates the Mongolian party system against changing coalitions of liberal and social-democratic parties (Rossabi, 2009).

Types of party systems in seven Asian cases

The following analysis proceeds in two steps. First, party system properties, such as the number of parties, and the degree of fragmentation, aggregation and asymmetry (i.e. relative size of the largest parties) are analysed. In a second step, we determine the types of party system present in the seven countries.

In order to determine the number of parties and the fragmentation of a party system, several measures are available in party research: Sartori's concept of 'relevant parties', Rae's 'index of fractionalization' (Rae, 1968) and the 'effective number of parties' (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979). Based on Alan Ware (1996) and Alan Siaroff (2000), this study counts all parties with at least 3 percent of parliamentary seats in order to determine the number of parties (P3%*S*; Table 1). Fragmentation is measured as the 'effective number of parliamentary parties' (ENPP).² The degree of aggregation of parliamentary parties is operationalized by means of the sum of the percentages of seats obtained by the two largest parties (2PSC).³ Finally, the extent of asymmetry in a party system can be determined with Siaroff's indicators SR1:2 and SR2:3.

The table shows that the most recent elections in Thailand (2007), South Korea and Taiwan (both 2008) are exceptional in that they have reversed or stopped earlier developments on some indicators. Keeping that in mind, however, a few trends can be detected even though there is a considerable degree of variation among individual indicators.

For the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand there is a clear trajectory toward less fragmentation as well as a decreased effective number of parliamentary parties in the lower house or only chamber of parliament. This development is accompanied by higher aggregation and asymmetry in all three party systems.

There still remain important differences between cases. In the Philippines, one of the most tangible single developments in recent years is a declining fragmentation. However, the number of political parties is still quite high, and the existence of a large number of very small parties with one to three seats in the House of Representatives is not even represented by our indicator. As an example, the Eleventh Congress (2004–07) had 33 different political groupings in the House of Representatives (Co, 2005). The emergence of two major political coalitions – the K4 coalition around President Arroyo's Lakas–CMD and the opposition Coalition for National Unity (KNP) – had only a modest effect on the concentration of the party system (Teehankee, 2006). While the two largest parties in the Philippines in 2004 together accounted for 54 percent of the seats, in South Korea the two major political parties had a combined seat-share of about 90 percent in the 2004 elections, although the latter number declined to 78 percent in the 2008 election.

The relatively small margin between the two largest parties (SR1:2) in the Philippines and South Korea indicates the absence of any clear pattern of dominance between the major parties. In both countries, electoral competition at the top is marked by high levels

Table 4. Party system indicators in East and Southeast Asia

Country	Election year	P3%S	2PSC	SR1:2	SR2:3	ENPP
Indonesia	1999	5	55%	1.3	2.0	5.5
	2004	7	43%	1.2	1.9	7.1
	2009	9	46%	1.4	1.1	6.1
Philippines	1987	5	34%	1.8	1.2	6.4
	1992	6	63%	2.1	1.3	3.9
	1995	5	61%	4.0	1.1	3.6
	1998	4	76%	2.0	3.7	3.1
	2001	4	59%	1.6	2.6	5.0
	2004	4	63%	1.7	1.9	4.4
South Korea	1988	4	63%	1.6	1.2	3.8
	1992	3	81%	1.5	3.1	2.9
	1996	4	74%	1.8	1.6	3.1
	2000	3	92%	1.2	8.0	2.4
	2004	4	91%	1.3	12.1	2.4
	2008	4	78%	1.9	4.5	2.9
Taiwan	1992	2	91%	1.9	52.8	2.2
	1995	3	85%	1.6	2.6	2.5
	1998	3	86%	1.8	6.3	2.5
	2001	4	69%	1.3	1.5	3.5
	2004	4	75%	1.1	2.3	3.3
	2008	3	87%	2.6	3.0	2.2
Thailand	1992	6	43%	1.0	1.3	6.1
	1995	8	46%	1.1	1.5	6.4
	1996	6	63%	1.0	2.4	4.3
	2001	5	75%	1.9	3.1	3.1
	2005	3	95%	3.9	3.8	1.6
	2007	4	56%	1.4	4.5	2.8
Mongolia	1990	2	87%	21.4	2.8	1.4
	1992	2	97%	17.4	4.1	1.2
	1996	2	99%	2.0	25.3	1.8
	2000	1	96%	72.8	1.0	1.1
	2004	2	95%	1.1	0.0	2.2
	2008	2	96%	1.7	27.1	2.0
East Timor	2001	4	67%	6.1	1.2	2.8
	2007	7	60%	1.2	1.6	4.4

Data for the 2007 congressional election in the Philippines are missing.

Source: Authors' calculation (election data from Carr, 2009; Central Election Commission of Taiwan 2008; Election Commission of Thailand, 2006; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009; Nohlen et al., 2001; Teehankee, 2006).

of competitiveness and close election outcomes. In Thailand, the data exhibit a clear trajectory towards single-party dominance until 2006. This development was a result of the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party to political hegemony between 2001 and the 2006 military coup d'état (Croissant and Pojar, 2006). The effective number of parliamentary parties dropped from 6.1 in 1992 to 1.6 in 2005. At the same time, the aggregation index rose from 43 percent to 95 percent. TRT's dominance is also

obvious from SR1:2, which increased from 1.0 in 1992 (indicating almost perfect symmetry) to 3.9 in 2005. It remains to be seen whether the reversal of these developments in the 2007 election indicates the beginning of a new trend in party system development in Thailand or constitutes only an interlude.

Taiwan, Indonesia and East Timor demonstrate the opposite trend: After the founding elections, all three countries experienced an increase in both fragmentation and effective number of parties. The indicators also point towards a more balanced relative strength of political parties. Whereas Taiwan stabilized around a bipolar party system, the party system in Indonesia became extremely fragmented. The two largest parties (Golkar and PDI-P) in the 2004 election only received a combined share of 43 percent of the mandates in the DPR, the Indonesian legislature. In 2009, this number only slightly increased to 46 percent, with Golkar being pushed to second place by President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat (PD). A trend towards a growing number of mid-sized parties (3–12 percent) that was already apparent in 2004 continued in the 2009 elections. Micro-parties, whose number had already markedly decreased from 14 in 1999 to 10 in 2004, were completely eradicated from parliament with the introduction of a 2.5 percent threshold in 2009. This is also apparent in the declining ENPP despite a sharp increase in the number of parties as measured by P3%S. While East Timor shares the trend towards more fragmentation, its two largest parties in the 2007 election, FRETILIN and CNRT, could still muster a combined support of 60 percent, only a slight decrease from 67 percent in the founding elections where FRETILIN and PD finished first. Technically, there are seven political parties with a seat-share of at least 3 percent in parliament (2007). However, two of these parties (KOTA-PPT and UNDERTIM) only have two seats each (exactly 3.0 percent of the total seats in parliament). Hence, the strict classification of the Timorese party system as extreme multipartism would be misleading. Therefore, we classify this party system as a moderate multiparty system with balance among parties (CNRT and FRETILIN).

Mongolia is a regional outlier on all indicators. The Mongolian party system remained at both the lowest effective number of parties among the seven cases and the lowest absolute number of parties over the entire research period, with only a single party winning more than 3 percent of the seats in the 2000 election. It alternated between being extremely asymmetrical in the elections of 1990, 1992 and 2000 and rather more symmetrical in 1996, 2004 and 2008: Whereas the first election victory of an opposition party in the history of Mongolia in 1996 was followed by a reverse landslide for the MPRP in 2000, the outcomes of the elections of 2004 and 2008 indicate that liberals and social democrats might have started to build a more stable electoral coalition within the Democratic Party.

The differences among party systems across the region also become apparent when classified according to Siaroff's typology (Table 5). Looking at party systems after the most recent elections, one system can be classified as two-party (Type 1: Mongolia), and two as moderate multiparty systems with either two dominant parties (Type 4: Thailand) or a balance among the parties (Type 5: Philippines). Another two party systems belong to the type of moderate multiparty system with a single dominant party (Type 3: Korea and Taiwan). Finally, both the East Timorese party system after the 2007 and the Indonesian party system after the 2009 legislative elections can be

classified as cases of extreme multipartism with balance of power between the parties (Type 8).

It is worth mentioning that our findings do not support the diagnosis that party systems in the Asia Pacific are converging on a single type of two-party system (Reilly, 2006, 2007). If one tried to identify a single point of convergence, this would rather be the heterogeneous category of moderate multipartism. However, as mentioned before, one of the merits of Siaroff's typology is precisely that it breaks down this crowded category.

Institutionalized and inchoate party systems in six Asian cases

As mentioned before, the index of party institutionalization by Mark Jones measures the institutionalization of political parties and party systems across four dimensions. The lack of reliable data for his indicators 2.2 (distance between party and society), 3.1 (party indispensability) and 4.2 (party continuity) makes it impossible to apply them to the Asian cases considered in this study. The following measurement is therefore limited to the remaining seven indicators across the four dimensions of the concept. Results for the six cases for which the relevant data are available are shown in Table 6.

There are two main findings. First, the party systems under consideration differ in their degree of institutionalization. According to most indicators, party systems in Thailand and South Korea are the least institutionalized. They are characterized by high volatility, unstable party organizations and weak roots in society. Although there are important exceptions, such as the Democrats in Thailand, most political parties in the three countries come and go like soap bubbles. The party system in Taiwan, on the other hand, is relatively well institutionalized. Even though Indonesia only reaches an aggregate score comparable to that of Mongolia and the Philippines, we still regard it as one of the more successful cases of party system institutionalization considering Indonesian democracy's young age⁴ (for similar findings, cf. Hicken, 2006; Ufen, 2008a): Indonesia's party system comes in a close second on the stability of inter-party competition and its citizens show the highest appreciation for the legitimacy of parties and elections. While observers agree that party identification is still relatively low in Indonesia (Mietzner, 2008; Tan, P. J., 2006), party membership is among the highest in the region (Park and Lee, 2007: 27–8). In Mongolia, good PSI scores seem to be carried mainly by the MPRP, while neither party identification nor party age of the other parties comes close. The Philippine score probably overestimates the degree of party system institutionalization, as election data only present the results for electoral coalitions and thereby systematically underreport inter-party volatility.

Second, there are several pronounced differences between the cases on a number of individual indicators. South Korea shows a very high level of volatility and very low party age. This is partly due to methodological problems. For example, electoral volatility is accentuated by frequent party splits and mergers. The volatility rate hence reflects rather the instability of party organizations than volatile voter preferences. In fact, if voting patterns are analysed not by focusing on party organizations but on the regional background of party leaders, Korea exhibits relatively stable voter-party linkage on the regional level since 1988 (Moon, 2005). Nevertheless, if voter loyalty is not directed

Table 5. Changes in party system types across Pacific Asia

		Number of parties		
Relative Strength of Parties		Two-party system	Moderate multiparty system	Extreme multiparty system
Balance among parties			[5] East Timor (2007)* Philippines (2004) Taiwan (2001)	[8] Indonesia (2009) Thailand (1992–1995)
	Two main parties		[4] Indonesia (1999) Taiwan (2004) Thailand (2007)'	[7] Thailand (1996) Indonesia (2004)
			[2] Korea (1992) Korea (2000–2004) Taiwan (1995)	
	One dominant party	[1] Mongolia (1990–2008) Taiwan (1992) Thailand (2005)	[3] East Timor (2001) Korea (1988) Korea (1996) Korea (2008) Thailand (2001) Philippines (1987–2001) Philippines (2007) Taiwan (1998) Taiwan (2008)	[6]

*See explanation in the main text. Source: Authors' calculations; current party system type.

Table 6. Degree of party system institutionalization

Country	D1: Inter-party competition	D2: Party roots in society	D3: Legitimacy of parties and elections	D4: Party organization	Aggregate index (D1+D2+D3+D4)/4
Indonesia	74%	30%	65%	50%	55%
Philippines	49%	54%	57%	67%	57%
South Korea	25%	73%	30%	25%	38%
Taiwan	77%	57%	35%	75%	61%
Thailand	61%	41%	53%	50%	51%
Mongolia	53%	90%	45%	38%	56%

D1: Stability of party competition computed as average volatility of votes and seats deducted from 100. (Source: see Table 4).

D2: Party roots in society computed as percentage of respondents with any party identification. (Source: East Asia Barometer, 2002–2003; Lembaga Survei Indonesia, 2007).

D3: Legitimacy of parties and elections computed as the arithmetical mean of trust in political parties and appreciation of parties and elections. Trust in political parties taken as any positive answers to the question 'Please indicate to what extent you trust the following institutions to operate in the best interests of society: Political parties' (Source: Inoguchi et al., 2009). Election legitimacy is computed as arithmetical mean of positive answers to the questions 'How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates?' (Q114) and 'On the whole, how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last election?' (Q43). (Source: Chu et al., 2007).

D4: Party organization is computed as average percentage of parties with at least 10% of seats in parliament that were at least (a) 10 and (b) 25 years in existence. Baseline is the most recent election. (Source: Authors' calculation with data from Banks et al., 2009).

towards parties as organizations but rather their political leadership, high volatility still does indicate a fluid and under-institutionalized party system.

Voters in Asia generally seem to value elections highly and trust parties. Curiously, relatively high scores in this dimension contrast with relatively low scores on party identification in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, just as relatively low trust for parties and relative dissatisfaction with elections correlate with high party identification in Korea, Taiwan and Mongolia. Indonesia, Taiwan and Mongolia score high on several dimensions of institutionalization, but for each country certain shortcomings remain: As mentioned before, the available data for Indonesia exhibit weak party identification; in Taiwan, the quality of the electoral process and political parties in general have a bad reputation among voters; and in Mongolia political parties opposing the post-communist MPRP have not yet managed to establish a stable party organization, as demonstrated by a high volatility rate and a low party age.

Reliable data on party membership are difficult to obtain for all six countries considered in this analysis. Asian parties generally tend to over-report the number of their registered members.⁵ In fact, the results of the Asian Barometer Survey (2005–07) show that the percentage of party members is low across most countries: 0.3 percent of respondents in Thailand, 0.5 percent in the Philippines, 1.2 percent in South Korea, 1.6 percent in Taiwan and 2.2 percent in Indonesia. Again Mongolia is the exception here with 24.2 percent (calculated with data from Park and Lee, 2007: 27–8).

One of the major reasons for the relatively well-institutionalized party systems in Mongolia, Taiwan and Indonesia is the strong presence of former authoritarian regime parties such as Golkar, MPRP and KMT. For example, about half of the total reported party members in Indonesia belong to either Golkar or PDI-P. The Kuomintang had a membership of 1.7 million in the mid-1990s and could rely on a vast network of local party branches, party cells in the state administration, state-owned enterprises and the military (Rigger, 1999). In Mongolia, party membership seems to have equalized relatively quickly, considering the hegemonic position of the MPRP during and shortly after the transition period. By the late 1990s, several opposition parties had managed to catch up in membership so that only little more than half of party memberships are still accounted for by MPRP (Fish, 1998: 136).

Regarding the Philippines and Thailand, the data show that political parties are quite inchoate. Parties have only been institutionalized to the extent that elites have bestowed legitimacy on open elections and parties as the key route for achieving power (Co, 2005; Ockey, 2005; Siripan, 2006a). Mass-bureaucratic political parties corresponding to Continental European parties with mass memberships do not exist. For the most part, parties are classic election machines and often preoccupied with achieving material gains for their leaders and office-seeking instead of policy-seeking. They also lack ideological appeal and party platforms that would link them with social groups to provide a voice to the populace. The 'cadre-esque', inchoate and decentralized nature of political parties in Thailand and the Philippines has allowed personalism, clientelism and kinship ties to prevail among party members (Hicken, 2006; McCargo, 1997: 118).

Despite the manifold differences between and within the individual party systems, the overall impression for the region is one of weak party system institutionalization. A comparison between East and Southeast Asia and 18 party systems in Latin America analysed by Jones supports this conclusion. Since data for three criteria are missing for the Asian cases, Jones's original results are not comparable with the data presented here. In order to conduct a cross-regional comparison, we tabulated the sub-dimension scores for the Latin American cases without the indicators 2.2, 3.1 and 4.2. This reduced the aggregate index by 6.5 in the regional mean compared to the results reported by Jones. Still, there is a strong correlation between both measures (Pearson's $r = 0.9145$).

According to the data in Figure 1, Uruguay, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua possess well-institutionalized party systems. Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala have the weakest party system institutionalization in Latin America. While Thailand and South Korea are ranked at the bottom of this interregional comparison, the Philippines, Indonesia and Mongolia achieve positions close to the median. Of all six Asian cases, only the Taiwanese party system is located in the top third of this ranking of 24 party systems.

The disaggregated sub-dimensional scores (Figure 2) once again demonstrate that the major weaknesses of Asian Party systems are high levels of electoral volatility and low stability of party organization. Party identification, on the other hand, is very high compared to Latin America, with four Asian countries finishing in the Top 5 on this dimension. Relatively high support for elections and political parties is evident in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, who finish first on this dimension. A low level of trust in political parties positions Taiwan towards the middle of the sample and Korea in the third but last position.

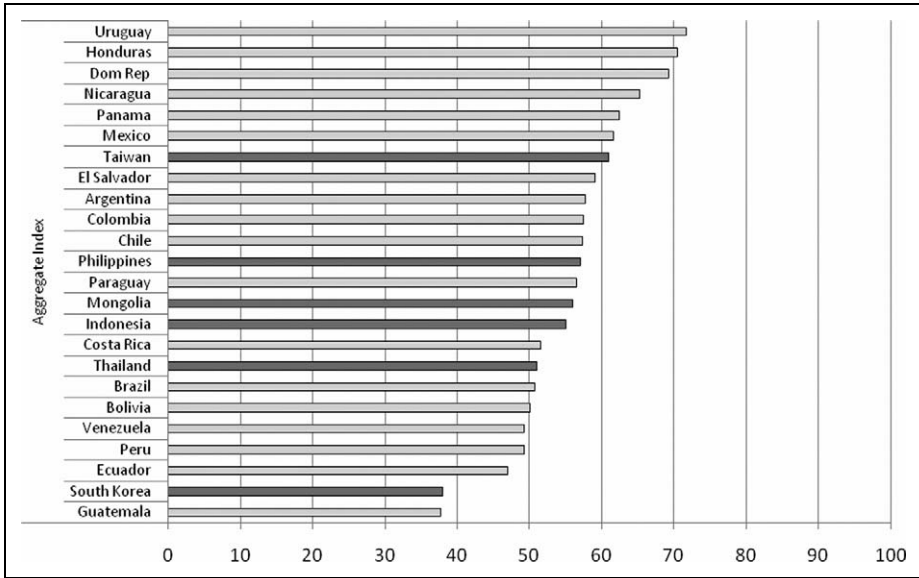


Figure 1. Cross-regional comparison of party system institutionalization (aggregate index).

Source: Authors' calculation (data; see Table 6 and adapted from Jones, 2007: 77–83).

While the results of the cross-regional comparison seem clear, one caveat remains. One could say that it may be unfair to compare the institutionalization of party systems between Asian and Latin American countries because countries in the latter area tend to have a longer experience with democracy than their Asian counterparts and are thus given greater room to institutionalize their party systems. However, a quick glance at the data shows that party system institutionalization is not simply a function of the time a democracy has been in place, as the oldest democracies in our Asian sample, the Philippines and South Korea, are among the cases with the lowest scores. The presence of at least one relatively well institutionalized party system in the sample with Taiwan also seems to indicate that while a certain time frame is certainly necessary, the passing of one generation can suffice for a party system to take root.

More important than the time span that has passed since the inception of democratization could be whether political parties played a major role in the authoritarian regime. In fact, Taiwan and Mongolia, which achieve relatively high PSI scores, had well institutionalized regime parties and even Indonesia scores quite well, given the fact it only went through its third parliamentary election in 2009. Even if the parties in question were intertwined with the authoritarian system and accordingly lost their hegemonic status after democratization, they still have organizational advantages over newly created parties. In Indonesia, for example, the regime party Golkar had party offices all over the country and could cash in this advantage with large shares of the votes in the elections of 1999 and 2004, especially in the outer regions of the archipelago (Liddle, 2000; Liddle and Mujani, 2005). Newly emerging parties needed to catch up with this advantage and therefore had a strong incentive to build durable organizations. As mentioned before,

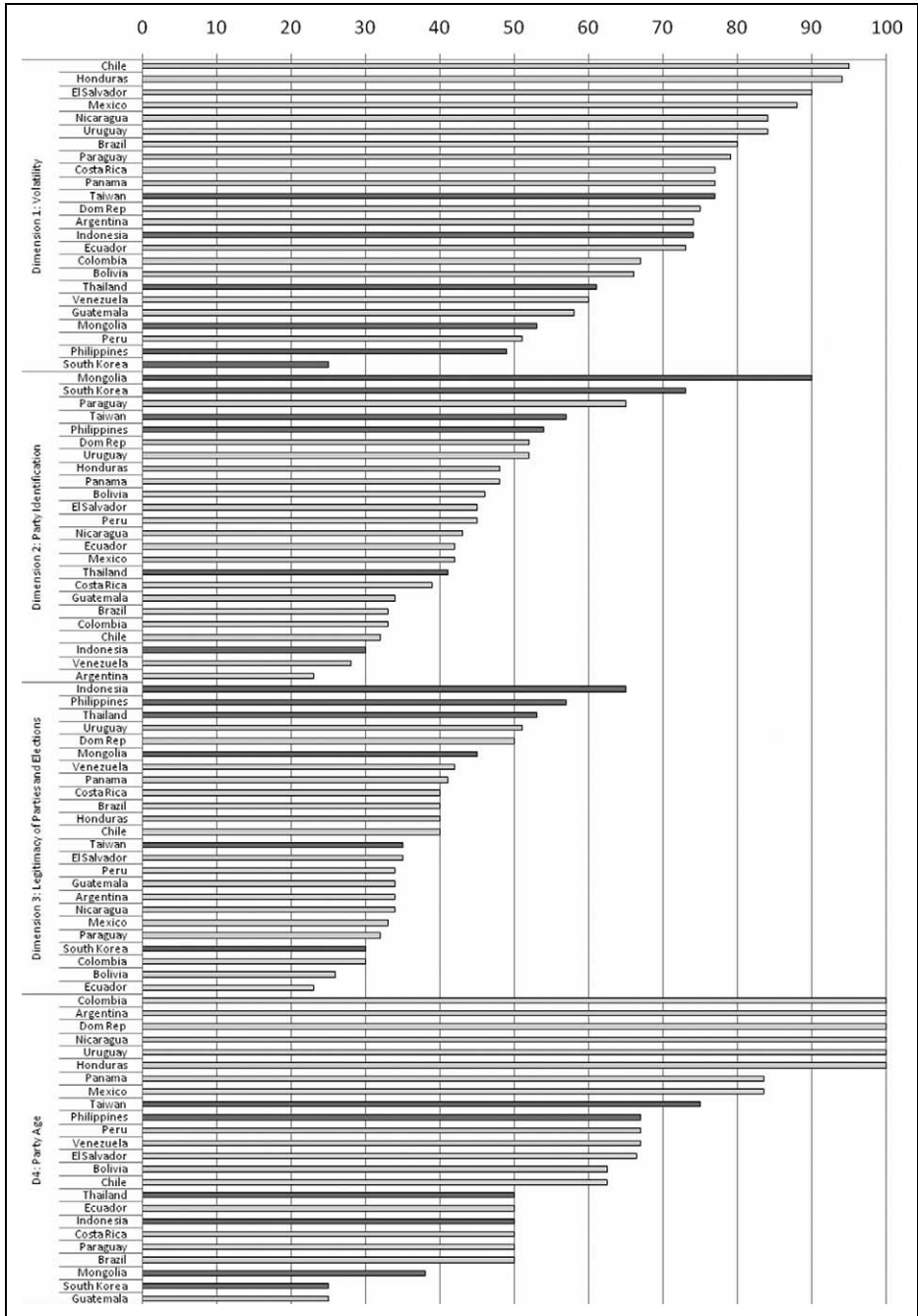


Figure 2. Cross-regional comparison of party system institutionalization (sub-dimensions).
 Source: See Table 6.

Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea all lacked strong parties under authoritarian rule, and their democratizations were not carried by nascent party organizations that could later develop into solid building blocks for a new party system.

Accounting for cross-national variation in Asian party systems

What, then, accounts for the cross-national variance of the structure and institutionalization of party systems that we identify in this study? One possible explanation is that party systems in Asia reflect the impact of political institutions, such as election system and party laws (Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1994). Another approach in the literature on political parties and party systems grounds its explanations in the sociological variable of social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

Party system formats

Not surprisingly, in view of the widely different Asian nations, there is also variation in the region's electoral systems (see Table 7). Despite these differences, there has been something of a convergence in recent years with South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand all choosing 'mixed-member' electoral systems during the past decade (Reilly, 2007). East Timor conducted its first election with a mixed-member proportional system (MMPS) but switched to a system of proportional representation with closed party lists and a 3 percent threshold in 2007. Indonesia started with a proportional representation system with closed lists, then switched to open lists in 2004, and recently introduced a 2.5 percent threshold for the 2009 elections. Finally, Mongolia switched from a single-member district plurality system, used in the elections of 1990 to 1996, to a run-off system in 2000. For the 2008 election, the country adopted a plurality system in multi-member districts.

The conventional wisdom in comparative politics is that PR electoral systems are designed to translate the percentage of votes closely into percentages of seats won, lowering the threshold for smaller parties (Duverger, 1954). We would therefore expect PR systems to produce small vote-seat deviations. Majoritarian systems, by contrast, require a higher effective vote threshold and essentially have a concentrating effect. Therefore, we would expect larger disproportionality arising from these systems, leading to a smaller effective number of parties in parliament.

The most widely used indicator to measure the proportionality of electoral systems is the Gallagher index of disproportionality.⁶ Another possible measure is the difference between the effective number of parties on the basis of votes (ENEP) and seats (ENPP). As Table 7 demonstrates, majority systems differ in the degree of disproportionality and the extent to which they produce distortions between ENEP and ENPP (see Table 7).

A correlation analysis which uses elections as the unit of analysis shows a statistically significant correlation between electoral disproportionality and the number of parliamentary parties (Pearson's $r = -0.607$). Even though a higher disproportionality correlates with a smaller number of parties, only in Mongolia is the disproportionality of majoritarian electoral systems strong enough to produce a pure two-party system. In all other remaining cases of plurality or mixed-member majoritarian systems, the electoral

system tends to reduce the party system fragmentation, but cannot produce a two-party format. It is worth mentioning, however, that this mixed result is exactly what one may expect, given the medium to low level of party system institutionalization and the strength of geographical fractionalization of the electorate in many of the countries under consideration. In fact, as Giovanni Sartori argues, a plurality system will *help* to produce a two-party format 'in the long run' under two conditions (Sartori, 1994: 40–1). The first condition is the existence of a 'structurally consolidated' party system. The second prerequisite is the existence of a relatively well nationalized party system in which the major parties' respective vote-shares do not differ much between one region or geographical unit and another. However, most Asian party systems are neither well structured nor highly nationalized (Croissant and Schächter, 2008).⁷ Even in Thailand, electoral reform only added to a decreasing number of political parties in the elections of 2001 and 2005. Additional factors external to the electoral system were more important (Croissant and Pojar, 2006).

In fact, across countries, party system development is significantly affected by non-institutional factors. Short-term interests, strategies and decisions of political elites, as well as ethnic heterogeneity are among them. Regional or other sub-national identities can influence party system development just as the historical pattern of party competition can (Dalton and Tanaka, 2007; Manacsa and Tan, 2005; Ockey, 2005; Reilly, 2006: 123–35). Bartolini and Mair (1995) have shown how cleavage theory can still explain present patterns of party competition in Europe: Depending on what role social cleavages play and at what point in history the conflict between owners and workers, tensions between industrial and agrarian sector or different religious and ethnic groups became salient in national politics, different types of party systems emerged. Despite the many differences between Western and Asian nations, recent studies on the Asia–Pacific show that party systems in East Timor, Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea are structured along different cleavages (Chu and Lin, 2001; Moon, 2005; Saldanha, 2007; Ufen, 2008b).

For example, political mobilization in South Korea is dominated by the regional cleavage between Yongnam in the east and the southwestern region of Honam (Moon, 2005). In Taiwan, the conflict over national identity forms the main cleavage within society that is also reflected in party politics (Chu and Lin, 2001). Both of these cleavages are situated on the territorial axis of Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage model (1967: 14 f.). Recently, a new conflict between authoritarian and liberal values emerged as a consequence of socio-economic modernization in both countries and already dominates other conflicts, such as class, religion or differences between urban and rural populations (McAllister, 2007).

Indonesia shows a more diverse cleavage structure. The conflict between secularism and religion is of central importance for the structure of competition between political parties since the 1950s (Geertz, 1960). In the party system, this cleavage takes the form of competition between political parties loosely associated with the notion of political Islam versus secular-nationalist parties. This main cleavage is complemented by several other cleavages with a more indirect effect, like the conflict between centre and periphery, different ethnic groups or urban and rural segments of society (Barton, 2006; Ufen, 2008b). Due to its long years of guerrilla resistance under Indonesian occupation, and to

Table 7. Indices of disproportionality

Country	Time span	Electoral system	ENEP-ENPP	Gallagher index
Indonesia	1999–2009	PR in multi-member districts	1.7	5
Philippines	1987–1998*	Single-member district plurality and separate list	0.3	10
South Korea	1988–2008	Single-member district plurality and PR list	1.0	10
Taiwan	1992–2004	Single non-transferable vote and additional list	0.4	7
	2008	Single member district plurality and PR list	0.3	14
Thailand	1992–1996	Multi-member district plurality	0.4	4
	2001–2005	Single-member district plurality and national list	1.0	11
	2007	Single-member district plurality and district list	0.4	7
Mongolia	1990–1996	Single-member district plurality	1.0	21
	2000–2004*	Single-member district majority	1.1	17
East Timor	2001	Mixed-member district proportional	0	2
	2007	PR with national list	1.1	4

*No data on electoral disproportionality for the 2001–2007 national elections in the Philippines and the 2008 election in Mongolia available from electoral commissions.

Source: See Table 4.

a certain extent intensified by the time of the UN transitional authority, East Timor's pre-occupation cleavages have been complemented by additional ones between people who left the country during occupation and those who stayed behind to fight, between different diaspora groups and finally between different regions of the small island over compensation for occupation-related suffering (Croissant, 2008: 656, 63). These cleavages resulted from the early years of independence and seem to be the main reason for the rising fragmentation of the East Timorese party system. It remains to be seen how stable these cleavages will prove to be in future elections as memories of the authoritarian past fade.

In the Philippines ethnic, religious, regional or socio-economic cleavages do not seem to have a strong effect on the party system (Rüland et al., 2005: 141–51): There are only rudimentary links between social cleavages and the national party system. Organizational instability, weak institutionalization and prevailing personalism as well as clientelism have so far prevented a clustering of parties along cleavage lines (Manacsa and Tan, 2005).

In Thailand existing cleavages for a long time did not have an impact on the country's party system either (McCargo, 1997). This has changed, however (Ockey, 2005). The emergence of Thai Rak Thai in the late 1990s was only possible because the party leaders managed to activate a latent conflict between peasants and urban proletariat, on the one side, and the urban middle-class, on the other. TRT presented itself as the advocate of lower class and rural voters who did not have political representation before.

Party system institutionalization

While a large literature in comparative politics has sought explanations for the variance in party system types, research on the causes of differences in the degree of institutionalization of party systems is less well developed. Of the few studies that have attempted to provide an explanation for the existence of institutionalized and inchoate party systems, most focus on single elements of the concept of institutionalization (i.e. electoral volatility), suffer from the lack of time-series data, or analyse only a very limited number of cases. Therefore, there is a critical shortage of testable hypotheses and empirical generalizations (see Kuenzi and Lambright, 2001; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006; Mainwaring and Zoco, 2007; Ufen, 2008b).

At this point in our analysis, any causal explanation of party system institutionalization in Asia must remain tentative. However, there are several hypotheses worth exploring. One was alluded to above: institutional approaches refer to factors such as the type of government or electoral system. Some studies argue that presidentialism hinders party institutionalization since it contributes to less coherent parliamentary parties, organizational instability and the personalization of political contestation (Linz, 1994; Merkel, 1997: 345). Other studies emphasize the role of the electoral rules for presidential elections (Shugart and Carey, 1992: 229). The findings of recent research on Latin America suggest that plurality voting for the presidency can have a stabilizing effect on party systems. Unlike majority systems with run-off elections, plurality tends to concentrate the political competition towards two-party systems (Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997). Presidential term limits could be another institutional factor which affects party institutionalization. Choi (2001) argues that the organizational instability of the post-1986 party system in the Philippines is a consequence of the single-term limit for the presidency introduced in the 1987 constitution. Presidential term limits facilitate intra-party conflict between potential presidential contenders and thereby often contribute to party splits. Similarly, Hsieh and Newman (2002) recently emphasized the impact of electoral systems for the legislature as an important factor influencing party system institutionalization. Some varieties of plurality systems, such as single non-transferable vote (SNTV, as in Taiwan up to the 2008 election) and plurality voting in multi-member districts (block vote, as in Thailand 1992–96 and again since 2007) force candidates of the same party to compete with each other at the district level. A similar effect has been ascribed to plurality voting with an additional party list (Thailand 2001–05) as it works against the emergence of stable linkages of parties and voters (Norris, 2002).

However, even though it is true that strong presidential executives have hampered the development of stable and well-institutionalized party systems in Asia in the past (Tan, A. C., 2005), there is no clear pattern emerging from the post-authoritarian systems in our sample (Rüland et al., 2005: 271). And since all young democracies in East Asia, as well as in Latin America with the exception of Thailand have presidential or semi-presidential systems, neither regional nor cross-regional differences can be accounted for by the type of government

Arguments regarding the electoral system (plurality, majority or PR system; term limits) appear to be more convincing. The destabilizing effect of majority rule with run-off

elections for the presidency on the party system was apparent before the Indonesian presidential election of 2004 and again before the election of 2009, when members of the National Mandate Party (PAN) almost split along gender lines over who to support for the presidential election: ruling president SBY, as the party had pledged, or rather Megawati as the party's women demanded (*Jakarta Post*, 2009). A similar effect of single-term limits for the presidency on the party system is evident in South Korea and the Philippines (Choi, 2001).

Sociological accounts again focus on the relevance of social cleavages for the development of party systems (Rüland et al., 2005; Ufen, 2008b). This literature identifies a relationship between early political mobilization of social cleavages and the strength of the local elite vis-à-vis national elites and party system institutionalization for Southeast Asia. Wherever social cleavages became politically relevant early on in the game, and where local elites were subalterns to a national leadership, parties became rather more institutionalized, as for example in Indonesia. If political parties neglected to mobilize those cleavages present or did so too late, and if local elites managed to dominate party politics as in Thailand and the Philippines, party systems remained volatile, disorganized and socially uprooted (Hicken, 2009; Manacsá and Tan, 2005; Ockey, 2005; Siripan, 2006b; Ufen, 2008b). However, it is unclear whether this explanation carries any weight for Korea or Taiwan. In both countries, cleavages were only mobilized at late stages of the development of political parties, i.e. in the mid-1980s (Chu and Lin, 2001; Hermanns, 2009; Kim, H. M. et al., 2007). The major difference in party system institutionalization between the two countries can therefore only be accounted for by looking at the role of local elites, which was significant for Korea – especially with the ‘Three Kims’ who dominated South Korean politics between 1987 and 2003 – and quite limited for Taiwan under KMT rule. Even if timing and strength of local elites can explain some of the differences, it still remains unclear how exactly these factors affect different aspects of party system institutionalization.

Differences in the degree of institutionalization of both party systems may be explained by the existence of meaningful parties at certain junctures of political development. Economic modernization is a major reason for the introduction of new actors into the political arena (Collier and Collier, 1991), albeit not the only one. Modernization in Taiwan and South Korea did create industrial workers as a sizeable new social group. However, political inclusion of the new working class into the political system was different in both countries. When the KMT moved to Taiwan in 1949, it continued to help the working class organize unions, and managed to establish a union system extending from the central to local levels. For the KMT government the working class was important for both political stability and economic development. State-sponsored unions under close surveillance of the ruling party were not only a source of votes but also administrative arms for executing government policies. Following the lifting of martial law in 1987 the opposition parties, looking for working-class votes, often took the side of labour groups and sponsored or supported labour rights. In South Korea, the state corporatist framework failed to prevent the emergence of politically active labour unions. Instead, a large number of illegal political unions developed. After democratization, Korean political parties did not attempt to develop strong political relations with these unions as they focused on regional electorates instead of working class votes (Buchanan and Nicholls, 2003).

While modernization is an important reason for new cleavages emerging, the owner–worker cleavage is not the only one that has the potential to introduce new actors to the political arena: In Indonesia, the two opposition parties tolerated by the ‘New Order’ were ostensibly built up to represent important societal cleavages. Even if truly democratic representation was not possible under Suharto’s regime, these groups, sometimes through informal association with mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul Ulama, did establish links with political parties that survived democratization and helped the Indonesian party system to institutionalize relatively well. In Thailand, on the other hand, the urban and rural poor had not been politicized by any of the existing parties under either authoritarian or democratic rule and therefore lacked links to them. When they first became the target of political campaigning by Thaksin, the elections of 2001 and 2005 resulted in landslide victories, thereby destabilizing the fledgling party system further. These examples indicate that any sizeable societal group currently marginalized or non-politicized can strengthen an existing party system if absorbed by existing parties or destabilize it if politicized by a new party.

Party systems and democratic consolidation

One major question remains: Does the type of party system and level of party system institutionalization matter for the consolidation of young democracies in East and South-east Asia?

As mentioned before, there is broad consensus among scholars that political parties are ‘the central intermediate structures between society and government’ (Sartori, 1976: ix). Thus, political parties are of central importance for the quality and stability of any democratic system. Especially the consolidation of new democracies requires that a system of well-institutionalized political parties takes root in society, for only such a system fosters the development of durable patterns of peaceful and stable alternation in government (Bosco and Morlino, 2006; Gunther and Diamond, 2003). In inchoate party systems, however, parties rise and fall from election to election, roots in the population are shallow and party organizations are weak. Inchoate party systems not only tend toward stronger factionalism and weak organizational structures. The lack of institutionalization of the party system is also often associated with pathologies in governance. Low levels of party system institutionalization can be associated with high turnover in political office, inability to legislate, gridlock between different branches of government, inability to hold politicians accountable for public policy and, potentially, the delegitimation of parties and democracy (Mainwaring, 1998; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995).

Our results support the view that at least three out of the seven party systems analysed in this study exhibit certain features which might impede democratic consolidation. In fact, Thailand and the Philippines are prime examples of the perils of inchoate party systems for democratic consolidation. The erosion of democracy under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (2001–06), the collapse of democracy in 2006 and the protracted political crisis since the transition from military rule to parliamentary democracy in late 2007 cannot be attributed to a single factor alone. However, students of Thai politics agree that the incapacity of the party system to accommodate social and

political tension, its feeble and insufficient institutionalization and the lack of adequate opportunities for political representation and participation within political parties are major obstacles to democratic governance in Thailand (Pongsudhirak, 2008). Even after Thailand's 1997 constitutional reforms, which explicitly aimed to strengthen party stability and party organizations (Kuhonta, 2008), Thai parties have remained only shallowly institutionalized. The dominance of inchoate political parties which showed little interest in developing stable organizations and strong linkage with the urban poor and the peasants in the countryside created an intermediary vacuum which, then, was filled by Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party and its seemingly 'populist' policies (Siripan, 2006b). Similarly, but less successful, attempts to topple the existing cartel of institutionally weak but dominant political parties occurred in the Philippines in the late 1990s under populist president Joseph Estrada. In both countries, opponents of the government, knowing that they could not defeat the incumbent government electorally, and lacking effective representation by political parties, took their protest to the streets (Landé, 2001). In the end, it was military intervention that proved decisive in both cases.

However, the case of South Korea demonstrates that there is no clear and linear relationship between the state of party politics and the quality of democratic governance or the state of consolidation of democracy. Korean parties lack longevity and organization and focus on their charismatic leaders and home regions. However, if one compares the level of democratic quality and consolidation in South Korea with many other newly emerged democracies in Asia (and beyond) it seems that Korean democracy is quite capable of compensating for shortcomings of the party system, as a vibrant civil society provides alternative opportunities for political participation and civic engagement (Kim, S., 2003). While there remain sound reasons to assume an influence of party system characteristics, discussed here on the development of democracy, how *much* they matter remains unclear, as the party system is a major – but not the only – arena of democratic consolidation identified by the literature (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Merkel, 1998).

Conclusions

This article has provided an overview of party system types and party system institutionalization in East Asia. The data presented allow for five conclusions. First, our analysis demonstrates that party systems in the region are not converging on a single type of party system. Looking at the most recent elections, Mongolia can be classified as a two-party system, Indonesia and East Timor as extreme multiparty systems and the remaining four cases as moderate multiparty systems. Within the latter category, we identify single-party dominance in Korea and Taiwan, and systems with two dominant parties (Thailand) or party balance (Philippines).

Second, East and Southeast Asian party systems also differ in their degree of institutionalization. Party systems in Thailand, the Philippines and especially South Korea are stuck in at least an inchoate state. Even though there is considerable variation among the cases, the party systems in Indonesia – for the short time span that has passed since transition to

democracy – Mongolia and Taiwan can be considered well institutionalized relative to the rest of Asia and moderately institutionalized when compared to Latin America.

Third, weak institutionalization correlates with volatile party system properties only in Thailand. South Korea and the Philippines seem to be paradoxically stabilizing into a situation of protracted under-institutionalization, as both cases combine more or less stable party system patterns with weak institutionalization and in South Korea's case possibly even the absence of the essential system character. This is a significant difference from Latin American party systems with similar aggregate institutionalization scores such as Ecuador, Peru or Bolivia, where low scores stem from the erosion of established party structures.

The fourth conclusion concerns the impact of the state of party politics on the consolidation of democracy. While democracy in South Korea seems able to compensate the perils of a weak party system by means of a strong civil society, the situation in the Philippines and Thailand is different: low party system institutionalization there is a liability for democracy.

Fifth, the discussion of potential explanations suggests that a combination of both structural and institutional factors accounts for much of the variance in the patterns and level of institutionalization of East and Southeast Asian party systems. However, empirical evidence that supports this assumption remains anecdotal and more comparative research needs to be done on the issue of party system institutionalization. It is very possible that other variables, such as economic development, political culture, elite behaviour and the timing of democratization, are more important than hitherto acknowledged. Nevertheless, it seems fair to assume that factors such as the status of political parties during the authoritarian regime, the salience of different socio-political cleavages and the mode of integration of working-class interests carry more explanatory weight than institutional variables such as the election systems.

Notes

We thank the three anonymous referees from *Party Politics* for their helpful comments.

1. East Timor is not included in the BTI. However, since both Freedom House (2009) and the Polity IV project classify East Timor as democracy we decided to include East Timor in our sample.
2. Computed as $N = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^n p_i^2}$; where N is the ENPP and p_i is the percentage of party i 's seats (Laakso and Taagepera, 1979).
3. A more commonly used index for this purpose is that of Lane and Ersson (1991). It does, however, produce extremely skewed results in party systems with a medium number of large and mid-sized parties and many micro-parties (as, e.g., in the Philippines).
4. In order to compensate for a possible effect of the mere time passed since democratization on party system institutionalization, we created a time-adjusted score for party system institutionalization, T . It includes the non-adjusted aggregate score I , the democratic experience E_i since the founding election measured in years and the regional arithmetic mean for democratic experience E_{avg} (in this case 17.7 years). It is computed as $T = \frac{I \times E_{avg}}{E_i}$. Calculated this way, party system institutionalization for our cases is 97 for Indonesia, 63 for Taiwan, 53 for Thailand, 52 for Mongolia, 46 for the Philippines and 35 for South Korea.
5. For example, the Thai Rak Thai party claimed that its membership had increased from 6.7 million in 2001 to 14 million in 2004. In the same year, the Democrat Party and Chart Thai Party

each reported a membership of more than 4 million. The tendency for parties to exaggerate their membership is particularly remarkable when measured relative to the size of the overall national electorate. From the late 1990s until 2001 the total party membership taken as a percentage of the total electorate (M/E ratio) would have increased to 48 percent. A few months after the 2005 general election it had reached 53 percent (Siripan, 2006a: 138).

6. The Gallagher Index (G) is a common measure for deviation of the apportionment of seats from the proportion of votes in the electorate for a party. It is computed as $G = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}(\sum_{i=1}^n V_i - S_i)^2}$, where V_i is the vote-share of party i and S_i its apportionment of seats.
7. The concept of party system nationalization has recently been revitalized in party research by Jones and Mainwaring (2003). While Sartori does not use the term or concept of party system nationalization his description of the second basic condition under which plurality system will concentrate party systems into a two-party format covers those socio-political factors and structures which inhibit (or permit) the emergence of nationalized political parties (Sartori, 1994: 40; Jones and Mainwaring, 2003; Hicken, 2009).

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