

Programmatic parties: Where do they come from and do they matter?

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Abstract: Motivated by the presumption that programmatic political parties improve public policy, a growing literature has begun to examine the choice of politicians to build programmatic political parties or to pursue clientelist electoral strategies. Researchers have not yet been able to test the claim that programmatic parties improve policy, nor has data permitted them to bring statistical evidence to bear on the conditions under which programmatic parties emerge and persist. This paper is a first effort to address these gaps. It introduces a new measure of programmatic political parties, available for more than a hundred countries for the period 1975 – 2004; it demonstrates that the emergence of programmatic parties prior to the introduction of competitive elections is the most important determinant of whether political parties are programmatic after their introduction; and it demonstrates substantial policy effects of programmatic political parties, the pattern of which suggests that programmatic political parties allow politicians to make credible promises to broad segments of the electorate.

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Considerable evidence now exists that political market imperfections such as uninformed voters or non-credible politicians undermine democratic performance. At the same time, a large body of research points to the role played by political parties in improving democratic accountability. This paper investigates the conditions under which programmatic parties, in particular, emerge; whether they have a significant influence on public policy; and whether the pattern of that influence provides insight into the specific political market imperfection that programmatic parties may solve. In particular, the hypothesis explored here is that to the extent that political parties are programmatic – that is, with a well-established reputation for advocating particular positions on issues of broad public concern – rather than rooted in machine-based or clientelist strategies or the charisma of individual leaders, we might expect corresponding improvements in public policy.

Two basic challenges have long confronted this line of research. Empirically, we have had only limited data on whether political parties are programmatic. Theoretically, the conditions under which parties become programmatic, or under which programmatic parties succeed as an electoral strategy, are not well understood. This paper is a first effort to overcome these challenges, exploiting information in the *Database of Political Institutions* (Beck et al 2001) to construct a proxy for whether parties are programmatic. The validity of this proxy is supported in comparisons of its assessment of political parties to the detailed assessments made for parties in small groups of countries by other scholars.

Two sets of experiments are conducted using this data. The first asks, under what conditions do programmatic parties emerge and persist? Historical factors turn out to

matter significantly: whether countries had programmatic parties when they first held competitive elections is the most important determinant of whether they have them later. On the other hand, although a persuasive literature, with important examples (e.g., Bismarck's Germany) has argued that competitive democracies that emerge out of a well-run state are more likely to exhibit programmatic parties, the evidence here is that bureaucratic quality has a strong, negative influence on whether programmatic parties develop. This has a straightforward explanation: political competitors in new democracies cannot easily gain electoral advantage from high quality public sector performance if voters are going to give credit to the pre-existing bureaucracy or earlier, non-competitively elected governments. In this case, pre-existing high quality bureaucracies encourage politicians to adopt clientelist strategies.

The second experiment asks whether programmatic political parties have strong effects on government policy. The evidence suggests that they do, and that the pattern of policy effects indicates that programmatic parties allow politicians to make credible pre-electoral promises to large segments of the electorate that they would not otherwise be able to make. The evidence does not definitively exclude other possible channels through which programmatic parties could influence political incentives, however. Accumulating more and more detailed data on party characteristics, and identifying the channels through which these characteristics matter for policy, remain important areas for further research.

Programmatic versus clientelist parties

The first experiment below uses cross-country evidence to identify the determinants of whether parties are programmatic. A broad literature looks at programmatic and clientelist parties. Much of this follows Dixit and Londregan (1996) and asks how parties distribute targeted – clientelist – transfers among different classes of voters (poor, rich, core

supporter or swing voter). For example, Stokes (2005) examines the tactics of the Peronist party in Argentina and finds that it used direct handouts or promises of private goods to attract the votes of the poor and uneducated, who were Peronist sympathizers but not diehard supporters. A different strand of the literature actually uses policy performance to identify whether parties are clientelist or not. Calvo and Murillo (2004), for example, identify the Peronists as particularly clientelist by demonstrating that the Peronist vote share is related to public employment, whereas the UCR-Alianza vote share is not.

This research makes valuable progress in helping us understand how clientelist parties operate and the extent to which political strategies of parties within countries can differ. It also demonstrates theoretically and empirically that income is likely to be a key determinant of whether parties make clientelist appeals. Although the question of whether parties target core or non-core supporters continues to be contested, the argument that the recipients of targeted largesse are largely poor seems settled. The questions examined here take the research in a different direction than these contributions, however. First, why do programmatic or clientelist parties emerge in the first place? And second, do they have an impact on public policy – a question that cannot easily be answered if programmatic and clientelist parties are defined based on public policy outcomes.

Others have focused on the emergence of programmatic parties and particularly their historical roots. Shefter (1994) argues that parties turn to programmatic appeals when they cannot engage in clientelism. He further claims that once parties adopt a clientelist or programmatic mode of operation, they are locked in and voters will expect them to continue to employ this strategy. Van de Walle (2003) applies this argument to African democracies in the 1990s, where he observes that parties switched to programmatic appeals because of the difficulties of managing clientelist handouts. However, the programmatic bases of

African parties have also turned out to be difficult to sustain. Consequently, van de Walle argues, two trends in African democracies stand out: a dominant party has emerged from initial multi-party elections; and ethnic and regional cleavages have been far more important than programmatic ones.

Kitschelt et al. (1999) adopt similar historical arguments to explain party development in post-communist Europe. They argue that programmatic parties were *less* likely to emerge in those countries where the state reached more further into the economy (giving political parties under democracy greater ability to rely on patronage promises following the transition); and in those states in which the communist regime was more patrimonial/clientelist prior to the transition. In fact, they go back even further in history and link the style of the communist regime in a country to the nature of government in the period prior to World War II.

The bureaucracy is an important player in all of these arguments. Shefter observes that where bureaucracies are independent and well-functioning, and would resist the implementation of arbitrary, clientelist policies (as, he argues, in Bismarck's Germany), new political parties are compelled to shape programmatic appeals to voters. This argument has a substantial echo in the literature. Chandra (2004), for example, also argues in the context of India that patronage is easier for politicians to dispense when the civil service is less professional.

This literature raises two issues. First, how precisely does the historical legacy influence political competition under democracy? The implicit argument is that what voters are accustomed to, they expect to continue. Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) offer a more explicit link between history and current political competition. Parties can invest in building up the credibility of their promises with voters – an effort to notify voters about what the promises

are, to make sure voters can monitor compliance, and to show that the party will pay a penalty if it violates those promises. However, if parties rely on patrons, this process will be slow – they will rely on patrons rather than their own efforts to recruit voters. In this framework, it is easy to see how history might matter: prior to the onset of democratic political competition, political competitors may have had the opportunity to develop credible policy stances, or they may have relied purely on patron-guided clientelist payoffs. Once political competition begins in earnest, parties confront a cost to changing strategies (clientelist parties must invest resources to develop a programmatic reputation, for example).

They present two examples of this. Well-identified policy differences separated political parties in Great Britain when it began to expand the franchise; following the expansion of the franchise, politicians in Great Britain approved reforms that increased the meritocracy in the civil service and reduced corruption. No such differences existed in the Dominican Republic in the aftermath of the assassination of Rafael Trujillo and the introduction of competitive elections led to decades of clientelist-oriented political decision making.

The second issue is related and concerns the role of the independent bureaucracy. The assumption that the independence of bureaucracies or the size of government are binding constraints on political choices to pursue patronage are at odds with a large literature suggesting that these are purely the product of political choice. With respect to the bureaucracy, for example, many scholars have pointed to the difficulty of assuming that bureaucracies can be immune from interference by politicians. On the contrary, the evidence points to the conclusion that bureaucratic independence is strictly determined by political incentives to interfere. Keefer and Stasavage (2003) show, for example, that the

independence of central banks – the epitome of the meritocratic bureaucracy in nearly all countries – is assured only in the presence of political checks and balances.

Given that the bureaucracy is a product of political choice, how can the bureaucratic legacy left by a non-democratic regime affect political competition following the introduction of competitive elections? One explanation is that voters have imperfect information about the relative contribution of bureaucrats and politicians to public sector performance. If performance is unchanged after moving to democracy, while politicians change but bureaucrats remain the same, imperfectly informed voters will give less credit to the competitively elected politicians. This implies a prediction contrary to that in the literature, however: given the pre-existence of a high quality bureaucracy, programmatic political parties are less likely to emerge, since maintaining good programmatic outcomes are particularly difficult for politicians to get credit for.

Finally, much of the literature examines the role of political and electoral institutions in fomenting or limiting clientelist appeals to voters. In some cases, researchers argue that the institutions are endogenous to whether parties are programmatic or not. Shefter (1994), for example, identifies a number of cases in which politicians shaped electoral rules to facilitate clientelist transfers. Persson and Tabellini (2000), on the other hand, assume that political and electoral institutions are exogenous and analyze their impact on the incentives of politicians to provide targeted rather than non-targeted goods and services to citizens.

This discussion makes clear that the literature identifies numerous determinants of whether programmatic parties emerge and persist in democracies. These range from income to historical factors to the presence of a high quality bureaucracy. Each of these is investigated in the first experiment below. In addition, though, the experiment considers additional factors that are neglected in the literature.

First, one might expect (e.g., from analyses such as those in Keefer and Vlaicu 2005), that the conditions of political competition matter. In particular, to the extent that the ability to make credible policy promises to a large swath of the electorate confers an electoral advantage, once one party acquires this capacity, others will be compelled to follow. The analysis below therefore asks whether the probability that the government party is programmatic is influenced by whether the opposition party is, as well, controlling for factors that might affect incentives of all parties to be programmatic.

Second, programmatic promises should only influence outcomes to the extent that they are credible. This in turn depends on whether parties stand to pay a substantial penalty if they renege on these promises. Reputation creates such a penalty, for example if it takes years and significant financial resources to build. The analysis below therefore takes into account the age of political parties, to partially capture the size of the penalty they bear from breaking programmatic promises.

Third, the literature points to income as one variable that influences the strategic appeal to political competitors of pursuing clientelist strategies. Other demographic and geographic factors might matter as well, however. For example, population density (total population and land area of countries) affects both the utility of public good provision and the difficulties of setting up machinery to deliver clientelist goods. The age of the population, particularly the fraction of the population that is young, might influence the relative demand for public goods and the difficulties of ensuring voter turnout. Not only might the young have different levels of demand for public goods, they are more difficult to bring to the polls, creating a higher payoff to private transfers that might attract them. Similarly, rural populations should value public and private goods differently than urban

populations and be similarly more difficult to bring to the polls. All of these are controlled for in the analysis below.

How might programmatic parties improve policy?

Programmatic parties are relevant for economic development to the extent that they influence public policy. This, in turn, means that they are relevant to the extent that they influence political incentives to pursue some public policies (e.g., those related to targeted goods and services or to rent-seeking) rather than others (non-targeted and public goods). If programmatic parties solve political actors' credibility problems, then the analysis of Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) implies that in countries with programmatic political parties, the electoral costs of service narrow classes of voters at the expense of voters generally are higher. As a consequence, policies should be less targeted and rent-seeking should be less in evidence. This approach to programmatic parties is consistent with Aldrich and Bianco (1992), who model the phenomenon of party-switching by assuming that party labels convey to voters the policies that parties will implement if they take office.

Snyder and Ting (2002) argue that party labels convey information about the policy preferences of candidates and analyze the strategic behavior of candidates in deciding which party label to adopt. To the extent that programmatic parties convey information about candidates that clientelist parties do not, we expect voters to be better able to hold politicians accountable for poor policy performance in the presence of programmatic policies. While this implies that programmatic parties should be associated with less rent-seeking, it is ambiguous whether better informed voters will also require parties to increase the provision of public goods and actually decrease the provision of targeted goods, the predictions that emerge from the credibility analysis of Keefer and Vlaicu (2005).

The arguments of Aldrich (1995), combined with other conditions, also imply that programmatic parties should increase the provision of public goods. He makes the claim that political parties provide the only way that voters can hold elected officials accountable for their collective actions, since no single legislator can reasonably be held accountable by voters for failures of public good provision, since many legislators are jointly responsible for it. For Aldrich's argument to explain the provision of non-targeted goods, it must also be the case that parties make promises regarding non-targeted goods and that these promises are credible (as in Keefer and Vlaicu 2005). Under these circumstances, programmatic parties – those which make credible promises about broad public policies – allow voters to hold legislators accountable for broad public policies. Clientelist parties allow them only to hold legislators accountable for private good provision.

Aldrich (1995) and others underline the importance of internal party organization – their ability to reward candidates who toe the party line and punish those who do not. However, the advantages of party membership rise as parties become more programmatic; if we identify parties as programmatic, we can therefore infer that they have greater capacity to exercise influence over party members.

To see this, one need only note that the leverage of parties over members depends on the benefits to members and a party's candidates for office of party affiliation. These benefits could be of three kinds. First, parties can make credible policy promises that individual candidates cannot, which is meaningful for voters as long as parties can discipline candidates who depart from the party's policy promises. Second, parties could provide voters with information about candidates that would otherwise be costly for candidates to provide. Finally, parties could offer candidates financial and organizational benefits: parties coordinate local and national vote-getting, control candidate recruitment, establish rules for

legislative and ministerial advancement, and achieve economies of scale in campaigning (Aldrich 1995). Such structures require time to be developed and, once developed, create a cost for parties that seek to renege on their promises.

Taken together, then, these predictions suggest that programmatic policies should have a strong effect on public policy, at the very least reducing corruption or rent-seeking. If programmatic parties solve credibility problems for politicians, they should also, following Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) reduce targeted good provision and increase non-targeted good provision. If they solve information problems for voters, as in Snyder and Ting (2002), the relative effects on private and public goods are more ambiguous. However, if programmatic parties simply enable voters to hold politicians collectively accountable for poor performance, they should improve non-targeted good provision (though the effects on rent-seeking and targeted good provision are more ambiguous).

Exploring the indicators

To explore the origins of programmatic parties and their policy impact, one obviously needs indicators of whether or not parties are programmatic. New indicators are introduced in this paper, with much broader country and time coverage than any others used in the literature. They come from the *Database of Political Institutions* (DPI, Beck et al. 2001), which identifies whether the each of the largest three government parties and the largest opposition party are right, left or center in their orientation or whether, on the contrary, their orientation is either not discernible in the sources employed or unrelated to economic policy.

Two indicators are created from this data. The primary indicator, used both in experiments on the determinants and policy effects of programmatic parties, is a dichotomous variable that equals one if the both the largest government and opposition parties are identified as having an economic program (right, left or center). In addition, in

order to test for whether the presence of one programmatic party spurs others into existence, dichotomous variables for each of the largest government and opposition parties are also employed.

Table 1 summarizes the primary indicator and its two components, as well as an average of party dummies, for four sets of countries: all country years in the data, all countries represented in 2000, and all country years or countries in 2000 for which governments had been elected in competitive elections. Elections are defined as competitive here and throughout the paper if the *Legislative and Executive Indices of Competitive Elections* in the *DPI* take on their highest values, seven, indicating multiple parties competed and none won more than 75 percent of the vote.

Table 1: Mean of programmatic indicators, *Database of Political Institutions*

	Gov't. and oppos. parties both programmatic?	Gov't program- matic?	Oppos. program- matic?	Program- matic avg, <i>all</i> parties	<i>N</i>
All country-years	.38	.57	.43	.50	5315
All countries, 2000	.48	.63	.59	.59	176
All countries with competitive elections, 2000	.77	.87	.84	.84	2038
All countries with competitive elections, all years	.73	.83	.82	.81	96

Note: A party is coded as programmatic when it is assessed as right, left or center in the *Database of Political Institutions*. Government party refers to the largest government party (the variable *gov1rlc* in *DPI*); opposition to the largest opposition party (*opp1rlc*). Programmatic average, *all* parties, is the average of the four dummy variables indicating whether the largest three government and largest opposition parties are programmatic.

The *DPI*-based indicator has the advantage that it covers all countries over the period 1975 – 2004. It has the disadvantage that it is (necessarily) based on limited information regarding parties. Parties are coded as left, right or center if short descriptions of the parties in either two political almanacs records them as such or if the party names

themselves suggest broad-based policy stances. However, although the coding in DPI does not represent a deep evaluation of parties, the standards of assessment simply give rise to noise in the data; there is no reason to suspect that the coding standards bias the coding. On the contrary, because they are likely noisy, empirical assessments using the measures are more likely to be insignificant than otherwise.

Though the *DPI* coding meets the minimum criteria that one looks for in establishing whether parties advance a programmatic agenda with respect to economic policy, its likely noisiness invites a comparison with other indicators of political party characteristics, available for a limited number of countries and years. These comparisons validate the use of the *DPI* measure as a measure of programmatic parties.

Only Kitschelt, et al. (1999) have data for numerous parties identifying them as programmatic or not. They identify parties from four Eastern European countries as diffuse or programmatic, where more programmatic parties are defined as parties that exhibit more programmatic “crystallization” and greater agreement between party insiders and outsiders on the content of the party’s program. Their data come from 1994 and 1995. The *DPI* variable exhibits a high correlation with these codings. Of the nineteen parties in their sample that are also covered in the *DPI*, Kitschelt, et al. (1999) label thirteen as programmatic or mostly programmatic. All of these parties are also identified as programmatic -- right, left or center – in the *DPI*. Kitschelt, et al. label the remaining six parties as diffuse or mostly diffuse. *DPI* codings agree in half of these cases, though in the other three cases *DPI* describes the parties as left, right or center.

All other cross-national data sources emphasize political and voter polarization rather than the programmatic character of parties. We do not expect measures of polarization to correlate well with whether parties are programmatic or not. However, one

can use DPI's codings of right, left and center to construct measures of party polarization and ask whether these measures correlate with others' measures of party polarization. If the correlation is reasonable, this supports the validity of an indicator based on these same variables of whether parties are programmatic.

Jones (2005) has assembled careful data describing political party systems in Latin America. Using survey evidence from Latinobarómetro and the Proyecto de Elites Latinoamericanos, he evaluates whether voters regard parties are legitimate; whether parties are polarized on the left-right spectrum based on respondent party preference and respondent self-identification on the left-right spectrum; and a measure of party polarization based on where party elites situate their own and other parties on the left-right spectrum. Parties are more polarized when the respondents expressing a preference for one party locate themselves on the left-right spectrum far from the average left-right self-placement of survey respondents, where each party's contribution to the polarization measure is weighted by the fraction of respondents expressing a preference for the party.¹ The correlation between DPI programmatic indicators and the polarization measures of Jones is, unsurprisingly, small (though positive).

The DPI polarization indicator is equal to the ideological distance between the largest government and largest opposition party, where a one is given to parties characterized as right wing, a -1 to parties characterized as left wing, and a zero to all others, and distance is the absolute value of the difference between these values. The resulting measure is significantly correlated at .40 with the 18 countries in Jones' sample. The polarization measures in Jones exhibit considerable bunching at values less than one, relatively

¹ The formula is from Taylor and Herman (1971), who measure left-right polarization as the sum of (percent voting for party i) \times [(mean ideological score of people voting for i) - (overall mean ideological score)]², or $f_i(\mu_i - \mu)^2$.

unpolarized, with more polarized countries rising to values of greater than seven. If one considers only the seven countries for which considerable variation in polarization exists (from 0.5 to 7.67) the correlation with the DPI measure rises to .71.

The World Values Surveys (86 observations on 56 countries in three survey waves, 1982, 1991, 1997) permit similar experiments to examine the validity of the DPI measure as an indicator of programmatic parties. Like Latinobarómetro, these surveys have questions about party identification and respondent self-placement on the left-right spectrum. Using these to construct measures of polarization, as in Jones, leads to two conclusions. This measure is significantly correlated at .31 with the DPI polarization measure described above. The WVS polarization measure is also significantly positively associated with the DPI programmatic measure, though this correlation is difficult to interpret. It is 1.3 when both the largest government and opposition parties are identifiably right, left or center in DPI, and .68 when they are not, a difference that is significant at a greater than 99 percent confidence level.

The World Values Surveys permit a further test of validity. Party polarization in the WVS is the product of two forces: voter polarization (where voters locate themselves far from each other on the left-right spectrum), but also programmatic parties, since if parties were not systematically identified with the right or left ends of the spectrum, left and right leaning voters would have no reason to cluster in one party or the other.² Consequently, we

² This is easy to see from the formula for polarization in footnote 2, $f_i(\mu_i - \mu)^2$. Polarization is necessarily lower when all respondents' ideological self-placements are clustered around the mean self-placement of all respondents. In this case, for any particular political party i , $(\mu_i - \mu)^2$ is necessarily small. However, even if voters vary greatly in their ideological self-placements and many are located at the ideological extremes, $(\mu_i - \mu)^2$ may still be small, depending on whether party i has attracted voters from only one end of the spectrum or from both ends. If parties have no coherent policy platforms that are aligned with the left-right concerns of voters, economic polarization will not play a role in voters' party preferences. If parties are programmatic, however, they give polarized voters a reason to cluster into correspondingly polarized parties.

would expect a positive association between programmatic parties and polarization in the WVS data if we control for whether voters self-identify themselves as polarized.

Results in Table 2 suggest that this is the case. It reports on four experiments testing the relationship between the *DPI* measure of programmatic parties and the measure of party polarization. The first two experiments control for the standard deviation of voter ideological self-placement; the second two for the fraction of voters that place themselves in the left-most or right-most ratings (1, 2, 8 or 10 on a 10 point scale). Although we do not expect social polarization to influence the economic polarization of parties, the second of each pair of regressions controls for social polarization (ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization from Alesina, et al.). All regressions additionally control for a variety of country characteristics that might also influence polarization: the size of the country, the fraction of the population that is young, and the fraction that is rural.

Table 2 supports the narrow conclusion that the *DPI* measure is a reasonable indicator of whether parties are programmatic. In every case, the WVS polarization measure is significantly higher when both the main opposition and government parties can be identified as right, left or center using the *DPI* measure and controlling for self-reported voter polarization. Voter polarization increases party polarization by construction, since voter self-placements on the left-right spectrum enter into the calculation of party polarization.

Table 2: Determinants of party polarization
(*p-values in parentheses based on robust, clustered standard errors*)

Dependent variable: <i>party polarization, WVS</i>	<i>Voter right-left identification, standard deviation</i>		<i>Percent of respondents, extreme right or left</i>	
Voter polarization, WVS (see column heading)	1.88 (.00)	1.94 (.00)	6.66 (.003)	6.95 (.001)
Main opposition and main government parties right/left/center (DPI)	.49 (.07)	.45 (.12)	.56 (.03)	.50 (.07)
GDP/capita (thousands, <i>ppp-adjusted</i> , constant 2000 international dollars)	-.03 (.84)	-.08 (.63)	-.013 (.35)	-.016 (.32)
Presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary (0, 1, 2)	.39 (.001)	.35 (.003)	.38 (.001)	.35 (.003)
Total population (<i>millions</i>)	.005 (.34)	.0007 (.90)	.012 (.008)	.008 (.14)
Percent population young	-.04 (.012)	-.04 (.02)	-.04 (.01)	-.05 (.004)
Percent population rural	-.02 (.005)	-.02 (.004)	-.03 (.001)	-.03 (.001)
Total land area (<i>millions km²</i>)	-.10 (.00)	-.058 (.14)	-.11 (.00)	-.07 (.07)
Ethnic fractionalization		-.87 (.13)		-.53 (.43)
Linguistic fractionalization		.54 (.33)		.59 (.39)
Religious fractionalization		-.55 (.28)		-.80 (.12)
<i>N</i>	70	70	70	70
<i>R</i> ²	.53	.55	.47	.49

Note Party polarization is constructed from variables in the WVS, see text. Fragmentation variables from Alesina, et al. (2003) Only observations with competitive legislative and executive elections (countries with the maximum scores on the DPI indices of legislative and executive elections) are considered. Results are robust to the inclusion of a year variable (not reported).

The table is also illuminating with respect to the broader issue of the conditions under which polarized political parties emerge. As we might expect, political polarization with respect to *economic* issues is not particularly sensitive to social polarization: none of the fragmentation measures is significant. Political polarization is also not sensitive to income inequality (not shown) nor income, somewhat more surprisingly. However, it is significantly influenced in all specifications by the size of a country, the fraction of the population that is rural, and the youth of a population. Clientelist appeals are more attractive or cheaper for parties to make when populations are more rural – the payoff to public goods is lower; when the geographic territory is larger – again, the payoff to public goods is lower; and when voters are younger, since youth is negatively associated with electoral participation. Polarization is also significantly greater in parliamentary systems. This is consistent with the notion that voters can risk their votes on extreme positions at lower cost in parliamentary systems.

When do programmatic parties emerge?

The first application of the DPI programmatic indicator is to assess the conditions under which programmatic parties emerge and persist. This is important for at least two reasons. First, for policy purposes, to the extent that programmatic parties are important for efficient, welfare-improving government decision making, one needs to know how to encourage them. Second, the same factors that give rise to programmatic parties may also influence, directly, government incentives regarding public policy. Understanding these effects is important if we are to sort through the independent effects of programmatic parties on public policy.

Table 3 explores the determinants of whether the main government and opposition parties are programmatic or not. The first three columns investigate the determinants of the

probability that only the main government party is programmatic. This approach allows us to investigate the effect of competitive pressures on the development of programmatic parties, and particularly the characteristics of the main opposition party. The second three columns ask more generally what determines whether parties are generally programmatic (that is, whether *both* the main government and main opposition parties are programmatic).

The three specifications in each set are logistic estimations of the respective programmatic variable. The first specification investigates the determinants of programmatic parties in a sample that includes countries for which there is no opposition party, or where the opposition party has a small fraction of the seats in the legislature. This regression evaluates whether the political advantages of disadvantages of a programmatic party are shared across political systems, including those in which the electoral threat to incumbents is minimal. The second specification, in contrast, retains only those country-years for which the sitting governments are competitively elected, based on the *DPI Indices of Legislative and Executive Competition*. The third specification is the same as the second, but controls for fixed effects, looking only at change within countries over time. Sample sizes are potentially over 5,000 observations, but drop considerably because of numerous countries in which there is no change in the dependent variable over time (for example, in advanced industrial democracies).

Each of the regressions controls for factors considered in the literature to be important for programmatic party development. First, we do not expect the *DPI* sources to record a party as programmatic if the party's connection to the program is ephemeral – if it loses no reputational capital nor experiences any other loss should it violate its program. As Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) argue, this is at the heart of credibility. To the extent that parties rely on reputations built up over time, party age gives an indication of the size of the

investment that parties stand to lose should they abandon their programmatic promises. To partially capture this reputational effect, the average ages of the main opposition and government political parties are controlled for in Table 3.³

The effects of party age are not only in the acquisition of reputation, but also in the construction of organizational structures that allow parties to discipline party members who deviate from the party line. For example, Strom (1990) argues that the existence of impermeable recruitment structures (such that high-ranking party officials come from within the party) and processes for leader accountability make parties more policy-oriented. These organizational developments certainly do not occur overnight. Consistent with this, Aldrich (1995) finds a positive and significant impact of the length of time of party organization on voter turnout across states in the US.

A credible party program does not inevitably emerge with the age of a party; parties could resist this evolution for many reasons. For example, charismatic party leaders might resist any development that allows the party and its members to enjoy a reputation with voters independent of the reputation of the leader. More generally, it is costly to develop a policy reputation with large numbers of voters and parties may prefer to forego these expenditures if they can. However, if a party is confronted with a competitor that can make credible promises to half the population, it will surely lose if it can make credible promises to only 10 percent of citizens.

The first set of regressions in Table 3 therefore control for competitive threats to parties that may stimulate them to develop or maintain a policy reputation. In particular,

³ Given this logic, one might expect older parties to do better electorally. In fact, there is strong evidence of this: the share of seats of the largest government party is significantly larger the younger is the largest opposition party. This result emerges controlling for whether systems are presidential or parliamentary, and for whether electoral systems are characterized by plurality or proportional representation systems and large or small district magnitudes. It holds whether one uses ordinary least squares on a panel from 1975 – 2004, or if one controls for fixed effects.

whether the main government party is programmatic is allowed to depend not only on the relative ages of the main opposition and government parties, but also on whether the main opposition party is programmatic. The potential sensitivity of programmatic parties to competition is easily illustrated. The main government party can be identified as right, left or center in 90 percent of the cases when the largest opposition party can, as well. The fraction drops to approximately 60 percent when the largest opposition party is not identified as programmatic.

Income and demographic factors might also influence the development of programmatic parties. As the earlier discussion reports, income, the percent of the population that is rural or young, and the size of a country might all influence incentives to pursue clientelist or programmatic appeals to voters.

Table 3 shows that the competitive environment and reputational factors have a significant influence on whether parties are programmatic. The age of the main government party is a significant predictor of whether it is programmatic, and the age of both the main opposition and government parties are significant predictors of whether both the main opposition and government parties are programmatic. This is true in a sample of all countries and of only those countries in which no party received more than 75 percent of the vote in legislative and executive elections, and is true as well when controlling for country fixed effects.

Except in the fixed effects regressions, the presence of a programmatic opposition party spurs the selection of more programmatic government parties. This effect is highly positive and significant, but the sign on the programmatic opposition coefficient switches to significantly negative in the fixed effects regression. The fixed effects result is likely to be spurious, however, since in 34 cases, a programmatic government party lost an election,

became a programmatic main opposition party, and was replaced by a non-programmatic government party; or a programmatic opposition party moved into the government and was replaced by a non-programmatic opposition party. In eight of these cases, the programmatic and non-programmatic parties simply switched places.

The results in the second and fifth specifications in Table 3 can be nearly replicated for non-democracies (not reported). The main government party is more likely to be programmatic when the opposition party is older and, though not significantly, when the opposition party is programmatic. Government and opposition parties are both more likely to be programmatic the older are each of them. These results indicate that even in uncompetitive democracies or non-democracies, pressure for the evolution of programmatic parties can exist.

Income per capita has a strong positive effect on the probability that parties will be programmatic, consistent with the thesis that clientelist transfers are more attractive to poorer citizens. However, after controlling for income, the percentage of population that is rural or young has no effect on programmatic parties in the non-fixed effects specifications. In the fixed effects specifications, they are significant and have an unexpected sign: programmatic parties are more likely the more rural and the younger are the population of a country. These, again, are likely to be spurious results, however, and seem to be driven by approximately 10 countries, the youngest and most rural in the sample.

Table 3: The determinants of programmatic parties (1975 – 2004)
(p-statistics in parentheses based on robust, clustered standard errors, logistic estimations)

Dependent variable:	Is the largest government party programmatic?			Are the largest government and opposition parties programmatic?		
	All country-years	Only competitively elected governments	Competitively elected, fixed effects	All country-years	Only competitively elected governments	Competitively elected, fixed effects
Age, main gov. party	.02 (.05)	.04 (.006)	.08 (.00)	.01 (.03)	.015 (.04)	.016 (.12)
Age, main oppos. party	.01 (.25)	-.01 (.18)	-.003 (.80)	.03 (.003)	.015 (.11)	.03 (.004)
Is main opp. party programmatic?	1.04 (.02)	1.13 (.04)	-2.35 (.00)			
GDP/capita	.13 (.07)	.18 (.01)	-.002 (.00)	.16 (.02)	.15 (.04)	.24 (.02)
Total land area	.09 (.92)	.03 (.31)		-.077 (.93)	.55 (.83)	
Total population	.013 (.81)	.03 (.25)	.16 (.71)	.0014 (.86)	.0004 (.97)	-.014 (.75)
Percent population rural	.02 (.14)	.013 (.40)	.44 (.00)	.01 (.40)	.008 (.64)	.24 (.00)
Percent population young	-.03 (.28)	-.04 (.25)	.35 (.01)	-.02 (.43)	-.03 (.32)	.27 (.00)
<i>p-value, likelihood ratio χ^2 test</i>	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
<i>N, countries</i>	2165, 136	1566, 108	404, 29	2165, 136	1566, 108	563, 38

Note: Estimates reported are log-odds (not odds ratios or probabilities). Constant not reported. Party variables from the *Database of Political Institutions* (see text). Other data from the *World Development Indicators*.

All countries in the estimations exhibited a decline in the youth and ruralness of their populations; these declines, however, were *smallest* for the youngest and most rural countries. On the other hand, although among all countries that experienced a switch between programmatic and non-programmatic countries, the switch was on average negative (away from programmatic parties), the average was much *greater* in absolute value for rural and demographically younger countries. Younger and more rural countries therefore experienced both a greater retreat from programmatic parties and a lower rate of decline in their youth and rural populations, leading to the association observed in columns 3 and 6 in Table 3.

The effects of historical factors on programmatic party development can also be examined, though with the smaller sample of countries whose history of competitive elections began after 1974 (since the first year of the DPI is 1975). To assess these effects, Table 4 presents estimates of the specifications in columns one, two, four and five in Table 3, modified in four ways.

First, each of the regressions in Table 4 controls for bureaucratic quality in the first year of democracy for democracies that began on or after 1984, the first year that Political Risk Services began assessing bureaucratic quality in its *International Country Risk Guide*. For democracies that began over the period 1975-1983, the 1984 value of bureaucratic quality is used. Second, Table 4 specifications control for the average of up to four dummy variables indicating whether the largest three government parties and the largest opposition party were programmatic at the time of the first competitive elections. Third, a control for the average age of all political parties at the beginning of democracy is controlled for. Since this is highly correlated with the age of the main government party, the age of the main government party

is suppressed in Table 4. Finally, initial income per capita is taken into account in Table 4, replacing current income per capita.

Table 4: Historical legacies and the determinants of programmatic parties (1975 – 2004)

(*p*-statistics in parentheses based on robust, clustered standard errors; logistic estimations)

Dependent variable:	Is the largest government party programmatic?		Are the largest government and opposition parties programmatic?	
	All country-years	Competitively elected governments	All country-years	Competitively elected governments
Initial average value, programmatic dummies for largest four parties in legislature after competitive elections first held	6.92 (.00)	6.6 (.00)	11.09 (.00)	10.86 (.00)
Initial average age, all parties in legislature after competitive elections first held	.06 (.01)	.06 (.01)	.05 (.04)	.05 (.03)
Age, main opposition party	-.05 (.002)	-.05 (.01)	-.02 (.18)	-.03 (.17)
Is main opp. party programmatic?	-1.82 (.31)	-1.60 (.35)		
Initial bureaucratic quality	-.66 (.06)	-.70 (.04)	-.48 (.07)	-.52 (.07)
Initial GDP/capita when competitive elections first held	.26 (.17)	.26 (.19)	.33 (.06)	.26 (.05)
Total land area	-.11 (.04)	.63 (.28)	-.61 (.10)	.25 (.50)
Total population	.067 (.18)	.047 (.37)	.012 (.07)	.003 (.80)
Percent population rural	.003 (.85)	.006 (.74)	-.005 (.81)	.0001 (.99)
Percent population young	-.06 (.26)	-.08 (.16)	-.14 (.01)	-.13 (.02)
<i>p</i> -value, likelihood ratio χ^2 test	.00	.00	.00	.00
<i>N</i> , number of countries	563, 57	548, 55	563, 57	548, 57

Consistent with the findings in Shefter (1994) and Kitschelt, et al. (1999), and the predictions in Keefer and Vlaicu (2005), the first two rows of Table 4 indicate that whether the main government and opposition parties are currently programmatic depends heavily on whether parties were programmatic and well-established when competitive elections were first held. The initial value of the indicator of whether parties were programmatic, averaged across the four largest parties, is large and positive, as is average party age.

In contrast to predictions in the literature, but consistent with the hypothesis advanced above, results in Table 4 indicate that initial bureaucratic quality is strongly *negatively* associated with programmatic party development. This finding is robust to other specifications, including the addition of continent dummies (which strengthens all of the coefficients). This is consistent with the argument that where bureaucratic quality is high, politicians have a more difficult time taking credit for the provision of high quality public goods. Citizens are more likely to credit earlier (non-democratic) politicians and the bureaucracy that these politicians bequeathed to competitively elected politicians, encouraging new politicians to pursue clientelist electoral strategies.

The importance of contemporary competitive pressures from opposition parties is collectively insignificant once one controls for the historical endowment of programmatic parties. In Table 4, whether the main opposition party is programmatic has an insignificant effect on whether the main government party is programmatic. The *age* of the main opposition party, insignificant or positive in Table 3, is negative in Table 4 and significantly *reduces* the probability that the main government party is programmatic. However, the net effect of average party and opposition age in Table 4 is essentially zero. A one year increase in the age of all parties has no net effect on the odds that the main government party will be programmatic. On the other hand, if the average of all parties' programmatic dummies at

the outset of democracy rises by one-fourth (the equivalent of one out of four parties turning programmatic), the odds that the main government party currently in power is programmatic rise by one-fourth.

The policy impact of programmatic parties policy

The key development questions associated with political parties is whether their characteristics influence political incentives to pursue targeted or non-targeted public policies, or more self-centered rent-seeking activities. One particular disincentive to pursue non-targeted public policies and to forego rent-seeking is the inability to make credible pre-electoral promises. Programmatic political parties directly address this problem, since they are defined by their capacity to convey a credible stance to voters regarding broad policies – economic policies in the case of the data here – that they intend to implement once in office.

Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) predict that the ability to make credible promises regarding non-targeted government policies leads politicians to pursue greater public or non-targeted good spending, less narrowly targeted spending, and discourages rent-seeking. Keefer (2005) finds strong evidence that the lack of credibility explains the policy performance of younger democracies – which precisely exhibit greater rent-seeking, lower public good provision and greater spending on targeted goods and services. Evidence below suggests that the presence of programmatic parties (specifically, whether both the main government and opposition parties are programmatic) results in similar policy outcomes.

Keefer (2005) identifies a series of policy variables that can be used to represent the preferences of governments with respect to targeted, non-targeted and rent-seeking policies. Similar to the policies in that work, therefore, the specifications in Table 5 below employ bureaucratic quality, the rule of law, (both from Political Risk Service's *International Country Risk Guide*) gross primary school enrollment and the market share of state-owned

newspapers (from Djankow, et al.) as proxies for political enthusiasm for non-targeted policies; public investment/GDP as a proxy for targeted spending; and the corruption indicator from Political Risk Services as an indicator of rent-seeking.

Table 5: The policy effects of programmatic parties (1975 – 2004)

(*p*-statistics in parentheses based on robust, clustered standard errors, OLS estimations)

Dependent Variable:	Corruption	Bureaucratic Quality	Rule of Law	Gross primary enrollment	Market share, state-owned newspapers (1998)	Public Investment/GDP
Gov. and opp. parties programmatic?	.44 (.003)	.44 (.003)	-.03 (.85)	9.78 (.001)	-.31 (.001)	-.01 (.06)
Income/capita (thousands of 2000 intern'l. dollars, <i>ppp</i> -adj.)	.08 (.00)	.11 (.000)	.08 (.000)	-.35 (.05)	-.035 (.30)	.55 (.98)
Total land area	.073 (.85)	-.03 (.92)	.015 (.96)	-.15 (.37)	.15 (.05)	-.05 (.02)
Total population	-.004 (.39)	.009 (.06)	.0008 (.80)	.02 (.56)	-.002 (.58)	.001 (.00)
Percent population rural	.003 (.46)	.0007 (.86)	.002 (.56)	-.15 (.11)	.003 (.05)	.0001 (.61)
Percent population young	-.013 (.21)	-.016 (.16)	-.05 (.000)	-.23 (.20)	.007 (.14)	.0008 (.29)
Education spending/GDP				1.22 (.05)		
R^2	.42	.55	.52	.20	.49	.12
<i>N</i> , countries	2437, 127	2440, 127	2440, 127	517, 155	94, 94	1774, 93

Note. Constant not reported. Party variables from the *Database of Political Institutions* (see text). Other data from the *World Development Indicators*

Bureaucratic quality and the rule of law are, by definition, non-targeted; to the extent that some in society benefit from responsive and efficient bureaucracy and protection from

government expropriation, but others, perhaps most, do not, both bureaucratic quality and rule of law are under-provided. Information is a public good; to the extent that government controls information, it is limiting this public good. The market share of state-owned newspapers is a plausible proxy for government restraints on the public's access to information. Public investment, despite its moniker, is a classic source of targeted spending; the term pork barrel has long characterized this type of spending for just this reason.

Government policy choice may vary simply because citizen demand differs across countries, rather than because of variation in the dynamics of political competition. To control for these variations, each of the regressions in Table 5 controls for demographic and geographic conditions that might affect citizen demand; these are more obviously appropriate in some cases (education and public investment) than others (bureaucratic quality), but are retained in all specifications for consistency. The school specification also includes a measure of government spending on education. Although high quality, universal primary schooling is a non-targeted good, government spending to provide education can either be targeted or non-targeted. Policy decisions regarding the quality of education, which are non-targeted, are difficult to observe. Keefer (2005) summarizes evidence from a number of countries showing that these managerial decisions have a significant influence on the quality of education. To allow the presence of programmatic parties to capture policy decisions affecting the quality of education, the primary enrollment regression includes a control for government spending on education, which captures targeted education policies.

Programmatic political parties have the expected effect on policy in all of the regressions except for rule of law. Although initial bureaucratic quality is negatively associated with the subsequent development of programmatic parties, programmatic parties have a significant *positive* effect on bureaucratic quality, as well as on the other non-targeted

goods primary school enrollment and freedom of information (the inverse of state control of newspapers). Corruption is significantly lower in the presence of programmatic parties as is targeted spending, on public investment. These results are supportive of the argument that programmatic political parties have a significant effect on government policy, and that this effect is related to the ability of political actors to make credible pre-electoral promises.

The specifications in Table 5 raise numerous questions. First, Tables 3 and 4 suggest that income per capita and the youth of the population are determinants of whether parties choose to become programmatic or not. To the extent that this is the case, the inclusion of these two variables spuriously reduces the significance of the programmatic variable in Table 5. As the penultimate row of Table 6 indicates, removing these two variables leads to a doubling of the estimated effect of programmatic parties on policy outcome. For example, the coefficient on public investment doubles from -0.1 to -0.2 and that on corruption from .44 to .95. The theoretical appropriateness of dropping these controls varies. In some cases, particularly primary education, both of these variables are well-established as direct determinants of the policy variable. However, in the case of primary education their removal has little effect on the programmatic coefficient. In other cases, such as corruption and public investment, where it is less clear that income and youth should be expected to have a direct effect on outcomes; their removal has a significant effect.

If one restricts attention to only country-year observations with competitive elections, the sample size drops considerably (more than a third), but results are little changed, as the first row in Table 6 indicates, except that public investment loses significance.

Table 6: Estimates of programmatic coefficient in alternative policy specifications
(p-statistics in parentheses based on robust, clustered standard errors, OLS estimations unless otherwise indicated)

Dependent Variable:	Corruption	Bureau-cratic Quality	Rule of Law	Gross primary enrollment	Market share, state-owned newspapers (1998)	Public Investment/GDP
Democracies only	.44 (.008)	.43 (.01)	-.006 (.97)	9.30 (.025)	-.24 (.04)	-.005 (.56)
Only new democracies (since 1975)	.34 (.02)	.28 (.09)	.02 (.92)	8.93 (.06)	-.22 (.07)	-.01 (.53)
Democracies only, controlling for ethnic fractional.; pres. or parl.; dist. magn.; and plurality or prop. rep.	.37 (.04)	.31 (.06)	.09 (.54)	6.5 (.06)	-.20 (.09)	-.002 (.88)
Only non-competitive or non-democracies	.16 (.48)	.33 (.16)	-.0009 (.99)	10.88 (.04)	-.35 (.05)	-.016 (.08)
Dropping pct. pop. young and income	.95 (.000)	1.12 (.000)	.69 (.000)	9.13 (.001)	-.42 (.000)	-.02 (.02)
Fixed effects, democracy sample	.43 (.00)	.53 (.00)	.39 (.00)	-.70 (.60)	N/A	.004 (.24)

Note. Specifications and samples based on those in Table 5, changed as indicated in leftmost column of Table 6. Party variables from the *Database of Political Institutions* (see text). Other data from the *World Development Indicators*.

Many researchers have pointed to the importance of political and electoral institutions as determinants (or correlates) of clientelist political strategies. However, controls for whether countries are presidential or parliamentary, whether they use plurality or proportional electoral rules, the size of their district magnitudes (all from the *DPI*), as well as

the extent of ethnic fragmentation, in the third row of Table 6, have little effect on the programmatic coefficients in the democracy sample. Finally, adding controls for fixed effects in the democratic sample, the results are quite similar to those in the first row, except that programmatic parties now have a significant effect on rule of law, but not on primary education. Moreover, after deleting income and the percent population young from the fixed effects specifications, programmatic parties have a significant negative effect on public investment and a significant positive effect on rule of law.

The question remaining with regard to the results in Tables 5 and 6 is whether endogeneity bias drives the results. To answer this question, one requires variables that are correlated with programmatic parties but not with the error term in the specifications in the tables. Whether parties were programmatic when competitive elections were first held is one such variable, as is ethnic fractionalization. Although these are valid instruments, the results in Tables 5 and 6 cannot be replicated when using them to instrument for current values of the programmatic variable. This leaves open the possibility that the results in the tables are indeed spurious, despite their robustness to the inclusion of many variables that one might believe would capture relevant omitted effects. A more plausible explanation, however, particularly in view of the significance of the fixed effects regressions, is that time-varying instruments are required that reflect change over time in the programmatic variable. This is not a new problem – all of the most commonly used instruments for institutional and political variables in the literature are time-invariant, ranging from settler mortality to legal origin to colonial heritage.

Taken these results together, therefore, it is compelling to conclude that programmatic parties have a significant effect on public policy. The reason that programmatic parties have these effects is less clear. On the one hand, the pattern of effects

is most consistent with the credibility hypothesis proposed by Keefer and Vlaicu (2005): programmatic parties allow political competitors to make credible political promises to a large fraction of the electorate, leading politicians to pursue more non-targeted policies, fewer targeted policies and less rent-seeking. However, the results associating programmatic parties and targeted policies are the least robust in Tables 5 and 6. The negative effect of programmatic parties on public investment is not as robust as the other results, and has no negative effect at all on public sector wages as a fraction of national income, an additional measure of targeted policy used in Keefer (2005). The evidence is thus consistent as well with the possibility that programmatic parties mitigate incomplete voter information.

Conclusion

Clientelist public policies are precisely those that emerge from government decision making in many developing countries. Understanding the when programmatic political parties emerge and assessing whether they have significant effects on public policy are therefore at the center of the political economy of development. The analysis here makes three contributions to this line of inquiry. First, it introduces a new indicator of programmatic parties that is available for a large number of countries and years. Second, it shows that the programmatic parties are more likely to emerge in richer countries, consistent with the literature. It is *less* likely in countries that inherit a high quality bureaucracy, in contrast to the literature but consistent with the hypothesis proposed here that newly-elected politicians cannot easily take credit for high quality public good provision to the extent that voters might attribute good outcomes to the bureaucracy rather than the politicians. However, across a large number of countries, the evidence here confirms the claims in Shefter (1994), Kitschelt et al. (1999) and Keefer and Vlaicu (2005) that a historical legacy of

programmatic parties is the biggest distinguishing feature between countries that currently exhibit programmatic parties and those that do not.

Finally, the evidence presented here suggests that programmatic parties do, indeed, have significant effects on public policy, a phenomenon not previously documented. Governments provide more public goods, are less inclined to engage in rent-seeking or corruption in the presence of programmatic parties and, though somewhat less robustly, undertake less targeted spending. Why programmatic parties have these effects remains a topic for further research. The evidence here is supportive, though not conclusively, of the hypothesis that programmatic parties allow political competitors to make credible pre-electoral promises to citizens.

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