



PARTY SYSTEM IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

A THEMATIC REPORT BASED ON DATA 1900-2012

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About V-Dem

Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is a new approach to conceptualization and measurement of democracy. It is a collaboration between some 50+ scholars across the world hosted by the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, USA.

With four Principal Investigators (PIs), three Project Coordinators (PCs), fifteen Project Managers (PMs) with special responsibility for issue areas, more than thirty Regional Managers (RMs), almost 200 Country Coordinators (CCs), a set of Research Assistants (RAs), and approximately 3,000 Country Experts (CEs), the V-Dem project is one of the largest ever social science research-oriented data collection programs.

V-Dem is collecting data on 329 indicators of various aspects democracy tied to the core of electoral democracy as well as six varying properties: liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative and egalitarian dimensions of democracy.

A pilot study in 2011 tested the preliminary set of indicators and the data collection interfaces and procedures. Twelve countries from six regions of the world were covered, generating 462,000 data points. In the main phase, all countries of the world will be covered from 1900 to the present, generating some 22 million data across the 329 indicators, as well as several indices of varying forms of democracy.

The resulting database will be the largest of its kind, and make possible both highly detailed, nuanced analysis of virtually all aspects of democracy in a country, and quick, summary comparisons between countries based on aggregated indices for at least seven varieties of democracy.

The data will be downloadable from a public V-Dem website as a public good some time in 2015. Users from anywhere will also be able to use sophisticated but intuitive and accessible online analysis tools. Students and media across the world will benefit from the nuanced comparative and historical data. Governments, development agencies, and NGOs will be able to make much better informed decisions, and even go back in time to re-evaluate aid efforts.

V-Dem is funded by (in order of magnitude): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Sweden, the European Commission/EuroAID, the Swedish Research Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Denmark, the Danish Research Council, the Canadian International Development Agency, NORAD/the Norwegian Research Council, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, and the Quality of Government Institute.

For further details and information, see <http://v-dem.net>.

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Note

All the figures in the report cover eight countries in South and Southeast Asia, including Afghanistan (1900-2012), Bangladesh (1971-2012), Bhutan (1900-2012), India (1900-2012), Nepal (1947-2012), Pakistan (1947-2012), the Philippines (1901-2012), and Thailand (1900-2012).¹ Section 1 includes figures showing the development of party systems in the whole region based on both the aggregate measure and individual indicators. Section 2 includes a figure displaying how the aggregate measure of party system changes over time in the eight countries. Sections 3 to 11 include figures on the patterns of individual indicators in the eight countries. Scores in all of the figures are the standardized values.

¹ Sri Lanka was also expected to be covered in the report. However, the data collection for Sri Lanka has not been finished.

Executive Summary

- Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) is particularly useful for helping researchers locate specific times of changes in components of democracy like the media, and track where changes originate in terms of specific indicators.
- Party systems in South and Southeast Asia have generally become “more democratic” over the 1900-2012 period, and most notably so over the last three decades. However, there is significant variation across countries and across the different indicators used to gauge the party system component..
- Areas in party system that are now lagging behind others are 1) Party Linkages (the degree to which parties used clientelistic appeals), 2) The degree to which parties at the national level have permanent organizations, 3) the number of parties that have local party branches.
- Countries where the party system component is faring less well than in other nations (until recently) are: Bhutan and Afghanistan. These two countries exhibit low levels of our party system measure, but have recently shown considerable improvement.
- Detailed analysis of indicators reveals that:
 - The number of parties that have permanent institutions at the national level is an area in need of attention in the region (though to a lesser degree in India and Pakistan).
 - Development of local party branches is an area in need of attention, especially in Bangladesh, Philippines, and Thailand.
 - Party Linkages seem to be an issue in need of attention, especially in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.
 - Distinctiveness of party platforms is an area in need of attention, specifically in Bangladesh and Philippines.
 - All countries experience a higher degree of party switching recently than in the past. Though this might be problematic, it is likely a result of the increasing vibrancy of the party system overall relative to the distant past.

1. Introduction

The 'third wave' of democratization resulted in an outburst of observers voicing hopes for a 'second liberation' in South and Southeast Asia. These soon turned into sour commentaries on the lack of 'real' change. The picture today is mixed. Some countries move ahead and become freer, while others do not. The goal of this report is to review these political dynamics, using the unique data gathered by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project and the measurement techniques developed by V-Dem.

The Varieties of Democracy project adds to the extant measurement of democracy in four ways. First, V-Dem seeks to provide data regarding various facets democracy extending back to 1900. Second, V-Dem's measurement and coding procedures are transparent and open for scrutiny. Specifically, the project provides individual democratic indicators data, as reported by expert coders, as well as the expert's estimates of confidence. In addition, V-Dem is explicit about the aggregation rules it uses. Finally, unlike Freedom House and Polity, which provide narrow conceptualizations of democracy, V-Dem will provide aggregate scores for seven core principles of democracy, emphasizing distinct values.

The party system is an essential component of democracy. This report therefore focuses on political parties and the institutionalization of the party system in eight countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, from 1900 to the end of 2012. The analysis conducted tracks the dynamics of party system institutionalization, as well as other facets of party politics in these countries.

It is important to note that the countries of the region exhibit significant variation in terms of their institutional and cultural characteristic: first, some countries are unitary and some federal in their structure (for example India and Pakistan). Second some are republics and some are constitutional monarchies (such as Thailand, Bhutan). The countries also vary in their electoral systems and the structure of their parliaments. Fourth, some are secular and some are officially religious (Afghanistan). Finally, most of the countries in the region have are characterized by deep social divides across ethnic and religious lines.

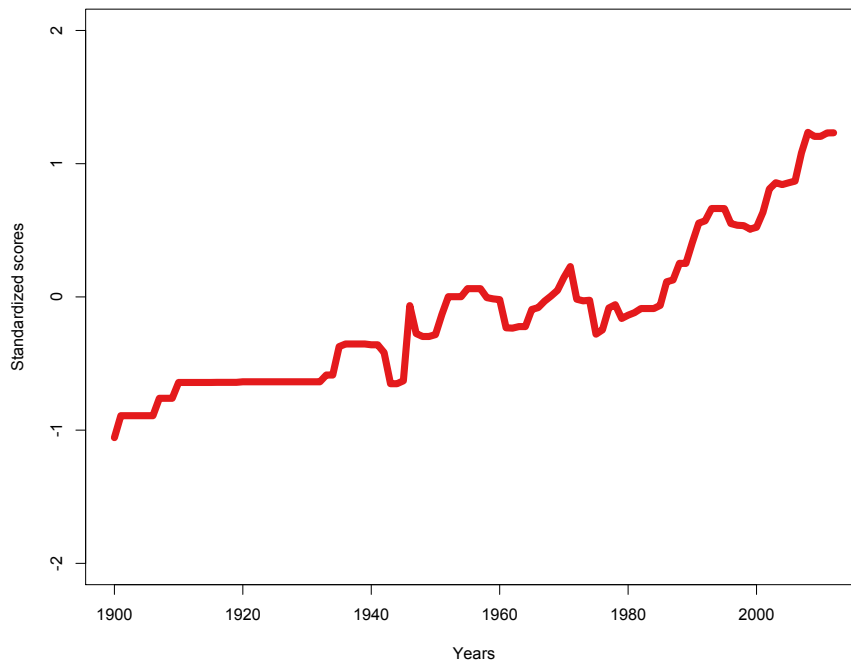
In terms of general patterns of party formation, in many countries external influence played an important role in the establishment of parties – like the case of United Communist Part of Nepal (Maoist), whereas in many others parties came to be as the result of internal developments. During the Cold War, however, external powers played a greater role, as was the case with pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions of National Awamy Party and leftist National Socialist Party in Bangladesh. Regional rivalries and national liberation issues also played a significant role in the formation of parties. For example, the rivalries between India, China, and Pakistan were pivotal to the party politics of countries in South Asia. Nationalism was important to the formation of the Indian National Congress (India), and the Awamy League (Bangladesh)

In terms of changes over time, while some countries have had the same major parties throughout the entire period, e.g., India, Pakistan, others have experienced the emergence of different parties in different times. While Bhutan serves as an example for a very restrictive party system history, since it had almost no party experience until 2008. Other countries in the region have experienced a long period of lively and contentious party politics, with established rivalries between major parties – as with Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Awami League, and the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party in India. The case of Afghanistan represents the middle ground between the vibrancy of party politics in India and Bangladesh (after 1972) and the restrictiveness of Bhutan, with elections occurring sporadically during the period, and parties banned for lengthy periods.

2. The Development of Party System Institutionalization in South and Southeast Asia

Figure 1 shows the changes in levels of party system development over time. This overall measure of party system is aggregated across nine indicators, including whether parties are banned, whether it is restrictive to form a party, whether opposition parties are independent, whether parties have distinct platforms, whether parties have national and local level offices, whether legislators of the same party vote cohesively, whether parties rely on public policies rather than clientelistic goods to attract votes, and whether legislators tend to switch between parties.

Figure 1. An Aggregate Measure of Party Systems in South and Southeast Asia



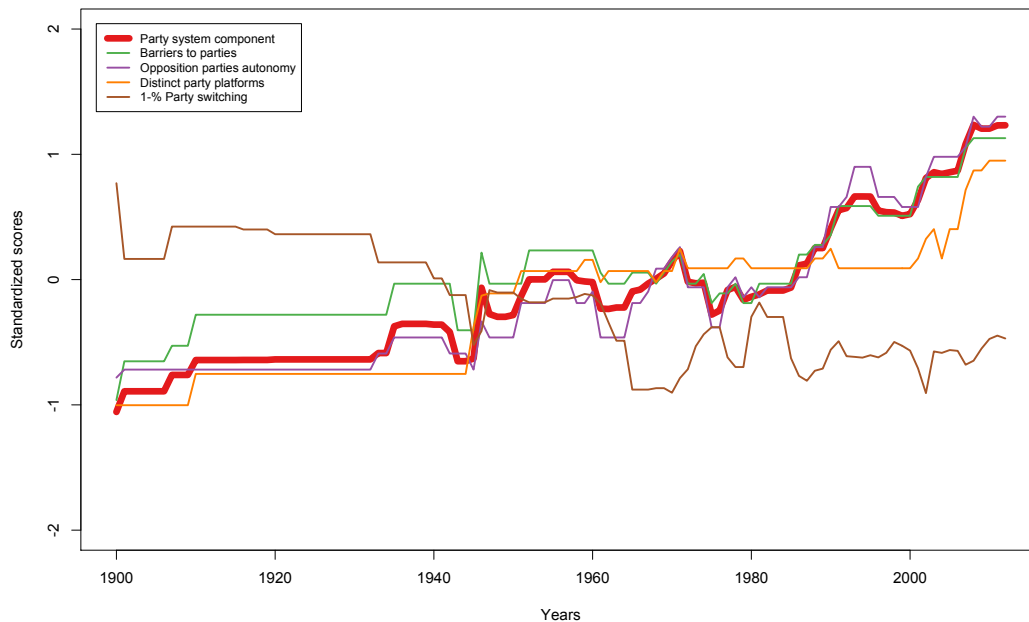
Higher values of the indicators mean fewer restrictions and more autonomy, clearer party platforms and less reliance on clientelism, higher levels of voting cohesion and less party switching. The Scores in Figure 1 (as well as in the following Figure 2A and Figure 2B) are averages of the eight countries.² Figure 1 suggests that overall, the democratic qualities of the party systems in South and Southeast Asia have largely developed. The improvement since the 1980s is particularly significant.

However, the aggregated index of party system institutionalization in the region hides important differences in variation both between different individual indicators used to aggregate the overall index, and in terms of cross-country variation. Below, we analyze these two aspects. This analysis highlights the ability of analysts to “drill down” using the V-Dem data, and reveal the nuanced factors underlying the dynamics of party system in particular, and that of democratic dynamics in general.

The “More Democratic” Areas

We start with analyzing the indicators included in the index discussed above. Note that in this section We are still using regional averages, but we disaggregate the overall party system measure into its components.

Figure 2A. The “More Democratic” Indicators of Party Systems in South and Southeast Asia



² It has to be noted that the time coverage of the data varies by countries. The scores between 1901 and 1946 are the averages of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Philippines, and Thailand; those between 1947 and 1970 are the averages of the five countries plus Nepal and Pakistan; and those after 1971 are the averages of all eight countries.

It is important to note that while specific indicators might be measured across different scales, in this presentation we standardized the indicators, and thus we are able to directly compare their levels.

In order to ease interpretation, Figure 2A contains both the overall index (the thicker red line) as well as a first set of four indicators included in the index-average. This set of indicators is “more democratic”. By this we simply mean that these indicators exhibited higher average scores (across the 1900-2012 period), relative to the other indicators of interest.

Figure 2A suggests that most of the “more democratic” indicators follow the similar pattern to the aggregate measure. *Barriers to form political parties*, which is picking up governmental regulations and intimidation preventing opposition parties from forming (thin green line), are gradually being reduced (the line goes up indicating “more democratic”). This is also an area that relatively speaking, was more “free” in the first half of the 20th century than many others as indicated by its position above the thicker red line for the overall index; *opposition parties autonomy* from the government and other influences (thin purple line) is also steadily increasing over the period; and *parties’ party platforms* containing the core messages of their programs and/or ideology (thin orange line) is gradually but continuously becoming more distinct. The improvements are particularly significant in the post-Cold War period from 1990 onwards.

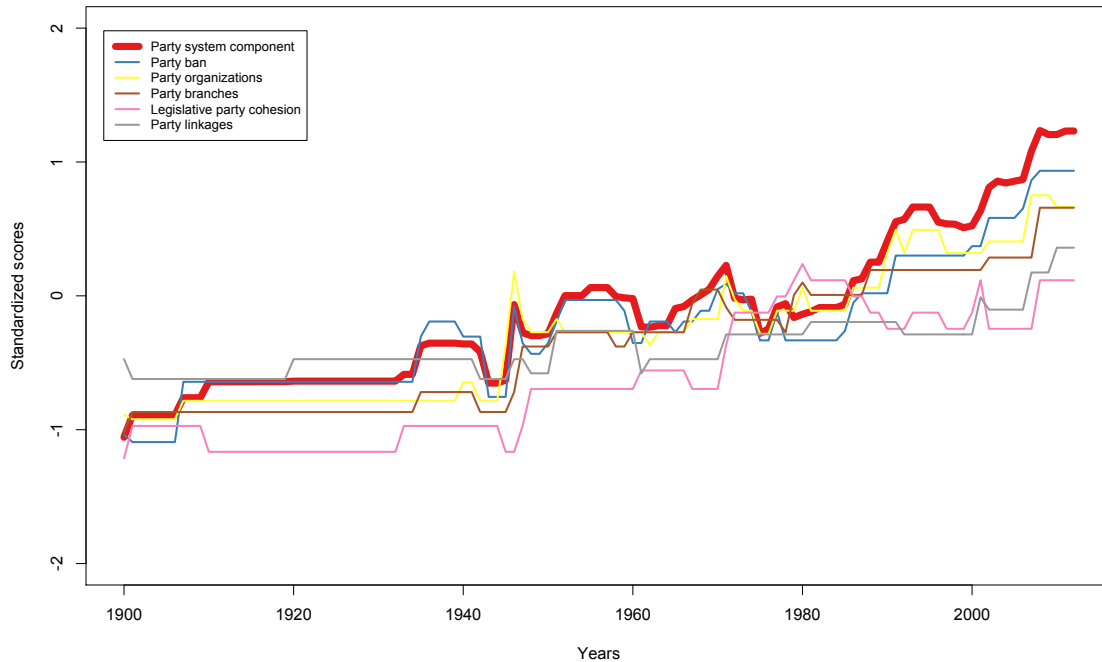
The *party switching* indicator, measuring how frequent representatives of political parties in legislatures switch party between elections (thin brown line), is a clear exception. The levels of party switching have gradually increased over the past century. This is indicated (perhaps counter-intuitively) by the brown line moving south-east in the graph. The theory behind this reversed indicator is that party switching between elections is a negative for democratic choice. If party representatives switch parties often between elections, it is difficult for citizens to know which option they are voting for at elections and thus diminishes the people’s sovereignty that is at the heart of democracy.

The “Less Democratic” Areas

Figure 2B presents the five “least democratic” indicators, on average, during the entire period while the thicker red line is kept in the graph as a reminder and point of comparison to the overall democratic qualities of the party systems in South and Southeast Asia.

The figure suggests that most of the “less democratic” indicators also follow the pattern to the aggregate measure. These indicators show on areas of party systems in these eight countries that are lagging behind.

Figure 2B. The “Less Democratic” Indicators of Party Systems in South and Southeast Asia, on Average over the Period



There has been a steady improvement across most indicators since the start of the times series in 1900, but from the 1980s most indicators have improved more dramatically. However, parties still tend to rely on clientelism to attract votes to a large extent as indicated by the flatter development of the *party linkages* indicator (thin green line). In addition, while there has been a steady improvement, many parties in South and Southeast Asia lack permanent organizations at either local or national level according to the *party branches* indicator (thin brown line).

The indicator of *party bans* (thin blue line) fit the aggregate measure well but while it has improved over time, it indicates a less “democratic” an environment than the overall index. In other words, there is still some level of significant formal restrictions on establishment of political parties in the region.

During the entire period, the levels of *legislative party cohesion* (thin pink line) are lower than the aggregate scores and this is also an indicator for which the last 10 to 15 years does not show as much of a positive development as most the others do. In other words, parties tend to remain somewhat fragmented and behave in incoherent ways making it harder for citizens to exercise their democratic right of choice in elections when the alternatives are not that clear. It should perhaps not come as a surprise when we have already seen the evidence of increasing party switching in Figure 2A, since these two indicators are measures of a similar latent issue.

Thus, the overall development of the “democraticness” of party systems in South and Southeast Asia can be portrayed. Naturally, this averaging of democratic qualities merges information from all the eight countries. In the following sections, the patterns of individual

countries driving the average scores are analyzed in order to provide an even richer and more detailed account.

3. General Development Across Individual Countries

Figure 3 shows the aggregate measure of party system in the eight countries. The figure suggests that in the 2010s, there have been substantial improvements in party systems in all these countries (at least one standard deviation higher than the global mean).

The patterns of development vary across countries. India has the most developed party system in the region. Except for the downturn in 1975 and 76, Bangladesh also maintains higher scores.

Party systems in Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines experienced larger fluctuations, but they have improved significantly since the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The development in Thailand is more gradual and continuous. The party systems in Afghanistan and Bhutan, were rated low for nearly the entire 20th century, but have also improved to a great extent in the 2000s.

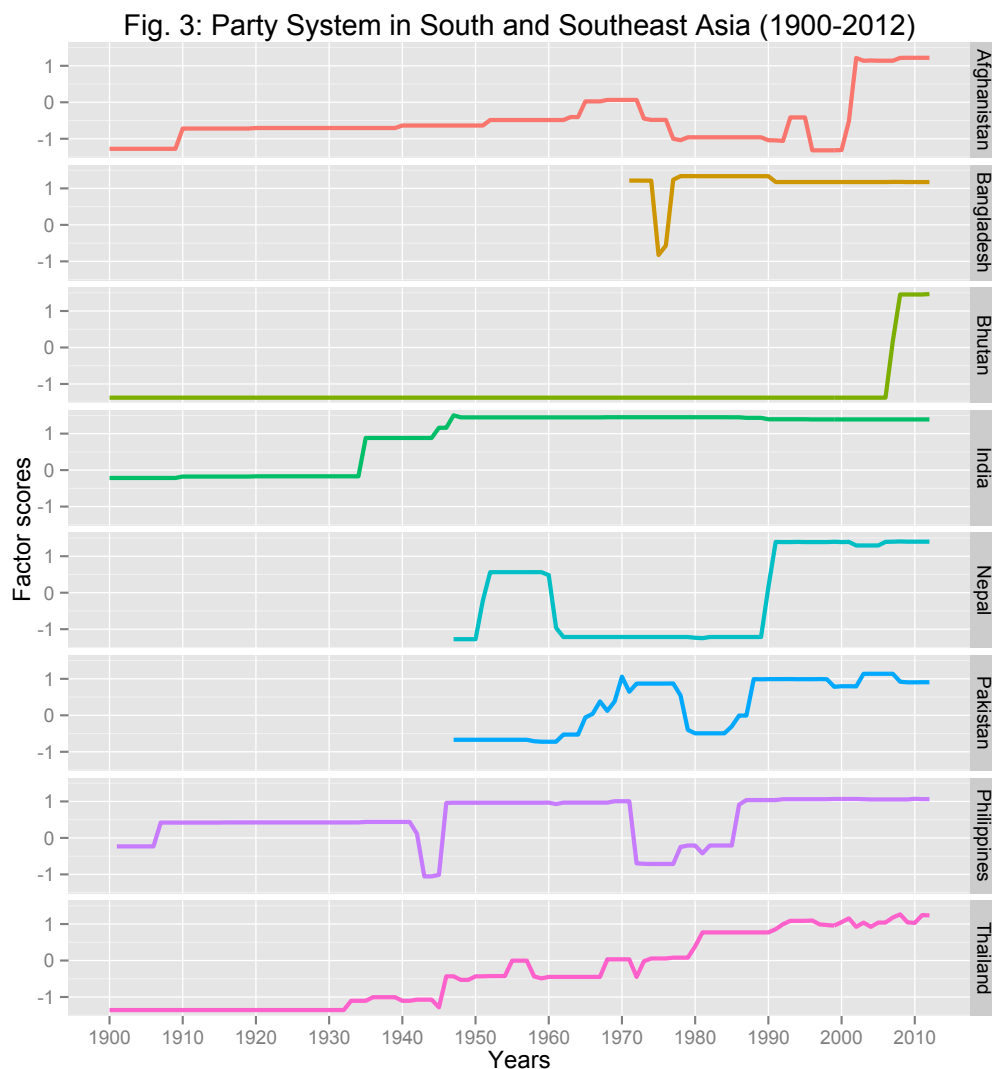
Each country's party system evolved differently. In Afghanistan throughout most of the twentieth century there is a steady increase in the aggregate measure, reaching peak in early 70s, but it drops by the end of the first half of the decade with coups, the ensuing civil war and the Soviet invasion. There was a short upward increase in 1992 with the fall of the soviet supported Najibullah's government and Afghan parties agreeing on peace and power sharing, but the country relapsed into civil war and the aggregate measure only goes up again after the defeat of Taliban's government.

A quick and deep drop follows the high starting position of the Bangladesh's political party system after emergence of this country in 1972 and first elections held in 1973 after the military coup. It goes up again after restoring elections in 1978 and throughout the 80s, with some decrease in the early 90s after the establishment of the caretaker government

In Bhutan, unlike other countries, the aggregate measure does not show many nuances in development, being at a very low level until the second half of 90s when significant political reforms were introduced and the king relinquished most of his powers. In Nepal the quick upsurge of the aggregate score happens in the 50s, this corresponds to the end of the Rana domination in the kingdom, and to the formation of a new government, comprising mostly of the Nepalese Congress Party. Almost three decade of a decrease in the aggregate score follow. This corresponds to the conflict between the king and the government, and the system without parties that was introduced in the end of 50s – the Panchayat – which lasted until the end of 80s. At this time the king was forced to introduce constitutional reforms that brought the aggregate score to the highest position throughout the entire period.

India, as the most democratic country in the region, has a steady uninterrupted increase of its aggregate score throughout the century. Two notable upsurges came in the mid 30s when some legislative reforms were introduced by the British and the Indian National Congress won the local elections of that time, and in the second half of 40s, after gaining independence from Britain.

Compared to other countries, Pakistan's path has been less steady throughout the. There was a growth in the 60s after the country adopted its new constitution in 1962. The aggregate score reached its peak in 1970 when Pakistan had its first democratic elections marking transition from military rule. The score went down in 1977 with the military coup and remained low during when the military of Zia ul-Haq up to 1988.



An extended period of party system development disturbed by brief periods of underdevelopment can be noted in the Philippines. This can be contrasted with the steady

incremental evolution of the party system in Thailand. The difference in the trajectory of party system development between the two countries can largely be attributed to historical path dependency. The Western-style party system was directly implanted by the Americans during their early colonization of the Philippines in the 1900s.³ On the other hand, Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that has never experienced colonization from the Western powers. Thus, Thailand didn't adopt Western institutions until 1932 when the military overthrew the "absolute monarchy" and replaced it with a "constitutional monarchy".⁴ While the Philippines' electoral and party politics were interrupted by two periods of democratic breakdowns (the Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 and the Marcos dictatorship from 1972 to 1986); Thailand, on the other hand has experienced 17 coups d'état interspersed with brief periods of party development (the so-called "democratic era" from 1974 to 1976 and "re-democratization" from 1992 to 2006). The extended periods of positive scores for party development correspond to three periods of party systems in the Philippines: a dominant one party system during the American colonial period (1900-1942); a two-party system during the postwar Republic (1947 to 1972); and the post-authoritarian multiparty system (1987 to present).⁵ In Thailand, political party development can be divided into three stages in terms of party organization: military and bureaucratic control of political parties (1946-1988); an era of rural capitalists and network politicians (1988-2000); and business conglomerate control over political parties (2001-present).⁶

4. Disaggregating Select Indicators Across the Eight Countries

Thus far we analyzed the overall temporal variation in the party system index, both regionally, and within specific countries. In the next sections we compare within-country variation in specific party system indicators.

Party Ban

Figure 4 displays the extent to which parties are banned in the eight countries. Similar to the patterns of the aggregate measure, in the 2010s, no parties are officially banned in these countries. Compared to figure 3, the most significant discrepancy with the aggregate measure is in the Philippines during the 1970s and the early 1980s, when the indicator scores were low, due to restrictions that were placed on the formation of several parties. This was largely due to

³ Julio Teehankee, "Electoral Politics in the Philippines", in Croissant, A., Bruns, G., & John, M. (Eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast & East Asia* (Singapore: Freidrich Ebert Stiftung, 2002), pp. 149-152.

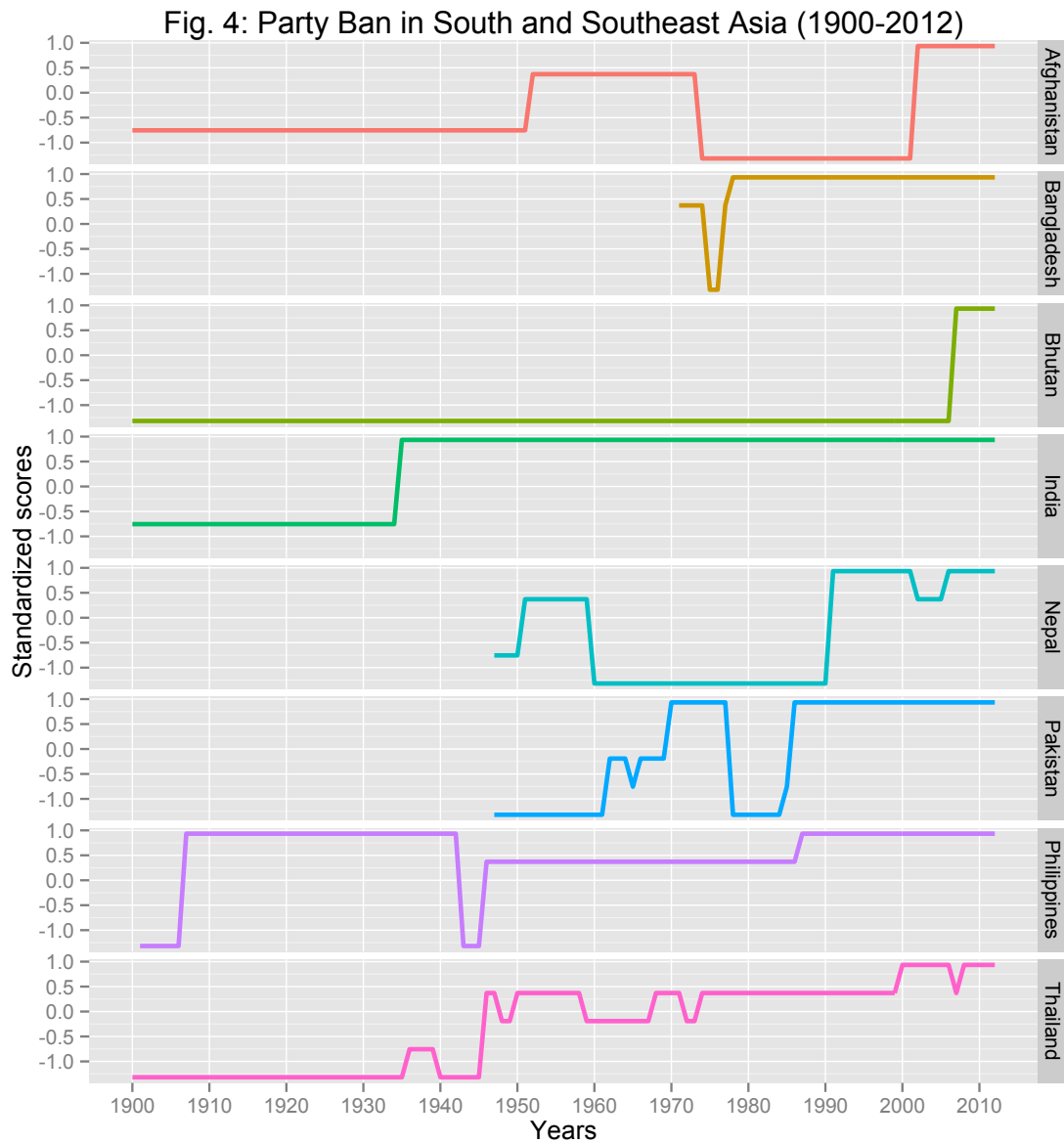
⁴ Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee, "Thailand", in Inoguchi, T. & Blondel, J. (Eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy: Contemporary Western Europe and Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 143.

⁵ Julio Teehankee, "Philippines", in Inoguchi, T. & Blondel, J. (Eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy: Contemporary Western Europe and Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 187-188.

⁶ Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee, *Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform* (Bangkok: Institute of Public Policy Studies, 2006), pp. 20-36.

the authoritarian regime of President Ferdinand Marcos who placed strict restrictions on the opposition, including the second oldest political party in the Philippines – the Liberal Party. In Afghanistan, the scores for this individual indicator from the 1950s till the early 1970s were also significantly higher than the aggregate measure. Both the Philippines and Thailand have banned communist parties during the height of the Cold War. A recent development in Thailand since 2007 is the dissolution of several political parties by the Constitutional Court for alleged election law violations. These include the Thai Rak Thai Party in 2007, and the People's Power Party, Thai Nation Party, and the Neutral Democratic Party in 2008. All these banned parties were affiliated with ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.⁷

⁷ Sawasdee, 2012, pp. 144-146.



In Afghanistan the party ban indicator went up starting from The ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. In Afghanistan, the party ban indicator started increasing from the early 50s, due to the reforms started by Zahir Shah, who introduced a new constitution in 1964. The high level of the party ban indicator decreased in 1973 after the coup that deposed Zahir Shah. The score goes up again in the early 2000s when Loya Jirga adopted a new constitution establishing an Islamic republic.

In Bangladesh, the only decrease on this indicator happens in 1975 due to several military uprisings and the declared state of emergency. The score goes up again in 1977 when new president Ziaur Rahman reintroduced the multi-party system and founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Afterwards the indicator uninterruptedly continues at high level till the end of

the period. In Bhutan, the only change on this indicator happens in 2008 with further transition towards constitutional monarchy and the first general elections held with participation of political parties.

India's party ban indicator improves radically once in 1935 with the adoption by the British of the Government of India Act that enabled local Indian politicians to participate in local elections. Subsequently, the Indian National Congress won in the 1937 provincial elections in eight of the eleven provinces.

Nepal's score improves from the early 50s with the termination of Rana autocracy. This improvement lasts a decade until king Mahendra dismantled the democratic experiment, as a result of a conflict with the government. The king dissolved the parliament and introduced the Panchayat system without parties. Importantly, since the abandonment of the Panchayat system in 1990 the scores of this indicator go back up again.

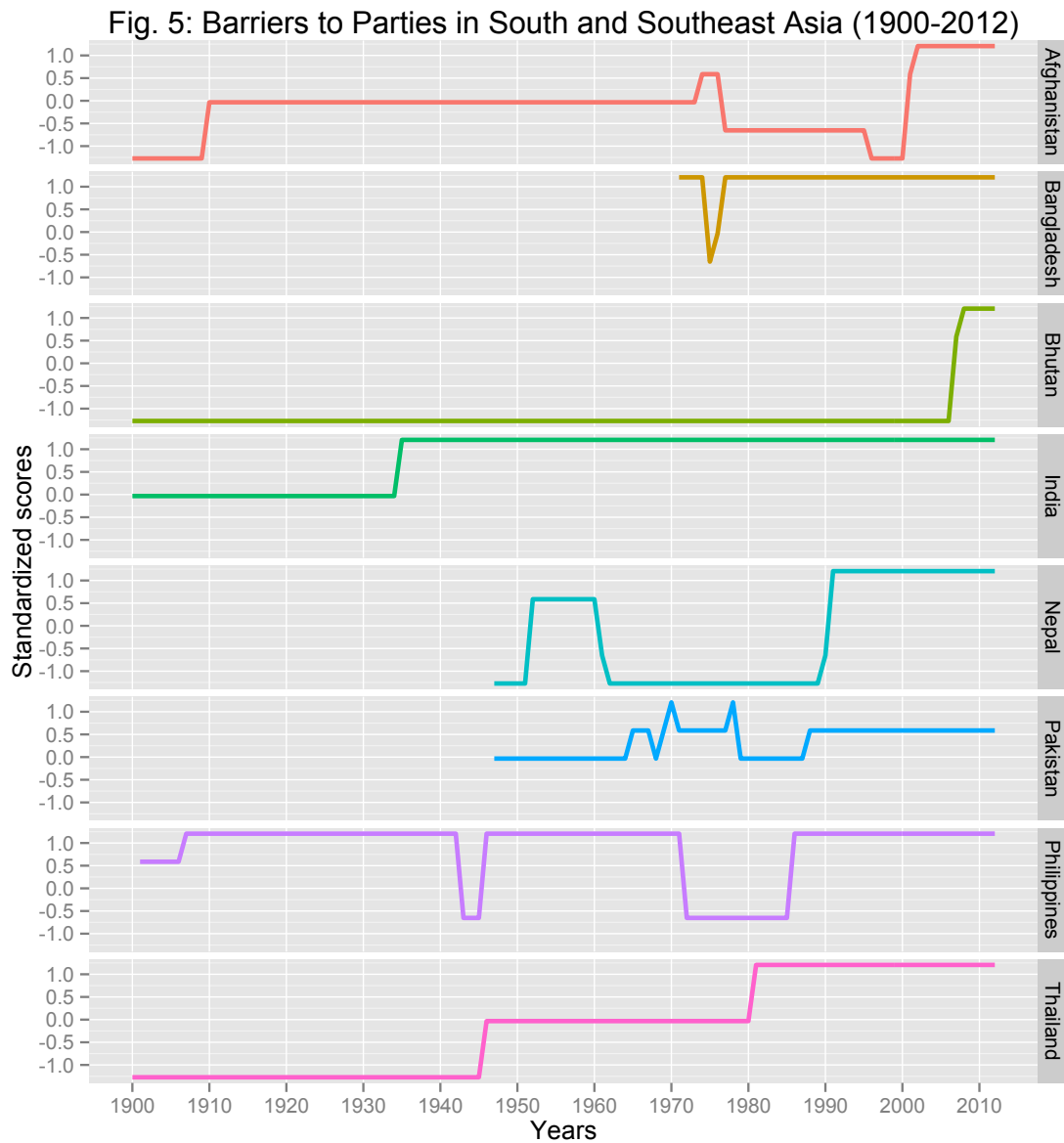
In Pakistan the scores increase continuously since martial law was lifted in 1962 until 1970, when the first democratic elections were held. This trend is punctuated by a short decrease in the mid-60s. It then stays at a high level up to the military coup of 1977. At this point, it drops abruptly to its lowest point. The levels of the indicator increase again in 1985, when the restrictions on political parties' activities were lifted.

There is a high degree of variation in the levels of the party ban indicator among countries over the observed period. However, all countries experience an improvement in the levels of this indicator towards the end of the period. In addition, downturns in the levels of this indicator are largely associated with internal political upheavals such as military coups. Some countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal experienced deep and long lasting drops on this indicator. In some countries, such as India, Bangladesh and Bhutan, changes in the levels of the party ban indicator occur once or twice throughout the period, while others have a more turbulent path, such as Pakistan and Thailand.

Barriers to Parties

Figure 5 displays how restrictive the barriers to forming a party were in the eight countries. In the 2000s, there are no substantial barriers in any of these countries. Compared to figure 3, in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand, the changes in this indicator seem to drive the improvement of the aggregate measure. Barriers to parties were quite restrictive during intense nondemocratic periods in the Philippines and Thailand. In the former, quite a number of formal and non-formal strategies were utilized by the Marcos dictatorship to limit the organization of opposition parties. In Thailand, the military and bureaucratic elites effectively controlled political parties from 1946 until the 1980s.⁸

⁸ Orathai Kokpol, "Electoral Politics in the Thailand", in Croissant, A., Bruns, G., & John, M. (Eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast & East Asia* (Singapore: Freidrich Ebert Stiftung, 2002), pp. 277-279.



In Afghanistan the indicator on barriers to parties follows patterns of the party ban indicator except for a few nuances in the 70s. Then after the short lived improvement in the middle of the decade, the indicator radically drops at the end of the decade and then drops to its lowest in the mid 90s. This corresponds to the Taliban coming to power, and introducing harsh barriers on political parties. These limitations to party formation lasted until a new government comes to power in the early 2000s. At this point in time, the indicator moves to the highest level of the entire period.

In Bangladesh the pattern of the barriers to parties indicator is similar to that of the party ban indicator. It almost exactly follows the timing and the degree of change occurring during the state of emergency following the 1975 military uprisings. Similarly, changes in the levels of this indicator echo the trends in the levels of party ban indicator for Bhutan and Nepal. The pattern in India is also similar, although until the 1937 provincial elections, the score was not as low as was the party ban.

In Pakistan, levels of the indicator go up at the time of the 1970 election. After a brief decline, they increase at the time of 1977 election. After this, the score declines and remains low until the late 1980s, but does not return to the high level it had in the 1970s.

In conclusion, unlike the case of the party ban indicator, not all countries improve their scores towards the end of the period. The outlier country is Pakistan, which has not reached its highest positions it had for a short while in the 70s.

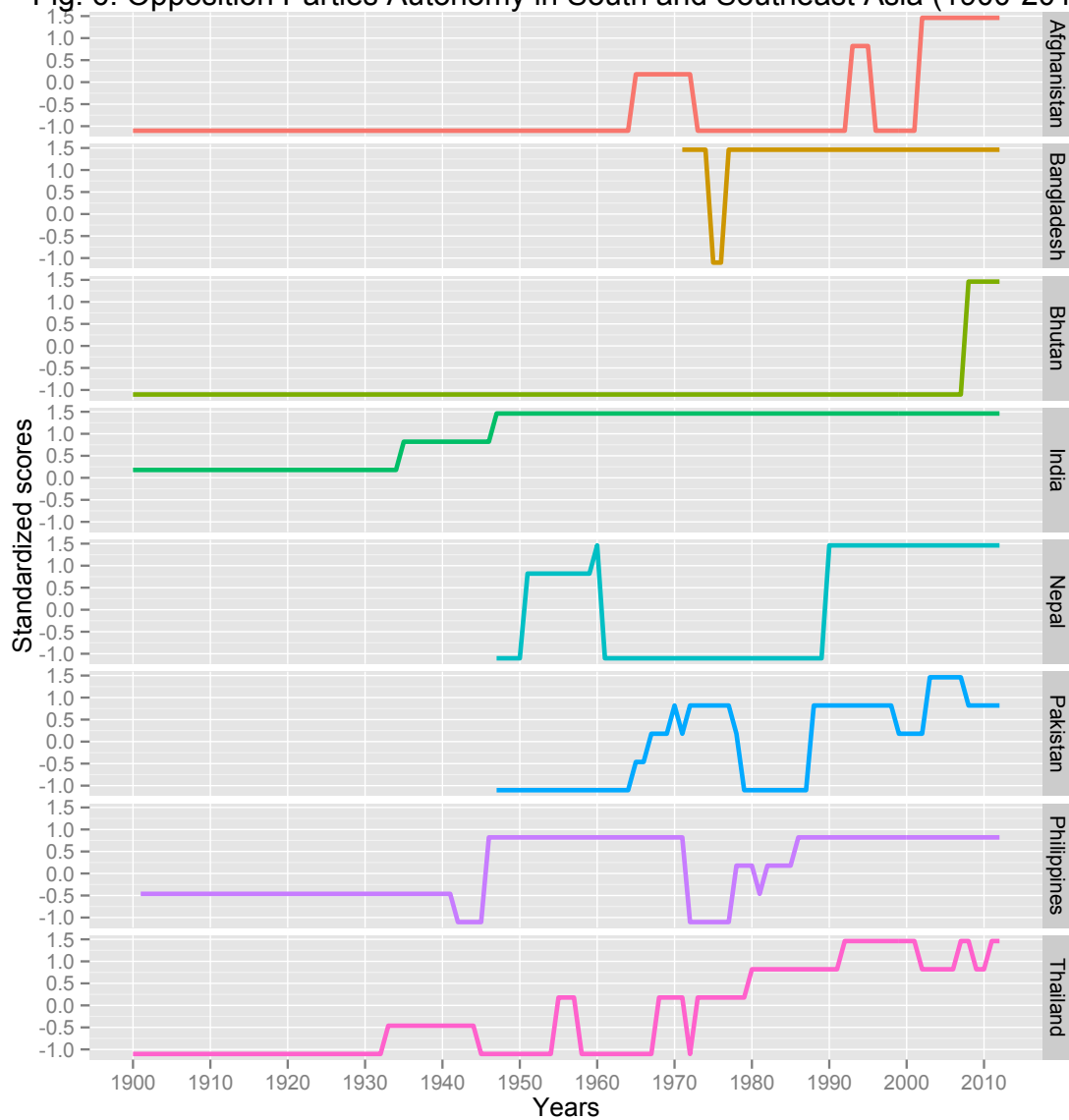
Opposition Parties Autonomy

Figure 6 shows the extent to which opposition parties are independent and autonomous of the ruling parties in the eight countries. Similar to the trends observed thus far, in these countries, most opposition parties have been independent from the ruling regime since the 2000s. In addition, in most countries the patterns of this indicator are consistent with the aggregate measure. In Afghanistan, the increase in the indicator levels in 1993-1995 are responsible for the upward trend in the level of the aggregate measure. In the Philippines, before the World War II, the dominance of the Nacionalista Party under a predominant party system has weakened the autonomy of parties that sought to oppose it. The same can be said during the Japanese Occupation, and during the period of authoritarian rule under Ferdinand Marcos. In Thailand, opposition parties are heavily repressed by military juntas during periods of nondemocratic rule.⁹ Control over opposition parties was more restrictive than other aspects of the party system.

In Afghanistan the opposition parties' autonomy indicator goes up first during Zahir Shah's reforms and then goes down at the time of the 1973 coup. It goes up again for a while and drops in the early 90s to increase again only in 2002. Throughout the coding period, the country undergoes a big increase from the lowest point in the early period to the highest level at the end of the period.

⁹ Sawasdee, 2012, p. 147.

Fig. 6: Opposition Parties Autonomy in South and Southeast Asia (1900-2012)



In Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, the scores on this indicator are almost identical with the party ban and barriers to parties' indicators. The same happens in India - the indicator steadily goes up in the mid-1930s and then after gaining independence in 1947.

In Pakistan the score steadily grows after the martial law was lifted in 1962, and decreases after the 1977 coup. It increases again after the end of military rule in 1988. The indicator decreases twice within the period – in 1999 when the army chief of staff Pervez Musharraf seized power and in 2007 when, still in power as a president of the country, he declared the state of emergency.

The scores on this indicator for many countries to some extent echo the pattern of scores of two previous indicators. What is different with scores on this indicator is the degree of change, which has much more amplitude in party autonomy.

The scores on the party autonomy indicator in Bangladesh and India were almost uninterruptedly the highest (except a short period for Bangladesh in the mid 70s) among countries of the region after achieving independence.

What is also notable is that the aggregated scores for this indicator throughout the period were below the aggregate V-Dem measure, except in the early 90s and the early 2000s. Afghanistan, Nepal and Thailand were the biggest contributors to the upsurges on this indicator.

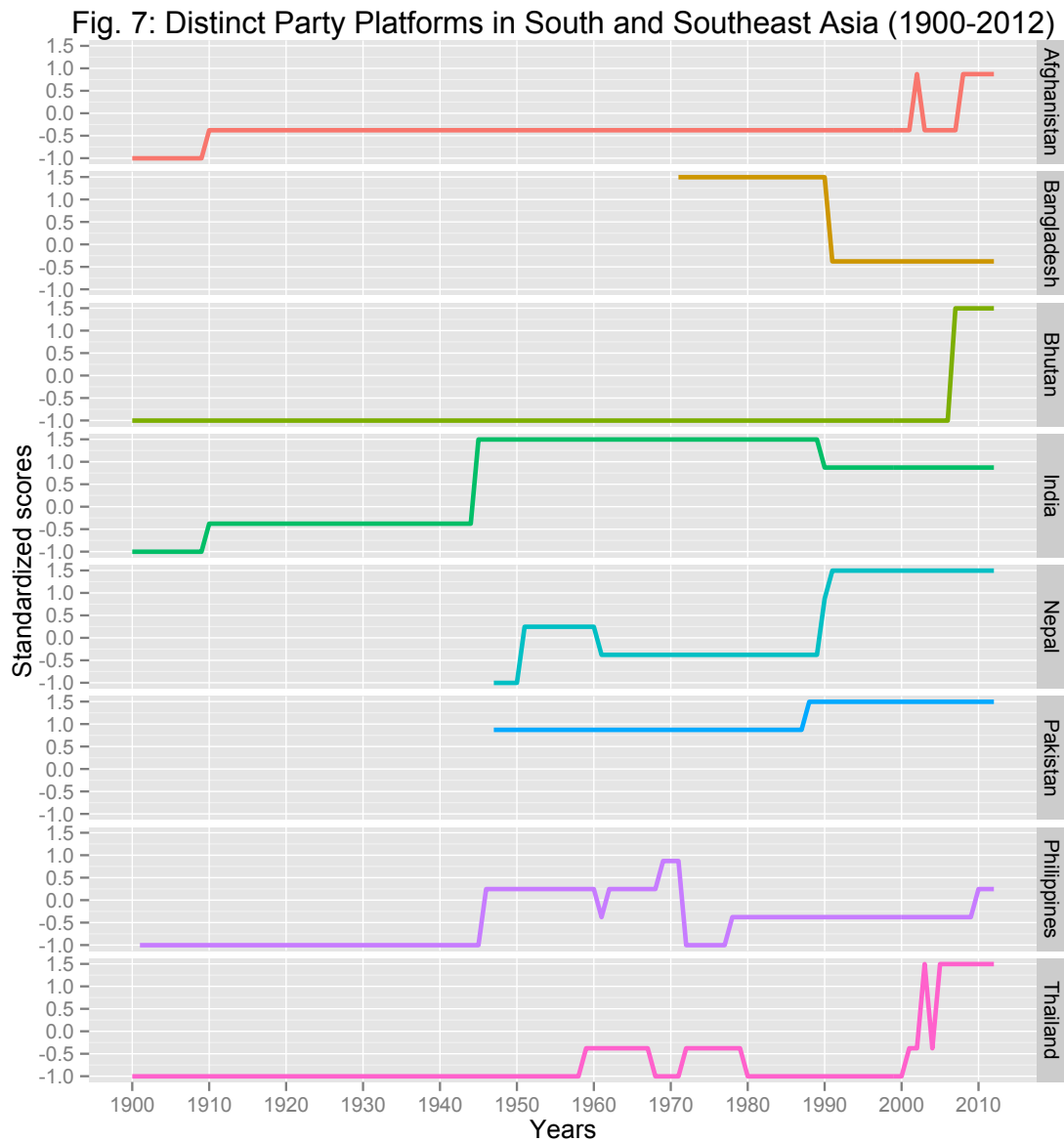
Distinct Party Platforms

Figure 7 presents the extent to which the main parties have platforms that are publicized and distinct from one another in the eight countries. Compared to figure 3, the patterns of this indicator are different from the aggregate measure. In Bangladesh, this indicator has largely declined since 1990. In Pakistan, the levels of this indicator are significantly higher than the aggregate measure during the entire period; while in the Philippines, the indicator is in general substantially lower than the aggregate scores. Elections in the Philippines are generally candidate-centered. Thus, political parties are organized around a political personality, rather than concrete party platforms.¹⁰ In Thailand, different from the overall pattern of gradual changes, the indicator began to improve and reached its highest values in the 2000s. This followed the success of the defunct Thai Rak Thai party of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to utilize public policy as a vote-getting tool.¹¹

The peaks of Afghanistan's scores on this indicator take place in early 2000s, this corresponds to the post-Taliban period, with various parties attempting to formulate their vision for the country and in the late years of the decade with the next round of presidential and provincial elections.

¹⁰ Teehankee, 2012, p. 198.

¹¹ Sawasdee, 2012, pp. 157



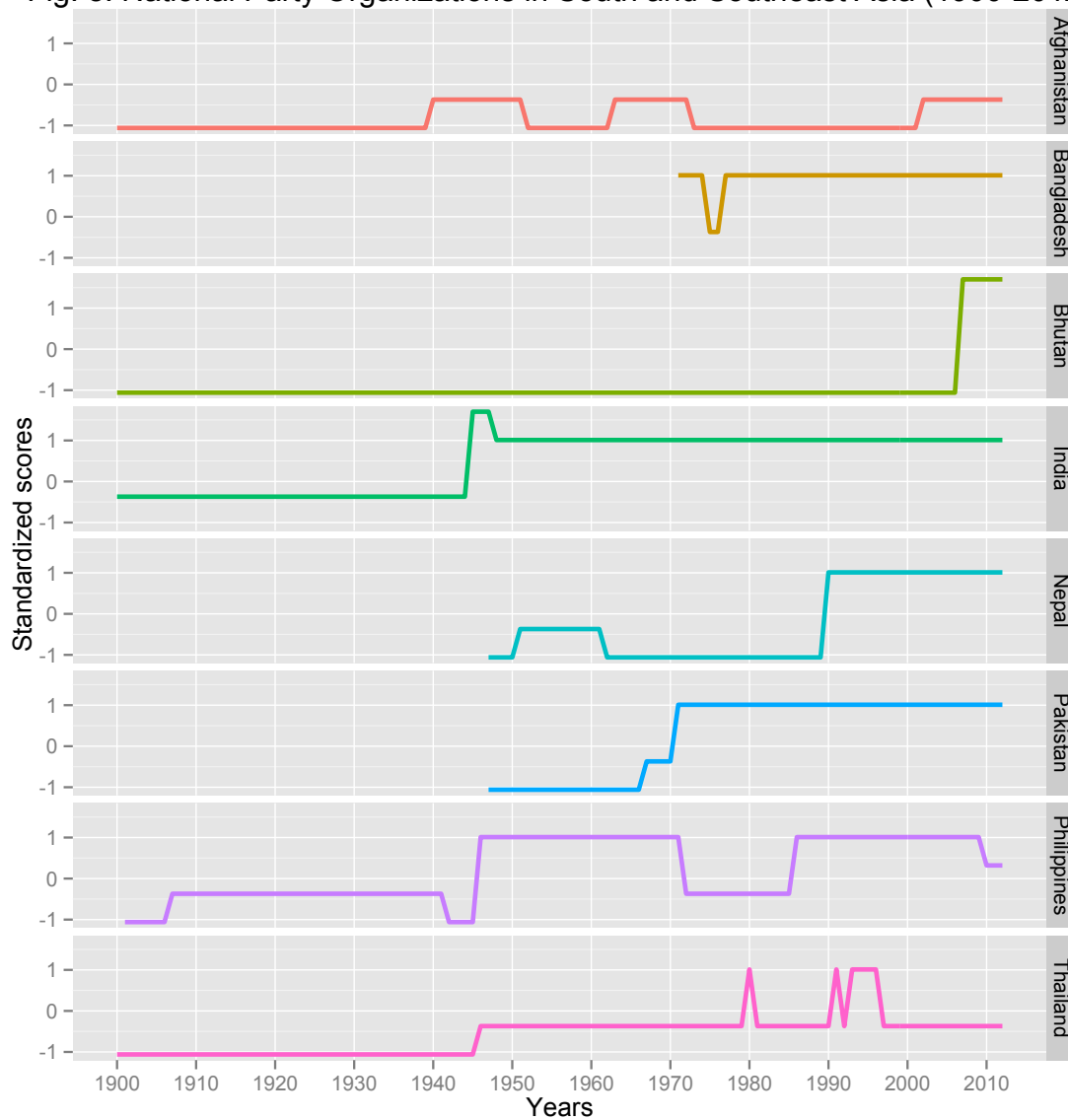
In Bangladesh the only change in the levels of the indicator is its decrease in the early 90s with the establishment of a caretaker government. This indicator contributes to the slight decrease of the aggregate country's score in early 90s. Bangladesh, and to a slight extent India, are the only countries in the region to experience decline on this indicator towards the end of the period. In Bhutan the scores in this indicator follow the trend, with the aggregate score changing only once but for the better – in the late 2000s. India's slight decrease in the aggregate score in early 90s follows the four decades long high score after the quick increase at times of gaining independence in 1947. The decrease happened when, after the 1989 elections, the Indian National Congress did not enjoy a majority in parliament. Nepal's scores on this indicator follow its other indicators with humps around the 1950s and 80s-90s, and with the decline on this indicator in between. Last, Pakistan's scores changed once on this indicator – increasing in 1988 with the end of military rule.

Towards the end of the period, most of the countries in the region improve their scores on this indicator while some see a decrease in their scores – Bangladesh and India - countries that on many other indicators generally improve their scores over time.

National Party Organization

Figure 8 shows whether parties in the countries of the region have permanent organizations for national-level offices.

Fig. 8: National Party Organizations in South and Southeast Asia (1900-2012)



The comparison with figure 3 suggests that, in Afghanistan and Thailand, although in general party systems have improved over the past ten years, most parties still do not have national-level permanent organizations. In Pakistan, while the aggregate measure largely declines during the 1980s, this indicator did not change. Again, the trend for the Philippines and Thailand follow the trajectory of party development in these Southeast Asian countries. Political parties in these countries are generally not organized as national party organizations, but rather along clientelistic, regionalist, and even familial lines.

Afghanistan ranks relatively low among the other countries of the region throughout the period. It has some slight increases on this indicator in 1940s, from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s and again since 2002. Bangladesh's scores on this indicator follow almost exactly the patterns of other indicators, apart from a quick downturn in the second half of 70s. As for Bhutan's scores, they are low throughout the period, but go up in second half of 2000s. What is notable with Bhutan is that it experienced this change only once, but it is the biggest shift of scores on this indicator among all countries.

In India, an upsurge takes place in 1947 following independence. This improvement is followed by a slight decrease at the end of the decade. Nepal experienced a decade-long increase during the 1950s. The levels of the indicator drop back to its lowest point during the early 1960s, and then increase steeply with abandonment of the Panchayat system. Pakistan experiences a swift rise in the values of the indicator since mid 1960s.

Only three countries have an unequivocal improvement on this indicator – India, Bhutan and Pakistan. Yet almost of the countries improve their scores on this indicator towards the end of the period, except for Philippines and Thailand. It is noticeable looking at the Figure 1 that aggregate peaks occur in the mid-1940s, the early 1970s, the early 1990s and the late 2000s.

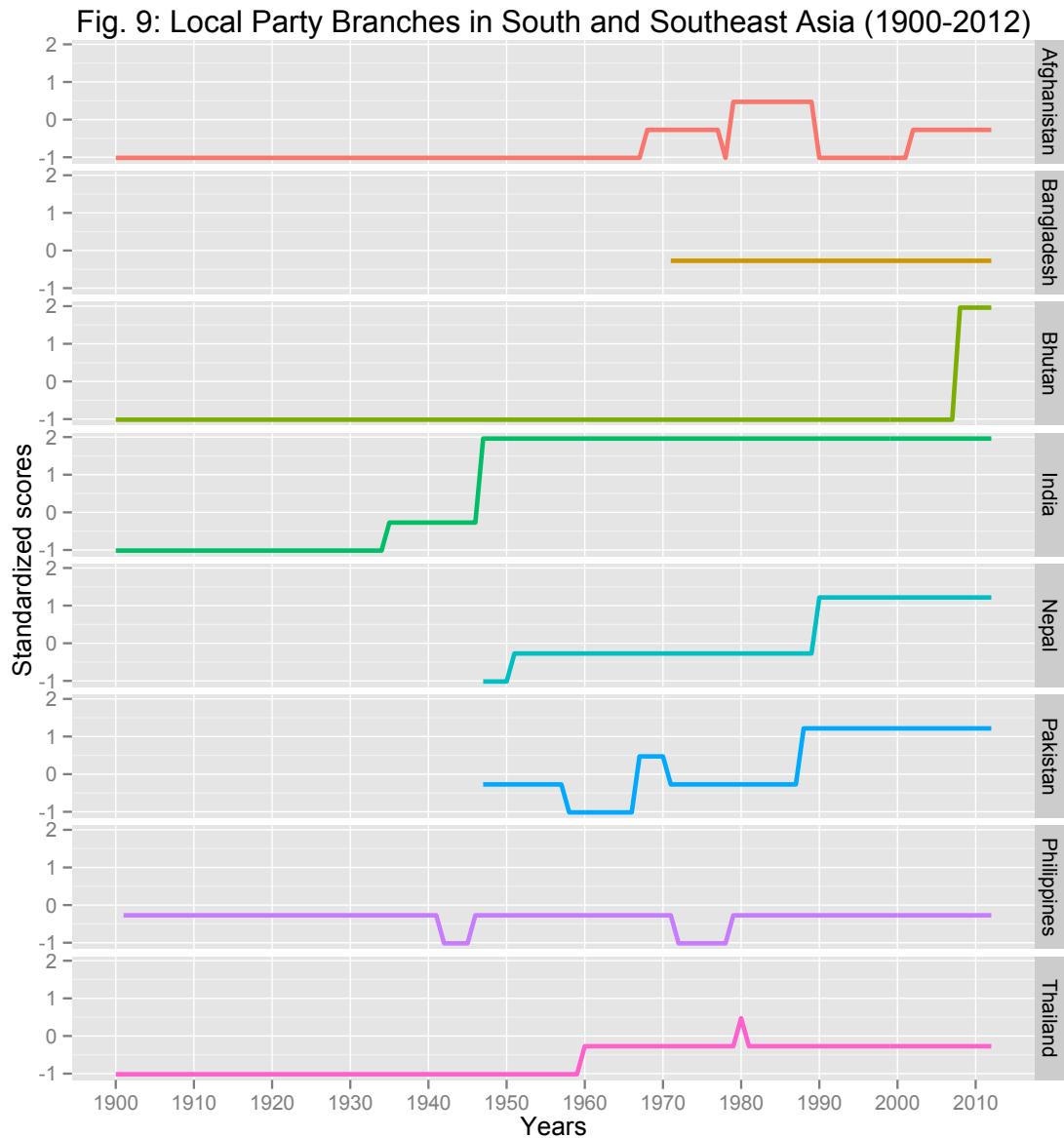
Local Party Branches

Figure 9 shows whether parties have permanent local party branches in these countries. The patterns of this indicator are substantially different from the aggregate measure. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Thailand, where the party systems have largely improved in at least the past ten years, most parties do not have local level offices. Again, this is due to the candidate-centered elections in Thailand and the Philippines that encourage personality-based parties.

In Afghanistan, the presence of local branches is mostly visible since the late 1960s and throughout the 70s and 80s. Afterwards the level of the indicator drops to the lowest and then modestly improves since 2002. Bangladesh's local party branches scores are low and do not change throughout the period.

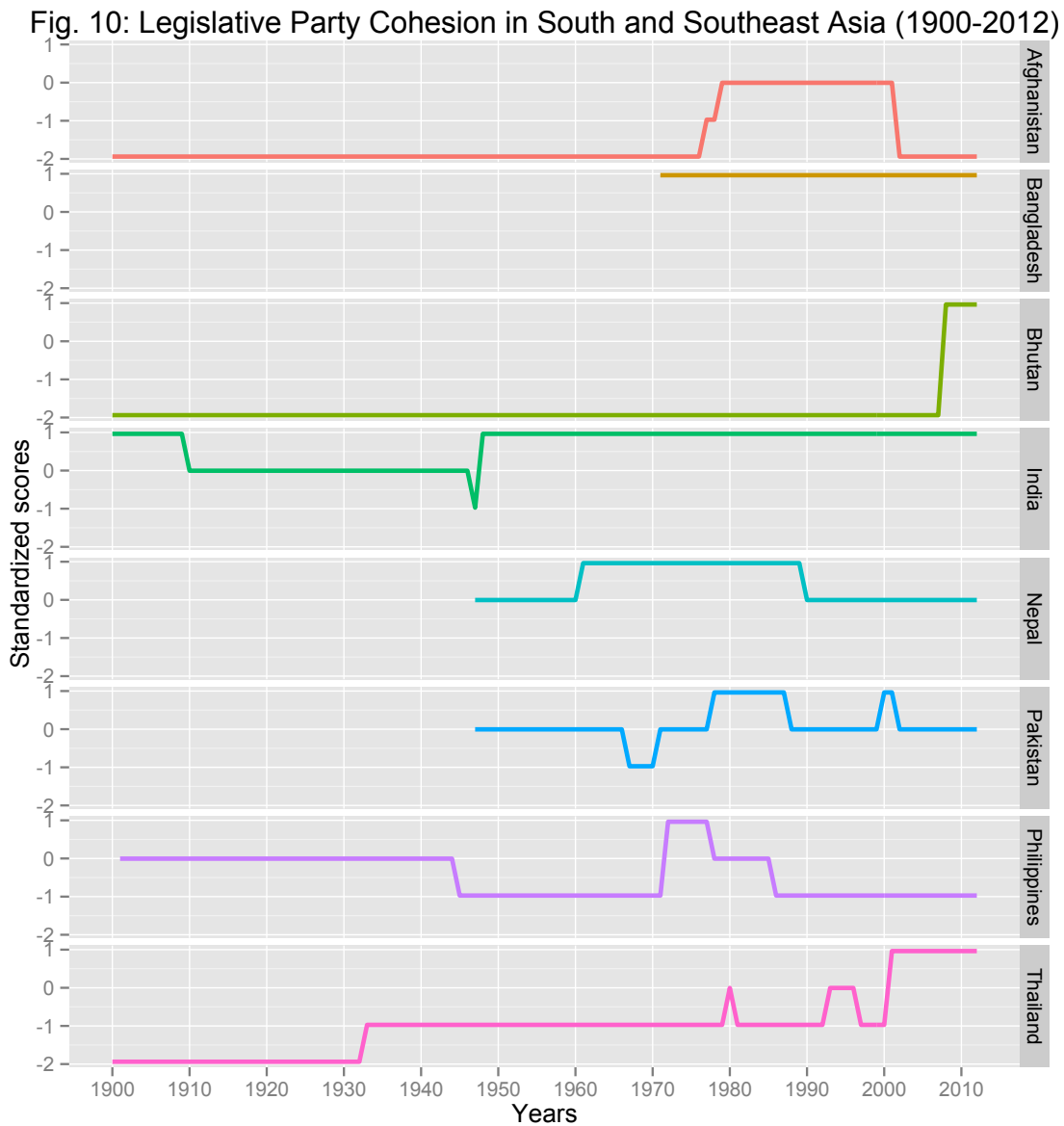
Bhutan's scores on this indicator as in other cases changed only once, increasing rapidly in the late 2000s. In India, the presence of local branches started to increase since preparations by the Indian National Congress to participate in local elections in the late 1930s, with another upsurge taking place after gaining independence.

Nepal's scores on this indicator increase twice – in the early 50s and late 80s. Pakistan's path on this indicator was uneven with a drop in the late 50s that lasted almost a decade and one happening in the early 70s that lasted into the late 80s. These drops were followed by considerable increases in indicator scores.



Legislative Party Cohesion

Figure 10 shows the extent to which legislative members vote with other party members on bills in the eight countries. The patterns of this indicator are also differ significantly from the aggregate measure. In Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines, legislators voted more cohesively when the scores of the aggregate measure are relatively low. In Bangladesh and India, legislators tended to vote relatively cohesively in the entire period. In Thailand, the indicator has reached its highest level since the 2000s, when the aggregate measure has also largely improved. In the Philippines, legislative party cohesion is a function of party-switching as legislators shift to the party in power to have access to pork barrel funds.



In Afghanistan the legislative party cohesion improves considerably in the late 70s and then drops again in the early 2000s. Bangladesh's scores were constantly flat being quite high throughout the period.

Bhutan exhibits a similar pattern to that of other indicators, with the scores going up steeply in the late 2000s. In India there is a decrease in 1910 and then further sharp decrease occurring at the time of independence. This is almost immediately followed by an increase to the highest in the period. Nepal's scores go up in the beginning of 60s and down in 1990.

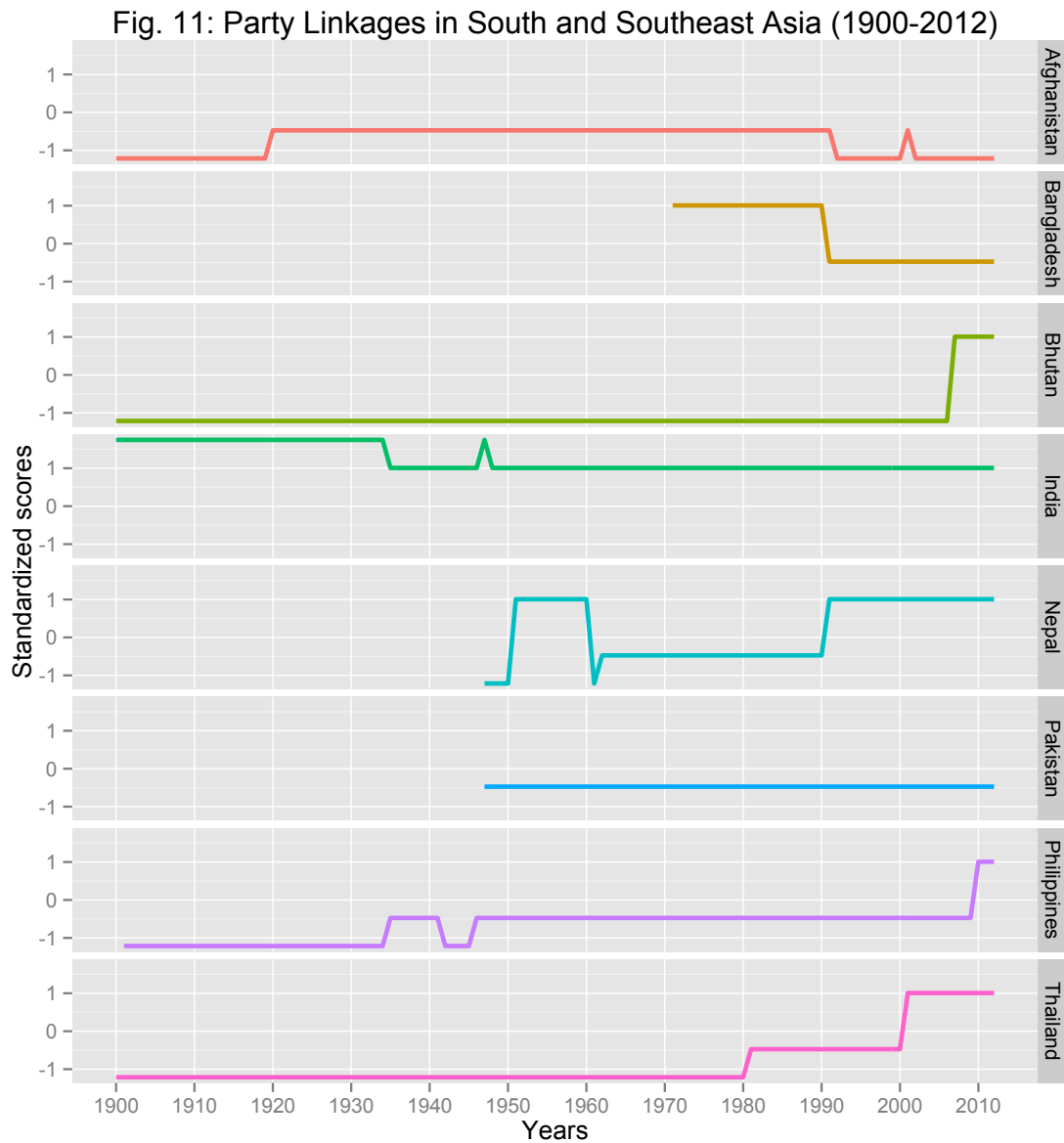
Pakistan has a relatively more nuanced pattern of changes to its scores on this indicator. The indicator levels drop in the mid 1960s and improve in the start of the next decade. This is followed by a further improvement in the late 70s, and then by a drop in the late 80s. The levels of the indicator improve again at the turn of the century.

A comparison between the levels of this indicator and the aggregate measure (Figure 1), makes clear that the legislative party cohesion indicator is one of the lowest almost throughout the entire period. The level of this indicator becomes higher than some of the other indicators only around the 1980s. The ascendance to this peak can be attributed to developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Philippines whereas the decline is attributable to political processes in Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Philippines.

Party Linkages

Figure 11 shows whether parties in the eight countries rely mainly on clientelistic goods or on public policies to attract votes. Higher values indicate parties' emphasis on public policies. The patterns of the indicator are different from the aggregate measure. In general, countries' scores on this indicator are lower than those on the aggregate measure. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, parties mainly rely on clientelism during the whole period. In Bangladesh, the indicator has declined since 1990, despite the improvement in other areas of the party system. In the Philippines, the indicator has begun to rise since the 2010s, long after the improvement of other aspects of the party system. In Thailand, the indicator has significantly increased since the 2000s, slightly later than the improvement of its aggregate measure.

Afghanistan's scores on this indicator increase in 1920 and drop only in early 1990s, corresponding to the beginning of the civil war in the country. The levels of the indicator increase for a very short period in the early 2000s. The score for this indicator for Bangladesh remain quite high since independence, but then drastically drop in the early 1990s.



As with other indicators, Bhutan's scores increase in the late 2000. India's scores were very high since the start of the period and then decrease. The score increases up again for a short while around the time of gaining independence and then drops again.

Nepal's parties were aiming at public policies almost immediately after the start of the period, but the scores decrease with the introduction of the Panchayat system and then increase after its termination. Pakistan has a constantly flat low score (the lowest except for Afghanistan) on this indicator, and Thailand exhibits a gradual improvement throughout the period.

Overall, countries' scores on this indicator show very little variation throughout the period and some countries exhibit consistent clientelistic practices as in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In most of the cases there is a tendency towards the end of the period to move away from clientelism in relations with constituencies, but some countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh become more clientelistic, or do not change as Pakistan.

The shift away from clientelism can be observed at turning points in histories of countries in the region, as it was in 1947 in India, in Afghanistan in 2002, in Nepal in 1951 when there is more demand for programmatic approaches. Additionally it can be explained by nascence of parties in such times and inability to get connected to voters in clientelistic manner.

Party Switching

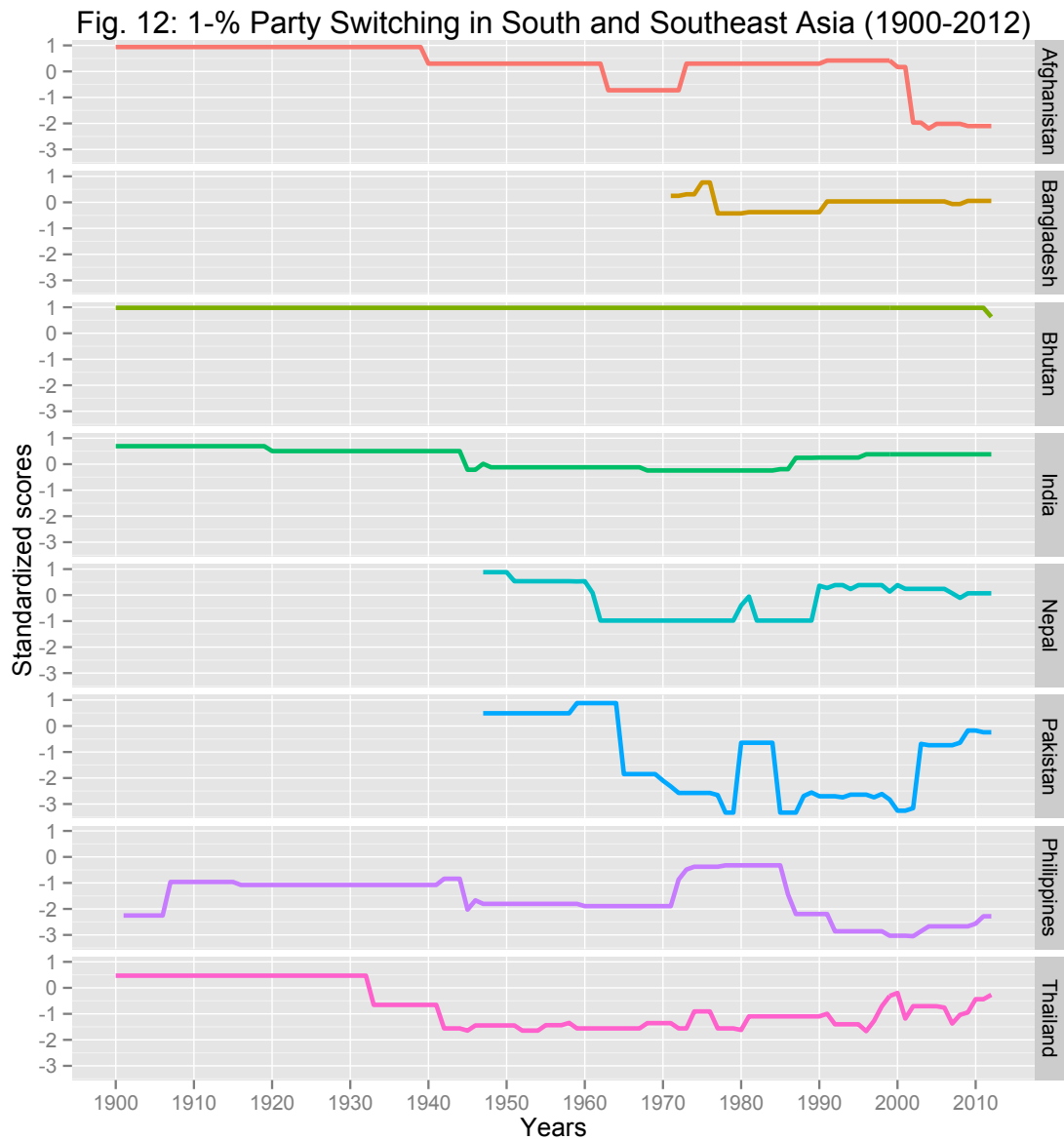
Figure 12 displays a measure of the percentage of the national legislators who change or abandon their parties in between elections. The figure suggests that in all the eight countries, except for Nepal, fewer legislators switch between parties when the overall party system measure is lower. Among these countries, the party memberships are more stable in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan since 2010.

In Afghanistan the party switching is a common practice that starts in the early 40s and increases further. In the Philippines, politicians switch parties before or after elections in order to align with the winning ticket and have access to pork barrel first half of the 60s and other patronage resources. Then it decreases throughout in the most of the 70s, in the 80s and 90s and then rapidly increases since 2002.

In Philippines, levels of party switching are quite high throughout the entire period, reaching their highest levels after the mid 1980s. Bangladesh's initial decrease in party switching is followed by a steep increase in the second half of the 70s which then was followed by a slight decrease in the beginning of the 90s.

In India, party switching started to appear since 1920 when all-embracing dominance of the Indian National Congress started to shatter. The further increase of this indicator started with gaining independence and lowered in the second half of the 80s when the dominance of the INC in parliament shattered and multi-party coalitions gaining more prominence.

This change in the last decades is also associated with more prominence gained by regional rather than national parties.



In Nepal the increase in party switching happens from the early 50s to the late 80s (with short lived decrease in the early 80s). In 1990 the sharp decrease in party switching happens at the time of adoption of constitutional changes.

In Pakistan a quick increase in party switching in the mid-60s and quick decrease in the early 2000s with a half a decade long decrease in between – in the first half of the 80s.

The score of this indicator for Bhutan exhibits least changes throughout the entire period. This is to be expected due to the absence of party politics until recently. However, it is interesting to note that another country with low levels of party switching is India, characterized by its rich tradition of party politics

5. Conclusions

Since countries in the region vary compared to each other in many regards it is not easy to conclude on the overall situation with party system. There are several trends that can be observed.

The aggregate score of party system in the region is affected by fluctuations in scores of various countries. The growth of late 1930s is affected by developments in India, the further drop in the mid 1940s – by Philippines, and almost immediate upsurge in the second half of 1940s – by India, Philippines, and Thailand. The drop in the early 1960s is heavily affected by Nepal, and further growth in the early 70s by Pakistan with the immediate drop in the aggregate score – by Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Philippines. The growth is steep throughout the 1980s and early 1990s by many countries including Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand.

The path of various indicators for each is different. Some are more or less constant and vary little throughout the period, as in Bhutan where across all indicators the change happens only once – in the late 2000s. Other countries, such as Pakistan, has a more varied path depending on unevenness of internal politics and frequent upheavals such as coups and introduction of martial laws.

Most importantly, the aggregate scores for the region show a considerable improvement over time. The most significant improvements occur during the last three decades. However, a couple of negative aspects are also notable. Most importantly, three facets of party system institutionalization are lacking: the first is the degree to which national parties develop local branches, and the second is the degree to which parties competing at the national level develop permanent institutions, and the third is the degree to which parties in the region use programmatic (and not clientelistic) appeals. These aspects could be of vital importance in the future of party systems in the region.