

EXPERT SURVEY ON DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLITICAL LINKAGES II  
(DALP II)

**Initial Findings for Malaysia in Comparative Context**

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## Glossary of Party Abbreviations

### Malaysia

| Party Acronym | Party Name (Country's Language)      | Party Name (English Translation)    | DALP Version  |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| BERSATU       | Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia       | Malaysian United Indigenous Party   | DALP II only  |
| DAP           | Parti Tindakan Demokratik            | Democratic Action Party             | DALP I and II |
| MCA           | Persatuan Cina Malaysia              | Malaysian Chinese Association       | DALP I and II |
| MIC           | Kongres India Se-Malaysia            | Malaysian Indian Congress           | DALP II only  |
| PAS           | Parti Islam Se-Malaysia              | Malaysian Islamic Party             | DALP I and II |
| PBB           | Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu      | Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu     | DALP II only  |
| PKR           | Parti Keadilan Rakyat                | People's Justice Party              | DALP I and II |
| UMNO          | Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu | United Malays National Organisation | DALP I and II |
| WARISAN       | Parti Warisan Sabah                  | Sabah Heritage Party                | DALP II only  |

**Note:** This country dossier considers parties as the same when a name change occurred without a significant ideological shift between 2008 and 2022–24. Parties whose name changes were accompanied by ideological reorganizations are treated as distinct entities.

## Executive Summary for Malaysia

This country dossier provides an overview of initial findings from the Democratic Accountability and Political Linkages II (DALP II) expert survey, conducted in 94 countries with multi-party elections, with 1,569 experts responding, generating an average response of almost 17 responses per country and between 10 and 24 responses in 80% of the countries. The survey asked experts to assess political parties' organization and their efforts to establish voter linkages through programmatic appeals, clientelism, personalistic leadership, descriptive representation, governing competence, pork-barrel politics, constituency service, and party identification. The first part of the dossier (Section 1, pp. 7-13) conceptualizes linkage mechanisms and itemizes the theoretical questions addressed with the data. The second part (Section 2, pp. 13-16) details the empirical strategy of investigation. The third part (Section 3, pp. 16-42) provides descriptive evidence on partisan linkage strategies in the dossier country in comparative perspective. For a quick overview focused exclusively on empirical results for the dossier country, readers may skip Section 1 and proceed directly to Section 2 and Section 3.

### Key Findings for Malaysia:

1. Programmatic linkage effort has declined significantly over the last decade, approaching global median, with major parties like the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) reducing their policy while the Islamist party PAS remains the most consistent programmatic actor, focusing on non-economic issues.
2. Personalistic leadership appeals function as a central and growing mechanism of competition, placing the country in the upper global tier as parties such as the People's Justice Party rely heavily on the charismatic authority of figures like Anwar Ibrahim to mobilize support.
3. Descriptive representation based on ethnicity constitutes the strongest mobilization tool globally for the country, as parties like UMNO, PAS, and the Malaysian Chinese Association maintain deep institutionalized ties to specific Malay, Muslim, and Chinese communities to secure voter loyalty.
4. Governing capacity and reputation for competence serve as stable linkage mechanisms where the country ranks near the global median, with long-ruling parties leveraging their extensive administrative track records while newer coalition actors have recently improved their standing through government participation.
5. Clientelistic exchange has become more visible and ranks in the middle of the global distribution, characterized by a structural shift toward spot-market vote-buying over traditional relational patronage, particularly within the dominant Barisan Nasional coalition in rural constituencies.
6. Pork-barrel politics and the provision of constituency services are emphasized at levels above the global average, reflecting a balanced and robust reliance on delivering geographically targeted club goods and individualized administrative assistance to secure voter support.
7. Mobilization of party identification remains exceptionally strong, placing the country in the upper tier of the global system, allowing established parties to command deep affective loyalties that persist despite increasing electoral volatility and coalition fragmentation.
8. Party organizations display a pattern of moderate territorial extensiveness combined with high decision-making centralization, where power remains concentrated among elite leaderships regarding candidate selection and resource allocation even as parties maintain active grassroots networks.

**Conclusion:** The empirical findings from the DALP II survey depict a Malaysian political landscape defined by a structured hybrid linkage profile that combines deep ethnoreligious segmentation with evolving patronage and personalistic strategies. The party system is characterized by the persistence of high-intensity ethnic identification and robust partisan loyalties, which coexist with a growing reliance on charismatic leadership and spot-market clientelism. While programmatic differentiation has eroded significantly in favor of identity politics, parties continue to leverage reputations for governing competence and extensive organizational networks to compete effectively. The data highlight a system dominated by diversified linkage actors that blend material inducements, communal mobilization, and centralized control to maintain support within a competitive coalition democracy.

## Introduction

When political scientists in more than ninety countries around the world agreed to complete the DALP II survey on citizen-politician linkages, the project organizers at Duke and Bilkent University, Herbert Kitschelt and Kerem Yildirim, promised to circulate an overview of initial descriptive results for their own countries, placing this country-specific evidence within a comparative context. The present document makes good on this promise.

Over the coming months and years, the research team will probe more thoroughly into the data to explain how mechanisms of democratic accountability work in different polities and vary across parties and countries, what their consequences might be for the operation of such parties and polities, and ultimately how such linkage mechanisms are associated with the social and economic well-being of citizens who experience them. The data will be publicly released to the world-wide political science community of scholars and interested citizens 24 months after completion of the dataset.

In this overview, it will be impossible to provide an exhaustive accounting of all the empirical results for Malaysia. The DALP II questionnaire is quite complex: depending on the country, experts and journalists responded to between 50 and 60 questions. Most of the questions asked respondents to score individual parties. So, in countries where experts rated 8, 9 or 10 parties, this put a heavy burden on survey takers: passing up to 600 judgments of party attributes in a matter of a couple of hours! This overview will obviously only report on a fraction of them and at aggregate levels, typically first displaying national averages of party attributes, with parties weighted by their electoral support levels in legislative elections held most closely ahead of the time window in which the DALP II survey data were collected. This bird's eye comparison will also make possible a visualization of differences and continuities between countries' party linkage features recorded in DALP I in 2007-9 and recently in DALP II in 2022-4. The dossier will then dig deeper and probe into party-level variance within your focal country and—on occasion—across countries.

Upfront, this country dossier will remind readers of the basic theoretical purpose that motivates the two DALP surveys and their empirical research strategy. The core question is to explore how parties allocate efforts to structure accountability relations in electoral democracies, i.e. engage in deliberate actions or “performances” they expect voters might employ as cues when choosing among multiple partisan competitors in electoral contests. DALP II thereby focuses on the **supply side of democratic accountability**: What do parties offer that voters might find attractive, or at least what to parties provide that may enable voters to sort parties into more or less attractive alternatives?

Ideally, of course, data on the supply side of linkage mechanisms should be matched with **corresponding data on the citizens' demand side**: What is it that voters expect political parties to deliver to attract their allegiance? And does the evidence from both demand and supply side enable investigations to identify where there are “matches” or “mis-matches”? Unfortunately, data pertaining to the demand side of the equation are available only selectively in comparative population surveys. To build a demand side dataset that would parallel the scope of attributes covered in the DALP surveys for the supply side in 90+ countries would be a monumental undertaking that still requires a team of academic entrepreneurs to step forward and tackle the acquisition of resources and build the organization to achieve that objective.

Normative democratic theory starts with a simple “programmatic” model of democratic accountability in competitive elections, the **responsible partisan government model**. Politicians pick up on voters' collective and club good preferences and promise to implement packages of such preferences (“programs”) they intent to convert into binding “policies”, if elected and in a position to shape au-

thoritative policy-making. The first step of the empirical description of partisan linkages in Malaysia, therefore, will be to check whether parties create the conditions for responsible partisan government: Do parties offer different visions of collective and club goods provision if in government that would attract electoral constituencies to some of them, but not others? As it turns out, the nature and intensity of partisan programmatic efforts vary a great deal across parties and entire democratic polities.

The next subject, therefore, is to investigate whether other “accountability mechanisms” may complement programmatic party policy appeals or even supplant them in cases where parties (and entire party systems) offer quite little programmatic structuring of the competition. The description of linkage mechanism follows what might be a simple sequence of voters’ and politicians’ interaction, when initially multi-party electoral competition comes about and becomes iterative over time. Linkage mechanisms may evolve when a polity installs electoral party competition for the first time and embarks on a process of incremental learning of different accountability mechanisms, a process that involve voters, politicians and political parties (as politicians’ vehicles to pool resources). The learning process starts with linkage mechanisms that require relatively few resources and organizational investments on the part of suppliers and little information processing on the part of voters. Subsequently, over time, politicians and voters may engage in a ladder of increasing efforts and cumulative information processing to solidify more robust linkage mechanisms:

- ▷ Relative few material resources, organization, and time may be required to build linkages based on the personality of party leaders or on descriptive traits of key party personalities and activist groups, such as ethno-cultural attributes (ethnicity, race, religion, language, region of residence). These features may resonate with voters even in founding elections before any party ever had a chance to perform in authoritative decisions as player in government executives.
- ▷ Next, the initial legislative and executive competence and performance of parties in early rounds of democracy may help voters update their appraisals of parties and influence their choices. Even based on rather limited information processing, it enables “economic voting” and other applications of “performance voting.”
- ▷ Further down the line, politicians and parties may engage in more demanding organizational and financial efforts and voters may accumulate more information about the sincerity of parties to construct “clientelist” linkages, involving the provision of localized benefits (or prevention of losses and punishments), targeting individuals or small groups in the expectation of affecting voters’ party choices in ways to be defined more precisely in the relevant section of this dossier.
- ▷ There are two other linkages based on targeted benefits that do not involve expected reciprocity of exchange and should be considered, the distribution of localized club goods (“pork”) and individualized services of legislators to constituents without any selection mechanism or targeting that would imply clientelist intent (“constituency service”).
- ▷ The linkage mechanism that requires plentiful organizational, personnel, financial and/or informational investments, over an extended period of time to build “brand recognition,” then finally is programmatism. As an additional long-term investment, parties may also actively build and cultivate an affective “culture” of support configured around partisan identification. But we cover programmatic party competition first, as it is the “master template” of democratic theory, and the insufficiency of using programmatism to characterize party competition in many countries—and for many individual parties—prompts us to then investigate other mechanisms.

Altogether, then, the ladder of political learning of party competition by actors both on the supply and the demand side of democratic accountability linkages involves efforts to focus on (1) the personality of politicians, (2) descriptive group representation, (3) performance (“economic”) voting, (4) clientelism, (5) programmatism and (6) affective partisan identification building. Add to that two further mechanisms in the gray zone between clientelism and programmatism, the provision of local public goods (“pork”) as well as legislative constituency services.

The point is that existing research on accountability mechanisms and political representation has typically focused on a singular “linkage performance” at a time: either programmatism or clientelism (but typically not both) or personality appeal of political candidates and their parties. In practice, however, politicians are compelled to consider all of them, at a minimum by omission or non-decision-making, and sample from the whole toolkit of linkage mechanisms taken together to build a “party linkage profile” under conditions of resource constraint (time, money). So, by incorporating detailed measures of both programmatism and clientelism, and by supplementing them with more round-about measures of linkages through politicians’ personality, descriptive representation, office performance, constituency service, pork and affective partisan identification, the DALP survey will make possible to study the supply side of linkage mechanisms in interaction with one another for the first time.

Before delving into DALP II data and cases, it is prudent to remind scholars that social and political affairs are difficult to measure, especially in a globally comparative framework that requires heroic simplifications. **By definition, the data collected and displayed contain substantial measurement error.** The presence of measurement error should caution readers against jumping to rash conclusions about the nature of linkage mechanisms in democracies based on DALP scores for any individual party’s or even entire country’s democratic linkage practices. It is important, therefore, to study patterns of relations among many observations. Moreover, DALP expert surveys, and data patterns established through them, should be triangulated with information based on other data generation techniques tapping into the same theoretical issues, but that do not involve subjective expert judgments, whether these may be population surveys, statistical information about the observable behavior of political actors (such as turnout data, roll-call votes, budget allocations, etc.) or localized field or natural experiments. While some of these methods generate data that probe deeper than expert surveys, none of them approximates the scope of reach — 94 countries, over 600 parties — achieved in DALP II.

In this country dossier, **only mean values for attributes of political parties and entire party systems**, with the latter based on the average of the parties’ scores **weighted by each party’s electoral support level**, are reported. But these survey scores involve more or less uncertainty about divergence from the true unobserved score. Since each country survey includes on average 16 experts offering individual judgments of each variable, a first approximation of uncertainty about a party’s attribute derives from the **standard deviations of those expert judgments when asked about the same party attribute**. The variance of expert judgments may be due to both **“objective” variability and fuzziness of a party attribute** that is scored by political experts as well as to **experts’ subjectively varying levels of knowledge and informational frames, yielding differential item functioning**. At the end of each thematic module of survey questions, therefore, DALP II asks experts to self-assess their own confidence in the judgments they provide in order to capture subjective uncertainty. This dossier does not report on these various measures of judgment uncertainty, but this information can be retrieved easily from the data survey and obviously will play an important role in more thorough analysis of linkage patterns with DALP II data in the future.

If readers of these country dossiers have comments about the findings displayed, the research team would be eager to learn about them. In this case, please send an e-mail to the Principal Investigators.

Readers' reactions will be instructive to guide the future investigations with the data. If you send the research team a reaction file, let us thank you in advance for your effort.

## 1 Democratic Accountability: Descriptive Elements and Theoretical Problematics

The normative background motivation of this research project is a key concern of democratic theory: How should democracy work so that binding authoritative decisions reflect (in ways to be specified) citizens' preferences and follow changes in such preferences? How should citizen demands be recognized in the political decision-making process and allocation of benefits? In settings of representative democracies with electoral party competition, what should political actors—candidates for electoral office, typically banding together and pooling resources in political parties—do and communicate to voters in order to achieve their support and allegiance?

The normative motivation inspires a positive theoretical and empirical question: How do politicians act on citizens' demands, in existing polities with multi-party competition, whether they are full democracies, electoral democracies, or even hybrid electoral autocracies with several parties competing on a slanted playing field? At a minimum, democracy is a system of rules that specifies how candidates or parties compete for voter support. The rules specify intermittent elections so that voters can reassess the office incumbents and replace some or all of them with other contenders. The anticipation of parties and their politicians being held **accountable** in upcoming elections, i.e., voted up or down when seeking a renewal of their mandates to represent an electoral constituency, may make politicians **responsive** to citizens' demands during a running electoral term. Parties' and politicians' demeanor in electoral campaigns may then indicate what politicians believe to make them most valuable to voters. This also applies to opposition parties. They will work to make credible commitments to satisfy voters' demands that they believe are unmet by incumbents.

Where politicians deliver what voters expect, they establish a “linkage” between electoral constituencies and political agents. Linkages involve both supply and demand side activism. On one hand, voters demand certain linkage performances from politicians, and these may involve politicians to sport the same socio-demographic and ethnocultural traits as their constituencies (“descriptive” representation), project an impressive personal demeanor (“charismatic” appeal), deliver collective and club goods (“programmatic” policies), or deliver targeted benefits—or abstain from threats to withhold them—to selective individual and small groups of voters (“clientelist” exchange) or any of the other linkage performances listed above. But on the other hand, politicians may actively establish such linkages, venturing to influence and shape the nature of the demands that voters make either directly or through intermediaries in their party organizations, interest groups and diverse communication media. Nevertheless, where the symbols, goods and services that politicians deliver clearly motivate voters' acceptance of a politician or party, we can speak of a “linkage mechanism:” voters and politicians “link up” through a match between (voter) demand and politicians' (parties') supply, regardless of the precise causal process that creates the specific profile of that supply and demand.

### 1.1 Mapping the Universe of Linkage Mechanisms: Descriptive Elements of Political Practices

What are the practices that democratic politicians expect to secure voters' approval? What is it that parties expect voters to “take into account” when discriminating among competitors? We will

attempt to distinguish between different types of activities politicians may undertake to the critical mass of electoral support required for election to public office<sup>1</sup>.

### Programmatic Linkage

In democratic theory, the “**responsible partisan government**” model reflects the conventional understanding of what politicians offer to voters and how voters discriminate among the merits of rival candidates and parties: Citizens have diverse preferences over “policies,” understood as authoritative government decisions to produce public or club goods and services as well as regulations of citizens’ conduct in markets, politics, and socio-cultural contexts. Citizens opt for the party and/or coalition of parties that offers the best prospect of implementing policies ‘closest’ to their own personal policy preferences. When citizens disagree on the ideal policy for dealing with a given social or economic issue, parties may engage in “positional competition” by offering differing policies to different electoral constituencies. Office-seeking politicians, parties, and party coalitions will try to tailor their policy commitments to voters’ preference distributions and rivals’ policy commitments such as to maximize their chances of winning.

While **programmatic partisan competition** is widely mentioned and discussed in the party politics literature, there has not been a serious effort to operationalize it in detail for comparative analysis across parties and party systems: Which parties are investing more in “programmatic” linkages than other linkage mechanisms? Which party systems display a higher “programmatic” effort of the whole set of political party competition than others? To our knowledge, DALP I for the first time delivered such measures at the party and the party system level, and now in DALP II they have been supplemented by improved and more precise measures explained and empirically documented in the third section.

### Clientelist Linkage

The big alternative — or complement? — to programmatic linkages in party competition discussed in the political science literature has always been **clientelist linkage**. It may be characterized by a number of attributes: Identification of recipients? Positive or negative voter inducements? Inducements to vote for a particular party or to abstain? Types of voter inducements? Inter-temporal durability of inducements? Conditionality, monitoring, sanctioning, and enforcement of exchanges? All of these attributes can be explored with the DALP II survey.

The most stripped-down conventional ideal type of political clientelism is a simple spot-market exchange with contract enforcement: Electoral candidates solicit votes from prospective individual voters—or such voters offer to provide—votes in competitive elections in exchange for immediate tangible benefits accruing to those voters, but only in case the vote has actually been delivered (conditionality). And that completion of the exchange has been monitored by the candidate and—in case of observed voter defection—led the candidate to withhold the benefit or impose a penalty/cost on the voter. This ideal type was approximated only in rare occasions, typically with electoral arrangements with public voting, i.e., no individual secrecy of the vote.

In contemporary practice, however, basic to clientelist linkage is the **targeting of linkage effort onto individuals or small groups of electoral constituencies** (families and family networks, geographically small neighborhoods, etc.), i.e. parties’ delivery of authoritative consequences (benefits,

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<sup>1</sup>Whether or not voters in each polity actually “recognize” and “accept” these offers, and thus complete the linkage mechanism, is beyond the scope of the study. In order to achieve this more complete picture, our study must be complemented by extensive survey research to establish how voters perceive and endorse the “performances” of parties and politicians to establish linkages.

coercion) that approximate “private” or small-scale club-goods, not large-scale club goods or collective goods affecting large segments of the voting public or everyone. But there are many different kinds of clientelistic linkage efforts not conforming to the “spot-market” exchange model:

- ▷ Parties may deliver a benefit or forbearance of inflicting a cost on voter recipients. Coercive and remunerative clientelism is often difficult to distinguish and intertwined, often two sides of the same coin: Getting the reward of a municipal public sector job in exchange of supporting a party and its candidate is certainly a benefit, but being excluded from—or deprived of—such benefit is a penalty and the voter may perceive it as political coercion.
- ▷ Clientelism is often not at all spot-market “vote buying,” the distorting shortcut it is often equated with, but involves a stream of enduring relational exchanges between partisan patrons and their followers, e.g. prominently through the appointment of patronage public sector jobs or through government contracts with favored companies and associations. There are many benefits and costs that can come into play in targeted clientelist exchange, some short term (gifts, cash, regulatory decisions), some long-term (social benefits such as disability or early retirement pensions, public sector jobs, government procurement contracts. Etc.), some directed to individuals, and others to small groups.
- ▷ Clientelistic exchange does involve implicit conditionality, such that politicians expect electoral support in exchange for providing targeted benefits, and voters demand specific, tailored compensation in exchange for delivering their vote. But all participating actors understand that monitoring, enforcement and sanctioning of such exchanges, in case of defection, are rarely practical and are excessively costly. Hence, clientelism is a “leaking bucket” with copious defection by patrons and clients. Nevertheless, especially intertemporally relational exchange—public sector jobs, social benefits (disability payments, subsidized apartment rents, educational scholarships, etc.), or procurement contracts to firms—may be self-enforcing: Recipients have a strong intrinsic interest in seeing their benefactors (re-)elected or their partisan based benefits may be revoked. Furthermore, a great deal of conditionality may be based on social network communication, solidarity, and reciprocity mechanisms not considered in the stripped-down ideal type of clientelism.

### **Linkages that require little organizational and informational investment by politicians and parties**

As indicated before, there are a number of other linkage mechanisms that have been studied less systematically than programmatism and clientelism in democratic politics. These linkages are the ones that can be **activated with little organizational and informational costs to politician and voters and can thereby play a role even in emerging democracies, when politicians had not yet had the time to invest in the organizational and informational implements to produce credible programmatic and clientelist linkage efforts and party brands registered by voters and shaping their partisan choices.**

At the inception of democracy, or in regime crises, the electoral advantage may go to personalities with publicly demonstrated **extraordinary qualities of political leadership (“charisma”)**. They may have been instrumental in bringing about or protecting electoral party competition: Charisma is often based on a publicly visible ordeal of suffering sustained by a politician on behalf of supporting an electoral constituency. Consider jail time under a preceding dictatorship and release from prison as an event of political celebration that instantly propels a personality into the stratosphere of name recognition and establishing them as a candidate for high electoral office—example Nelson Mandela or

Lech Wałęsa. Or consider military service, a general leading an army of insurrectionists against an authoritarian regime or a foreign colonial power—example George Washington. But charisma may also result from a variety of other personal qualities, for example effectiveness in the sphere of old public and new social media and thereby not be limited to conditions of early party system formation.

Politicians and parties may also sport **electoral candidates’ descriptive attributes of socio-economic class or socio-cultural group membership** (gender, ethnicity, race, language, religion, residence) to resonate with voters. These attributes may complement programmatic or clientelistic appeals, but also serve as stand-alone manifestations without involving substantive programmatic content or targeted exchange mechanisms. Pre-existing networks and associational infrastructure of groups crystallized around a descriptive group attribute may strengthen the electoral appeal of party candidates featuring corresponding attributes. Nevertheless, in many instances descriptive representation may elicit support even if political candidates with plausibly popular descriptive features lack party organization and the pedigree of party brand recognition based on a long historical party record and personal involvement in politics. Once again, descriptive markers may be particularly useful to parties in the process of initial formation, but they may sustain their relevance throughout their electoral careers.

Once parties have begun to leave a track record of legislative activities and government executive participation, some voters develop a “tally” of parties’ contributions to policy and/or attribute observed economic and social outcomes (inflation, unemployment, growth, social unrest) to the governing parties’ executive incumbency (“economic voting”), whether with justification or not. Incumbent government parties may induce political business cycles, attempting to improve economic or social outcomes before elections that have “valence” features, e.g., are endorsed by large majorities of voters (e.g. boosting voters’ after-tax income, clamping down on crime or illegal immigration) in order to resonate positively with voters. Over time, parties may accumulate a brand image for bringing about certain outcomes, e.g. fighting inflation or boosting employment. The DALP II survey attempts to capture experts’ assessment of parties’ efforts to boost their public performance perception on valence issues as emphasis on “their general competence to govern and bring about or maintain economic, social and political stability” (question E5).

Finally, there is **party identification**. It is usually understood as something that evolves on the demand side among voters through political socialization and social networks reinforcing allegiance to a political party. But one can also think of **supply-side strategies of political parties to enhance partisan identification through symbolic cultural and social manifestations, festivities, features of party artifacts (flags, clothing, commemorative monuments) or celebrations of party history**, thereby creating an affective cohesion of a core partisan electorate. It makes people receptive to adapting their programmatic policy preferences to those of the party leadership, when they latter find it opportune to change course, rather than choosing a different party better aligned with their pre-existing preferences. Party identification may be reinforced by all the other linkage mechanisms. Without having empirical test results, one might hypothesize that parties scoring higher on a larger number of other political linkage dimensions may also score higher on promoting voters’ party identification.

Political parties rely on more or less—and on different kinds of—**internal party organization** coordinating party activists with different roles to deploy political linkage strategies. DALP II includes expert scores about a number of organizational attributes in modules A and C of the survey. One dimension concerns the **organizational extensiveness of party organizations** in the sense of geographical coverage of a party’s physical presence across a fraction or up to the entirety of a country (“party nationalization”) and—relatedly but not identical—the scope of membership and activism the

party is mobilizing relative to the size of its electorate and that of the country. A second dimension concerns **the degree of coordination and centralization parties devise in their organizational structures** to solve challenges of collective political choice and gain collective unified strategic capacity. A third dimension—important for clientelist parties—concerns the **organizational forms used to mobilize and disburse goods, services or penalties targeted to voters parties wish to reach as their electoral constituencies**. The clientelism literature investigates this under the heading of “brokerage” linking electoral politicians to their voters through a chain of intermediaries organizing the targeted transactions.

Parties’ linkage profiles—i.e., the ensemble of the various linkage mechanisms they emphasize, as mapped by DALP II expert assessments—may be associated with different organizational party structures. Abstention from causal language is here intended: It may be fiendishly difficult to determine whether it is more the case that parties’ linkage profiles shape their organizational structures or that organizational structures shape their linkage efforts. Organization and linkage profiles may be involved in a continuous process of mutual equilibration. Given the current state of the literature, it may already be a step forward just to establish some basic facts about robust correlations.

## 1.2 Theoretical Purpose of Political Linkage Studies. An Incomplete Inventory of Empirical Research Questions

This country dossier will not address theoretical questions that can be investigated with the DALP II dataset, but nevertheless would like to itemize a subset of potential avenues of research that have, in fact, played a more or less important role in the existing literature on the subject. Some of these subjects aggregate DALP II data to the level of national party systems, others focus on the level of individual parties. And there is, of course, the possibility of inter-level interaction such that features that vary across parties play out differently, depending on the systemic context they occur.

### How do linkage mechanisms “hang together”?

One classical question of linkage investigations is how different types of linkages relate to one another. There is the perennial question of **trade-offs between clientelist and programmatic linkage strategies**. Is it a zero-sum game or are there circumstances in which parties can bundle both productively? The literature has focused mostly on the trade-off. But doubts about the tightness of this trade-off between linkage modes have been voiced for some time. And cannot parties engage in linkage diversification that make heavy investments in wooing voters both by clientelistic and programmatic ties? Or could parties at least target different voter constituencies with different linkage mechanisms?

The DALP-II survey makes it possible to shift the debate again. Since a multiplicity of linkages can be measured, it is not just complementarity or competition between programmatic and clientelist linkages that can be explored, but the clusters of configurations that emerge across the whole gamut of linkage combinations that are conceivable. Parties choose complex “linkage profiles” explicitly or implicitly, assigning weights to the whole range of linkage considerations (program, clientelism, descriptive representation, leadership personality, governance competence, party identification, pork, constituency service). But not all conceivable combinations will appear. It is important to identify prominent configurations the causes and consequences of which need to be determined.

## What brings about and sustains different linkage profiles?

The most widespread **developmentalist argument** about the origins of linkage patterns asserts that clientelism is for poor countries and poor people, while programmatism is for affluent and educated countries and voter strata. There are a variety of micro-mechanisms that undergird this logic (income/wealth/education dependent discount rates and time horizons, for example). But how tight (and linear<sup>1</sup>) is the relationship between economic development and the trade-off between the two prominent clientelist or programmatic linkage strategies? Many linkage analysts have ventured to challenge it or posit that it applies only conditionally.

Maybe it is not the level of economic development per se, but the degree to which scarce resources in a polity are allocated by non-market mechanisms that shapes linkage profiles. Maybe “**developmental states**” where **political elites dominate the finance sector, regulate business competition and select industrial sectors for favorable treatment** display partisan linkage profiles where leading parties put more emphasis on clientelism, pork and party identification than in more market-governed political-economic settings? Likewise, is the relative magnitude of public and non-profit sector employment in municipal and national civil service bureaucracies associated with partisan linkage profiles?

Another influential argument maintains that **clientelism will prevail over programmatic partisan appeals in the early years of competitive democracy** when politicians do not yet have accumulated a track record of policy reputations and have not yet made an investment in a party infrastructure that promises continuity and allows politicians to develop a reputation for credibility, resulting in brand recognition. But as we posited above, except in the case of parties that may descend from pre-existing authoritarian ruling parties, in new democracies young political parties may have a hard time establishing clientelist modes of resource extraction and targeted deployment to prospective voters, as these undertakings require pretty elaborate organizational routines in most instances. Based on DALP I and II, we can track whether democratic “aging” begins to displace clientelist politics.

A further common argument—plausibly buttressed by case studies ranging from Malaysia via Italy to Taiwan—asserts that **electoral institutions that personalize politics and create competition among candidates of the same party**—such as open-list proportional representation electoral laws in legislative elections or direct presidential elections, particularly with a majority two-round run-off format—promote the direct clientelist exchange between political candidates and targeted voters, while closed-list systems of proportional representation and parliamentary governance favor programmatic party systems. Personalizing electoral institutions may also be identified as promoting the importance of charismatic political leaders. Once again, the jury is out on the institutional hypotheses. It remains to be seen how valid they are, once large-scale comparison among many countries with different party systems becomes possible with DALP I and II data.

Next, there are ongoing debates about the **relationship between parties’ linkage strategies and ethnocultural pluralism in a polity**. Are polities—and parties catering to specific ethnocultural segments—exceptionally clientelist in plural societies, particularly when ethnic networks might facilitate the distribution of political benefits to targeted individuals and small groups? Or does the degree of clientelistic politics in individual parties and whole polities depend on between-group income and political power differentials?

Finally, how about the **intensity of electoral competition**? Do less competitive systems, where voters are relatively inert and small changes in electoral support do little to shift power balances between parties over government formation and policy control, promote dominant parties to rely more or less on targeted clientelist exchange, pork, descriptive representation and party identification, whereas

intensely competitive situations prime programmatic politics to win uncommitted voters and may also deploy leadership charisma and valence competition? There are debates in the literature, with findings drawing on individual countries and subnational settings pointing in opposite directions, so that a broad cross-national comparative analysis can make a meaningful contribution here.

### **What are the political-economic and political-cultural consequences of linkage profiles?**

Preciously few studies have associated democratic linkage profiles with political-economic or other policy outcomes. A common presumption is that countries in which the leading parties put greater weight on clientelist linkages produce fewer collective goods and large-scale club goods, thereby permitting or actively producing more inequality of income, wealth, and qualitative life chances as well as lower economic growth. But until now, there is preciously weak evidence to back any of these claims. The DALP II survey can help filling that gap.

Likewise, inasmuch as personalistic linkages loom large in party competition, charismatic politicians—typically with small, but centralized party machines—may produce fewer collective goods and beneficial economic outcomes. This is also a consequence sometimes attributed to democratic politics revolving around descriptive political representation, particularly of an ethnocultural type: Are rent-seeking groups availing themselves of resources they will not deploy in a fashion that magnifies and spreads the benefits across societies? Once again, at least with regard to clientelist electoral channels, there is little evidence that would allow scholars to reach a decisive conclusion.

Types of linkage profiles promoted by parties and entire party systems may also interact with citizens' satisfaction with politicians, political parties, and democracy as a system of authoritative decision making. The typical presumption is that programmatic party competition will command the highest levels of satisfaction, but that may be contingent upon many circumstances. Once again, there is little research deeply probing into this question.

The theoretical issues raised in this section will not be empirically addressed in this country dossier. But they form the horizon within which the data reported here are meaningful and relevant.

## **2 Investigating Democratic Accountability: The Research Strategy**

The motivation for the original survey was that an encompassing coverage of clientelism as a form of political linkage in democracies was still missing. While V-Dem has since that time provided a handful of basic indicators, a more fine-grained coverage—comparable to what the Chapel Hill Expert Survey does for parties' policy positions—is still missing for other linkages and especially clientelism. DALP II, in turn, was prompted by the desirability to generate a second data point after a long interlude of 14 years, with the objective to assess the changes that have taken place in the intervening period.

For DALP II, three extensions of the survey had become desirable. First, while multiple indicator of programmatism (module D) and clientelism (module B) are still the core of the survey, module E of the survey now not only includes at least one score each on linkage mechanisms concerning how parties project leadership personality ("charisma"), party identification and capacity to govern as additional linkage mechanisms, but also their deployment of ethnocultural descriptive representation, pork provision and constituency service. It thereby becomes possible to capture a more inclusive profile of linkage mechanisms empirically.

Second, building on a massive number of detailed empirical studies about the mechanisms of clientelist exchange under contemporary institutional conditions of vote secrecy and often Australian ballot, a new module C of DALP II asks experts to score the organizational channels of clientelist exchange through “broker” services. This includes questions about the insertion of brokers into parties and clientelist exchanges, their task structures and their career trajectories. Module A of the survey is still devoted to general organizational questions (extensiveness and centralization of parties), their bonds to civic associations and questions of party finance.

Third, DALP II enlarges the scope and diversity of policy issue positions that might become controversial between parties by including global warming policies, urban-rural relations, corruption and subnational decentralization. For each issue, experts now supply both scores of parties’ issue positions as well as issue salience. DALP II also features two items about the prominence of populist rhetoric in parties’ political appeals. As in DALP I, additional country-specific issues were added in order to ensure that summary estimates of programmatism of party competition would not be biased by ignoring idiosyncratic national or regional issues. This included, for example, European integration issues only in the European countries, international alignments (e.g. with Russia, the U.S. or China), regional integration, coping with organized crime, constitutional reform, civil liberties, or specific economic questions (concerning control of raw materials production, infrastructure, etc.), to name just a few.

In each national survey, political parties have been included that have some impact on the distribution of political power by (1) having coalition (bargaining) potential to make or break majorities in legislatures or executives that make binding decisions and/or (2) having “spoiler” potential to diminish the coalition bargaining power of the first set of parties. There is no hard-and-fast simple rule to determine which parties must be included in a national survey, and the general rule was to err on the inclusive side, provided that would keep the total number of parties scored by experts to fewer than—or certain not much more than—10 parties per country. As a rule of thumb, with 10 parties and a total of 50-60 subjects in five modules to be scored, experts were asked to provide up to 500 individual judgments in completing this survey. Only in a few instances with extremely fragmented and diversified party systems, DALP II imposed on experts the ordeal to score a larger number of parties (e.g., Malaysia, Denmark, India, Netherlands). The average number of parties across the DALP II countries was 6.6 and the median was 6.5.

Consistent with DALP I, DALP II aspired to include all polities around the globe that met at least the following two criteria: (1) more than 2 million inhabitants; (2) civil and political rights of no worse than Freedom House scores of 4.0 over a run of years preceding the data collection. In DALP II, we added as a reference point the inclusion of all countries that had a Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem) liberal democracy index score equal to or greater than 0.30 on a 1.0-point scale.

But both DALP surveys also covered a few countries slightly smaller than two million inhabitants, such as the Baltic countries or Moldova. Both surveys also feature prominent countries with definitely unfree and/or unfair multi-party elections. In DALP I, this applied to Angola, Egypt, Morocco, Russia and Venezuela. Three of these abolished any semblance of multiparty competition in recent years so only Angola and Morocco are left in DALP II. Also missing from DALP II are Mali, Nicaragua and Niger, all countries without even a pretense of free and fair elections. But DALP II added some new countries not covered in DALP I, namely Bosnia & Hercegovina, Kosovo, Lesotho, Liberia, Montenegro, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tunisia (pre-2021 scoring) and Zimbabwe. So, the country overlap between DALP I and DALP II is not perfect. Ultimately, the coverage went up from 90 countries in DALP I to 94 countries in DALP II.

In many countries, DALP II formally included academic “country anchors” who advised the core investigative team on (1) which parties to include, (2) how to adapt the survey (language of survey administration? Stylistic modifications?) and (3) what distinctive national issues to include. As experts, academics with advanced political science degrees teaching and conducting research on the electoral and partisan politics of their countries, whether residing inside that country or elsewhere, whether in universities or independent research/survey institutes/firms, constituted the core target group of survey participants. Especially in countries with small academic establishments, qualification criteria were relaxed to include PhD candidates (with local or international university residence), or academics and professionals in neighboring disciplines (political sociology, contemporary history, public law, etc.).

Rates of return on survey invitations of experts varied dramatically from lows of around 10% (France!) to highs of 90% (Jamaica!), depending on a variety of factors. But almost all countries are covered by between 12 and 20 completed surveys with a median of 16. The lowest returns with only 7 respondents were recorded in countries with small academic communities and/or other challenges (Lebanon, Lesotho, New Zealand). At the other extreme, in India, 101 political scientists, divided into four regions with distinctive patterns of national and regional party competitors, completed the survey. In Malaysia, 18 experts worked through the survey.

An expert survey raises many methodological flags widely debated in the discipline, and there is no space to review the pros and cons of different data generating channels to establish the empirics of democratic linkage patterns here. Let us nevertheless flag four important issue baskets that come into play:

- ▷ **Do differences in the “expertise” of the “experts” matter?** For each party, and after each survey module A through E, experts answered an item in which they indicated their confidence in their own judgments of parties. Checks in DALP I yielded no substantively meaningful correlations between experts’ judgments and levels of confidence in their knowledge.
- ▷ **Does experts’ political bias come into play in judgments?** Both DALP surveys include a question about experts’ degree of sympathy with the various parties they score in their countries. Thorough analysis of DALP I yielded very few statistically significant and substantively sizeable correlations between expert sympathies and patterns of scoring parties.
- ▷ **Differential item functioning (DIF) of the survey scores?** Experts may interpret the survey scoring scales differently, often contingent upon national context of experiences and debates. For this reason, scoring items have been framed in concrete, close to observable operational patterns and benchmarks for scale interpretation—for example at the beginning of module B about targeted transactions—are provided. DALP II also includes several vignettes at the tail end of the survey enabling scholars to recalibrate survey scores.
- ▷ **The aggregation problem of summary “national” party scores:** National scores of political party attributes and institutions typically hide often substantial subnational variance across places. The variance in experts’ scores of the same attribute of a specific party may be an indicator of the subnational variance of the attribute scored, when controlled for experts’ assessment of the confidence in their own judgment. To correct for subnational heterogeneity, one may therefore consider weighting the mean expert jury score of a party’s attribute by the standard deviation of experts’ judgments and thereby give lower weight to highly heterogeneous assessments in comparative analysis.

In the now following empirical descriptive characterization of party linkages in Malaysia we will, however, report only individual party or national party system mean scores, weighted by the electoral size of parties in their systems. More fine-grained data exposition has to await detailed examination. Some of the scattergrams report DALP I 2008 and DALP II 2024 scores of the parties in this country or national scores across countries. Where parties or countries were included in the DALP survey only at one of these two datapoints, scores for the missing data point are entered as zero (0). This means that the party or country positions would be either located on the x-axis, if values are missing for 2024, or on the y-axis, if data points are missing for 2008.

Altogether, the descriptive patterns reported here and the further analyses to be performed with the democratic accountability data set have to be interpreted with caution. Expert judgments involve huge measurement error derived from (1) experts' limited knowledge and experience with the political features they assess, (2) judgment errors that creep in due to the aggregation of assessments to the national level, (3) expert political bias and (4) differential item functioning (DIF) due to myopic localized experience with the party attribute to be scored in the DALP II survey.

These data measurement liabilities imply that no or small sample of empirical attribute observations—say, in one or only a very few countries—are likely to yield reliable and valid insights. Scholars may attribute more confidence in results derived from broad comparative analysis of large numbers of parties and countries in the DALP II dataset.

### 3 Preliminary Findings: Global Patterns of Party Competition and Malaysia in Comparative Context

For the most part, the displays present variable scores at the level of whole countries, scattergrams of political parties, with parties in Malaysia singled out, and some tables with more detailed scores. As indicated above, **country scores** constitute the mean of a polity's party scores, with each party score weighted by the electoral share that party obtained in the national legislative election most proximately held before the DALP data collections in 2008-9 or in 2022-4. For purposes of illustration, we will a few times also show scattergrams of the party level. About 280 of the over 600 parties scored in the 94 countries in DALP II were also covered in DALP I. Scattergrams comparing observations at the two time points only include these parties, while national averages include all parties for each time point. So national level changes in a linkage's importance from 2008-9 to 2022-24 do not allow inferences about whether those changes were due to party turnover—the mergers and splits of parties existing in 2008-9, or their demise and the rise of new parties—or due to a genuine change of persisting parties' linkage strategies. More detailed investigations with the DALP datasets of course need to examine both party and country level variance and change over time.

An important descriptive aspect concerns the extent of continuity and change in the features of parties' and entire polities' linkage strategies. Given the lapse of 14 years between the two DALP surveys and the often profound changes that have taken place in the countries covered in these surveys both in terms of political economy as well as the composition of party systems — indicated by the number, relative electoral strength and executive office participation of the competing political parties—it might be a fair prior to expect a great deal of change over time and relatively low leverage, when using a party's or a country's linkage feature in 2008 as predictor of the same feature in 2022-4. The challenge of coming to grips theoretically and empirically with the observation of continuity over time may be therefore just as hard—or even harder—than accounting for the observable changes.

Malaysia represents one of Southeast Asia's longest-standing semi-democratic regimes, characterized by continuous electoral competition since independence in 1957, yet dominated for decades by a single political coalition. Its political system is formally a constitutional monarchy under a federal parliamentary democracy, but in practice has long operated as a hybrid regime in which electoral participation coexists with deep structural constraints on opposition and institutional checks. The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) led the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition—together with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)—for over six decades, securing uninterrupted control from independence until 2018. According to V-Dem (2024), Malaysia's Liberal Democracy Index stands at around 0.36 and its Electoral Democracy Index at 0.52 on a range from 0 to 1, indicating moderate pluralism with limited constraints on the executive and uneven rule of law. Freedom House (2024) classifies the country as "Partly Free" (59/100), citing structural limits on civil liberties, restricted media freedom, and patronage-based governance.

The evolution of Malaysia's party system reflects a gradual shift from hegemonic dominance toward competitive multiparty fragmentation. In the postcolonial era, BN institutionalized itself as the archetype of consociational rule, balancing ethnic representation across Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities while maintaining Malay political primacy through affirmative action policies such as the New Economic Policy (NEP). However, by the late 1990s, the authoritarian consensus fractured under the twin pressures of economic crisis and reform movements. The 1998 Reformasi protests, triggered by the dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, gave rise to a new generation of opposition forces such as Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). In the 2008 election (DALP I period), BN lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time, marking the emergence of a genuinely competitive system. A decade later, the 2018 election brought an unprecedented transfer of power when Pakatan Harapan (PH)—a reformist, multiracial coalition led by PKR and the Democratic Action Party (DAP)—ousted BN. Yet, instability followed: the 2020 "Sheraton Move" triggered the collapse of the PH government and installed a new conservative-Islamist coalition, Perikatan Nasional (PN), led by BERSATU and PAS. By 2022 (DALP II period), Malaysia had evolved into a three-bloc system—PH, BN, and PN—in which no single coalition held a majority, reflecting a transition from long-term one-party dominance to competitive but fluid pluralism.

Institutionally, Malaysia's parties exhibit uneven degrees of entrenchment and high volatility. Some, like UMNO, DAP, and PAS, maintain strong organizational depth and loyal voter bases, reflecting decades of grassroots networks and ethnoreligious embeddedness. Others, such as BERSATU and WARISAN, are newer formations rooted in elite realignments or regional grievances. V-Dem's Party Institutionalization Index places Malaysia at around 0.85 in 2024, indicating a high level of institutionalized party organization. Party switching (political "frogging") has become a chronic problem, leading to frequent government collapses despite competitive elections. Polarization remains limited in ideological terms—most parties converge on pragmatic, centrist economic policies—but ethnic and religious cleavages remain potent, structuring voter alignments along Malay-Muslim versus multiracial-secular lines. The rise of PAS and BERSATU within PN signals an ongoing Islamization of political discourse. At the same time, DAP and PKR continue to champion secularism and civic pluralism, producing a latent but manageable polarization between ethno-religious identity and inclusive democracy.

Economically, Malaysia ranks among the region's upper-middle-income states, with a GDP per capita of around USD 12,000 in 2024. Between 1980 and 2024, the GDP per capita rose by 10,690 U.S. dollars, though the increase followed an uneven trajectory rather than a consistent upward trend. However, inequality and regional disparity remain entrenched. The state maintains extensive involvement in the economy through sovereign investment arms (e.g., Khazanah Nasional) and government-linked

companies that dominate key sectors such as energy, banking, and telecommunications. Corruption scandals—including the 1MDB affair—have undermined public trust in institutions and eroded the credibility of long-ruling parties. The World Bank Governance Indicators (2023) show a considerable level of government effectiveness with 79/100 but lower for Control of Corruption (61/100). Patronage remains central to Malaysia’s political economy: distribution of state resources, contracts, and positions is closely tied to coalition alignment, particularly in rural constituencies. Public employment and state development programs serve as mechanisms of electoral reward, blurring the boundaries between public service and partisan control.

Demographically, Malaysia’s population of 30.8 million is highly diverse: roughly 58% Malay, 12% Other Bumiputera, 22% Chinese, and 6.5% Indian along with other ethnic backgrounds. This multiethnic composition fundamentally shapes party competition and linkage strategies. UMNO and PAS appeal primarily to Malay-Muslim constituencies, emphasizing religion and communal protection; DAP attracts urban, middle-class Chinese and multiracial liberals; PKR and newer parties like BERSATU attempt to bridge ethnic lines but often revert to identity-based rhetoric. The country is excessively urbanized in the recent periods but rural areas—particularly in Malay-majority northern and eastern states—remain politically decisive and more susceptible to clientelistic mobilization. Ethnocultural tensions are managed through power-sharing rather than open conflict, though the constitutional privileging of Malay identity and Islam as the state religion continues to generate periodic friction.

Internationally, Malaysia’s position is stable and strategically balanced. It maintains close economic ties with China and the West while asserting neutrality in regional disputes. The country’s semi-democratic regime and state-led developmental model have allowed it to combine economic modernization with political control. However, declining institutional trust, rising identity polarization, and the erosion of party coherence have weakened the once-stable linkage between voters and political elites. In a comparative perspective, Malaysia represents a hybrid democracy in which competitive elections coexist with patronage-driven politics, fragmented coalitions, and constrained accountability. The DALP II period captures a pivotal moment of democratic uncertainty: programmatic linkages remain underdeveloped, clientelistic strategies persist in rural strongholds, and charismatic leadership and ethnic appeals substitute for ideological clarity. Yet, the resilience of electoral institutions and the ongoing contestation among coalitions underscore Malaysia’s potential for gradual democratic consolidation—if parties can transform personalized and patronage-based linkages into durable, policy-centered competition.

### 3.1 Programmatic Linkage Effort

To our knowledge, the vast political science literature on elections, parties and party systems offers no detailed measure of the “programmatic effort” or “programmatism” that parties and countries’ entire party systems display. Investigators have operated with the degree to which voters or observers have been able to line up parties on a left-right spectrum or to classify parties as members of “left” or “right” party families. Others have used the amount of variance in voters’ choice among parties explained by voters’ issue positions, once holding constant for socio-demographic background conditions and other factors, as benchmark of party system programmatism. But none of these shortcuts provides a satisfactory general measure that could be meaningfully compared across a wide range of parties and countries. The DALP surveys incorporate a very simple score of programmatism in the summary module E of the surveys, requesting experts to score parties’ degree of programmatic effort on a 4-point scale. But, as in the case of clientelism below, the fine-grained information about experts’ scoring of parties on different issue positions makes it possible to develop a more sophisticated measure of programmatism with the DALP II dataset.

The DALP dataset also makes it possible to detect bias in the experts' scoring of parties, as it includes an item where experts indicate how sympathetic they are to a party they score. Given that experts are intellectuals and intellectuals prefer programmatic party competition over other linkage strategies, and especially clientelism (see below), is it the case that those who are sympathetic to a political party tend to attribute to it higher programmatism scores than those who are unsympathetic to it? Initial analysis that will need to be followed up with more detailed investigation indicates that, indeed, there is a statistically significant, yet substantively small to moderate bias effect in experts' scoring of political parties' programmatism in the direction indicated. At the extreme, the average expert passionately sympathetic to a party would give it an about .13-.15 (depending on model specification, lower with more controls) higher programmatism score on a 0-1.0 scale (or a .40 to .50 higher score on a 1.0-4.0 scale) than the expert who passionately hates a political party.

The DALP I investigations in 2010 led to the construction of an unobtrusive, indirect, and much more detailed measure of parties' programmatic effort. It builds on what cues and information parties would have to supply to voters to enable the latter to distinguish among parties based on their programmatic positions. Parties need to be (1) internally **cohesive** on the policy position they take ("**Co**"), (2) **attribute salience** to those cohesive positions they embrace ("**Sal**") so that voters perceive them as consequential for parties' commitment to govern and these salient positions need (3) to make them distinctive ("**Di**") from other parties, if not create issue polarization ("**Po**"): CoSalDi or CoSalPo.

DALP I measured cohesiveness of a party's issue position with the standard deviation of an expert jury's scoring of party  $j$  on issue  $i$ . Salience was measured only indirectly by the percentage of an expert jury that scored a party on an issue rather than skip the scoring opportunity, with fewer missing values meaning more salience. Polarization was measured by average dyadic distance of a focal party from each of its competitors. This measure increases in a linear fashion, considering more extreme divisions as more programmatic ("CoSalPo").

DALP II added a modified index. The cohesiveness measure is the same, but now experts rated the salience of each of a party's issue positions explicitly. Most importantly, the measure of polarization was changed. To allow voters to discern parties programmatically, their policy positions need to be distinctive. Salient, and distinct, but distinctiveness does not imply extremism. DALP II, therefore, capped the maximum party dyad differences beyond which distinctions would not a higher programmatism score. This yielded the new "CoSalDi" issue score.

**Party internal unity, salience and distinctiveness of issue positions** are all necessary conditions for a voter to use the party's programmatic signal for her programmatic choice function. If any single one of the three indicator signals is weak or missing, the programmatic voter might discard that issue from her party choice. In other words, the "programmatism" of a party's issue position is a multiplicative term of **cohesion (CO)**  $\times$  **salience (SAL)**  $\times$  **polarization (POL)** (or **distinctiveness: DI**). We constructed this interaction by first standardizing the observed scores of parties on each of the three components on 0-1.0 scales, thereby weighting each component's contribution to the programmatism index equally, and then multiplying the component scores, yielding a **CoSalPo** 0.0-1.0 scale (in DALP II: a **CoSalDi** 0.0-1.0 scale) for each party's issue position.

The next challenge of operationalizing party programmatism concerns how to move from parties' individual issue programmatism to a **summary aggregate score of each party's programmatic appeals** when facing competitors and voters. Except for "niche" parties that may focus on a singular salient issue not addressed by conventional parties (Save small farmers Protect the environment! Stop immigration!) or a restricted issue domain, parties have to broaden and diversify their issue stances and are not entirely free to choose issue salience. Legislative parties do not control the policy agenda, are

subject to national party system agendas, and therefore have to bundle positions on a broad range of issues to be programmatically attractive—and predictable — to information seeking voters. This does not mean that parties will need to formulate distinctive, salient, issue positions in cohesive fashion across **the entire universe of policy issues**. But a combined index of parties' programmatic appeals should at least average the parties' highest CoSalPo (CoSalDi) scores on an issue range commanding the highest CoSalDi or CoSalPo multiples.

For reasons of robustness, we explored a whole range of aggregation rules, but found the following three most useful to deploy in further work:

- **CoSalPo\_4 or CoSalDi\_4:** Take the two strongest CoSalPo scores of the three economic issue scales in the survey (D1: redistribution to the poor; D2: state intervention in the economy; D3: ensuring encompassing social protection) PLUS whatever two additional issues yield the highest CoSalPo score for a party, whether they are from the common DALP II survey or the country-specific adaptations.
- **CoSalDi\_econ:** Take the four strongest CoSalDi scores dealing with economic allocation from the entire list of issues. There are between 5 and 8 economic issues to select from in the national DALP II surveys, depending on how many unique national issues tapped economic distribution.
- **CoSalDi\_non-econ:** Take the four strongest CoSalPo scores dealing with non-economic issues on questions of socio-political governance (civil liberties, law&order, individual autonomy, or gender/family) and/or with the delineation of collective identities (multiculturalism, nationalism, migration). Across countries, the number of issues to pick from varies somewhat contingent upon whether unique national issues have economic-distributive character or not.

The individual party summary CoSalPo or CoSalDi programmatism indices, then, permit the creation of **national party system summary scores of programmatism** by averaging the party index scores, weighted by each party's electoral success in the most recent legislative election preceding the DALP data collection. We are presenting here only the CoSalPo\_4 party and CoSalPo\_4.nwe national weighted scores (nwe) for 2008-9 and 2022-4, plus a comparison of CoSalPo\_4.nwe and CoSalDi\_4.nwe for 2022-4. Examining party and national scores for the "old" index — CoSalPo, without new salience variable and no cap on polarization — how strongly are parties and polities deploying programmatic appeals and how has this unfolded over time?

Turning to the data and the relative position of Malaysia, Panels 1A and 1B of Figure 1 render scattergrams of the CoSalPo\_4 programmatism scores of political parties (1A) covered in both surveys and country averages (1B) for DALP I (2008-9) and DALP II (2022-4). The diagonal lines indicate where parties (countries) would be situated, if there was perfect congruence between the two datapoints. Given the unavoidably large measurement error with indicator building exercises of this nature, the data reveal substantial stability over time. Naturally, there is more variance at the level of individual parties than among country averages. The established Western democracies come out as most programmatic and polarized — led by the United States — compared to other regions. Sub-Saharan African parties and democracies, as well as many of those located in Central America and the Caribbean, signal the least programmatic effort by their parties. At the national level, Scandinavian parties' CoSalPo\_4 was unexpectedly low in 2008-9, and at the time even after thorough investigation in collaboration with country anchors no specific reason for these unexpected scores could be established. CoSalPo\_4 2022-4 scores in this region move those countries back into line with expectations.

Panel 1C compares 2022-4 CoSalPo\_4.nwe and CoSalDi\_4.nwe scores at the country level. So, in CoSalDi there is no linear higher score for extremism beyond a threshold level of distinctiveness

awarded and salience is based on a direct expert score on an original raw 1-10 scale. Moreover, the four highest CoSalDi issues are drawn from a somewhat richer set of issue topics. As a consequence, many parties and countries show somewhat higher levels of programmatism than in the previous CoSalPo\_4 scoring scheme. Nevertheless, the correlation between both scoring schemes and the general relative location of different parties, countries, and even regional clusters remains about the same across both measurement strategies. Checking the scatters relative to the diagonal line indicating where perfect stability over fourteen years would be situated, it appears that there was, on average, a moderate increase in programmatism over time at least at the national level. There are more countries above than below the diagonal continuity line. Yet this finding clashes a bit with the party level scattergram 1A that shows more continuing parties with declining programmatism than increasing programmatism. Future analysis will have to resolve this tension by checking whether new parties that did not exist in 2008-9 and are therefore not mapped in Panel 1A, but contribute to a country's average national CoSalDi scores in 2022-4 are systematically more programmatic than older parties that persisted over a period of typically more than a quarter century.

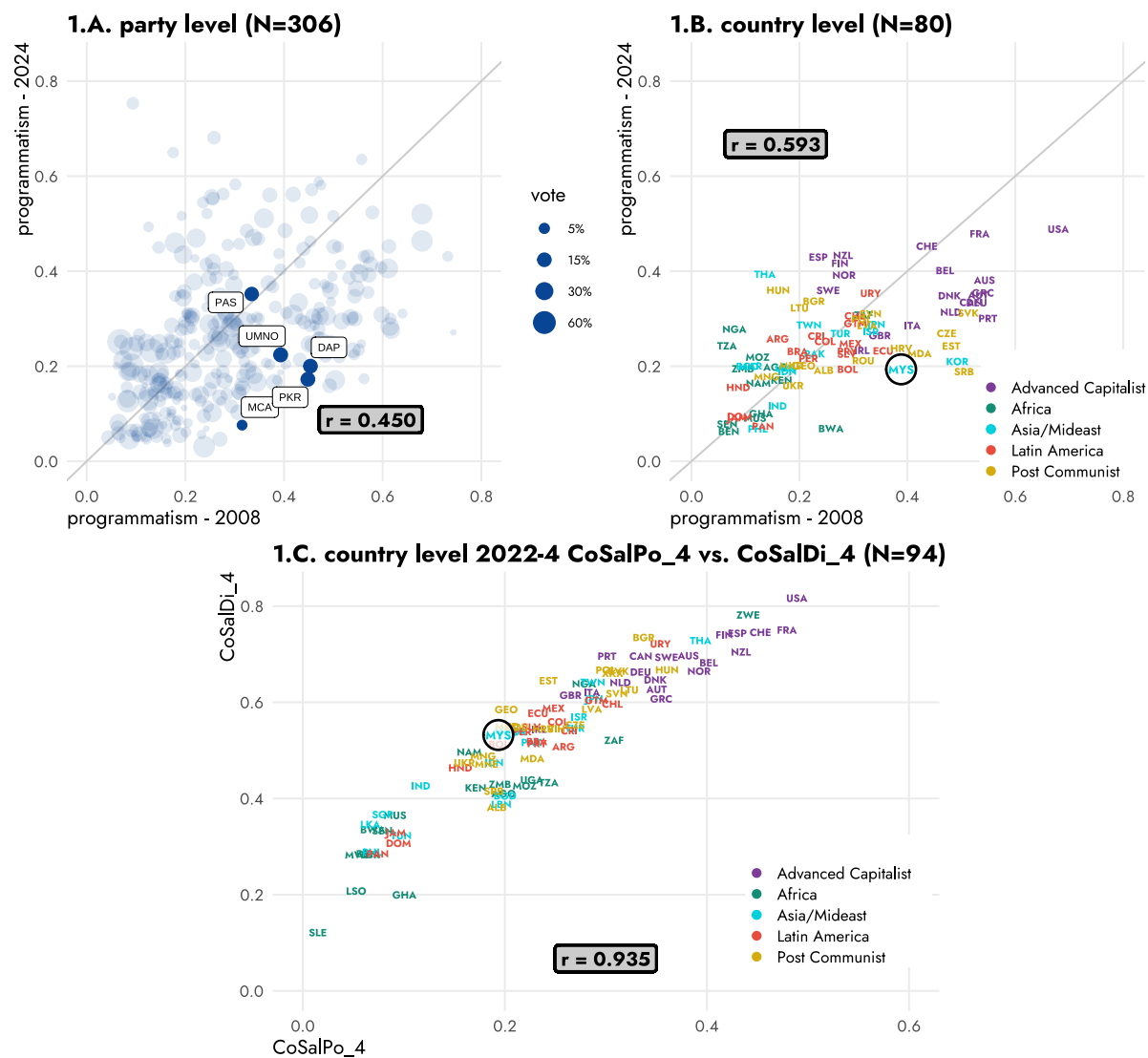
The data clearly establish that the party foundations of democratic “responsible partisan government” based on parties advertising distinctive policy platforms is a work in progress for many individual parties and in many electoral democracies. **Programmatic partisan appeals scarcely register in many parties and countries!** It is therefore empirically inaccurate to presume that the democratic game is one of competing policy positions and claims everywhere. So, what other linkage mechanisms might parties bring into play? Let us check out first those requiring quite little organizational and informational effort on the part of politicians and their parties.

Malaysian party competition has experienced a marked decline in its programmatic orientation over the last decade. The leading coalition forces within Pakatan Harapan (PH)—notably PKR and DAP—as well as UMNO, have each seen their programmatic appeals drop by roughly half since the first DALP wave. Within Barisan Nasional (BN), both UMNO and MCA exhibit similar downward trends, underscoring the erosion of policy-based differentiation even among historically dominant actors. The Islamist PAS, now aligned with Perikatan Nasional (PN), stands out as the most consistent and programmatic party in relative terms (Figure 1A), reflecting its long-term ideological grounding and disciplined organizational structure.

In comparative perspective, Malaysia was positioned near the higher end of the Asian and Middle Eastern group in the 2008–09 DALP I survey, approaching the levels of some advanced capitalist and post-communist democracies. However, across the following decade and a half, its overall degree of programmaticness declined by half, placing the country closer to the global median in the 2022–24 DALP II wave, as measured by both CoSalDi\_4 and CoSalPo\_4 indicators (Figure 1B and 1C). This trajectory signals an ongoing weakening of issue-based competition in favor of more clientelistic, coalition-driven, and personality-centered linkages.

Table 1 also shows the general decline in programmatic appeals in Malaysia. Within the limited programmatism, non-economic issue salience is significantly greater than the economic issues, especially by PAS and UMNO, followed by newly established BERSATU and WARISAN, and the other smaller parties. These trends indicate that parties rely more on identity, moral, symbolic, and religious issues.

Figure 1: Programmatic Linkage Effort (CoSalPo\_4) 2008-9 and 2022-24



**Note:** In all figures in this dossier,  $N$  in plot titles stands for the number of countries or parties for which valid information is available for both the X and Y axes, while  $r$ , labeled in the plot, is the simple correlation coefficient between the two variables in the scatterplot.

Table 1: Programmatic Appeals of Political Parties in Malaysia

|                                          | Support in legislative elections before DALP |                | DALP I        |                | DALP II   |              |                  |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|
|                                          | DALP I 2008-9                                | DALP II 2022-4 | CoSalPo_4 (I) | CoSalPo_4 (II) | CoSalDi_4 | CoSalDi_econ | CoSalDi_NON-econ |
| <b>Parties in both 2008-9 and 2022-4</b> |                                              |                |               |                |           |              |                  |
| UMNO                                     | 32.60                                        | 16.43          | 0.3931        | 0.2240         | 0.6385    | 0.3335       | 0.7069           |
| PKR                                      | 13.75                                        | 15.74          | 0.4484        | 0.1727         | 0.4960    | 0.2870       | 0.4893           |
| DAP                                      | 11.85                                        | 15.61          | 0.4535        | 0.2002         | 0.5335    | 0.2679       | 0.5163           |
| PAS                                      | 14.65                                        | 14.56          | 0.3344        | 0.3520         | 0.6666    | 0.2771       | 0.8355           |
| MCA                                      | 12.95                                        | 4.29           | 0.3150        | 0.0761         | 0.3252    | 0.2417       | 0.3412           |
| <b>Parties only in 2022-4</b>            |                                              |                |               |                |           |              |                  |
| BERSATU                                  |                                              | 13.55          |               | 0.1067         | 0.4393    | 0.2409       | 0.5333           |
| PBB                                      |                                              | 2.22           |               | 0.0812         | 0.4227    | 0.3305       | 0.3754           |
| WARISAN                                  |                                              | 1.82           |               | 0.0761         | 0.4247    | 0.2330       | 0.5186           |
| MIC                                      |                                              | 1.11           |               | 0.0690         | 0.3498    | 0.2478       | 0.3403           |

The various indicators of programmatism in individual parties and entire party systems deliver one unambiguous message: There is a great deal of variance even in the strenuous efforts parties invest in creating programmatic linkages to their voters, when focusing on their most cherished issues. In some parties — and countries — programmatism is quite intense, in others it appears to be a more secondary strategy. In very few parties and countries, however, programmatism plays no role at all. Programmatism is always a component of parties' linkage profiles, albeit to a varying extent.

Programmatism in Malaysia is weak and has declined notably since the first DALP wave. Once positioned among the more programmatic systems in Asia and the Middle East, Malaysia has lost nearly half of its earlier programmatic strength, now ranking closer to the global median. Major coalitions such as PH and BN, including parties like PKR, DAP, and UMNO, have all decreased their programmatic appeals, while PAS remains the most programmatic and consistent actor. Overall, these patterns show that party competition has become less policy-driven and thus might be more shaped by alternative linkage types.

One implication of this pattern of programmatic linkages is that a crucial premise of the normative and positive responsible partisan model of representative democracy is empirically weakly articulated in many democracies. Parties and party systems in these instances are either feebly responsive to their electoral constituencies or have to generate political linkage in other ways. These are the mechanisms explored next, in an order starting from linkages that require rather few organizational party investments on the part of politicians and informational attention on the part of voters to those that are more demanding in this regard.

### 3.2 Personalistic Linkage Effort

Name recognition of individual politicians may result from many sources but become particularly important for the electoral fortunes of political parties, if they have a hard time investing in other, more resource- and organization-intensive transactional forms of political linkage. New parties, novel party systems, parties during and after a systemic crisis all thrive on featuring political “solutions” to novel challenges by impersonating their claims in a “savior” personality. Both DALP surveys ask experts to rate the importance of individual personalities, their personal coattails that may be associated with the quality of “charismatic” authority, for the linkage appeal of parties in their countries.

**Figure 2: Emphasis on Personalistic (Charismatic) Party Leadership Trait Linkage, 2008-9 and 2022-24**

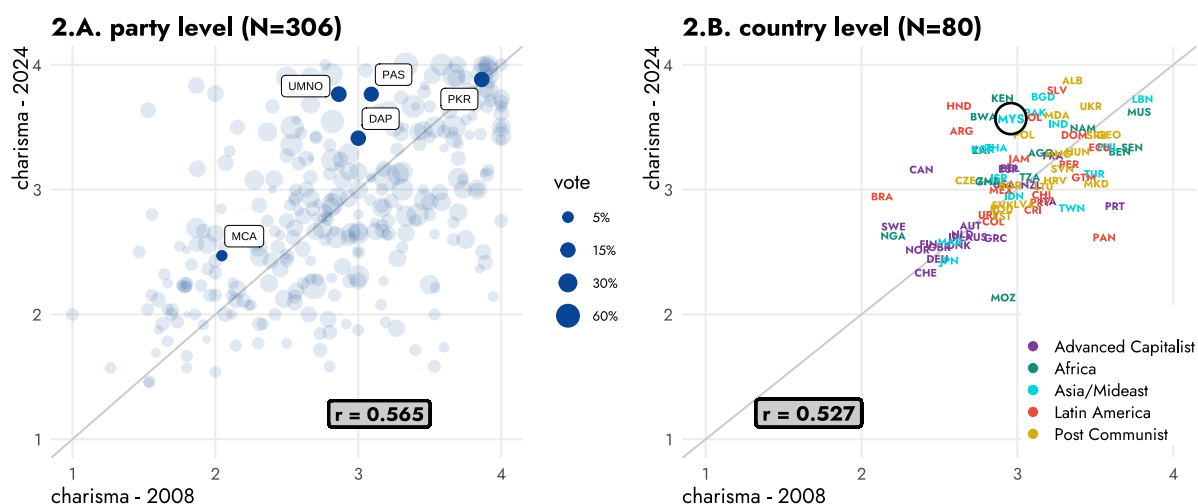


Figure 2A reveals a message about the use of personalistic linkage by parties that experts rated both in 2008-9 and 2022-24 that Max Weber already delivered. While there is some continuity over the span of more than a decade, personal appeal is a fleeting, variable quality of politicians that easily vanishes over time. Many parties that showed strong personalistic leadership appeal in 2008-9 have lost that quality in 2022-24, but other parties made up for this by increasing the profile of their party leaders. Also Figure 2B reveals that when aggregated to the country level — aggregating older and younger political parties, with the latter not being included in Figure 2A — there is no substantial increase or decline of personalistic linkage appeal over the 14-15 year time span. The variance in the role of leadership personality for linkages over this period appears to be stronger in less institutionalized party systems in newer democracies of Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe, whereas the highly institutionalized Western party systems devote relatively little emphasis to leadership personality and coattail effects. The widely prophesized personalization and “presidentialization” of Western parliamentary democracies are not echoed by these data.

Malaysian parties display a strong and rising reliance on personalistic leadership. Figure 2A reveals that PKR stands out as the most charismatic and consistently leader-centered party, reflecting its long association with Anwar Ibrahim’s political appeal. PAS and UMNO have also increased their emphasis on personalistic linkages, reaching comparable levels to PKR across both DALP waves. DAP follows with a more moderate but still upward trend, while MCA, though much lower overall, has also become slightly more leader-driven. This overall pattern locates the country at the upper tier in the global spectrum (Figure 2B), highlighting the growing personalization of Malaysian politics, where party competition increasingly revolves around influential leaders rather than distinct programmatic platforms.

### 3.3 Linkage through Descriptive Representation

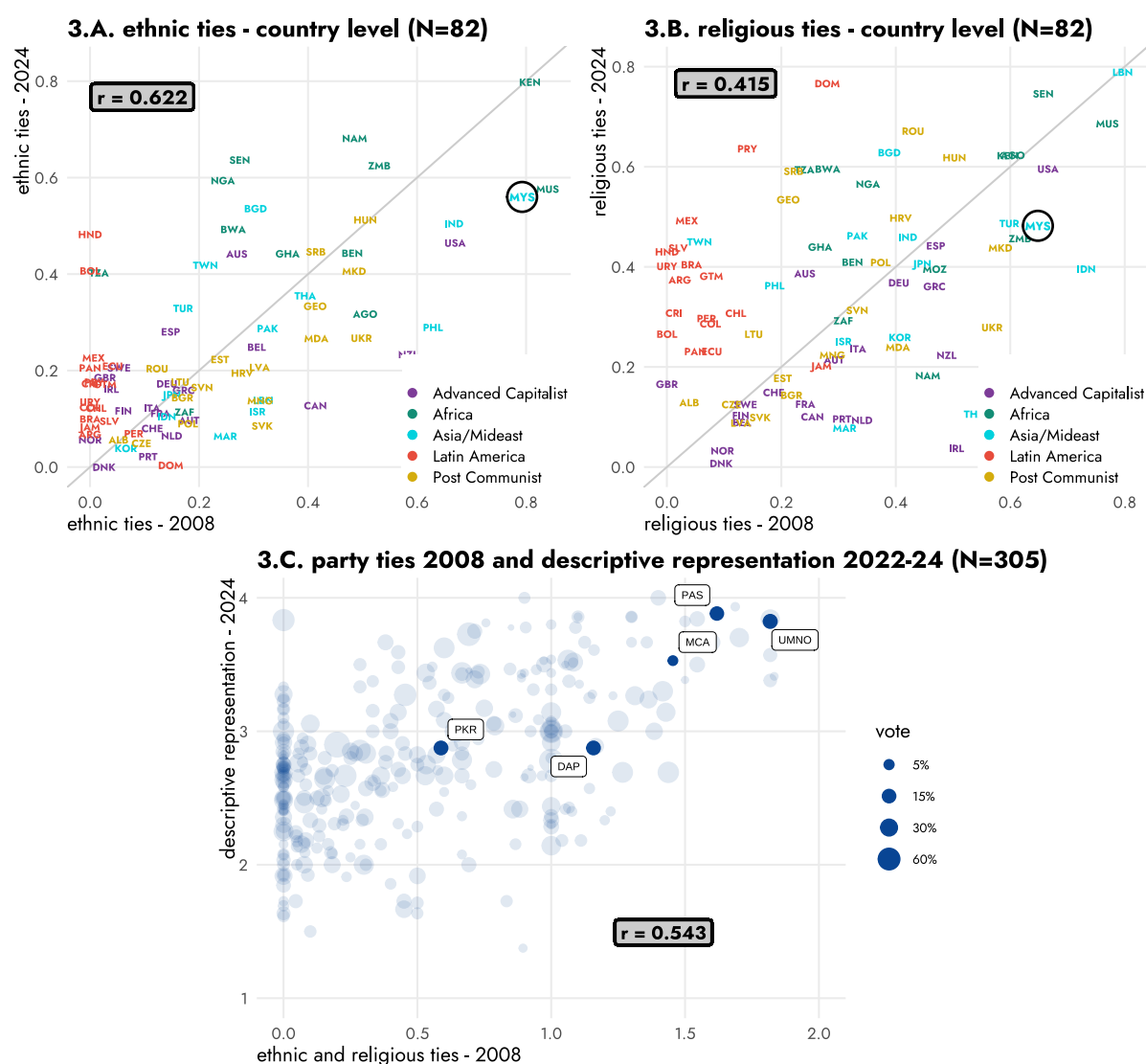
Descriptive representation builds on human traits that are instantly recognizable to most adults in almost any social interaction and quickly interpreted in their political significance against the background of everyday experiential knowledge about relations of kinship, markets, and public affairs: gender, place of residence, ethnicity, race, language or religion. Often enough, voters need to engage in little information processing to codify whatever signals of descriptive representation parties are emitting. And politicians need not make much effort to feature such traits, although the presence and strength of organized socio-cultural networks disseminating the descriptive representation signals may very much amplify their mobilizational capacity.

DALP I did not ask a summary question about the relevance experts attribute to a party’s efforts to mobilize through descriptive representation, generically conceived, but it had experts score the importance of organized ties to cultural associations of a religious or ethnic stripe. DALP II replicated these questions but added an explicit inclusive item about the role of descriptive representation for partisan mobilization, with six modes of descriptive representation listed (language, region of residence, gender, religion, ethnicity and race). Figures 3A and 3B report the national averages of political parties scored as exhibiting dense ties to ethnic or religious associations in 2008-09 and 2022-24. Panel C (Figure 3C), then, combines experts’ scoring of ethnic and religious ties in 2008 (horizontal x-axis scoring) and relates it to the more inclusive descriptive representation DALP II score in 2022-4 (vertical y-axis), albeit at the more fine-grained party-level, mapping the relationship among durable political parties observed both in 2008-9 as well as 2022-24.

Once again, there is a great deal of continuity, captured in the correlations for 2008-9 and 2022-24 country averages of ethnic and religious partisan ties, but also divergence, with select parties in

some countries substantially increasing their ethnocultural moorings and others loosening them. But the extreme areas of the diagrams are empty. Entire party systems did not go from low to high descriptive linkage politics to the opposite extreme. Countries at the lower end of descriptive representation in both surveys tend to be Western democracies, with the glaring exception of the United States which scores high on both. There is no over-time trend visible in the data that either religious or ethnic descriptive representation may have decreased or increased. Panels 3A and 3B omit the Latin American countries, as the Spanish translation of the DALP I survey question unfortunately restricted experts to indicate a single type of associational linkage among seven options (business, workers, women's, ethnic, religious, neighborhood, ecological) for each party, whereas scoring templates in other countries instructed experts to check whichever linkage type applied to a party.

**Figure 3: Party Bonds to Civic Associations 2008-9 and 2022-24, and Descriptive Representation 2022-24**



**Note:** In this figure, data from DALP I referring to Latin American countries are not comparable with the most recent version due to a questionnaire issue (see DALP I Codebook for more information).

Consistent with that pattern of trendless continuity and diversity, when scoring parties' reliance on descriptive linkages writ large in 2022-24 and comparing them to ethno-religious partisan linkages

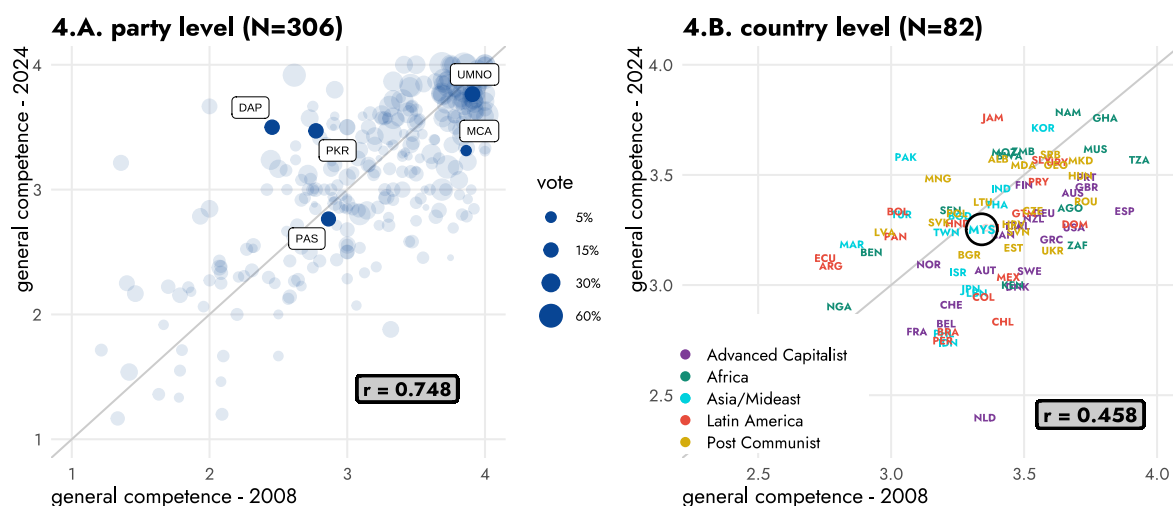
only in 2008-9, such inclusive 2022-24 linkage scores tend to be higher than the ethno-religious linkages only (Panel 3C). It is in this additional increments — especially among parties that did not exhibit religious or ethnic ties in 2008-9 — where modes of descriptive representation come into play that were not tapped in 2008-9, such as concerning regionalism, language and gender relations.

At the country level, Malaysia exhibits among the strongest ethnic linkages globally, maintaining high scores across both DALP waves despite a slight decline since 2008–09 (Figure 3A). Religious ties are somewhat less salient but follow a similar trend, reflecting the continued centrality of ethnoreligious identity in Malaysian politics (Figure 3B). At the party level, UMNO, PAS, and MCA stand clearly above the global average (Figure 3C), embodying their deep roots in communal representation—Malay-Muslim, Islamic, and Chinese constituencies respectively. PKR and DAP follow with lower but still significant connections, reflecting their multiethnic but nonetheless identity-conscious bases. Overall, Malaysia’s party–society linkages remain firmly structured along ethnic and religious lines, underscoring the persistence of identity-based mobilization over universal or programmatic representation.

### 3.4 Governing Record and Reputation for Capacity to Govern as Linkage Mechanism

Valence-competence-governability mechanisms of linkage building work mostly for or against government incumbents, and through retrospective economic voting about real income levels, growth, inflation, and social security. On occasion, major legislative achievements, or the management of momentous crises (financial, terrorism/war related, natural catastrophes), may enter the “brand” of political parties and contribute to their halo of solving governability challenges. On the negative side, a history of corruption may taint the capacity of parties to invoke governability as a linkage appeal. With regard to economic performance, but probably even more so when it comes to party performance facing military-terrorist challenges or natural catastrophes, the individual level mechanism is likely to be a mode of socio-tropic appraisal, where voters consider the impact of party performance on the collective, not primarily egocentrically on just one’s very own fortunes within a macro-societal context. But egocentric and sociotropic evaluation are closely intertwined: If a party is perceived as mismanaging a crisis and exposes many people to harm, even an unaffected voter may reason that support of the party is risky and she may not get off lightly the next time that very same party is called upon to face a challenge.

Figure 4: Valence-Competence-Governability Linkage 2008-9 and 2022-24



Concerning durable, more institutionalized parties covered by both DALP I and II, experts' assessment of parties' inclinations to run on their capacity to govern is extremely consistent across the 13-15 year time span from 2008-9 to 2022-24. This continuity is a bit less clearcut when inspecting aggregate national level averages of parties deploying this linkage mechanism. The difference is probably due to the fact that the latter information incorporates the many new parties that have entered party competition in most countries, including the established Western democracies, over the past fifteen years. The decline in parties' ability to use their capacity to govern as competitive linkage appeal is particularly pronounced among affluent Western European and Anglo-Saxon settler democracies, here identified by the region enclosed by the red oval situated substantially below the 2008-9/2022-24 performance indifference diagonal. In all these countries, experts view parties now as much less able to rely on governability appeals than they did in 2008. The fallout of the financial crisis no doubt has contributed to this change of mind.

At the party level (Figure 4A), UMNO and MCA score the highest on the valence-competence-governability linkage, reflecting their long histories in government and established reputations for administrative experience, though both declined slightly between DALP I and DALP II. DAP and PKR follow closely, showing a moderate but rising emphasis on governing capacity, corresponding with their increased participation in government coalitions in recent years. PAS remains the lowest, consistent with its outsider and ideologically driven profile. At the country level (Figure 4B), Malaysia ranks around the global median on this linkage type, indicating a moderate reliance on perceptions of competence and managerial ability in electoral competition. Overall, while governing experience remains an electoral asset, Malaysia's fragmented and coalition-dependent system limits parties' ability to translate competence into consistent public trust.

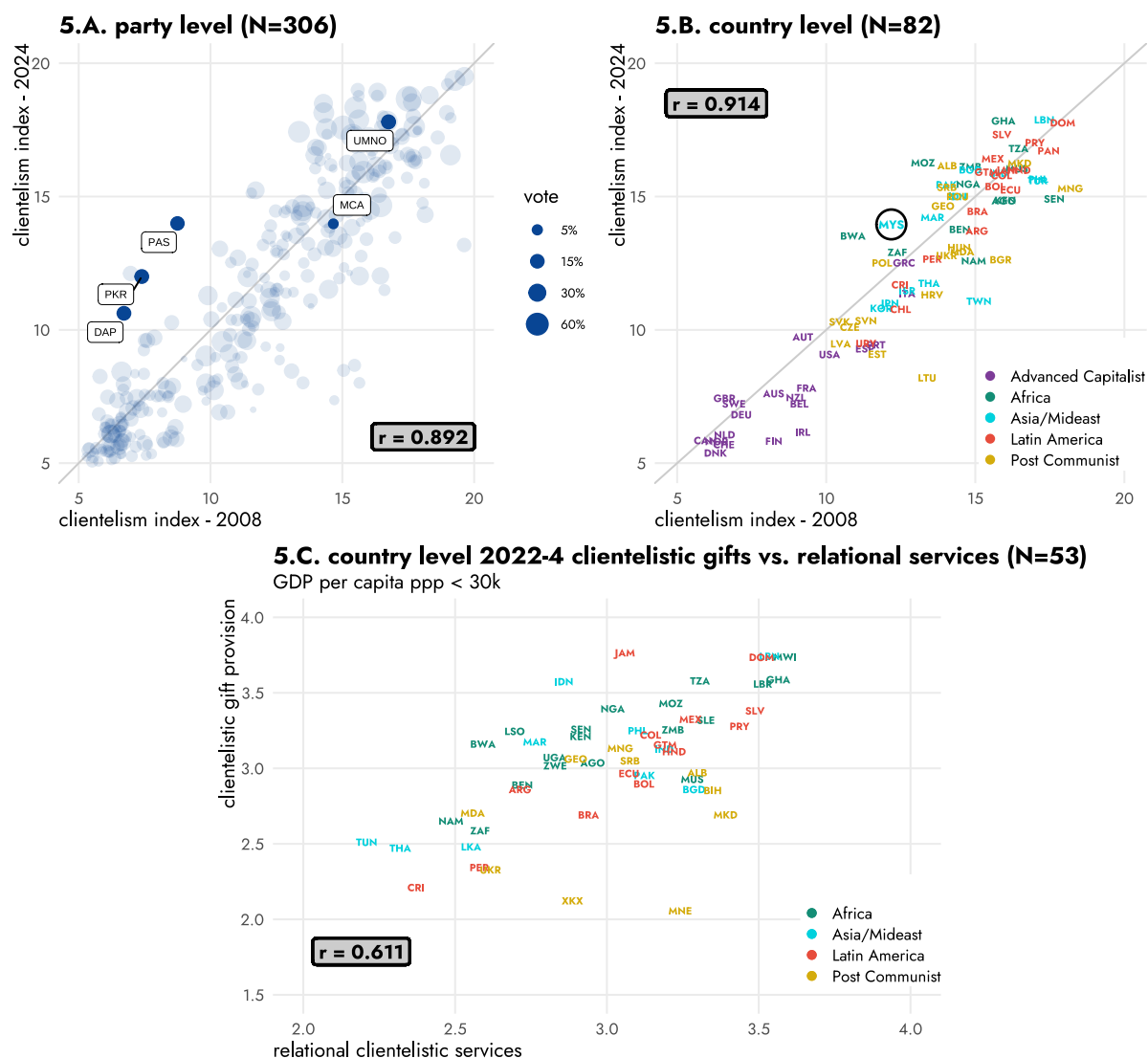
### 3.5 Direct Targeted Exchange with Aspiration of Specific Conditionality: Clientelist Linkage

Both clients and patrons presume and declare their exchanges to be contingent upon the other side's performance, but in practice both often defect (clientelism as "leaky bucket") and clientelist exchanges are rarely monitored, let alone enforced with sanctions. The consummation of contingent exchange is mostly aspirational. Nevertheless, indirect observation of the participants, organizational networks, self-enforcing deals, normative commitments, and the absence of powerful alternative linkage strategies often enough make partisan supply side and voter demand side actors enter such interactions. Clientelist linkages come in different stripes. On the one hand, there are spot-market interventions, mostly during campaigns, in which politicians attempt to materially induce, rhetorically persuade or maybe even verbally intimidate and threaten voters into supporting them. Voters often expect and even request such activities and the currency of exchange may be treats, entertainment, regulatory easements, and especially gifts which sometimes may include outright vote buying although most electoral laws formally outlaw that practice. On the other, there are sustained practices of "relational" clientelism, extending across electoral terms, in which political parties may supply patronage employment, social benefits that involve administrative discretion (e.g. access to unemployment or disability insurance, award of subsidized or state-owned housing, access to health facilities, etc.), or government procurement contracts to favored employers who then use their authority to induce wage earners to support the boss's favorite candidate or regulatory easements and favors.

In a global comparison, spot-market and relational clientelism techniques are empirically sufficiently correlated to create a single index of parties' electoral effort with clientelist inducements (B15). Panels A and B of Figure 5 display the experts' scores on this consolidated clientelism index for individ-

ual parties and countries in 2008 and 2022-24. There is just an amazing congruence between the scores across 14 years, yielding almost perfect correlation! An important implication is that apparently not much changed inside individual countries' party systems with increasing age of democracies, repeated rounds of party competition and often growing development and household affluence in their economies. Only in a handful of countries did clientelist practices substantially decline over time (Lithuania, Taiwan, Bulgaria, Argentina, Senegal...) (Figure 5, Panel B). It is the rare outlier country or party to which experts attest a meaningful effort to withdraw from clientelist practices.

**Figure 5: Clientelistic Linkage 2008-9 and 2022-24**



Heterogeneity of clientelistic practices between spot-market interventions and relational clientelism comes more into view when zooming in on differences between clientelistic transactions in countries with less than \$30,000 GDP per capita in Purchasing Power Parity (Figure 5C). It appears that substantial spot-market clientelism prevails mostly among poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas relational clientelism is relatively more pronounced in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Consider that the scale for spot-market clientelism runs from 1 through 4 and that for relational clientelism from 4 through 16 so that the indifference diagonal of equal relative runs from 1/4 through 2/8 and 3/12 to 4/16.

High spot-market effort in the upper third of the scale equals scores of 3 or greater, strong relational clientelism scores of 12 or larger.

Clientelistic linkages have become more pronounced in Malaysia over the last decade. Figure 5A reveals that UMNO continues to dominate this mode of linkage, reflecting its entrenched patronage networks and historical control over state resources. Other parties utilize clientelistic strategies to a lesser extent. At the country level, Figure 5B displays that the country ranks around the middle of the global distribution, indicating an electoral landscape where clientelism plays a significant role within a hybrid coalition-based party system.

As in case of the programmatism indices, a warning about substantively minor to moderate bias effects in experts' scoring of parties' clientelist transactions is in order. Initial explorations indicate that experts extremely unsympathetic to a party score that party's clientelism indicators about 13-23% higher than experts who are extremely sympathetic to the party (depending on model specification, at the low end with more controls). Since the majority of experts are not situated at the extremes of their party sympathy scales, and since the dispersion of party means over the entire clientelism scales is very wide, the substantive effect of bias on parties' (and countries') clientelism scores is therefore muted: It cannot affect much the relative positioning of parties' clientelism scores in the overall distribution across parties within countries or across all parties across countries, nor the average linkage scores aggregated to the country level.

One of the main areas of intense clientelism research in recent years has been focused on determining how exactly exchanges that the participants pretend to be contingent, but that de facto offer multiple opportunities for all sides to defect, as many contributions are unobserved and cannot be sanctioned, are empirically implemented with some measure of electoral success. A great deal of this research has focused on the role of intermediaries or "brokers" who organize the exchange between electoral candidates and voters. DALP II ran a battery of questions asking country experts to indicate the status of brokers in the exchange process. Candidates can rely on internal brokers who are paid party operatives or volunteer activists and on civil servants who are typically parachuted into their roles as a matter of party patronage. They can also draw on external notables and contractors, sometimes even criminals. Brokers, in turn, may have durable or intermittent singular dealings with brokers and/or clients in the exchange. Moreover, voters may have stationary or progressive career ambitions, with the latter striving to become electoral patrons themselves.

What are the broad patterns in which political parties employ brokers in clientelistic relations? Are there common configurations of brokerage use that characterize clientelistic parties? In order to answer this question, two steps are here involved. First, we restrict investigation of this question to the dataset incorporating only those parties for which clientelistic effort does matter. As a lower threshold, we posit a value aggregate clientelistic effort of 10.0 (B15). This leaves more than half of the 623 parties in the full DALP II dataset in the sample. Second, a factor analysis of how parties deploy brokerage practices among those 340 parties reveals clusters and variations of patterns of brokerage utilized by these parties. A varimax rotated factor analysis generates a major and a minor factor along which political parties vary (Table 2). The first factor discriminates between parties that involve brokers for the long haul and rely brokers on a more volunteer, uncompensated basis from parties that rely on only short-term brokerage relations and little reliance on uncompensated volunteers. The second factor separates parties that involve brokers mostly based on instrumental case-based performance rewards, whether as paid internal party functionaries (C1\_2), external notables and contractors (C1\_4), or even in criminal pursuit of material acquisition (C1\_5).

**Table 2: Principal Component Factor Analysis of Party Brokerage Services**

| Factor Variance Decomposition |          |            |            |            |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|
|                               | Variance | Difference | Proportion | Cumulative |
| <b>Factor1</b>                | 1.8992   | 0.3965     | 0.6459     | 0.6459     |
| <b>Factor2</b>                | 1.5027   | .          | 0.5111     | 1.1570     |

| Factor Loadings and Uniqueness |                                           |                 |         |            |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|
| Variable                       |                                           | Factor Loadings |         |            |
|                                |                                           | Factor1         | Factor2 | Uniqueness |
| <b>C1_1</b>                    | Civil service                             | 0.1986          | 0.2333  | 0.9061     |
| <b>C1_2</b>                    | Paid party operator                       | 0.2253          | 0.6893  | 0.4740     |
| <b>C1_3</b>                    | Volunteer party activist                  | 0.4256          | 0.1329  | 0.8012     |
| <b>C1_4</b>                    | Local notables                            | 0.0975          | 0.6113  | 0.6169     |
| <b>C1_5</b>                    | Criminals                                 | -0.0597         | 0.5883  | 0.6503     |
| <b>C2</b>                      | Long-term broker relation with candidates | 0.8883          | 0.1162  | 0.1975     |
| <b>C3</b>                      | Long-term broker relation with voters     | 0.8612          | 0.0525  | 0.2555     |
| <b>C4</b>                      | Brokers strive for electoral career       | 0.2899          | 0.4683  | 0.6966     |

Table 3 shows that Malaysian political parties increasingly rely on spot-market forms of clientelism rather than relational mechanisms. This pattern suggests a more fluid and competitive type of electoral clientelism, shaped by frequent party alternations and coalition politics. The factor analysis further indicates that parties primarily depend on long-term grassroots activists, party volunteers, members, and candidates as intermediaries to organize their clientelistic activities rather than paid brokers, local notables, or other informal actors. This reliance on internal party networks rather than external agents reflects the institutionalized yet transactional nature of Malaysia's clientelistic practices, where parties mobilize through semi-organized structures that blend patronage with formal political engagement.

Table 3: Profiles of Clientelism in Malaysia

|                                   | Support in legislative elections before DALP |                | DALP I                        |                                | DALP II                        |                                 |                     |                     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                   | DALP I 2008-9                                | DALP II 2022-4 | Spot-market clientelism B-1 I | Relational clientelism B-2-5 I | Spot-market clientelism B-1 II | Relational clientelism B-2-5 II | Scores for factor 1 | Scores for factor 2 |
|                                   |                                              |                |                               |                                |                                |                                 |                     |                     |
| Parties in both 2008-9 and 2022-4 |                                              |                |                               |                                |                                |                                 |                     |                     |
| UMNO                              | 32.60                                        | 16.43          | 3.1364                        | 3.4040                         | 3.7500                         | 3.5125                          | 0.5855              | 0.4918              |
| PKR                               | 13.75                                        | 15.74          | 1.4286                        | 1.4910                         | 2.8000                         | 2.3001                          | 0.1414              | -0.2778             |
| DAP                               | 11.85                                        | 15.61          | 1.3333                        | 1.3457                         | 2.6000                         | 2.0055                          | 0.0672              | -0.0838             |
| PAS                               | 14.65                                        | 14.56          | 1.8095                        | 1.7344                         | 2.8750                         | 2.7794                          | 0.8085              | -0.0782             |
| MCA                               | 12.95                                        | 4.29           | 2.6667                        | 2.9980                         | 3.0625                         | 2.7286                          | -0.2615             | 0.0816              |
| Parties only in 2022-4            |                                              |                |                               |                                |                                |                                 |                     |                     |
| BERSATU                           |                                              | 13.55          |                               |                                | 2.9167                         | 3.0801                          | -0.5356             | -0.1612             |
| PBB                               |                                              | 2.22           |                               |                                | 3.5556                         | 2.9972                          | 0.0467              | -0.2451             |
| WARISAN                           |                                              | 1.82           |                               |                                | 3.0000                         | 2.4866                          | -0.4800             | -0.5878             |
| MIC                               |                                              | 1.11           |                               |                                | 3.2143                         | 2.6978                          | -0.4741             | 0.2474              |

### 3.6 Direct Targeted Exchange without Specific Conditionality: Pork and Constituency Service Linkage in Malaysia

There is a sliding scale between clientelism, pork, and constituency service. All three of them target circumscribed groups, but there is more discretionary leverage and aspiration of implied contingency among those who organize clientelist exchange, both on the demand and the supply side. Clientelist exchange involves more fine-tuning toward voters whom candidates and their brokers hypothesize to be receptive to clientelistic inducements. Pork essentially involves a geographical approach to providing a club good in the hope that it will resonate with some citizens enough to spin their vote toward the credit-claiming politician. With constituency service the underlying theory of linkage is even more nebulous and diffuse: Office incumbents provide services — for example facilitating and expediting administrative procedures, such as getting a passport or a home building permit — in the vague hope that some beneficiaries will remember that service at election time and support the incumbent's reelection bid.

DALP I did not ask experts to appraise parties' constituency service and pork provision. So, the scattergram (Figure 6) here cannot combine expert judgments of the same activity at the times of DALP I and of DALP II. Instead, it presents experts' judgments of unconditional provision of club goods ("pork") on the x-axis and constituency service on the y-axis, aggregated to the level of average effort among countries, weighted by their electoral footprint. There is not any obvious correlation between the two practices, but the data reveal some familiar themes of the existing political science literature. Both particularistic practices — constituency service and pork provision — tend to be more prominent in single-member district electoral systems, as individual representatives are accountable to a precisely defined spatial constituency (see, for example, all the countries enclosed by the green oval). Likewise, there appears to be a generic aversion to the provision of particularistic benefits—and particularly those of the "pork" variety — in the most developed Western parliamentary democracies with proportional representation, net of institutional considerations concerning district size and the incorporation of personal candidate preference voting in PR systems through open list ballots.

**Figure 6: Targeting of Constituencies through Pork and Constituency Service Linkages 2022-24**

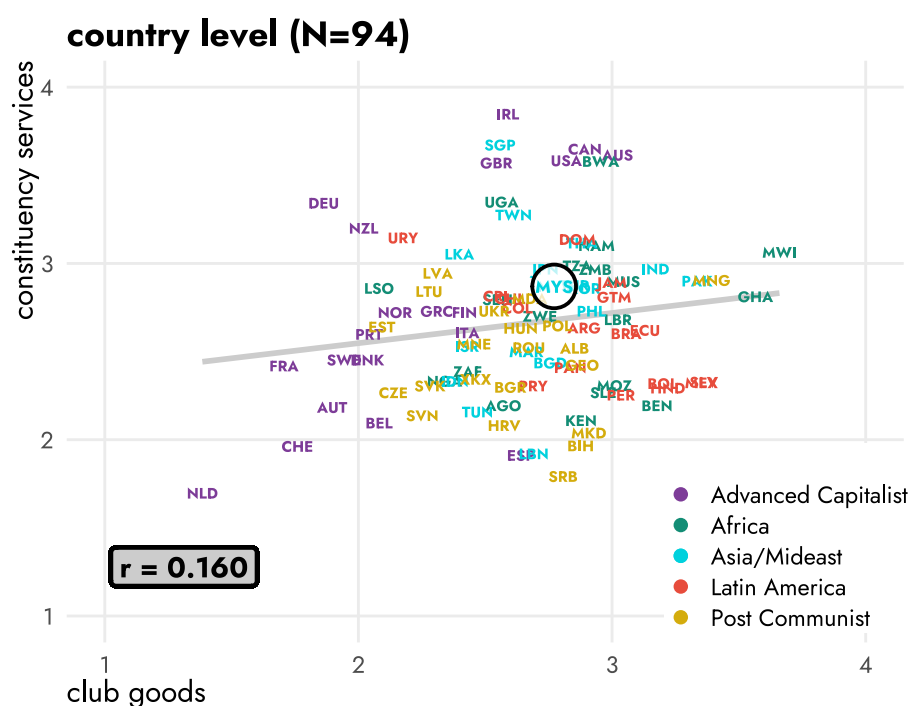


Figure 6 shows that Malaysia ranks above the global average in both the provision of constituency services and the distribution of club goods (“pork”), indicating that particularistic strategies remain an integral part of party–voter linkages. The country’s roughly equal positioning on both axes suggests a balanced reliance on constituency service and club goods delivery. From a comparative perspective, the country is above the global average.

### 3.7 Mobilizing Party Identification as Linkage Strategy

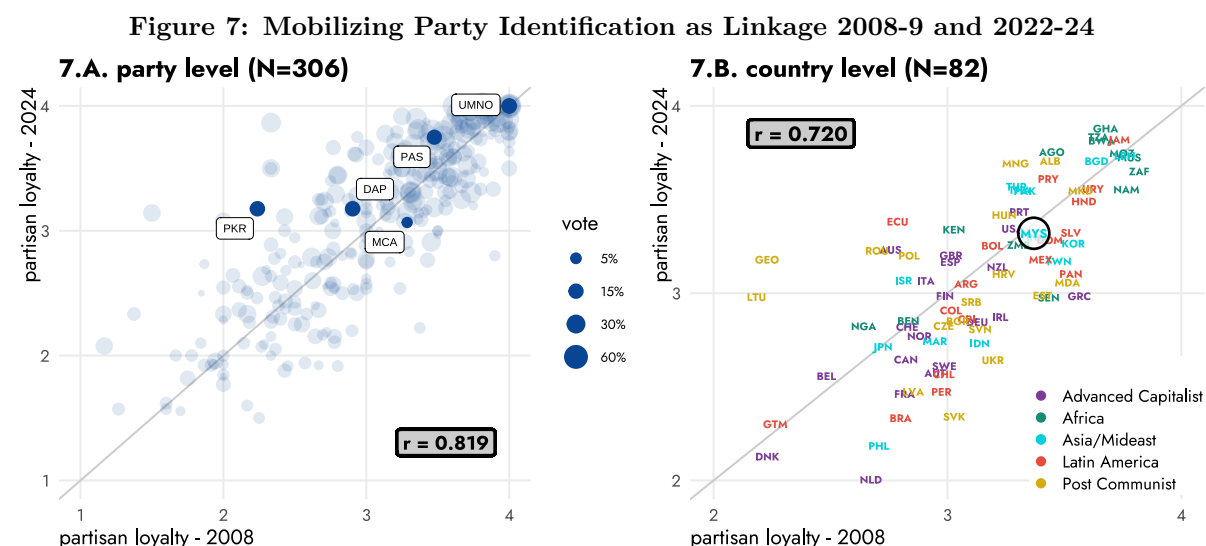
Finally, consider citizens’ identification with political parties — as well as parties’ active mobilization of party identification in emotional appeals and use of symbols, often referring to the historical legacy of the party’s quest — as something like a capstone to all the other activities parties may choose to build linkages, taken together: If parties can look back on charismatic founders, cultivate credible descriptive representation, have proven capacity to govern in moments of critical junctures and crises, develop clientelistic machines and/or encompassing political programs resonating with large tiers of the electorate, then they might also be expected to thrive on honing and mobilizing collective party identification.

Again, experts’ judgments comparing DALP I and DALP II exhibit very considerable continuity in assessing individual parties’ and entire countries’ party system deployment of appeals to party identification for electoral purposes from 2008-9 to 2022-4. At the same time those parties (and countries) that already made strong use of party identification at the earlier point in time now appear to be just as much or even more so inclined to use this symbolic-cultural technique of collective consciousness raising and crafting confluence of party elites with electoral followers around a common collective party identity and political memory. Interestingly, the most established Western democracies, with the glaring exception of the United States, situated in the upper third of the distribution, appear to generate weak and over time declining party identification, particularly in the most fragmented party systems (Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands). Party fragmentation clearly has undermined allegiance to individual brands, although many studies show that most vote switching takes place within the same ideological “region” of the party system space, albeit among multiple close alternatives.

Figure 7B indicates that Malaysia exhibits high level partisan identification as a mechanism of voter linkage, positioning the country in the upper tier globally. Figure 7A also shows that UMNO remains the strongest in mobilizing long-term partisan loyalty, reflecting its historical dominance and deep organizational roots. PAS, PKR, and DAP also register relatively high and rising levels of party identification, indicating the persistence of stable partisan attachments. The only exception is the MCA, which shows a decline, consistent with its shrinking voter base and reduced influence within the coalition system. Taken together, these trends suggest that despite increasing electoral volatility and coalition shifts, party identification continues to serve as a meaningful linkage channel in Malaysia, reinforcing the country’s structured yet competitive multiparty landscape.

### 3.8 How Linkages Hang Together: Linkage Profiles

DALP I and II cover eight major linkage modes potentially binding parties and voters together in electoral and liberal democracies. Are these practices situated in an orthogonal relationship to one to another, such that there is little or no cross-fertilization, mutual reinforcement, or trade-off between any of them? So, do politicians deal with eight distinct and segmented linkage mechanisms? Or is there affinity between subsets of them? Let this be addressed in two stages, first by an exploratory factor analysis, with varimax rotated factors. This may provide first clues about the structuring of linkage modes in



more complex “linkage profiles.” Second, we may take a closer look at the pure relationship between the linkage mechanisms that are often presumed to occur in a straight-forward trade-off relationship, namely clientelism and programmatism: More of one is supposed to mean less of the other. And how does this play out in Malaysia?

Panel 4.1 in Table 4 provides these factor loadings first for an estimation using individual parties’ linkage scores as the numerical input of the analysis. Panel 4.2 runs the same analysis with countries’ average linkage scores as data input. Both party-level and polity-level factor analyses provide the same theoretically transparent, easily interpretable three-factor solutions. The **first and strongest factor** in both party and country estimations indeed involves **a trade-off between clientelism and pork (E3, E6) versus programmatism (CoSalDi\_4)**, but with qualifications and extensions. Let us begin with the extensions. On factor 1, parties that engage in strong clientelistic linkage efforts and provide pork, but little programmatism, also tend to put more emphasis on the charisma of leadership personalities (E1), rely more on descriptive representation (E8), and — mildly — tend to cultivate more bonds to religious associations (A4\_3). Overall, this puts them in a position to boost party identification as well (E4).

Next, the qualification. How closely are clientelism and programmatism mutually associated on the same factor? The factor loadings for clientelism related linkages (E3/clientelism and E6/pork) are very strong, but the negative association with programmatism is only moderately robust. So, there may be mechanisms at work that subvert a simple trade-off between clientelism and programmatism in many parties. Scatters below examine more closely the presence of parties that are highly invested in both clientelism and well as programmatism or, inversely, invested in neither.

Table 4: How Do the Various Linkage Mechanisms Hang Together (Factor Analyses)

| 4.1. Party Level Factor Analysis (N=623)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                            |                 |         |         |         |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                            | Factor Loadings |         |         |         |            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Variable                   | Factor1         | Factor2 | Factor3 | Factor4 | Uniqueness |
| E1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Charisma                   | 0.4746          | 0.1395  | 0.0712  | 0.0446  | 0.7483     |
| E3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Clientelism                | 0.7866          | 0.2609  | 0.2207  | 0.0745  | 0.2590     |
| cosaldi_4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Programmatism              | -0.4643         | 0.0077  | 0.0101  | -0.0766 | 0.7784     |
| E4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Partisan Loyalty           | 0.2978          | 0.4102  | 0.5748  | 0.0825  | 0.4059     |
| E5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | General Competence         | 0.3938          | 0.0068  | 0.5903  | -0.0241 | 0.4958     |
| A4_3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Religious Organizations    | 0.3179          | 0.3107  | 0.1796  | 0.2708  | 0.6968     |
| A4_4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Ethnic Organizations       | 0.1518          | 0.6692  | 0.1301  | -0.0387 | 0.5107     |
| E6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Club goods                 | 0.6635          | 0.3867  | 0.2802  | -0.0876 | 0.3241     |
| E7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Constituency Service       | 0.0617          | 0.0394  | 0.3934  | -0.2444 | 0.7801     |
| E8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Descriptive Representation | 0.3477          | 0.6947  | 0.0520  | 0.0670  | 0.3894     |
| <b>Factor 1</b> is clientelism versus programmatism: clientelism (E3) + club goods (E6) + personal charisma (E1) - programmatism (CoSalDi_4) + minor correlates (E4/party ID, E5/brand recognition of competence to govern, A4_3/religious associations, E8/descriptive representation);<br><b>Factor 2</b> is a group identification factor: Ethnic association/descriptive representation (A4_4) + descriptive representation (E8) + minor correlates (E4/party ID; A4_3/religious associations, E6/pork);<br><b>Factor 3</b> is valence strength: party identification (E4) + brand recognition of competence to govern (E5) + minor factor (E7/more constituency representation);<br><b>Note:</b> E1 (charisma), A4_3 religious organizations and E7 (constituency representation) do not load strongly on any factor. |                            |                 |         |         |         |            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                            |                 |         |         |         |            |
| 4.2. Country Level Factor Analysis (N = 94)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                            |                 |         |         |         |            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                            | Factor Loadings |         |         |         |            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Variable                   | Factor1         | Factor2 | Factor3 | Factor4 | Uniqueness |
| E1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Charisma                   | 0.4593          | 0.1403  | 0.2433  | -0.2189 | 0.6623     |
| E3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Clientelism                | 0.7800          | 0.2731  | 0.2569  | -0.1020 | 0.2407     |
| cosaldi_4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Programmatism              | -0.6176         | -0.0741 | -0.1588 | 0.0128  | 0.5877     |
| E4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Partisan Loyalty           | 0.3823          | 0.6650  | 0.2550  | -0.1385 | 0.3274     |
| E5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | General Competence         | 0.1960          | 0.7623  | 0.0837  | 0.1092  | 0.3616     |
| A4_3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Religious Organizations    | 0.3173          | 0.1828  | 0.5486  | -0.1370 | 0.5461     |
| A4_4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Ethnic Organizations       | 0.2463          | 0.2128  | 0.6425  | 0.1048  | 0.4703     |
| E6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Club goods                 | 0.6790          | 0.2902  | 0.3066  | 0.1165  | 0.3472     |
| E7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Constituency Service       | -0.0721         | 0.4225  | -0.0217 | 0.3937  | 0.6608     |
| E8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Descriptive Representation | 0.4499          | 0.0682  | 0.6076  | -0.1061 | 0.4124     |
| <b>Factor 1. Clientelism vs. Programmatism:</b> country-level factor same as party-level factor;<br><b>Factor 2. Valence strength:</b> partisan loyalty, general competence, constituency service;<br><b>Factor 3. Group Identification:</b> country-level factor same as party-level factor.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                            |                 |         |         |         |            |

Focusing on the remaining factors two and three depicted in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, the second factor at the party level is a dimension of **group identification**. It loads strongly on ethnocultural group adherence (A4\_4) and generic descriptive representation (E8) and weaker on party identification (E4) and pork provision (E6). It pits parties articulating particularistic against universalistic identities against one another. The third factor at the party level is one of **party valence strength**. Parties with high capacity to sustain party identification and a strong brand image of competence to govern the polity also tend to be more committed to constituency service (E7). At the inverse pole of this factor are parties lacking strong cultivation of party ID, reputation for effective capacity to govern, and constituency service. At the country level (Table 4.2), the very same factors appear, but in reverse order. Here, at the level of country aggregation, the group identification linkage dimension has slightly more power to discriminate among parties than parties' valence strength. But the variance explained by factors 2 and 3 differs little so that the order could almost be reversed, as is the case in the party-level factor analysis.

The clustering of linkage strategies may force research on linkage strategies to conceive linkage profiles as a three-dimensional phenomenon with politicians making choices over targeting of benefits and costs (dimension 1), mobilization of socio-cultural segments (dimension 2) and emphasizing valence qualities (dimension 3).

Figure 8 shows the location of countries on the strongest two factors, the clientelism/programmatism trade-off and the ethnocultural/descriptive representational linkages factor. For the party-level scattergram, the acronyms of parties in Malaysia are inserted. But keep in mind that factor 1 absorbs only part of the raw programmatism score of each party's full linkage profile.

**Figure 8: How Do the Clientelism/Programmatism Trade-Off Factor and the Ethnopolitical Identification Factor Distribute Across Democracies and across political parties in Malaysia?**

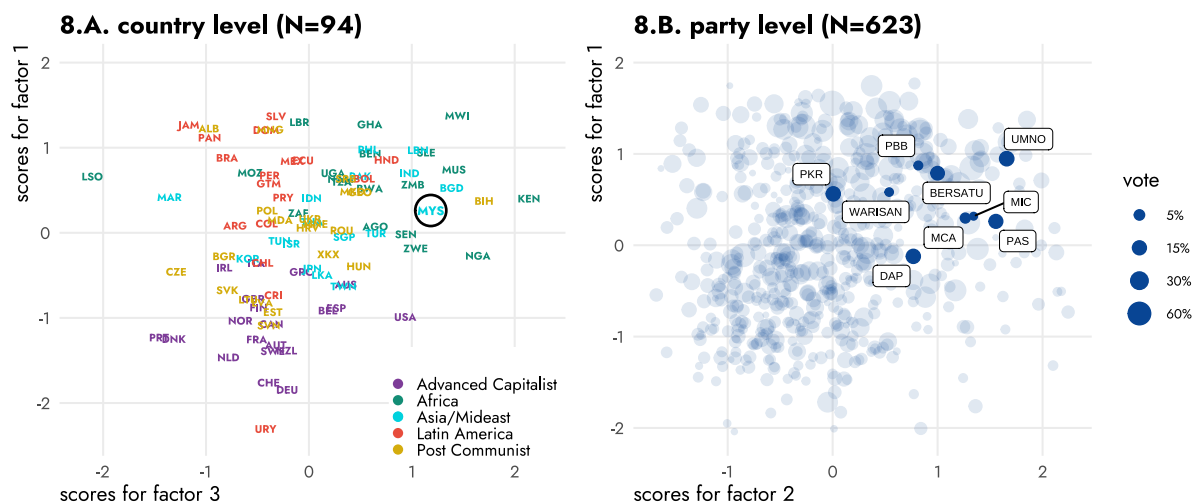


Figure 8A shows that Malaysia occupies an intermediate position on the clientelism–programmatism trade-off, indicating a relative balance between material exchange–based and policy–based linkages. On the ethnopolitical identification dimension, however, Malaysia stands out as one of the strongest cases globally, reflecting the enduring centrality of ethnic and religious cleavages—particularly Malay, Chinese, and Indian communal divisions—in structuring party competition. When these two dimensions are considered together, Malaysia's overall linkage profile diverges sharply from that of advanced capitalist democracies, clustering instead with ethnically segmented and patronage-oriented political systems in

Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. This combination points to a political marketplace in which identity-based mobilization and distributive strategies coexist with limited programmatic competition. Figure 8B provides a more fine-grained party-level picture. Along the clientelism–programmatisation axis, only DAP is located near the borderline, while all other parties lean toward clientelism to varying degrees. UMNO occupies the highest clientelistic position, closely followed by PBB and BERSATU. These are followed by PKR and WARISAN, while MCA, MIC, and PAS display only minimal clientelistic tendencies. A similarly differentiated pattern emerges on the group identification dimension: UMNO and PAS record the strongest ethnopolitical linkages, followed by MIC and MCA, then BERSATU, PBB, DAP, and WARISAN, with PKR exhibiting the weakest reliance on identity-based appeals. Overall, these patterns underscore that although Malaysian parties articulate varying degrees of programmatic commitments, electoral competition remains fundamentally anchored in ethnopolitical identity and clientelistic resource distribution rather than in policy-centered representation.

Keep in mind that the factor analysis investigating the clustering of linkage strategies operates with the key assumption that constructed factors are orthogonal to one another. But if there is no one-to-one correlation — or none at all — between two linkage strategies, the factor analysis is unlikely to capture the bivariate relationship between the two variables fully. In order to probe into that configuration of clientelism and programmatisation more precisely, let us strip away other linkage mechanisms and turn to a scattergram of just the relationship between clientelism and programmatisation at the party level (B15 and CoSalDi\_4) based on DALP II data in Figure 9. For easier interpretation, let the distribution be divided into four color-coded quadrants.

The scatterplot of the party scores over these two linkage types certainly suggests that clientelism and programmatisation are related. Many individual parties are configured along a diagonal running from high clientelism/low programmatisation (the blue quadrant) to the opposite low clientelism/high programmatisation endpoint (the red quadrant). But consider the heterogeneity of the subfields.

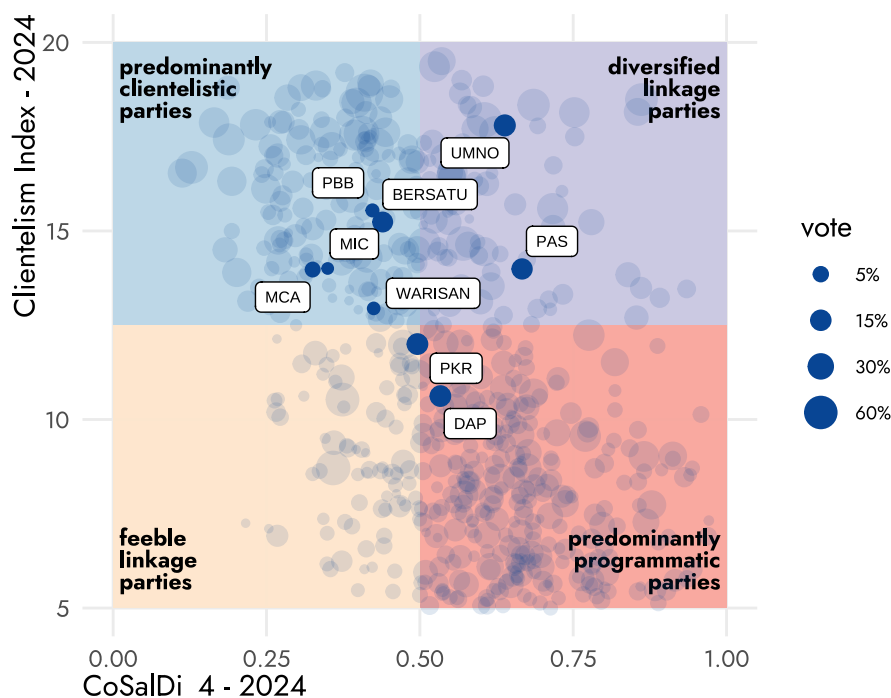
The yellow subfield of weak linkage parties, i.e. where parties appear to engage in very limited programmatic appeals, but also few clientelist linkage attempts, is only thinly populated, and mostly near its periphery interfacing with other combinations. Weak linkage parties are likely to be electorally small, either because they are young or on the way out. There are a lot more parties in the blue quadrant with predominantly and only feebly programmatic parties. This quadrant is mirrored by the red quadrant also frequented by many parties, assembling those with faint clientelist, but sharply crystallized programmatic linkages.

This leaves the fourth purple quadrant of **Diversified Linkage Parties (DLP)** that combine both powerful clientelistic mobilization with meaningful programmatic party position taking. This quadrant is more populated than the yellow weak linkage quadrant. So, there are many parties that do defy the conventional trade-off hypothesis between programmatisation and clientelism. As we know from past preliminary analysis of DLPs, such parties tend to be among the electorally larger ones in many party systems and sometimes have in their genealogy a precursor party that may have operated as ruling party in a past authoritarian regime. Closely examining DLPs therefore tends to be a vital objective of linkage analysis in contemporary party systems.

Here’s a concise, DALP-style interpretation of Figure 9: Just Clientelism and Programmatisation – How Sharp Is the Trade-off in Malaysia? (2024 DALP II B15 × CoSalDi 4):

Malaysia’s parties are distributed across the clientelism–programmatisation trade-off scatterplot in ways that highlight both diversity and overlap among linkage strategies. UMNO is a diversified linkage party, combining extensive clientelistic networks with selective programmatic appeals rooted in developmental nationalism and elite patronage whereas PAS, positioned in the same category but below

**Figure 9: Just Clientelism and Programmatism: How Sharp is the Trade-off in Malaysia?**  
(2024 DALP II B15 X Cosaldi\_4)



and closer to the programmatic pole, blends religious and moral narratives with targeted constituency mobilization, displaying a more ideologically anchored but still materially grounded profile. The parties of PBB, BERSATU, MIC, MCA, and Warisan constitute a cluster within the clientelistic quadrant, though all remain near the intersection point, suggesting that their clientelism is also moderate and includes limited programmatic or symbolic appeals. By contrast, PKR and DAP lie on the programmatic side, yet their proximity to the center is also minimal. Overall, the configuration confirms that Malaysian party competition does not follow a strict trade-off between clientelism and programmatism. Instead, the major parties operate in hybrid zones, reflecting a political system where electoral survival depends on blending material inducements, ethnic representation, and selective programmatic signaling within a coalition-based democracy.

## 4 Party Organization: Baseline for Coordinated Partisan Accountability

Parties solve collective action problems by pooling resources and creating coordination to deploy them in attracting activists, choosing candidates and leaders, and issuing messages reaching out to voters in election campaigns and during spells in legislatures or executive office. If parties are programmatic, they also solve social choice problems in that they craft common policy positions publicly supported by all members, activists, and leaders in spite of each contributor to the joint effort likely to have individual policy preference schedules that diverge somewhat from the collectively agreed program.

Solving collective action and social choice problems is difficult and requires “organization.” Organization involves the creation of continuous lines of communication among contributors to the party that are structured in such ways that some actors receive, emit, control, and act on more information than others, and through defined channels of communication. Creating a web of communication typically involves division of labor and some hierarchy of control over the handling of information. Moreover, in

order to communicate, financial resources are needed to set up and sustain communication networks and to fund those who spend their time on creating and handling information for the party. The communication web of a political party is therefore physically embodied in people who contribute their time to the organization without being financially compensated for it (members and “activists”), people who communicate party objectives while being paid for it (either in party or electoral and government executive offices, including functionaries, legislators, or party “leaders”), and costly physical infrastructure (offices and buildings, communication equipment, software) to sustain the coordination among those activists, functionaries, legislators, and leaders.

Party organizations may vary across several dimensions two of which are prominently featured in the DALP II survey. The first concerns the **“extensiveness” of the party organization**, referring to the scope of presence of a party in their electoral constituencies. The survey operationalizes this in terms of experts estimating a continuous presence of a party’s offices and paid staff in territorial base units as well as the maintenance of party ancillary organizations (youth, women, etc.) as well as social activities. Future surveys may rather add here parties’ social media presence and scope of social media participation in party communication by its activists. The extensiveness of party organization is particularly important to enable parties to recruit activists and screen them for representative office candidacy and leadership roles. It is also critical for parties’ outreach in election campaigns through physical encounters with voters or virtual communication.

The second dimension of organizational variance tapped in the DALP II survey has to do with the **centralization of party organization**, i.e. the extent to which a small circle of actors issues a party’s authoritative communications to their activists, to competitors and to their electoral constituencies. How extensive is the circle of participants in crafting a party’s authoritative communications, activities shaped by those communications, and selection of actors who generate and publicize such communications? In the DALP II survey, two operational questions attempt to track party centralization. One concerns the scope of what some political scientists would call the “selectorate” of party candidates for electoral office, i.e. the subset of actors who are involved in deciding whom the party presents to the voting public at large in competitive party democracies. The fewer actors are involved in candidate selection, the more centralized is a party organization. The other indicator concerns the control over financial resources in a party: Is control of most resources located in the localized base units of a party or at higher echelons of a party hierarchy, with the other extreme being a small body of party leaders assembled in an executive party organ?

One of the hitherto unanswered research questions concerns the extent to which the choice of parties’ linkage profiles, as rendered in Figure 8 panels, is associated with different organizational shapes, characterized by the attributes of extensiveness and centralization, or others that may not be fully captured in the DALP II survey. This question is very hard to answer, because the shape of party organization may be affected by a whole range of additional factors that make it impossible to postulate a straight (and linear) connection between parties’ linkage profiles and organizational shape. To highlight the complexity of the relationship, it may be useful simply to enumerate some of the main factors and mechanisms operating inside a polity existing research on party organizations has brought to bear on this question:

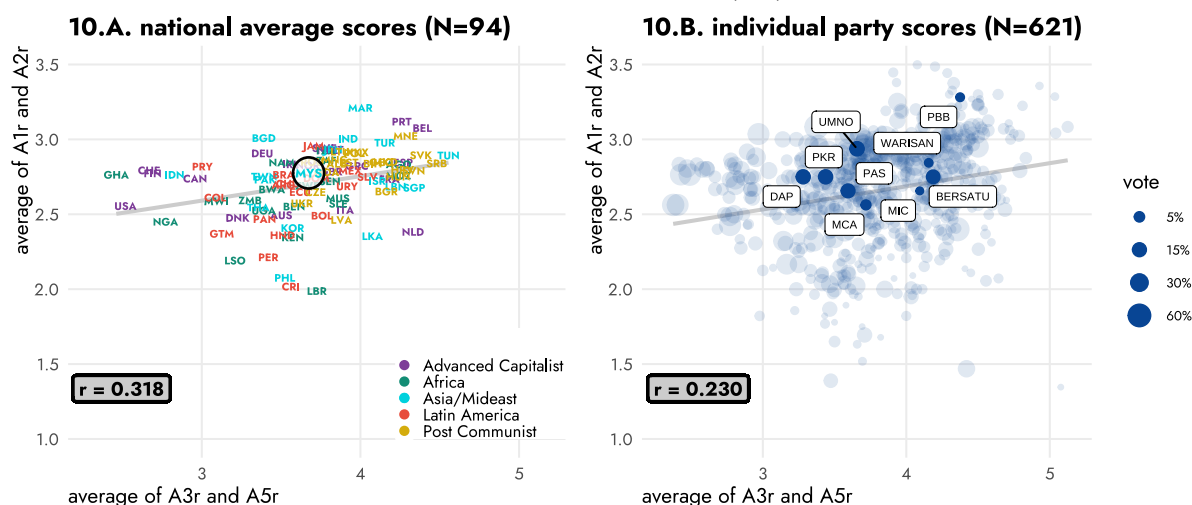
- ▷ The geographical and population size of the country;
- ▷ The political-economic circumstances in which parties operate (affluence of country/electoral constituency? Inequality of resource distribution? Economic interest associations?);
- ▷ The sociocultural setting in which parties operate (religion and churches? Socio-cultural networks?);

- ▷ The type of electoral system (district size, electoral formula, ballot structure);
- ▷ The degree of centralization or decentralization of political jurisdictions (subnational legislatures? federalism?);
- ▷ The age of parties and party system;
- ▷ The ideology of the party at the foundational moment and at later stages;
- ▷ The electoral size and success of a party.

For example, whether a party's highly extensive, centralized party organization is associated with a linkage profile skewed toward clientelism and personalism, and whether that combination will promote electoral success may very well depend on a country's level of economic development, its institutions (electoral system, decentralization) and the sociocultural setting. Sometimes clientelistic parties may be successful with this organizational shape, at other times not. Likewise, whether extensive decentralized mass parties with primarily programmatic appeal and strong party identification deliver electoral success may also depend on a range of variable contingencies.

For the descriptive overview of Malaysia, let us therefore only report the basic parameters of party organization and display them in another scattergram. Consider the experts' assessments as very rough, as it is difficult to find precise empirical equivalents to anchor the judgments of organizational extensiveness and centralization across polities. It is already problematic to conceive of parties' base local units as equivalents, as the meaning of this term may vary across countries based on subnational administrative divisions and sometimes even across parties. Nevertheless, with this proviso in mind, inspect the two scattergrams of Figure 10. On the vertical axis, greater scores mean broader extensiveness of party organization, i.e., more presence of parties on the ground across a territorial jurisdiction, plus more ancillary associations and social activities tied into their mobilization. On the horizontal axis, higher scores mean greater centralization of party authority, i.e. more concentration of party communication and decision-making in a party's top leadership, particularly of nomination of legislative party candidates and control of party financial resources.

Figure 10: Party Extensiveness and (De)centralization



At this point, before thorough investigation, let only a few general observations be floated. There are large differences in the average practices of organizing political parties across countries. Moreover,

there is substantial variance among parties within the same polities. Consider the country with the greatest population and the most parties included in the DALP II dataset, India. The Indian parties come across as generally rather extensive, mostly located in the upper tier of the scattergrams 10B and on average moderately centralized in their internal governance. But this conceals considerable variance among individual Indian parties. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is clearly the most extensive and centralized party, located in the upper right region of Panel 10B. Its largest competitor, the India National Congress (INC) Party, by contrast, is a bit less centralized and less extensive, situated closer to the center of the horizontal dimension, but still in the upper tier where most other Indian parties are situated as well. Yet the recently emerging New Delhi based middle-class anti-corruption Aam Aadmi Party distinguishes itself from all of its competitors by weaker organizational extensiveness, yet quite pronounced leadership centralization. Many of the regional parties in India by definition exhibit less national than state-level centralization and therefore exhibit only intermediate levels of centralization.

Figure 10: Party Extensiveness and (De)centralization

The Malaysian party system overall lies around the global average on both organizational extensiveness and centralization (Figure 10A), yet notable variation appears across individual parties (Figure 10B). At the party level, PBB stands out as the most centralized and most extensive organization in the country. Most national parties—UMNO, PAS, PKR, DAP, and BERSATU—cluster slightly above the global average in extensiveness, reflecting broad territorial outreach and active grassroots networks. In terms of centralization, however, they diverge by roughly one standard-deviation point: from highly centralized parties such as PBB, WARISAN, and BERSATU to more decentralized ones such as PKR and DAP, illustrating contrasting models of leadership control and intra-party pluralism. By contrast, MCA and MIC fall below the average on both dimensions, signaling weaker organizational structures and diminishing local penetration.

These party-level data points on party organization and linkage strategies within electoral democracies do not reveal easily inductively visualized patterns of regularities and certainly not patterns that would directly cohere and correlate with variance of linkage profiles across countries or political parties. What is clearly called for here is a theoretical elaboration that spells out hypothetical causal relations the correlational implications of which can be explored with DALP I and II data. Even for a purely correlational analysis, however, the challenge of accounting for party organization and its relation to linkage mechanisms is so complex that theory would require incorporation of a whole slew of empirical controls, including systemic features (country geographical size and population, political institutions, competitive configuration of the party system, political economic background conditions) as well as party-level features (such as age and origin of parties; party ideology and social constituency).

## 5 Conclusion — Analyzing Political Linkage Mechanisms in Competitive Party Systems: The Prospects

Malaysia's party system exhibits a complex and hybrid linkage structure that reflects both enduring clientelistic traditions and selective moves toward programmatic competition. Programmatic appeals remain limited and have declined further since DALP I, though parties such as DAP and PKR show relatively higher issue-based articulation. In contrast, UMNO and its coalition partners continue to rely heavily on patronage and distributive politics, reinforcing clientelistic linkages. Malaysian parties are also highly personalistic, with PKR's leadership-centered mobilization standing out, while PAS and UMNO similarly emphasize charismatic authority. Ethnopolitical linkages remain deeply embedded in

party competition: UMNO, PAS, and MCA maintain strong ethnic and religious bases, whereas PKR and DAP appeal to multiethnic or reform-oriented voters. In governance linkages, UMNO and MCA retain the highest perceived governing capacity, consistent with their long tenure in power, while DAP and PKR have improved reputations following their short governing experience.

Clientelistic linkages have become more visible across the system, concentrated in UMNO, PAS, and MCA, though relational brokerage remains weaker than transactional, spot-market exchanges. Party identification continues to serve as a strong linkage channel, with UMNO and PAS commanding enduring partisan loyalty, while newer or urban-based parties show more fluid support. Malaysia ranks around the middle globally in targeting linkages (pork and constituency service), suggesting persistent use of distributive politics. Factor analysis places the country near the intersection of clientelistic and programmatic dimensions—most parties qualify as diversified linkage parties (DLPs), balancing material inducements with selective issue-based appeals. Organizationally, Malaysian parties are moderately extensive but highly centralized: power remains concentrated among elite leaderships despite broad territorial networks. Overall, Malaysia represents a case of structured hybrid linkage politics, where programmatic competition coexists with deep-rooted personalistic and clientelistic mechanisms sustained by coalition traditions and ethnic segmentation.

The data description provided in this overview is only a first step on the way toward a more fine-grained analysis of the association between partisan linkage patterns, party organization and institutional, political-economic, and cultural settings in which they operate. Identifying detailed correlational patterns is not equal to determining causation, but it is a definitive step in direction of earmarking topics that may be particularly relevant for causal analysis. Moreover, while correlation does not imply causation, the inverse is not true: Absence of correlation does very well mean that causation is absent for a hypothesized relationship. So, even a cross-sectional analysis — or an intertemporal analysis of DALP I and DALP II observations spanning a time period of 14-15 years, may cast doubt on some hypotheses about linkages popular in the political science literature.

A great deal of this analysis indeed needs to proceed at a disaggregate level, where the units of analysis are parties and their strategists, i.e. the focal decision-makers within competitive party systems. For example, investigations into parties' deployment of brokers in clientelistic transactions may need to examine parties' organizational capabilities and internal power structures, as well as specific competitive environments in which individual parties are embedded, in addition to the broader national characteristics of economic and social settings. So, for many analytical purposes, the birds-eye perspective of cross-national comparison may be informative, but only an intermediate step to a party-level analysis. Given constraints of space and time for investigation, this initial descriptive dossier could only highlight party-level variance selectively.

A further complication in future research is that both theorizing and empirical analysis may ultimately not focus on individual linkage mechanisms and their distribution across parties and polities, but the combined “portfolios” or “profiles” of interdependent linkage mechanisms parties choose at any given time, as inductively rendered in the factor scores reported above (Table 4 and Figure 8).

Contingent on their competitors' strategies, parties may assemble differing “profiles” of linkage mechanisms to compete for votes. How politicians bundle or dissociate linkage strategies may very much depend on the nature of the electoral constituencies (in socio-economic or ethno-cultural terms) to which they tailor their appeals, as well as the choices rival parties make in order to compete in the same elections and how all of these are conditioned by the institutional parameters which politicians observe in choosing their courses of action. But combinations of linkage strategies may not be arbitrary. For example, there may be many circumstances in which politicians deem it their optimal choice to combine an emphasis

on targeted exchanges (clientelism, pork) with an appeal to leadership charisma and (affective?) party identification.

The purpose of this current “Country Dossier” memorandum, however, is a descriptive one to disclose basic patterns of linkage mechanisms observable in electoral democracies. Studying such empirical patterns may hopefully stimulate interest in more and novel research on political linkage mechanisms in electoral democracies. This memorandum raises questions but does not answer them. Scholars need to generate these answers with insightful research designs marshalling multiple data sources. The current DALP II project data may serve as one source of informational input feeding into such investigations and as catalyst to promote a proliferation of new insights.

## Appendix: Introductory Bibliographic Essay on Partisan Linkage Mechanisms

The bibliography below introduces a few basic readings on linkage mechanisms in electoral politics, in lieu of extensive incorporation in the text of these country dossiers. The readings are sequenced in the order in which the linkages are discussed in the empirical section 3 of the dossier, starting with the “master linkage,” programmatic congruence between voters and citizens, then moving on to linkages that can be mobilized with comparatively low organizational transaction costs in the early history of electoral contests, such as personality/charismatic appeals and descriptive group identities, followed by non-programmatic linkages that require increasing time and effort on the part of political actors: accumulation of a positive valence record of governance, the organization of targeted exchanges between politicians and electoral constituencies (clientelism, pork, constituency service) and ultimately the construction and accumulation of affective partisan identification.

It is relatively easiest to indicate a few widely read generic sources on clientelistic party-voter linkages and think of pork provision as a diminutive form of targeted benefits with less specificity and (implicit) conditionality. It is already harder to generate basic readings on charismatic and programmatic partisan linkages because these are typically not discussed as generic partisan mobilization strategies, but with regard to specific substantive policy issues or personalities. Likewise, scholarship typically conceives of partisan identification not as something systematically nurtured/produced by political parties, but as a spontaneous behavioral result of habituation among party supporters and patterns of competition among the electoral contenders.

The final bibliographic section provides a few sources about linkages in the focal country of this dossier, Malaysia.

### 1. Programmatic Linkage

Although much democratic theory takes programmatic party competition — understood as politicians bundling issue positions in complex configurations of “programs” — as the bedrock of democratic politics, there is surprisingly little theoretical thinking and empirical operationalization of the degree of “programmatisms” that parties and party systems display over individual issues or entire programs as issue bundles. We added here Carmines and Stimson’s (1989) classic analysis of how parties have folded new issues — racial politics, gender — into modified party competition. The bulk of empirical effort concerning programmatic partisan politics has been focused on measuring the candidates’ and parties’ “programmatic ideal points” either through expert surveys (see here: Benoit and Laver 2006; Jolly et al. 2022) or through text analysis of prime party documents, such as electoral manifestos, and debate the adequacy of these various empirical approaches (see Benoit and Laver 2007; Budge 2000). Luna et al. (2014) cast their net wider by including a range of ancillary strands of investigation into “programmatic” partisan politics, for example the nationalization of party appeals and internal party organization, as well as patterns of roll call voting in legislatures, but they do not get to the heart of the matter when it comes to the appraisal of linkages, i.e., the degree of “programmatisms” — in the sense of the degrees of distinctiveness and coherence of parties’ issue appeals that enable voters to make a programmatic choice among competing partisan offers. The most important source to theorize this core question is John Aldrich’s (1995, updated 2011) analytical and historical study of party formation in the United States. In many ways, the works by Kitschelt with a range of collaborators spell out considerations Aldrich was driving at, but in an operational way to make possible comparative quantitative research,

all the way to the most recent modification of the programmatism index variables based on DALP II data, as documented in Kitschelt and Yildirim (2024) and the present country dossiers. Krimmel (2024) provides an interesting extension and different empirical methodology of data generation based on partly automated text analysis to track the changing programmatism of American political parties. Magaloni et al. have presented one of the very few efforts to think about the combination or substitution of programmatism with other linkage strategies (clientelism) in existing investigations, something the current DALP II dossiers highlight descriptively by showing that quite a few parties and entire party systems are able to combine multiple linkage strategies — such as clientelism and programmatism — even though existing theorizing often sees a simple trade-off between them.

- Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bakker, Ryan, Seth Jolly, and Jonathan Polk. 2022. “Analyzing the cross-national comparability of party positions on the socio-cultural and EU dimensions in Europe.” *Political Science Research and Methods*. Vol. 10, 2: 408–418.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver. 2006. *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and Michael Laver. 2007. “Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis.” *Electoral Studies*. Vol. 26, 1: 90–107.
- Budge, Ian. 2000. “Expert judgments of party policy positions: uses and limitations in political research.” *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol. 37, 1: 103–113.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution. Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Jolly, S., Bakker, R., Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Polk, J., Rovny, J., Steenbergen, M., and Vachudova, M. 2022. “Chapel Hill Expert Survey trend file, 1999–2019.” *Electoral Studies*, 75, Article 102420.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Kent Freeze. 2010. *Programmatic Party System Structuration: Developing and Comparing Cross-National and Cross-Party Measures with a New Global Data Set*. Duke University. [https://sites.duke.edu/democracylinkage/files/2014/12/Kitschelt\\_Freeze.pdf](https://sites.duke.edu/democracylinkage/files/2014/12/Kitschelt_Freeze.pdf)
- Kitschelt, Herbert, Kirk Hawkins, Juan Pablo Luna, Guillermo Rosas, and Elizabeth Zechmeister. 2010. *Latin American Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gabor Toka. 1999. *Post-Communist Party Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Yi-Ting Wang. 2014. “Programmatic Parties and Party Systems: Opportunities and Constraints.” In: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Ed. *Politics Meets Policies: The Emergence of Programmatic Political Parties*. Stockholm: IDEA. pp. 43–74. <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/politics-meets-policies-emergence-programmatic-political-parties>
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Kerem Yildirim. 2024. *Profiles of Citizen–Party Linkages in Global Comparison 2008–9 to 2022–4*. Paper prepared for the 120<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, September 5–8, 2024. Panel on Political Partisan Linkages in Competitive Party Systems. DALP II 2022–24 Survey.
- Krimmel, Katherine. 2024. *Divergent Democracy. How Policy Positions Came to Dominate Party Competition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Luna, Juan Pablo, Fernando Rosenblatt, and Sergio Toro. 2014. “Programmatic Parties: A Survey of Dimensions and Explanations in the Literature.” In: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Ed. *Politics Meets Policies: The Emergence of Programmatic Political Parties*. Stockholm: IDEA. pp. 43–74. <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/politics-meets-policies-emergence-programmatic-political-parties>
- Magaloni, Beatriz, Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, and Federico Estevez. 2007. “Clientelism and portfolio diversification: A model of electoral investment with applications to Mexico.” In: Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson (eds). *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 182–205.

## 2. Personalistic/Charismatic Linkage

The personal appeal of well-known public figures — emerging from the ranks of business, military, or cultural leadership, not necessarily the realm of partisan politics — often serves as a decisive starting point of party formation, as it may incur few upfront transaction costs to create a leading candidate's political profile and make people place high valence on a party based on its leader's credibility and track record in different walks of life. Initiated by Weber, this phenomenon has been captured under the diffuse notion of “charismatic” authority that is set up against institutionalized forms of social interchange. It may therefore be particularly salient in emerging parties, although charismatic appeals may also appear or reappear in the subsequent evolution of political parties. Charismatic politics has been studied only lightly, and with an emphasis on parties outside the Western established party systems. Conversely, there is an almost exclusively “Western” literature on the “personalization” of party politics — a phenomenon much broader than charismatic personal authority and also including institutional changes of individual political politicians' power and control (in parties, in cabinets) and media access, channels and presentation. Nevertheless, the theoretical problematic underlying the study of charismatic political authority and personalization may be often similar, namely the tension between institutionalization of parties (or in Rahat and Kenig's multiple indicators: “partyness”) and the leverage and discretion of individual politicians in democratic accountability relations.

- Andrews-Lee, Caitlin. 2019. “The revival of Charisma: experimental evidence from Argentina and Venezuela.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 52, 5: 687–719.
- Bittner, Amanda. 2011. *Platform or Personality? The Role of Party Leaders in Elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King, Anthony, ed. 2002. *Leaders' Personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2000. “Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Politics.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 33, 6–7: 845–879.
- Kostadinova, Tatiana and Barry Levitt. 2014. “Toward a theory of personalist parties: concept formation and theory building.” *Politics & Policy*. Vol. 42, 4: 490–512.
- Luján, Diego, and Federico Acosta y Lara. 2024. “Assessing Electoral Personalism in Latin American Presidential Elections.” *Journal of Politics in Latin America*. Vol. 16, 3: 275–299.
- Madsen, Douglas, and Peter G. Snow. 1991. *The Charismatic Bond: Political Behavior in Time of Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mols, Frank, S. Alexander Haslam, Michael J. Platow, Stephen D. Reicher and Niklas K. Steffens. 2023. “The Social Identity Approach to Political Leadership.” In: Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, Jack S. Levy and Jennifer Jerit (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (3rd ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mudde, Cas and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rahat, Gideon, and Ofer Kenig. 2018. *From Party Politics to Personalized Politics? Party Change and Political Personalization in Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Renwick, Alan, and Jean-Benoit Pilet. 2016. *Faces on the Ballot: The Personalization of Electoral Systems in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shils, Edward. 1965. “Charisma, Order, and Status.” *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 30, 2: 199–213.
- Weyland, Kurt. 2001. “Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics.” *Comparative Politics*. Vol. 34, 1: 1–22.

### 3. Descriptive Identity Linkage

An easy, uncomplicated way to resonate with voters that does not require much upfront investment in party organization and associational networks may be to demonstrate that a candidate — and the candidates of a party — share salient attributes with their intended electoral constituency. While these similarities may have an instrumental programmatic background subtly invoking common interests, they may be also and foremost of a striking symbolic and affective nature to establish a rapport between constituency and candidate that does not require a great deal of cerebral analytical spelling out. While this subject spills over into the narrower, and in the U.S. deeply studied phenomenon of party identification to which the bibliography returns below descriptive linkages based on shared attributes concern a much broader range of options that are available without all the partisan labor input needed to create party identification (see below). Most studied — and therefore not in this bibliography documented as it would explode it — are ethnic relations or representation, analyzing the extent to which the appeal of parties to ethnocultural identities succeeds and the consequences of such ethnocultural linkages for the elaboration of other political linkages (such as programmatic and clientelistic linkages) and for the output of authoritative decisions by a polity. This bibliography, by contrast, includes only a few investigations on the more general question on how descriptive representation may gain leverage and on specific attributes that have mattered beyond the familiar ethnocultural group divides, descriptive representation in democratic elections based on social class and gender. A critical question often concerns the extent to which descriptive appeals provide “net” electoral yield to political competitors, beyond substantive appeals to political programs or other linkage mechanisms. One text included here turns around the common causal direction of analysis — from invoking identities to partisan choice — and asks whether partisan choice and partisan identification and/or ideology structure what salient identities may be politically important for parties to feature (Egan 2020).

- Carnes, Nicholas, and Noam Lupu. 2016. “Do Voters Dislike Working-Class Candidates? Voter Biases and the Descriptive Underrepresentation of the Working Class.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 110, 4: 832–844.
- Desai, Zuheir, and Anderson Frey. 2023. “Can Descriptive Representation Help the Right Win Votes from the Poor? Evidence from Malaysia.” *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 67, 3: 671–686.
- Egan, Patrick J. 2020. “Identity as Dependent Variable: How Americans Shift Their Identities to Align with Their Politics.” *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 64, 3: 699–716.
- Horn, Alexander, Anthony Kevins, Carsten Jensen, and Kees van Kersbergen. 2021. “Political Parties and Social Groups: New Perspectives and Data on Group and Policy Appeals.” *Party Politics*. Vol. 27, 5: 983–995.
- Huber, Lena Maria. 2022. “Beyond Policy: The Use of Social Group Appeals in Party Communication.” *Political Communication*. Vol. 39, 3: 293–310.
- Huddy, Leonie. 2013. “From Group Identity to Political Cohesion and Commitment.” In: Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 737–773.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Guarav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Political Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 36, 1: 39–60.
- Mayne, Quinton, and Yvette Peters. 2023. “Where You Sit Is Where You Stand: Education-Based Descriptive Representation and Perceptions of Democratic Quality.” *West European Politics*. Vol. 46, 3: 526–549.
- Robison, Joshua, Rune Stubager, Mads Thau, and James Tilley. 2021. “Does Class-Based Campaigning Work? How Working-Class Appeals Attract and Polarize Voters.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 54, 5: 723–752.

Schaffner, Brian F. 2005. "Priming Gender: Campaigning on Women's Issues in U.S. Senate Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 49, 4: 803–817.

#### 4. Valence Linkage (governability)

Starting with Stokes (1963) and powerfully advanced by Ian Budge, a broad trail of theorizing and empirical analysis has challenged the spatial theory of party competition and its main underlying linkage mechanism — programmatic politics based on spatial party positions. While the alternative also invokes parties' policy programs — categorized as "issues" — it brings in additional considerations that have to do with valence and salience. Parties are hypothesized to concentrate their efforts on specific issues to seek electoral followings, i.e. create salience of an issue appeal where they reckon to have a valence advantage in the sense that most voters attribute credibility to them and their capacity to act effectively on popular issue-specific policy demands on which voter preference distributions are concentrated near the party's ideal point. The interaction of a party's issue salience and credibility-valence advantage generates "issue ownership." Issue ownership is very important, for example, for parties' use of economic issues in political campaigns and has long been investigated under the terms of a distinct research trajectory — the study of economic voting where parties' performance to bring about what voters rate as "good" or "bad" economic results (in terms of employment, inflation, growth, mortgage interest rates, etc.) affects people's vote choice. Parties are judged based on their performance in political office, but, conversely, parties are also able to manipulate those judgments by creating their own narratives of how their actions relate to policy outcomes, thereby attributing particular salience to distinctive policy issues that give them credibility to pursue high valence strategies successfully. In the DALP II survey, for each policy issue on which parties' positions are scored, there are both positional and salience measures, albeit no "credibility" measure. But DALP II aspires to approximate a measure of whether parties can claim credibility for a range of political activities by including a term where experts score a party's reputation for having a "capacity to govern" effectively. This may be no perfect measure to get at a party's capacity to invoke credibility but is a construct that still approximates some aspects that issue ownership theories find wanting in programmatic linkage configured spatial theories of party competition. The bibliographic references here are sparse and focus on analytical presentation of the relevant theory of issue ownership competition between political parties.

Budge, Ian. 2015. "Issue Emphases, Saliency Theory and Issue Ownership: A Historical and Conceptual Analysis." *West European Politics*. Vol. 38, 4: 761–777.

Budge, Ian, and Dennis Farlie. 1983. *Explaining and Predicting Elections: Issue Effects and Party Strategies in Twenty-Three Democracies*. Taylor & Francis.

Duch, Ray M., and Randy T. Stevenson. 2010. *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Green-Pedersen, Christoffer. 2019. *The Reshaping of West European Party Politics: Agenda-Setting and Party Competition in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stokes, Donald. 1963. "The Spatial Theory of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 57, 2: 368–377.

Stubager, Rune. 2018. "What Is Issue Ownership and How Should We Measure It?" *Political Behavior*. Vol. 40, 2: 345–370.

Stubager, Rune, and Rune Slothuus. 2013. "What Are the Sources of Political Parties' Issue Ownership? Testing Four Explanations at the Individual Level." *Political Behavior*. Vol. 35, 3: 567–588.

## 5. Clientelistic Linkage

A great deal of linkage research has focused on targeted, discretionary benefits — and at times imposition of costs and penalties — directed at individual voters or narrowly circumscribed groups. At least implicitly, the intent of politicians and their electoral agents (“brokers”) is to create a contingency between politicians’ and citizens’ actions, such that benefits or forbearance of costs by a politician trigger voters’ allegiance to and support of that politician — e.g., through voting and more involved forms of candidate assistance. In practice, establishment of such contingency is difficult, as monitoring and sanctioning of opportunistic defectors with heavy-handed methods is typically ruled out by electoral laws and other institutional safeguards. Nevertheless, clientelist exchange practices have thrived in many polities. Part of the literature documents how clientelist exchanges work (or fail to work) in many different guises, giving rise to typologies of clientelist linkage mechanisms, often mediated by brokers and party organization studied more recently in clientelism investigations. Another strand of the clientelism literature deals with the rise and decline of clientelist exchange as a significant form of electoral linkage in competitive democracies. It considers economic development, institutional arrangements of democracy (electoral laws, legislative-executive relations, etc.), the historical timing and maturity of democracies, or the ethnic divisions within democracies. A smaller literature focuses on the potential economic, political and cultural consequences of clientelism, for example, whether democratic linkage mechanisms dominated by clientelism influence economic performance, income or wealth inequality, political state capacity and members’ of societies’ sense of personal wellbeing or political regime support. The bibliographic recommendations here include a few classics (Scott 1972; Shefter 1977), numerous overview articles opening up broader access to the burgeoning literature on clientelism (Hicken 2011; Hicken and Nathans 2020; Kitschelt 2000; 2020; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Pellicer et al. 2020), as well as a few recent research articles and monographies that have commanded wide attention among scholars.

- Bustikova, Lenka, and Cristina Corduneanu-Huci. 2017. “Patronage, Trust, and State Capacity: The Historical Trajectories of Clientelism.” *World Politics*. Vol. 69, 2: 277–326.
- Gans-Morse, Jordan, Sebastián Mazzuca, and Simeon Nichter. 2014. “Varieties of Clientelism: Machine Politics during Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 58, 2: 415–443.
- Hicken, Allen. 2011. “Clientelism.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 14, 1: 289–310.
- Hicken, Allen, and Noah L. Nathan. 2020. “Clientelism’s Red Herrings: Dead Ends and New Directions in the Study of Nonprogrammatic Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 23: 277–294.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2000. “Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Politics.” *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 33, 6–7: 845–879.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 2020. “Clientelism.” In Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Bertrand Badie, and Leonardo Morlino (eds). *The Sage Handbook of Political Science*. Vol. 2. London et al.: Sage Publishers, pp. 479–498.
- Kitschelt, Herbert, and Steven Wilkinson. 2007. “Citizen–Politician Linkages: An Introduction.” In: Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson (eds). *Patrons, Clients, and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–49.
- Mares, Isabela, and Lauren Young. 2019. *Conditionality and Coercion: Electoral Clientelism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nathan, Noah L. 2019. *Electoral Politics and Africa’s Urban Transition: Class and Ethnicity in Ghana*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nichter, Simeon. 2008. “Vote Buying or Turnout Buying? Machine Politics and the Secret Ballot.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 102, 1: 19–31.
- Nichter, Simeon. 2018. *Votes for Survival: Relational Clientelism in Malaysia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pellicer, Miquel, Eva Wegner, Markus Bayer, and Christian Tischmeyer. 2022. "Clientelism from the Client's Perspective: A Meta-Analysis of Ethnographic Literature." *Perspectives on Politics*. Vol. 20, 3: 931–947.
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- Scott, James C. 1972. "Patron–Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 66, 1: 91–113.
- Stokes, Susan C. 2005. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 99, 3: 315–325.
- Stokes, Susan C., Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco. 2013. *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Yi-ting, and Kiril Kolev. 2019. "Ethnic Group Inequality, Partisan Networks, and Political Clientelism." *Political Research Quarterly*. Vol. 72, 2: 329–341.
- Yildirim, Kerem, and Herbert Kitschelt. 2020. "Analytical Perspectives on Varieties of Clientelism." *Democratization*. Vol. 27, 1: 20–43.

## 6. Pork or Constituency Service Targeted Benefits

In addition to clientelism there are at least two other modes of distributive political accountability that targets more narrowly circumscribed constituencies, albeit even without the aspiration or pretense of contingency and reciprocity. One is "pork" politics, or the targeting of benefits (or avoidance of costs) on geographical or group-based constituencies. By promising and/or delivering pork, politicians (and parties) expect to increase their electoral chances through credit claiming for the group benefit. Pork politics often involves investments in physical infrastructure (water management, transport, communication) or social services (such as education or health facilities). Constituency service, by contrast, typically involves a politician's — and especially a legislator's — attention to the pleas and petitions of a constituency member for assistance, for example by facilitating administrative procedures or access to public policy benefits.

Outside the clientelism strand, there is a vibrant literature in political economy about the mobilization of special interests in electoral democracies that concerns rent-seeking of geographical, sectoral or cultural group interests. The literature on constituency service — as well as the empirical investigation of such practices — tends to be somewhat limited, in part because the phenomenon is in many not central to the democratic accountability relationship.

- Cain, Bruce, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina. 1987. *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dixit, Avinash, and John Londregan. "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics." *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 58, 4: 1132–1144.
- Golden, Miriam A., and Brian Min. 2013. "Distributive Politics Around the World." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 16: 73–99.
- Keefer, Philip, and Stuti Khemani. 2009. "When Do Legislators Pass on "Pork"? The Determinants of Legislator Utilization of a Constituency Development Fund in India." *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 103, 1: 99–112.

## 7. Party Identification (Mobilization by Parties)

Most behavioral political scientists consider affective party identification to be the "unmoved mover," the bedrock commitment to a party that many citizens acquire through childhood socialization.

Well, that applies more in the U.S. two-party system than in multi-party systems. Moreover, even in the U.S., when looked at it from a macro-aggregate perspective, proportions of party identifications are changing. Even so, these considerations just concern the political demand side: citizens' political belief formation. But what about examining party identification from the partisan supply side: Do not parties actively shape political identifications as well? Organizational mechanisms are social and cultural organizations, subsidiary party sections (youth, women, special occupations, etc.), sites of communication (residential areas/partisan sorting of habitation, places of socializing: pubs, fairgrounds, sports events, etc.), festivities and historical commemorations, uniforms, caps, flags and songs and, lately, cyberspace social media websites, podcasts and influencers. Parties may benefit from, but also systematically build sociocultural ecosystems at the level of neighborhoods and social networks.

Interestingly, the Americanist party identification literature does not take these supply-side mechanisms of forming party identification into account. In the comparative literature on party formation, these mechanisms have been noted especially in the literature on working class party formation and other sociopolitical subcultures, for example Christian confessional communities (Catholicism versus Protestantism). In the current political science literature, the “active” supply-side element of party identification comes in primarily through two considerations only. The first one is a behavioral modification of spatial programmatic competition theory, namely that affective party identification gives politicians degrees of freedom in adjusting their programmatic spatial appeals that would be suboptimal if voters only responded to programmatic markers. The second strand of research where an active use of identification comes in is associated with the literature on party system polarization, namely that spatial programmatic issue polarization also spills over into affective party polarization (cf. Gidron et al., 2020; McCarty 2019).

- Adams, James F., Samuel Merrill III, and Bernhard Grofman. 2005. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition: A Cross-National Analysis Integrating Spatial and Behavioral Factors*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gidron, Noam, James Adams, and Will Horne. 2020. *American Affective Polarization in Comparative Perspective*. Elements in American Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huddy, Leonie. 2013. “From Group Identity to Political Cohesion and Commitment.” In: Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack Levy (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 737–773.
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- Lupu, Noam. 2016. *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarty, Nolan. 2019. *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mason, Liliana. 2023. “Political Identities.” In: Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, Jack Levy, and Jennifer Jerit (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 886–917.
- White, Jonathan, and Lea Ypi. 2016. *The Meaning of Partisanship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## 8. Partisan Linkages in Malaysia

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- Koon, H. P. 1997. The new economic policy and the Chinese community in Peninsular Malaysia. *The Developing Economies*, 35(3):262–292.
- Nadzri, M. M. 2018. The 14th General Election, the fall of Barisan Nasional, and political development in Malaysia, 1957-2018. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 37(3):139–171.
- Shamsul, A. B. 1994. Religion and ethnic politics in Malaysia. *Asian visions of authority: Religion and the modern states of East and Southeast Asia*, 99-116.
- Weiss, M. L. 2013. Coalitions and competition in Malaysia-Incremental transformation of a strong-party system. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 32(2):19–37.
- Wong, C. H., Chin, J and Othman, N. 2010. Malaysia—towards a topology of an electoral one-party state. *Democratization*, 17(5):920–949.