Article

Political parties and republican democracy

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Abstract Political parties have been the subject of a recent resurgent interest among political philosophers, with prominent contributions spanning liberal to socialist literatures arguing for a more positive appraisal of the role of parties in the operation of democratic representation and public deliberation. In this article, I argue for a similar re-evaluation of the role of political parties within contemporary republicanism. Contemporary republicanism displays a wariness of political parties. In Philip Pettit's paradigmatic account of republican democracy, rare mentions of political parties often stress their tendency to lead to factionalism or corruption. Others working in the republican tradition such as Richard Bellamy and Ian Shapiro provide more extended discussion of the role of parties, but limit their theoretical function to enabling electoral competition. I argue that political parties play a far more significant role in promoting non-domination than this. In addition to enabling electoral competition, I show that political parties are also essential to the effective operation of two other components of republican democracy: contestation and interest-formation. I further argue that understanding political parties in these terms is compatible with republican democracy more generally, addressing the worry that parties will produce factional rather than common-good oriented public decisions.
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Introduction

The place of political parties within political liberalism has undergone a significant re-evaluation in recent years. Rawls himself pays them little attention, focusing instead on ideal conditions of public reason and democratic engagement – a focus that some have taken to signify a neglect of or, worse, an aversion to political partisanship. Whether or not such a charge is fair, parties continued to hold an ambivalent position in the political liberal rubric for a number of years. Recently, however, a number of liberal theorists (Bonotti, 2017; Rosenblum, 2008; Muirhead

and Rosenblum, 2006) have argued that political parties are in fact essential to the effective functioning of Rawlsian political liberalism, contributing to public reasoning, motivating compliance with existing fair norms and rules, and enabling the expression of pluralism. Others, including Russell Muirhead (2006) and Robert Goodin (2008), have developed liberal arguments defending parties that sit outside of the Rawlsian framework. Alongside this re-assessment, political parties have also been subject to renewed interest from theorists engaging with social-democratic and socialist traditions (White and Ypi, 2016; Ypi, 2012; Dean, 2016) seeking to articulate the place and radical potential of large-scale, vertically organised groups in the context of the rise of experimental horizontal movements such as Occupy and Extinction Rebellion.

Despite these re-evaluations, political parties continue to hold an ambivalent position within republican theories of democracy. Republican theorists admit of the necessity of political parties in representative democracies, but have not fully integrated them into their accounts of democracy. When they discuss them, their focus often settles on their potential to lead to factionalism or corruption. At best, parties appear as political organisations which, when appropriately checked by norms of public civility and institutional safeguards, may be useful in the effective operation of democracy in complex modern societies. At worst, the presence of political parties seems to threaten the deliberative ideal of politics that plays such a prominent role in the account of non-arbitrary rule most notably developed by Philip Pettit. Nor do others operating in the republican tradition who advocate electoral competition over deliberation as the chief means for the promotion of non-domination – chiefly Richard Bellamy (2007; 2009) and Ian Shapiro (2016) - fare much better; while each places greater emphasis on political parties in their analysis, the function that parties are viewed as playing remains highly limited.

In this article, I argue that republicans should adopt a more positive attitude towards political parties, which can in fact play a crucial role in the promotion of non-domination within republican democracy. In addition to enabling electoral competition, I will argue that parties are central to two components of republican democracy, which I call the contestation and the interest formation functions. The distinctive organisational and normative character of political parties is central to effective practices of contestation and the development and tracking of citizens' interests. In addition to developing a positive argument for the significance of political parties to republican democracy, I also attend to the worries about the destructive tendencies of parties in the republican literature and show that incorporating a more extensive role for political parties in republican democracy is compatible with the core components of republican democratic theory. The wariness with which republicans have approached political parties thus far should, then, be abandoned; rather, parties are central to the effective operation of a republican model of democracy.

My argument will proceed as follows. In the first section, I outline the sceptical position that contemporary republicans have taken towards political parties in the context of republican democratic theory. I identify the role that parties play in enabling electoral competition both in Pettit's account of republican democracy and competing accounts. I suggest that, in addition to enabling effective electoral competition, political parties are necessary for the operation of two other features of a legitimate political system in republican terms; contestation and interest-formation. In the next two sections, I lay out how political parties contribute to these functions. In the final section, I turn to address two important republican concerns about the capacity of parties to contribute to non-domination. I demonstrate the compatibility of the expanded role of parties with core features of republican democracy, providing a rationale rooted in republican democratic theory for the extended role of parties outlined in this article I also argue that enlarging the role of parties need not lead to factionalism.

Sceptical republicanism

Contemporary republican democratic theory has followed the liberal literature in saying little about the role of political parties – a neglect that republicans, unlike liberals, are yet to correct.

In contrast to the ambivalent position of democracy within parts of the historical republican tradition, neo-republicans regard democracy as a foundational requirement of freedom as non-domination and state legitimacy.[1] The most comprehensive account of neo-republican democracy is presented by Pettit in *On the People's Term's*. Pettit (2012, pp. 146–149) emphasises that legitimate government is predicated on citizens being able to control the state, and that control being distributed equally; only in such a condition can the power of the state be non-arbitrary, and citizens enjoy freedom as non-domination. A functioning democratic institutional regime will provide citizens the opportunity to exercise individualised control over the direction of the state. Most importantly for Pettit, citizens must have the power to contest state actions or policies which do not promote the common avowable interests of the political community (Pettit, 1997, p. 185; 2012,

[1] I take the distinguishing feature of republican models of democracy as conceiving of democracy in terms of the promotion of non-domination. This does not require a wholehearted embrace of the label, and means that my discussion incorporates theories that reject various elements of the neo-republican prospectus, or which are not presented as 'republican' (such as Ian Shapiro's). Given the distinctive centrality of the concept of non-domination to republican thinking about democracy, I suggest that all theories of democracy which are largely based on the value of non-domination can meaningfully be conceived as republican. The main focus of my argument, though, will be on neo-republican accounts, primarily Philip Pettit's.

p. 179). These mechanisms will be buttressed by practices of deliberation taking place within the assembly and in the wider public sphere.

In order to ensure that a democratic state does in fact track the interests of the citizenry reliably, an institutional structure must incorporate mechanisms that protect against various pathologies of democratic politics, such as tyranny of the majority. For Pettit, the constitutional basis of political institutions, and the protection of individual basic liberties, should not be subject to ordinary political decision-making, which tends to be short-termist, insufficiently deliberative, and prone to produce outcomes guided by expected partisan advantage (Pettit, 2004, pp. 52–57; 2012, pp. 232–233). As such, Pettit (1997, pp. 177–183) incorporates traditional republican features, including separation of powers and a 'mixed constitution' in which minority rights are protected in his account of republican democracy, and stresses the importance of depoliticised agencies and juridical means of contestation.

Political parties only occasionally appear in this picture of democracy. A crude but revealing reflection of this can be found in the index of *On the People's Terms*; there is no entry for 'political parties', and only one for 'political party policy' (see Pettit, 2012, p. 337). While the highly abstract nature of Pettit's account of democracy might explain some of this absence, their near-absence in discussions of those parts of the institutional regime in which they play an important role appears to indicate a peripheral function. Even when discussing elections and legislative assemblies, parties appear (when they are mentioned at all) as incidental actors that may participate in such processes, but are not really central to their operation (Pettit, 1997, pp. 190–191; 2004, pp. 60–61). The participation necessary for robust popular influence over the state is championed, but it is 'radical social movements' rather than parties which Pettit envisages as organising to 'offer an account of common concerns, articulate a suite of popular demands, and challenge government for its failures to recognize or reflect those demands in its policies' (Pettit, 2012, p. 227). Despite this lack of attention, there appears to be an assumption that parties will be present in republican societies (Pettit, 1997, p. 234; 2012, pp. 226–227).

Furthermore, Pettit's brief discussions of politicians and parties focus primarily on the *threats* they pose to legitimate rule and politics oriented to the common good than to the productive function they might perform. Some of these worries concern ways in which parties may act to distort processes or mechanisms aimed at producing non-domination or effective policy for political ends – threats that Pettit seeks to blunt through appeal to juridical means and depoliticisation (Pettit, 1997, p. 237). Others focus on how parties may bring about a politics oriented around factional allegiance rather than considerations of the common good of the polity (Pettit, 1997, pp. 210–212). While Pettit's reliance on depoliticisation as a response to these worries is weaker than in some of his earlier work, it remains a central component of the political system he describes in *On the People's Terms*. For

instance, the danger of short-termism is solved here as before by shielding decisions from the influence of political activity, placing significant realms of policy-making 'at arm's length' through the use of bodies which 'effectively constrain policy, on issue of energy and the environment and on matters of criminal sentencing', as well as fiscal policy (Pettit, 2012, pp. 232–233).

The prominence of these concerns in Pettit's discussions indicates that the marginal position of parties in contemporary republican democratic theory is not only a product of the Rawlsian context within which modern republican thought was developed, but also of the wariness towards political partisanship that runs through the historical republican tradition. Some of the aspects of this genealogy to which contemporary neo-republican theorists (including Pettit) most commonly refer include republican Rome and the work of English and American republicans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Pettit, 1997, pp. 19–21). The potential for political groupings to develop into factions promoting sectional rather than common interests, and the question of how to prevent this, was a core issue for many theorists in this tradition, including James Madison and Richard Price, as well as for figures such as Rousseau and Machiavelli who influenced later republican thought (De Dijn, 2019; Sparling, 2016). The pursuit of factional interests – that is, those interests which are not properly common among all members of the polity, and only seek to advance the claims of the members of a particular group – cannot, republican theorists generally claim, bring about government based on the common good. Not only, as Madison notes in *Federalist 10*, does the 'mutual animosity' of parties prevent effective co-operation for the common good, but it may lead to the tyranny of the majority – a preoccupation of the republican tradition that Pettit engages with deeply (Pettit, 2012, pp. 211–218). Although these historical discussions predate the development of modern political parties, their warnings regarding the potential for arbitrary sectional rule or the absence of consideration of the common good in political life can clearly be applied to some degree to modern political contexts.

Notwithstanding this wariness, there is a clear if underappreciated reliance in Pettit's work on political parties to facilitate at least one of the mechanisms central to popular control of the state – electoral competition. Although Pettit does not provide much detail about this function, we find more explicit consideration in the work of Bellamy and Ian Shapiro. Although both Bellamy and Shapiro defend quite different (republican) models of democracy, the role that parties play in enabling electoral competition seems broadly compatible with Pettit's account.[2] For Shapiro, parties embody conflicts of interest that exist between citizens and provide a means

[2] Note that my discussion here makes no comment on the proper organisation or scope of electoral politics with a republican institutional system, on which these authors disagree. See Rosenbluth and Shapiro (2018) for a detailed defence of a competitive two-party system that differs substantially from Pettit's model of democracy. I comment on the organisational implications of my argument in more depth below.

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for those conflicts to be expressed and navigated through institutional means (Shapiro, 2016, p. 83). Electoral competition between parties provides a clear link between the expression of the interests of citizens through the electoral process and the policies that the state will enact. Like Shapiro, Bellamy (2007, pp. 232–237) emphasises the role of parties as vehicles for competitive and decisive democratic elections that establish a broadly even balance of power within the citizenry over time. Parties, he argues, will be incentivised to present their policies in relation to the common good and to address a wide variety of issues of public concern to build winning coalitions (Bellamy, pp. 230–231).

One fundamental function that political parties perform in modern democratic societies is to provide an epistemic shortcut for voters. Although republicans stress the value of political participation in promoting non-domination, they also recognise that many citizens will be unable to keep abreast of the broad range of policy developments and political conflicts that make up much of everyday political discourse (Pettit, 2012, p. 228). Political parties provide a way for citizens to cast their vote in a way that reflects their interests without necessarily knowing the positions of the individual candidates in an election on the full range of issues, signalling in broad terms the kinds of values and principles that will guide the behaviour of a candidate if successfully elected (Bellamy, 2007, p. 236). Rather than choosing from an enormous menu of policy positions and priorities, voters will choose between the programmes advanced by political parties (Shapiro, 2016, p. 80; Bellamy, 2009, p. 107).[3]

This epistemic function is crucial to another electoral function that parties enable – the transformation of local electoral contests into national mandates for government (Bonotti, 2017, p. 164; Goodin, 2008, p. 216). Representatives are not merely elected on their individual merits, but as members of a party that will seek to implement its manifesto and govern in accordance with its central commitments – or, if unsuccessful, represent those interests in opposition and act as a government in waiting. The election of independent members is unable to produce a national mandate for a manifesto or policy platform; parties are needed to create this possibility, as they link the commitments of individual candidates to a national programme. As Robert Goodin (2008, p. 216) puts it, parties are necessary for the generation of 'anything like a coherent *ratio* for government enactments, which is required in "giving laws to ourselves"'. This means that the epistemic function of parties runs in both directions; parties provide a useful means for citizens to navigate public discourse and cast votes, while electoral success for parties depends on their ability to outline a programme that is appealing to the public and which can receive a national mandate (Shapiro, 2016, p. 79).

[3] Of course, voter behaviour is not exclusively based on party manifestos, and incorporates perceptions of trust, competence, leadership, moral character, and so on, as well as considerations such as geography and tradition.

While stating more clearly the role of political parties in enabling electoral competition is crucial to understanding their role in republican democracy more generally, it does not exhaust that role. Despite the greater emphasis that Shapiro and (especially) Bellamy train on parties in comparison to Pettit, neither of their accounts fully capture the range of ways in which political parties promote the republican ideal of democratic self-government as a form of non-domination. As I will argue below, the role of political parties in republican democracy extends beyond the function of electoral competition, and is integral to the effective operation of at least two other dimensions of legitimate, non-dominating government that are not fully captured by these accounts.

Political parties as agents of contestation

The first of these is what I will call the contestation function. As I have already indicated, contestation is fundamental to ensuring that the state is forced to track the interests of the citizens, and particularly to protecting minority rights against a potentially oppressive majority. Indeed, for republicans contestation is an essential component of political legitimacy. As Pettit (2012, p. 185) puts it, 'the non-arbitrariness of public decisions comes of their meeting, not the condition of having originated or emerged according to some consensual process, but the condition of being such that if they conflict with the perceived interests and ideas of their citizens, then the citizens can effectively contest them'. Armed with the (individualised and unconditioned) power to contest public decisions, citizens will be able to relate to the actions of the state as within their control, despite their lack of authorial input.

The means by which Pettit suggests that individuals can contest actions of the state are myriad, including juridical mechanisms such as judicial review and constitutional courts, and formal and informal political mechanisms such as constitutional checks on office-holders' use of powers, the establishment of specialist or nonpartisan committees, and freedom to protest in public. Contestation is also built into the structure of Pettit's model of republican government; separation of powers ensures that, for instance, the executive requires the consent of the legislature to perform certain actions, while oversight bodies and independent policy commissions function as internal contestatory bodies (Pettit, 2004, p. 53; 2019, p. 37; 2012, p. 233).

Pettit (2019, p. 37) acknowledges that political parties can also be useful in enabling contestation, noting that one way in which citizens can exert contesting influence on the government is 'via opposition parties in the elected legislative chamber, or via the members of a second legislative chamber, who can interrogate government, seeking or challenging justification for the policies adopted'. However, I suggest that republicans should place greater emphasis on the role of

political parties as an essential feature of the contestation function. While Pettit mentions parties as a means by which citizens can contest policy within an elected chamber above, he provides no reason to think that party affiliation or organisation will be either necessary or even especially useful in enabling this contestation. A legislature comprised of independent members could 'interrogate government, seeking or challenging justification for the policies adopted'. The role of parties in actually enabling contestation, on this account, is therefore unclear.

One of the reasons why political parties are integral to the contestation function is that their organisational structures can provide a link between individual citizens and the contestatory procedures of the legislature and the official political arena more broadly. This link is considerably more inclusive than that incorporated in procedural mechanisms of contestation such as ombudsmen, or judicial ones such as judicial review, enabling citizens to express their views and interests in their own terms, and to convey how proposed or enacted policies directly impact their lives. Political parties can effectively convey the concerns and protests of their members and supporters by virtue of the internal structures that enable them to organise, campaign, and fight elections. Members of local or constituency parties are able to register the feelings of individuals and communities to those higher up the party hierarchy; individual party members may contact their elected representative(s), local party co-ordinators, or the party HQ directly; members of affiliated associations may do the same.[4] When this process works appropriately, parties can be said to be a means by which citizens may contest policy collectively and intentionally within official institutional mechanisms.[5] Parties can identify the most urgent and widely felt concerns of the population and ensure these are given sufficient consideration, and – again relying on the institutional mechanisms and expertise of the party as an organisation devoted to contesting elections – calculate how to create the biggest impact in their interventions. This enables political parties, as Giovanni Sartori (2005, p. 25) has noted, to 'provide for something that no poll or machine can supply: They transmit demands backed by pressure'.

The collective dimension of political parties is also central to another way in which political parties contribute to democratic contestation – though in this instance not as a means for members and supporters to articulate their views, but in promoting the ideal of collective self-government that is central to the justification

[4] Note that state institutions do not perform this *political* epistemic function. Local government bodies may feed information regarding their region to central government departments or bodies, but this is a purely administrative flow with no collective dimension.

[5] There will be important differences in the character and capacity of different kinds of parties (especially between those operating in political systems in which party affiliation is less central to the identity and commitments of office-holders at many levels, such as the US) to contest in this way. The form of collective contestation I focus on here is based on parties which have a unified organisational structure, a permanent committed membership base, affiliations with other groups, and (paradigmatically) a parliamentary presence. The organisation of the main US parties, and the political system in which they operate, make this kind of contestation more difficult, at least at the national level.

of political authority. As Jonathan White and Lea Ypi emphasise in their defence of political partisanship, legitimate partisans will be guided by 'principled commitments', and political parties – in contrast to pressure groups and local interest groups which may occassionally seek elected office – will be organised around *shared* commitments of this kind (White and Ypi, 2016, p. 24). That is, the political party 'serves ends irreducible to the interests of a sectoral grouping', but which are open to general assent and which can be justified to political opponents (White and Ypi, 2016, p. 22). The orientation of political discourse around these principled commitments can cultivate the conditions and mechanisms of a vigorous and vibrant system of democratic contestation that is ultimately shaped towards the common good. Contestation of this kind will always be informed by normative complaint or disagreement to some extent, revealing the link between a party's principled commitments and the principles and values that are embedded in a society's whole political culture.[6]

A possible response to the lack of integration of the role of political parties in enabling contestation in Pettit's republicanism is to reject his account in favour of alternative republican models of democracy. As I have noted, Bellamy and Shapiro both defend quite different models of republican democracy in which parties play a more prominent role. But the role that parties play in enabling contestation is crucially connected to the specific ideal of non-domination based on public reasoning and justification that is central to Pettit's account and which neither Bellamy and Shapiro sufficiently cater to. The contestation function that parties play, especially in the operation of public reason and the presentation of justifications based on principled commitments, is intertwined with the idea that deliberation, rather than merely majority voting, is necessary for a political system to effectively track the interests of the population. Although Bellamy does place the disagreement between parties at the heart of his rival account, his articulation of political disagreement leaves little possibility for genuine justification of the kind required for non-arbitrary political authority (Bellamy, 2007, ch. 5). For Bellamy, political parties can at best aim to bring about outcomes that bundle together the separate interests of various different constituencies – a process that is prone to reflect the relative bargaining power of those constituencies (White and Ypi, 2016, pp. 151–154). Such a process cannot produce justifications of political rule that are appropriately responsive to the common interests of citizens, which, when political parties are organised on the basis of principled commitments, drive political contestation (Lafont, 2019, ch. 2).

[6] This might also include forms of partisan activity that enable or overlap with contestation. Internal discussions about which principles a party should be guided by; the education and training of activists in relevant political traditions and history; justifying or defending core principles in public debate and applying them across different policy areas; and reflecting on how those commitments are best promoted by the state and convincing voters and other parties of the merits of those policies are all relevant forms of contestatory activity that help form this connection.

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Political parties, then, both generate the conditions of, and provide the means for, the contestation central to republican democracy. Of course, contestation can be ineffective, and the power to contest will often be distributed in highly unequal ways.[7] But the role that political parties play in contesting elections works in tandem with their contestatory function to maintain the salience of decisions that have already been taken. For example, a key component of the UK Liberal Democrats' 2010 general election campaign was to seek to maintain the salience of a number of decisions made by the incumbent Labour government over the previous 13 years which were unpopular with their target voters (most notably, the Iraq war, restrictions on civil liberties, and the introduction of university tuition fees). Although the parliamentary arithmetic had meant that they could not prevent these from occurring in the first place, their record of opposing the government on those issues in Parliament over the previous decade was an important factor in the election campaign, demonstrating the symbiosis between these two functions.

Notwithstanding this symbiosis, it will be a task of republican political institutional design to try and ensure that the power to contest is distributed fairly. Preventing some of the primary ways in which particular groups may levy disproportionate power to contest policy – through private donations to politicians or parties, monopolisation of economic power, opaque public decision-making, and manipulation of the electoral system – are already important republican institutional aims (Pettit, 2012, pp. 234–235). Although the policies which will best ensure that contestatory power is widely dispersed and not hoarded according to economic, cultural, or geographic factors will differ within different constitutional regimes, some institutional conditions will be generally desirable. For instance, a system of political finance might be required to both bulwark politics from economic power by placing significant restrictions on political spending and advertising *and* provide financial support enabling smaller parties to contest policies publicly and effectively. The need to promote the contestatory power of parties might also have quite determinate implications for the electoral system. Mateo Bonotti (2020) has recently argued that electoral systems combining majoritarian and proportional mechanisms will most effectively enable parties to simultaneously be responsive to their members and develop sufficiently broad public justifications of policy. This provides a pro tanto reason to adopt a system of this type. But while mixed electoral systems may be able to better balance between these two elements of contestation in general, we should note that the space for contestation within any political culture is a function of the combined operation of an electoral system, model of political finance, political traditions, media landscape, and a multitude of other factors. The weaknesses of an electoral system

[7] Consider how, after losing its parliamentary majority in the UK's 2017 heneral election, the Conservative government led by Theresa May became highly reliant on the political support of the ten elected members of the Democratic Unionist Party, which was able to exert radically disproportionate influence over government policy and spending.

in enabling certain kinds of contestation may be offset by other components of a broader well-designed and regulated political ecology.

Understanding the contestatory role of political parties in democracy not only broadens the political grammar of republican theory, but also adds to the republican understanding of the concept of contestation itself. Contestation is often contrasted to authorial or consensual modes of control, providing a means by which citizens can be said to control the direction of the state without requiring onerous levels of participation (Pettit, 1997, p. 185). In the individualised, often depoliticized form outlined by Pettit, it can appear to be a largely procedural and bureaucratic affair.[8] But incorporating political parties into our understanding of contestation reveals that contestatory processes begin a long way prior to the act of an individual or group contesting a policy in formal institutions. This final act of contestation is only one part of the practice of contestation developed and structured through the organisation and operation of political parties. The messy and unending practice of deliberation that provides the background conditions for contestation should be viewed as a part of that contestation rather than a mere prelude. In this sense, internal party conflicts about policy positions, the understanding and implications of core principled commitments, electoral and media strategy, and so on, are as crucial to the effective production of legitimate rule as the protection of formal institutional procedures themselves. They are both required for citizens to be able to contest and control the direct of the state.

Parties as sites of interest-formation

Political parties also, I suggest, contribute to a third function in republican democratic politics, one central to the standard of state legitimacy based on non-domination. For republicans, the legitimacy of the state is based on its being appropriately responsive to the interests of its citizens; more precisely, the state must track the interests of those citizens, adjusting its course when necessary and ensuring that the mechanisms and procedures that enable popular control are adequately protected and maintained. One of the ways in which this connection might break down is if citizens in certain conditions are unable to articulate or identify their interests. Individuals subject to domination may suffer in this way. This may be because they are subject to arbitrary power that prevents them from expressing what they know to be their real interests. For instance, before gaining the right to vote in democratic societies, women were unable to express their political interests institutionally. And even when relations of dependence and domination do not formally prevent some members of society from registering their

[8] Pettit of course acknowledges the role of political protest in contestation, but stresses the importance of depoliticized processes (see Pettit, 1997, pp. 195–197).

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interests politically, they can distort the interests individuals register.. It is only when all citizens are able to register their interests that the state can be said to be responsive to the common interests of the people, and thus to be legitimate.

In addition to formal exclusion, societies can fall short of this standard if individuals or groups are subject to arbitrary power that prevents them from identifying and articulating their own interests in ways that the political system will register. Normative forms of domination may operate to obscure and distort individuals' perception of their interests, or to obstruct the expression of certain interests, in a particularly insidious way. They are rooted in the lack of control that individuals have over the norms that are socially prevalent and influential within a social context; an individual or group will be subject to normative domination when they are unable to contest or influence existing social norms on equal terms to others, or when they are disadvantaged in the distribution of normative authority (Jugov, 2020, p. 60). Those subject to testimonial or epistemic injustice are unable to protest or contest norms or social or political standards because they do not possess the appropriate social standing or authority in the eyes of their fellows citizens (Fricker, 2013). Within a republican framework we can understand this as a form of domination because normatively disadvantaged groups are subject to power over which they do not have adequate control.

This kind of normative domination disrupts legitimate republican government in a number of ways. As Miranda Fricker (2013, pp. 1322–1327) has argued, conditions of epistemic injustice prevent effective contestation by disqualifying legitimate contesters, or underweighting their claims. It also stymies the operation of public reason. In cases of normative domination the ability for members of both dominated or dominating groups to engage in public reason – that is, to participate in public discussion of political claims and appeals according to commonly accepted standards – is undermined (Coffee, 2013, pp. 126–127). The claims and complaints of dominated groups tend to be informally de-legitimised, cast as external attacks rather than contributions by right. The monopolisation of the creation of social meaning – or, at least, of social meaning that feeds into official institutions and practices - by powerful social groups can lend the appearance of impartiality or neutrality to norms and processes that in reality serve the interests of members of dominant groups. Most importantly, these conditions present little opportunity to change the normative landscape, as both institutional and deliberative political avenues are resistant to it.[9] The state will not track the interests of the population accurately if the normative culture – and with it the

[9] Of course, subaltern groups will still participate in the creation of social meaning, and these forms of intellectual and social innovation will sometimes gain traction within society at large despite the prejudices and constraints that prevent dominated individuals from equal participation in normative life. But without a wholesale reformation of the distribution of normative authority – what Frederick Douglass termed a 'revolution in thought' - such influence will remain dependent on the permission of the dominating class (see Coffee, 2020).

language and frames of political discourse – remains subject to the control of one part of society. Official justifications of state action or proposed policy will fail to respond appropriately to interests which have been suppressed by virtue of normative domination, or which have only found partial expression in the accepted terms of political discourse. As such, republican politics is undermined greatly.

Political parties are necessary (though of course not sufficient) to ensure that the interests of the whole society can be expressed freely and articulated in political processes. They can perform two relevant functions. One of these, also discussed by Matteo Bonotti in the context of political liberalism, involves the amplification of existing marginalised interests or claims, while the other involves the development of distinctively *collective* interests. First, parties provide a means for the articulation of subaltern or new perspectives and experiences in established political institutions – partly by virtue of the organisational characteristics discussed above, but also by challenging existing narratives and amplifying alternative voices. Even in a well-designed republic, threats of domination will emerge, and new interests will develop over time. Parties, by providing a channel between popular opinion and government, help to ensure these developing interests can be registered within the formal political system. They can act, in Bonotti's (2017, pp. 159–162) terms, as a 'loudspeaker' by virtue of their distinctive organisational structures, which enable the claims or complaints of a small group not merely to be pointed to, but to be taken on and spoken in the voice of the whole party.

As well as amplifying interests which develop and are articulated independently, political parties are able to play an even more critical role in enabling the expression and realisation of collective interests. The practice of politics is not solely concerned with the tracking of interests – amplifying neglected voices, tweaking representative mechanisms, responding to demands – but is also a realm of interest-formation and consciousness-raising (White and Ypi, 2016, pp. 13–14) The picture of popular control over the direction of the state presented by Pettit is one of individualised control. He is right that the basis of political influence must, on republican terms, be individual citizens rather than supposedly representative institutions or groups, such as family units or interest groups. Without individualised control, citizens lose the power to define their own interests. But many of those interests will be of a collective or shared character, which can only be properly expressed or understood in collective terms. Not all of these will be especially transformative. Part of the role of a political party, for instance, will be to demonstrate to different groups of citizens that they have certain interests in common. But they can also provide a means for the exploration and identification of different kinds of properly collective interests. Perhaps the most prominent historical examples of this are class interests.[10] The shared experience and relations

[10] The role that political parties have played in developing particular visions of national and transnational belonging in various post-colonial contexts is also important to note here.

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of class may themselves exist independently of any particular political party seeking to represent certain interests, but the role of a political party in representing a social or economic class can elevate and transform that experience into a more properly political identity – especially when accompanied with institutions which ground that party in the lived reality of that class.[11] This can supplement and extend existing understanding of class experience – for instance, enabling the development of a lexicon of class politics. The formation of these specifically political dimensions of collective interests may be developed by social movements or civil society organisations, but their elucidation through political parties enables these interests to be formulated not merely as sectional or group claims but as claims regarding the common good and the exercise of political power by the state (Bonotti, 2017, pp. 121–122). Distinctive to political parties is the need to develop multi-issue agendas which can present these claims not merely as one among many competing sectional interests, but as an interest which both articulates the collective experience of particular groups and generates claims for particular kinds of action in the common good (Bonotti, 2017, p. 163).

The role of parties in articulating new collective interests also points to the potential for international links between parties, beyond the useful and prosaic practice of sharing information and experiences and providing solidarity. Many of the collective interests which parties articulate are not limited to the political circumstances of any given state, and parties with similar principled commitments and aims often co-operate with the aim of improving their respective domestic fortunes. In other cases, stronger claims of an existing or latent transnational collective may be made. To a greater or lesser degree, both kinds of claims may be politically transformative in challenging – implicitly or explicitly – politics conducted at the national level. Republicans are used to thinking of democratic politics as nationally-bounded, but the potential for parties (as well as other political actors) to challenge existing national categorisation should be regarded as a useful reminder that for politics to continue to happen at this level, it must align with citizens' perceptions of their own lives and interests.

While the focus of the argument presented in this article is on integrating political parties into republican models of democracy, this capacity for parties to generate new forms of political identity and collectivity is an element of republican thinking regarding parties that may have particular relevance in the broader literature on normative partisanship. As well as exploring how parties contribute to the operation of democratic deliberation and the justification of democratic rule, philosophical work on parties must also take into account this capacity, which situates parties both as indispensable components of existing democratic systems

[11] I am thinking here not only of trade-unions and local party branches, but also of the educational colleges, clubs, and sporting associations that characterised much of the British Labour Party's social presence in its heartlands throughout much of the twentieth century. Note that comparable institutions have also been of historical importance for conservative parties.

and potential means for their radical transformation. The account of 'revolutionary partisanship' developed by White and Ypi (2016, ch. 8) engages with strategic and justificatory questions around such transformations, but as Bonotti has noted in a symposium on the book, leaves parties beached between their obligations to conform with the constraints of public reason, and their role in improving the justificatory basis of political rule (Bonotti et al., 2018). The role of parties in enabling the development and articulation of particular collective interests points towards the need for philosophical investigation of the kinds of obligations on parties (and on the state) that might be generated as a result.

Parties in republican democracy

I have argued that political parties can contribute to the promotion of non-domination within a democratic political system by acting as agents of contestation and enabling the amplification and identification of collective interests. On its own, this claim does not provide a basis to say that republicans have been mistaken in their reluctance to integrate parties fully into theories of republican democracy. It is also necessary to show, firstly, that the expanded role of political parties is beneficial to the production of non-domination across the political system as a whole, and that it is compatible with the institutional tools on which republican democracy relies. Additionally, we must show that it does not bring with it unreasonable costs or risks – of which, for republicans at least, the risk of factionalism looms largest. In this Section, I will address both issues, arguing that the function of parties outlined above should be viewed as bolstering rather than transforming or degrading a broadly Pettitian model of democracy. My aim here is not to provide an empirical justification for this claim, and my focus will be on those characterisations of these objections which are primarily normative.

Republican models of democracy employ a range of institutional mechanisms and principles to ensure that the state is sufficiently responsive to the interests of the citizenry. For Pettit, drawing on the historical republican tradition, these include constitutional measures, such as separation of powers, bicameralism, rights of judicial review, and rule of law constraints. These are buttressed by a network of watchdog and depoliticised agencies, independent media organisations, impartial bodies and, ultimately, a vigilant population guided by public-spirited and robust norms (Pettit, 2012, pp. 215–218). As I noted earlier, this sophisticated institutional constellation is partly a product of a fear of party-based political decision-making and conflict. The prominent role of depoliticised agencies in Pettit's model is precisely justified on the grounds that certain policy areas are better served by cool-headed expertise than the heat of partisanship. How, then, can an expanded notion of the role of political parties in promoting non-domination be reconciled with an

institutional framework that has been developed deliberately to impede their operation?

It is right to note that this model of contestatory democracy leaves little room for political partisanship, and numerous critics have taken aim at this feature of Pettit's account (Bellamy, 2007; Urbinati, 2010). But the role that I have outlined for political parties in this article does not rely on a rejection of Pettit's constitutionalism. In fact, the contestatory and interest-formation functions that I outline rely on and complement core elements of a Pettitian model. The kind of contestation that parties will enable are, I have argued, distinctive in content and character, as (for example) the structure of parties provides a means for collective interests to function as a grounds of contestation. But crucially the role of parties is still envisaged in the explicitly republican terms of contestation, the relaying of the interests of citizens into political decision-making, and common interests.

Beyond this explicit congruence, there is good reason to think that the functions outlined above will bolster rather than corrode the conditions of republican democracy. For instance, a culture of political partisanship effectively rooted in divergent principled commitments will tend to reproduce and reinforce the norms of republican public reason by requiring the claims made by members or the party collectively to address the common interests of the citizenry. Their organisational form can enable political participation from a wider range of citizens who might be intimidated by formal procedural mechanisms, while simultaneously acting as a filter on potential claims which do not command sufficient support or fail to accord to relevant standards. Although the logic of partisanship and the more depoliticized elements of republican democracy will often come into conflict, this should be viewed as a productive tension. The architecture of republican democracy is organised around a range of different means that citizens can use to influence the state, which collectively provide a basis for saying that the citizens control the state (Pettit, 2012, ch. 4). Boundary disputes among these means will inevitably arise out of immediate political conditions, but it is a virtue of republican political design that it places a high threshold over which any proposed changes to those boundaries must pass.

One might suspect that parties may be inhibited from performing these functions within the architecture of institutional checks, vetos and independent procedures outlined by Pettit, or that this legalistic institutional form may render those parties vulnerable to elite capture. But within an otherwise well-functioning political system (i.e. one that is not unreasonably prone to stasis or where checks and balances are too weak), parties will be under no more threat of capture or institutionalisation than in Pettit's account as it stands; the modest expanded role that I argue they should play does not render this capture any more or less probable.

One additional reason we might have for optimism is that the guiding principles of republican democracy provide useful organisational resources to bulwark threats of this kind. Of course, the internal structure of a political party is up to members of

that party, who are entitled to organise their political association in accordance with their ideological principles and collective priorities.[12] But even a relatively minimal incorporation of organisational mechanisms aimed towards internal non-domination is likely to provide means to resist this kind of capture. These might include:

- Internal contestation processes over party policy, leadership positions, procedures, etc., which would force party leaders and organisers to justify themselves to, and persuade, members and affiliated organisations, enabling those members to challenge dominant narratives or partial representations of the interests of voters (Wolkenstein, 2019, p. 31)
- Individuated democratic control by members. Note that while republicans will view some forms of party democracy as preferable to others, no particular model is required. The model of intra-party deliberation developed by Wolkenstein (2019, ch. 2), for instance, would more then satisfy this condition, but from a republican perspective a range of different ways of organising party decision-making will be viewed as acceptable so long as members are effectively able to influence the direction of the party, and that the system enabling this influence does not entrench party elites or privilege particular segments of the membership. While Bonotti (2020) has recently suggested that reforms aimed at enhancing party democracy may also harm their ability to develop and present sufficiently broad-based accounts of the common good, a substantial degree of internal democracy will be crucial for the development of a sufficiently authentic account of the common good (especially for parties which do not aim to fulfil 'catch-all' or technocratic roles, which may themselves be less averse to the prospect of elite capture).
- Engagement with non-party actors and social movements, which forces parties to confront a broad range of political demands, including those which may challenge those in positions of party management and produce new collectivities. As Stuart White (2019) has argued, social movements may promote non-domination, specifically targetting oligarchy or elite capture, in a variety of ways, each of which involves engagement with political parties and the functions of contestation and interest-formation outlined above. Parties will often have incentives to keep their distance from movements which are not bound by the requirement to maintain broad electoral coalitions for fear of alienating potential voters, and party leaders may fear losing control of the party machine. But

[12] Although I do not explore the possibility here, I think it plausible that parties within a republican framework will be charged with meeting what White and Ypi (2016, p. 210) have called an 'organizational minimum' - that is, a core set of organizational principles which can enable parties to fulfil their normative function, above which there is room for significant variation. For an extended discussion of the normative considerations surrounding the internal organisation of parties, see Wolkenstein (2019).

developing mutually beneficial, if challenging, relations with social movements can enable parties to tap into forms of democratic and political innovation that are unlikely to be generated within political parties.

Parties which engage in the kind of activity I outline above, and which institute some or all of these types of internal organisational mechanisms, are more likely to be vigilant against such threats, most notably due to their cultivation of collective interests – a practice likely to illuminate both the costs of party institutionalisation and the means by which it may occur. Conversely, parties which fail to do so, or which operate within political systems which place costs on these kind of organisational principles, are more vulnerable to elite capture and less well equipped to perform the functions outlined in this paper. This possibility, though, is present in all democratic political systems; republican democratic theory at least provides a coherent link between the internal structure of parties and the operation of legitimate democratic rule, and some conceptual tools to think about how parties may be structured to perform their functions more effectively.

From here, we can see that accounting for an extended role for political parties in republican democracy also need not increase the threat of factionalism. Factionalism occurs when state action, rather than being determined by the common avowable interests of citizens, becomes based on the particular interests of a section of the population (Pettit, 1997, p. 56). When either a majority or minority are able to direct the state without appealing to these common interests, those outside of this group will relate to the state as an arbitrary power. Political parties are often charged with making sectional claims, or representing the interests of only their electoral coalition rather than the national interest, and as such might be viewed as vehicles of factionalism. More weakly, the worry might be that the more prominent a role that parties have in a political system, the more likely that party identification becomes the most salient form of political identification, at which point factionalism is liable to develop.

Creating a political context resistant to factionalism will involve consideration of far more than the role of parties themselves, spanning questions of the distribution of wealth, party funding, and political culture (Bonotti, 2017, pp. 29–30). My argument in this paper does not, I suggest, make factionalism any more likely by virtue of empowering parties. Firstly, those parties will operate within an institutional structure that prevents majoritarian violation of minority rights and revision of the rules of the political system for partisan advantage. Such a system limits how much damage a party can do in government before being voted out, and provides an incentive to speak to the whole country rather than merely to one's own voters. Secondly, the role of parties in enabling the realisation of collective interests can be expected, in societies according to other standards of non-domination, to be a force for solidarity rather than an exclusionary device.

Individuals may come to see that they have an array of interests held collectively with different but overlapping groups which span political divides, underlining the common interests that connect different communities. Finally, parties provide a means for fierce criticism and contestation of potentially factional activity, as opposition parties have an incentive to publicise decisions which are made without proper justification. While the tendency for parties to become factional cannot be eradicated, within an effective institutional setup this must be balanced against the positive role that I have argued parties can play in promoting non-domination.

These are all reasons to think that within a broadly functional political system, parties will not be liable to degenerate into factions. But we must also remember that even well-designed institutional regimes are liable to break down, and that political life will often be characterised by entrenched relations of domination. We should therefore be concerned not only with the means by which non-domination can be maintained within an effective political system, but also with how it can be resisted in a dominating state. The role that I have argued parties can play in consciousness-raising gestures towards their capacity to play a transformative role in conditions of domination – a capacity that perhaps, by virtue of their distinctive organisational structure and claim to legitimate rule, they are uniquely well equipped to express.

Conclusion

Political parties, then, should be viewed with less caution than they are often granted by republican political philosophers. I have made both a positive and a negative case that parties should be viewed more positively by republicans. My positive argument has shown that political parties can perform valuable functions beyond the role of enabling electoral competition. By virtue of their distinctive structure and claim to rule, they provide the means for forms of contestation and interest-tracking which would otherwise be lacking. My negative argument has attempted to demonstrate that extending the role of political parties need not threaten the basis of legitimate rule by bringing about institutional corrosion or factionalism. These risks cannot be nullified, but extending the role of political parties in public deliberation and contestation need not make them any more likely to be realised. As such, republicans should welcome the revival of political parties in political philosophy, and belatedly take the opportunity to integrate parties fully into their discussions and models of legitimate democratic rule.

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