

The Paradox of Adversity

The Contrasting Fates of Latin America's New Left Parties

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Why do some new political parties take root after rising to electoral prominence, while others collapse after their initial success? Although strong parties are critical for stable, high-quality democracy, relatively little is known about the conditions under which strong parties emerge. The classic literature on party-system development is largely based on studies of the United States and Western European countries.¹ Since almost all of these polities developed stable party systems, the classic theories tend to take successful party-building for granted. While telling us much about how electoral rules, social cleavages, and access to patronage shape emerging party systems, they leave aside a more fundamental question: Under what conditions do strong parties emerge in the first place?

Since the onset of the third wave of democratization, attempts to build parties have failed in much of the developing world.² In Latin America, over 95 percent of the parties born during the 1980s and 1990s disbanded after failing to take off electorally, and even among the small subset of parties that attained national prominence, most collapsed shortly afterward.³ Despite the preponderance of unsuccessful new parties, existing literature on party-building in developing countries focuses overwhelmingly on the tiny fraction of new parties that survived. For example, scholars have written hundreds of book-length studies on successful new parties in Latin America but only a few such studies on unsuccessful cases.⁴ This inattention to unsuccessful cases is methodologically problematic: without studying cases of party-building failure, we cannot fully account for party-building success.

Latin America's "new left" parties—left parties born during the region's third wave (1978–1995)—provide a rich universe of cases for analyzing variation in party-building outcomes.⁵ These parties faced the same initial challenges. With the collapse of ISI and the emergence of an elite neoliberal consensus in the 1980s and 1990s, the left's traditional economic platform became politically infeasible in much of the region, and with the decline of labor unions and rise of the informal sector, the left's capacity

to mobilize the popular classes decreased considerably.⁶ Despite these common challenges, Latin America's new left parties experienced widely varying degrees of success. The overwhelming majority flopped electorally and quickly disappeared,⁷ while roughly a dozen attained national electoral prominence. Of these roughly dozen, five took root and are now institutionalized parties, while the others collapsed after their initial success.⁸ The survival and collapse of Latin America's new left parties had major consequences. Where new left parties survived, party systems and democratic regimes were more likely to become consolidated (e.g., Brazil).⁹ Where new left parties collapsed, checks on executive power and opposition to dominant parties weakened (e.g., Argentina), and party systems and democratic regimes were more likely to break down (e.g., Peru). Nevertheless, variation in new left party outcomes remains under-researched and poorly understood.

Notably, most of the Latin American new left parties that survived were born—and spent several initial years—in adversity. Brazil's Workers' Party (PT) and Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) were engaged in electoral opposition to authoritarian regimes for five to ten years, while El Salvador's FMLN and Nicaragua's FSLN emerged from more than a decade of armed conflict. In contrast, most new left parties that collapsed after liftoff were born in democracy, under less adverse circumstances (e.g., Argentina's FREPASO and Peru's United Left). What explains this paradox?

Surprisingly, adverse circumstances may facilitate party-building. New parties tend to collapse because most do not have strong territorial organizations and committed activists and, consequently, do not survive early crises. New parties with strong organizations and committed activists are more likely to emerge under adverse conditions—specifically, conditions of limited access to (1) state resources¹⁰ and (2) mass media. Office-seekers with limited state and media access have no choice but to undertake the slow, labor-intensive, and non-vote-maximizing work of organization-building. At the ground level, organization-building is laborious, usually unremunerated, sometimes risky, and unlikely to bear short-term electoral fruit. Consequently, the process selects for committed “believers.”¹¹ Limited state and media access thus may facilitate successful party-building—and, notably, is characteristic of office-seekers engaged in opposition to authoritarian regimes. Thus, the article's take-away argument is that party-building may be more likely to succeed in authoritarian contexts (provided that repression is not too extreme) than under democracy. Although this argument arises from a study of the contemporary Latin American left, it should have broader applications to parties across historical periods and the ideological spectrum.

The argument in this article runs counter to an influential strain of contemporary scholarship positing that stable democracy facilitates party-building. Numerous scholars have argued that democracy itself, at least if uninterrupted, encourages party-building by giving elites an incentive to “turn” to parties¹² and by giving voters repeated opportunities to develop partisan attachments.¹³ Such claims are likely overstated. In Latin America and other parts of the developing world, democracy

appears to impede party-building by easing opposition access to media and the state. Although parties are almost certainly good for democracy, democracy may not always be good for party-building.

The Argument: The Paradox of Adversity

With few exceptions, political parties must establish strong partisan brands in order to become institutionalized.¹⁴ It is rare, though, for parties to be born with strong brands.¹⁵ Most new parties must first go through a process of brand development, differentiating themselves from other parties and demonstrating internal consistency over time.¹⁶ During this embryonic period, new parties frequently experience electoral crisis, either failing to take off electorally or suffering a major setback. Existing analyses of party failure tend to focus on the causes of such electoral setbacks.¹⁷ However, new parties typically disintegrate not only because they face electoral crises, but also because they are not organizationally equipped to survive them.

New parties are much more likely to survive crisis if they have strong territorial organizations¹⁸ and committed activists.¹⁹ Building a strong organization, however, is no easy task. It requires significant time and work, as the party must recruit members, establish local offices, and train local organizers, construct institutions for internal decision-making, and procure financing, often through small dues and donations. These processes are slow and require volunteer labor. Organization-building also reduces elite nimbleness and flexibility. Rank-and-file members are likely to demand internal democracy, which prolongs decision-making, and to insist on candidates and programs that may alienate sectors of the electorate. For all these reasons, new parties that invest in organization typically make slow electoral progress, at best.

Office-seekers thus only have a strong electoral incentive to invest in organization if they cannot win office by quicker, easier, or more vote-maximizing means. Two such means are (1) the use of the state resources for electoral purposes²⁰ and (2) mass media appeals.²¹ Consequently, only when office-seekers lack access to state and media do they have a strong electoral incentive to invest in organization.

State, Media, and Incentives for Organization-Building

In many developing countries, politicians in office routinely use the state as a “substitute” for party organization.²² Such politicians siphon public money for campaign financing, deploy government employees as campaigners, recruit candidates from government agencies, and use public buildings as campaign offices. Investing in party organization takes longer, requires more fundraising, and imposes tighter constraints on elite nimbleness and flexibility. Thus, it is often electorally rational for elites in office to forgo

party-building and use state resources to win elections.²³ An extended period in the opposition, then, may actually serve as a blessing in disguise for party-builders. In the opposition, office-seekers cannot use the state for electoral purposes. Effectively, they lack access to a major party substitute that hinders party-building.

Importantly, though, in recent decades, office-seekers in the opposition often have not needed to invest in parties in order to obtain a mass following. Given the extensive reach of television and radio, media-savvy political entrepreneurs can win major elections (including presidential elections) through mass media appeals, with little or no party organization behind them. They can appeal to millions of voters instantaneously, autonomously, and without the need for canvassing. Consequently, the rise of broadcast media has weakened elite incentives for party-building and debilitated or prevented the emergence of strong parties in many present-day polities.²⁴ Brazilian ex-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso memorably observed in the late 1980s that for office-seekers, “a TV channel is worth more than a party.”²⁵

Crucially, however, even in the age of mass media, not all party leaders have media access. In contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes, restrictions on freedom of the press often deprive government opponents of media platforms and coverage. Where large segments of the opposition lack media access, the only new opposition parties capable of achieving electoral success are those that build strong organizations. These parties must invest heavily in territorial organization if they wish to contend for power. Consequently, not all new parties born in the mass media age are likely to be fragile, as Mainwaring and Zoco have influentially suggested.²⁶ On the contrary, some contemporary office-seekers have very limited media access, and this, paradoxically, facilitates party-building by creating incentives for organization-building.

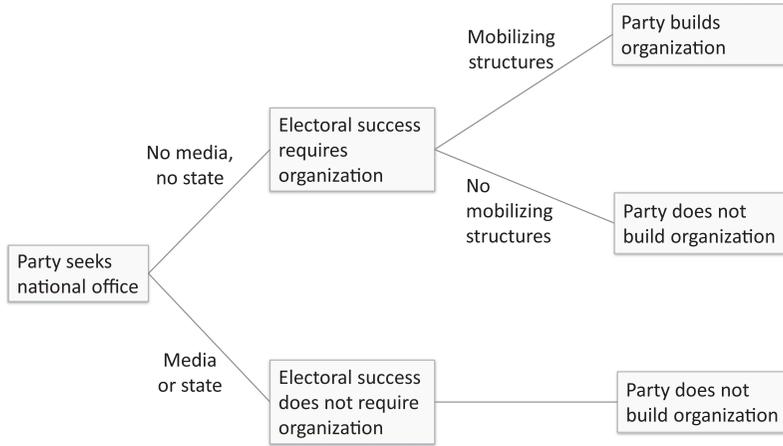
Mobilizing Structures and the Means for Organization-Building

Elites with incentives to invest in organization must also have the means for organization-building. Access to civil society feeder organizations, or “mobilizing structures,”²⁷ significantly reduces the costs of organization-building by supplying new parties with activist networks, elites and cadres, and infrastructure. Historically, most strong party organizations have been built on trade unions, social movements, local church associations, guerrilla armies, and other organizational platforms.²⁸

Adversity and Activist Commitment

A strong organization, though necessary to cushion new parties against collapse, is not sufficient. To survive crises, new parties, even those with organization, require committed activists. Low state and media access not only creates incentives for organization-building, it also selects for committed activists. As observed earlier, new parties with low state and media access tend to make slow electoral progress, at best.

Figure 1 Conditions for Organizational Strength



Consequently, elites cannot offer selective incentives (e.g., patronage) to most activists in the short term. The unavailability of selective incentives weeds out careerists and patronage-seekers. As a rule, only ideologues—Panebianco’s “believers”²⁹—are willing to join a new party with few resources and uncertain prospects.³⁰

The Role of Authoritarianism

Low state and media access thus facilitates party-building by creating incentives for territorial organization and selection pressures for committed activists. Critically, new parties with low state and media access are more likely to be found in authoritarian contexts than in democratic ones. In authoritarian systems, the ruling elite excludes the opposition from the state, either by not holding elections, or by holding elections but significantly handicapping the opposition through fraud, repression, heavy spending, and other means. Many authoritarian regimes also handicap opponents by limiting their media access. Through politicized licensing, bribes, sanctions, or outright ownership, they ensure that major media outlets support the regime and ignore or defame the opposition.³¹

Authoritarian contexts can facilitate opposition party-building in two additional ways. First, although extreme authoritarian repression undermines party-building by deterring even the most committed regime opponents, less extreme (and more typical) repression strengthens opposition selection pressures by weeding out activists unwilling to face violence or imprisonment. Second, the large-scale mobilization of believers, naturally, requires the existence of a higher cause. Anti-authoritarian movements tend to furnish such causes. These movements are struggles against political exclusion and

sometimes state violence. Consequently, they stir passions, helping to mobilize the founding generation of activists who are so vital to building resilient party organizations.

Under democracy, civil liberties such as freedom of speech, press, and association are broadly protected, and, in the contemporary era, opposition parties have access to broadcast media. Consequently, new opposition parties under democracy are, on average, more capable than their anti-authoritarian counterparts of quickly penetrating the state. In many respects, this access to state and media is desirable, but it weakens the incentives and selection pressures that are critical for party-building.

Low state and media access is neither necessary nor sufficient for successful party-building. Some new parties survive and take root despite being born with state or media access,³² and countless new parties that lack state and media access still collapse during their formative periods. The argument in this article is probabilistic: new parties that lack state and media access are more likely to survive and become consolidated—again, provided that repression is not too extreme.

The Argument at Work: New Left Party Survival and Collapse in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina

This section illustrates the above argument by comparing three Latin American new left parties: Brazil's Workers' Party (PT, est. 1980), Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD, est. 1989), and Argentina's Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO, est. 1994).³³ Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina have the three largest economies in Latin America, and the PT, PRD, and FREPASO are the most electorally successful left parties born in these three countries since the onset of the third wave in Latin America. The PT, PRD, and FREPASO also share several analytically relevant features, allowing for a rough "most similar cases" comparison. All three parties formed during the 1980s in opposition to neoliberal economic policies. They initially had limited access to state resources and strong ties to nationally organized mobilizing structures. Finally, they all suffered early electoral crises. The PT experienced a major letdown in its first election; the PRD suffered crushing defeats in its first two national elections; and FREPASO had a disastrous election in 2001. Yet, while the PT and PRD survived and took root, FREPASO disintegrated. The case studies below provide evidence that the PT and PRD weathered their crises because of their origins under authoritarian rule. Deprived of access to mass media, both parties initially invested in organization and, when crisis struck, were equipped to survive. In contrast, FREPASO's founders began their party-building project under democracy, with access to independent mass media. Consequently, they did not invest in organization and were not equipped to survive.

The PT in Brazil

Brazil's Workers' Party (PT) was established in 1980 and spent its first half-decade as a major opponent of Brazil's military regime (1964–1985). Its founders came from the

Table 1 Explaining New Left Party Survival and Collapse in Brazil (PT), Mexico (PRD), and Argentina (FREPASO)*

	Access to the State	Access to Mass Media	Access to Mobilizing Structures	Strong Territorial Organization with Committed Activists	Outcome after Electoral Crisis
PT (Brazil)	None	None	Full	Yes	Survival
PRD (Mexico)	None	None	Full	Yes	Survival
FREPASO (Argentina)	None	Full	Full	No	Collapse

*See Appendix A for details on operationalization.

civil society organizations leading Brazil’s pro-democracy struggle at the grassroots level: the autonomous labor movement, or “new unionism,” in collaboration with the Catholic and Marxist left.

PT Organization-Building: State, Media, and Mobilizing Structures During its first decade of existence, the PT had virtually no access to state resources or private finance. In a country with a federal government, over twenty state governments, and over 4,000 municipal governments, the PT, on creation, did not hold a single executive post. Not until 1988 did the PT win its first major executive position, the mayoralty of São Paulo. Annual party revenue was below 200,000 USD until 1986 and 1.1 million USD until the mid-1990s.³⁴ Such meager patronage and financial resources were grossly insufficient to grease the wheels of a national party machine in Brazil.

The early PT also lacked access to mass media. During Brazil’s military dictatorship, television ownership increased substantially, and control of TV stations became essential for congressional and subnational political success. Brazil’s military presidents systematically awarded broadcasting concessions to allied local and regional bosses in implicit exchange for pro-government media coverage, “creating the new phenomenon of electronic [clientelism].”³⁵ This pattern, which harmed the new unionism and PT during the late military period, continued after the 1985 transition to civilian rule under presidents José Sarney (1985–1990) and Fernando Collor de Mello (1990–1992), who were both PT opponents. Under President Sarney, the politicized distribution of television and radio licenses “reached a new level,”³⁶ and during Collor’s abbreviated tenure, “political favoritism” remained “the only criterion” for awarding broadcasting concessions.³⁷

Throughout the PT’s gestation and formative period, a single network—*Globo*—held a monopoly in television news and systematically omitted, distorted, and manipulated political news to hurt the left.³⁸ *Globo*’s most flagrant breach of neutrality occurred in 1989, when the network’s flagship news program, *Jornal Nacional*, heavily edited presidential debate segments to cast right-wing candidate, Fernando

Collor, in a favorable light and portray the PT's Lula da Silva as radical and dangerous. In 1993, Lula identified *Globo's* media monopoly as a central impediment to full democratization.³⁹

Out of power and off the airwaves, the early PT depended on grassroots activism for electoral gain—a reality not lost on early PT organizers.⁴⁰ While low state and media made organization-building electorally necessary, the PT's ties to civil society made such organization-building possible. The PT built a strong organization by tapping into new unions, the Catholic left, and the Marxist left. New unions supplied the PT's top leaders and provided more cadres, activists, members, and office locales than any other civil society feeder organization.⁴¹ The Catholic left also played a vital role. In the late 1970s, Catholic base-level communities (CEBs) became heavily involved in the autonomous labor struggle and, later, the PT. The Catholic left's strength in rural and peripheral urban areas extended the early PT's organizational reach.⁴² Finally, many elites and cadres from Brazil's three leading Marxist parties (PCB, PCdoB, and MR-8) defected from the center-left PMDB to join the PT, and the PT also absorbed a group of more radical Marxist organizations such as the Trotskyist Workers' Faction.⁴³

During the 1980s, the PT established an extensive organizational presence in the industrialized Southeast and South and several rural states (e.g., Acre and Pará). In 1980 and 1981, the PT's membership and local infrastructure skyrocketed in size and, thereafter, expanded steadily. By 1989, the PT had 625,000 members⁴⁴ and offices in nearly half of Brazil's municipalities.⁴⁵ By the mid-1990s, the PT's membership approached one million.⁴⁶

Selection Effects and Activist Commitment PT founders describe the organization-building of the 1980s as an extremely difficult undertaking requiring immense effort.⁴⁷ The difficulty stemmed primarily from the need to recruit and register hundreds of thousands of party members in hundreds of municipalities and to train activists for this organizing work. Organizers worked without pay and sometimes under threat of repression. Such conditions, along with the early PT's electoral marginality, shaped the profile of the party's early joiners. By and large, those who joined the early PT did so because they believed in what the party stood for (e.g., popular empowerment and participation and the fight against inequality).

Surviving Crisis in 1982 The PT's strong organization and committed activists fortified it amid early electoral crisis. In the 1982 municipal, state, and congressional elections, the PT suffered a major letdown. The party had entered the electoral season with optimism due to the "great energy of struggle"⁴⁸ and unexpectedly large rally audiences during its campaigns.⁴⁹ Most activists believed that Lula would win the São Paulo governorship, the most important of the offices contested.⁵⁰ Lula, however, placed a distant fourth, and in a country with over 4,000 municipalities, the PT won only two small mayoralties. In Brazil's congress, the PT received a paltry 3.5 percent of the seats. Keck calls the 1982 results a "profound shock and disappointment to the

PT,” which “the PT experienced as a severe defeat,” and after which “deep disappointment and a kind of collective depression” set in.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the PT quickly rebounded. In post-election internal dialogues, party leaders assessed that the 1982 campaigns had distanced the party from its civil society roots. The party thus initiated a “return to the base,” with a renewed emphasis on “social action.”⁵² With no elected offices to occupy, top party leaders, including Lula, rededicated themselves to the new unionism. In 1983, they founded the umbrella new union confederation, the Unified Workers’ Central (CUT), beginning a successful effort to expand the autonomous labor movement. The PT’s renewed focus on social action came to involve other civil society actors as well, particularly landless workers. On the strength of the PT’s grassroots leadership,⁵³ Brazil’s 1983–1984 movement for direct elections (*Diretas Já*) became the largest mass mobilization in the country’s history.

The PT performed unexpectedly well in the mayoral elections of November 1985. The party ran campaigns in nearly every state capital, and PT candidates achieved breakout performances across the country. The PT won the mayoralty of Fortaleza (then Brazil’s fifth largest city), and unlike in 1982, PT candidates finished second or third in a number of other major municipal contests, including São Paulo’s. In part, the PT’s performance reflected its strengthened civil society ties, but the PT had also begun to develop a successful brand. The PT’s boycott of the January 1985 presidential election—following the Brazilian Congress’s rejection, months earlier, of the amendment for direct elections—had consolidated its image as a party of principle, less willing to compromise for short-term political gain than the PMDB.⁵⁴ This helped attract and cement Brazil’s left-wing vote. By the second half of the 1980s, the PT dominated the left side of Brazil’s electoral spectrum.⁵⁵

The Institutionalization of the PT The PT’s evolution from the late 1980s to the 2010s is well-known and widely studied.⁵⁶ In 1989, Lula da Silva burst onto the national political scene and almost won the presidential election, raising the PT’s national profile. In 1994 and 1998, though, Lula suffered presidential defeats, largely because the PT ran too far to the ideological extreme,⁵⁷ as niche parties often do.⁵⁸ As in 1982, these setbacks (especially Lula’s 1994 loss) dashed members’ expectations. Nevertheless, the PT—as it had done before—survived to “play another day.” In fact, the PT of the 1990s, even as it lost repeated presidential elections, never ran a serious risk of collapse. Below the presidential level, the PT made steady electoral gains. After winning only two mayoralties in 1982, the PT won 36 in 1988, 54 in 1992, 115 in 1996, and 187 in 2000.⁵⁹ In 1988, the PT won the mayoralties of São Paulo (one of Brazil’s most important offices) and Porto Alegre. In 1990, the PT crossed the 10 percent threshold in the lower house of congress and continued to gain in 1994 and 1998 (see Appendix B).⁶⁰ In 1994, the PT won its first two governorships, in Espírito Santo and Brasília, and in 1998, it won three, in Acre, Mato Grosso do Sul, and, most importantly, Rio Grande do Sul. In short, while Lula was losing presidential elections, the PT was steadily growing and becoming institutionalized as a major national party.

During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the PT became Brazil's most successful party. At the national level, the party finally "adapted," embracing macroeconomic orthodoxy and modernizing its campaign tactics.⁶¹ These adaptations paved the way for Lula's 2002 presidential victory and enabled the PT to follow Lula's 2002 victory with repeat victories in 2006, 2010, and 2014. Between 1994 and 2014, the PT regularly won 10–20 percent in the lower house of congress (see Appendix B), and in 2014, it captured four governorships.

What is critical, however, is that the PT survived the formative years. The 1980s tested the PT's durability, as the party suffered a major electoral setback in 1982 and operated on the margins of national electoral politics for nearly a decade. The PT survived this difficult period and could subsequently take root because of its durable party organization, built under adverse, authoritarian conditions.

The PRD in Mexico

Like Brazil's PT, Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) is an opposition party that formed under adverse, authoritarian circumstances, built a strong organization with committed activists, survived early electoral crisis, and took root. The PRD was born in 1989 under the authoritarian rule of the hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). It grew out of a mass movement to elect Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, leftist PRI defector, president of Mexico in 1988. After Carlos Salinas of the PRI defeated Cárdenas in an election widely viewed as fraudulent, the movement that backed Cárdenas strengthened, and from it, the PRD emerged.

PRD Organization-Building: State, Media, and Mobilizing Structures The PRD was born with no governors and a limited number of mayors in small, poor municipalities. It did not win a single governorship or major mayoralty until the late 1990s, in contrast to the conservative National Action Party (PAN), the PRI's other main opposition party. The PRD also suffered from chronic "financial shortages" and a lack of "resources to invest in electoral campaigns...and professional cadres."⁶² At the local level, early PRD candidates often financed and ran their own campaigns. As late as the mid-1990s, the national PRD organization could only afford fifty permanent staff.⁶³ One party activist and scholar summarized that as late as the mid-1990s, "there was nothing [i.e., no patronage] to distribute."⁶⁴

In contrast, the PRI had vast financial resources (public and private) at its disposal, which it used to outspend the PRD by overwhelming margins during the first half of the 1990s.⁶⁵ The Salinas administration (1988–1994) also created and implemented a major poverty relief program, PRONASOL, which targeted electorally strategic municipalities across Mexico and helped the PRI co-opt or divide many local electorates and civil society organizations previously sympathetic to Cárdenas.⁶⁶

The early PRD also lacked access to mass media. Lawson has shown that until the late 1990s, the owners of Mexico's major media conglomerates, in exchange for

preferential treatment by the government, systematically set the public agenda in accordance with PRI priorities, omitted politically sensitive developments from news programming, favorably covered the PRI, and cast PRI opponents in a negative light.⁶⁷ At the center of Mexico's PRI-dominated media establishment lay the *Televisa* conglomerate (est. 1973). By the 1990s, *Televisa*, much like Brazil's *Globo* network, monopolized Mexico's television market, commanding over 80 percent of its television audience.⁶⁸ In the mid-1990s, *Televisa*'s chief executive, Emilio Azcarragá Jr., called himself a "soldier of the PRI" and his network "part of the governmental system."⁶⁹

Unsurprisingly, the early PRD suffered from systematic media hostility and blacklisting. During the 1988 presidential campaign, Cárdenas received under nine hours of airtime on *Televisa*'s primetime cable news program, *24 Hours (24 Horas)*, while Salinas received over 140 hours.⁷⁰ In the lead-up to the 1994 presidential campaign, PRI candidate Ernest Zedillo received forty-six times more airtime than Cárdenas and the PAN's Diego Fernández de Cevallos combined.⁷¹ According to several analyses, unfair media treatment significantly harmed the PRD in both the 1991 congressional election and 1994 general election.⁷²

The PRD thus relied on activists to reach voters, and, like the PT, it was able to build a strong organization through civil society ties. The early PRD drew primarily from three groups: the traditional Marxist left, the "social" left, and ex-PRI networks. In late 1988, Mexico's largest left party at the time, the Socialist Mexican Party (PMS), dissolved itself so that the PRD could adopt its registry and absorb its members and offices. The PRD thus inherited several thousand ex-PMS leaders and cadres, a disproportionate number of whom rose to positions of national leadership or won major offices.⁷³ The social left provided the PRD with a much larger number of early members and activists.⁷⁴ This category comprised organizations and movements that disdained electoral politics, detested the PRI, had "iron-willed activist bases," and sometimes engaged in "warlike (including armed) forms of struggle."⁷⁵ Among social left actors, rural unions in the southern states and urban popular movements in Mexico City (particularly the Neighborhood Assembly) played the most important role in supplying PRD members and establishing local PRD branches.⁷⁶ Finally, large networks of defecting PRI cadres and activists fed into the PRD, particularly in Michoacán and Tabasco, the home states (respectively) of the PRD's most prominent PRI defector, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, and fellow PRI defector and future PRD presidential candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.⁷⁷

PRD organizational-building quickly resulted in a high degree of territorial implantation. Within a few years, the PRD had established a strong presence in several parts of Mexico, especially Mexico City and poor southern states such as Michoacán, Guerrero, and Tabasco. By the mid-1990s, the PRD had over one million members and offices in over half of Mexico's 2000+ municipalities.⁷⁸

Selection Effects and Activist Commitment Joining the early PRD typically required a willingness to do party work without a salary or the prospect of a likely election victory or government job. In one member's words, the early PRD "couldn't

be a business.”⁷⁹ Activism also required, for many, a willingness to put one’s own safety at risk.⁸⁰ In fact, more left-wing activists were killed in Mexico between 1988 and the mid-1990s—estimates range from 250 to 600⁸¹—than in Brazil under military rule.⁸² Such realities discouraged careerists from joining the early PRD. For the most part, only committed activists joined during the party’s formative years.

Surviving Crisis in 1991 and 1994 Organizational strength and activist commitment fortified the PRD amid early electoral crisis. The PRD suffered major setbacks in the 1991 congressional and 1994 general elections. Before the 1991 election, PRD “leaders and activists shared. . . a certainty” that the party would win “broad representation” in the legislature.⁸³ The party performed abysmally, though, unexpectedly losing seats and finishing a distant third with only 8 percent of the vote. The result dashed members’ expectations and threatened the party’s survival. Prominent social left leaders, protesting PRI hostility, advocated that the PRD abstain from future elections. Cárdenas later stated: “The objective of the [1991] midterms was the real, effective liquidation of the PRD. . . [T]his was the PRD’s hardest electoral moment.”⁸⁴

In fact, however, the 1991 crisis galvanized much of the PRD base: “1991 represented for the PRD its first political setback but at the same time the consolidation of an iron-willed base.”⁸⁵ According to one founding PRD leader, the PRD survived in 1991 because the PRI had murdered scores of activists and committed widespread fraud, and thus its victory was seen as illegitimate and did not discourage most party activists.⁸⁶ Another founder with social left origins stated that the PRI’s hostility only motivated activists, who did not entertain the thought of giving up after 1991.⁸⁷ The gubernatorial election results of 1992 and 1993 indicated the PRD’s base-level resilience, as the party received large vote shares in numerous states.⁸⁸

In the 1994 presidential election, the PRD suffered a second major setback. Contesting the presidency for a second time, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas ran well left of the median voter⁸⁹ and lost in a landslide, finishing third with just 17 percent of the vote. The outcome’s lopsidedness was unanticipated; in fact, many PRD members had believed that Cárdenas would win.⁹⁰ Moreover, the prospect of a Cárdenas presidential victory—and, with it, the completion of Mexico’s democratic transition and an historic victory for the Mexican left—had animated PRD members since 1988. That Cárdenas received under a fifth of the vote deflated hopes, led to anger, disillusionment, and recriminations, and damaged the party’s credibility and self-conception as a serious contender.

As in 1991, though, most PRD activists—more radical, on average, than the party moderates who blamed Cárdenas’s defeat on ideological intransigence—remained unfazed. As before, they viewed the result as illegitimate due to the PRI’s various unfair advantages and hostile tactics. The defeat, in their view, was merely another lost battle in a longer-term war with the PRI. Many PRD members had been killed during the 1994 campaign, and one PRD founder, when asked how the PRD rebounded from Cárdenas’s defeat, responded, “We were at war.”⁹¹ As had occurred after the 1991 congressional election, PRD activists regrouped, directing their

energies toward upcoming subnational campaigns and, in Tabasco, post-election civil resistance.⁹²

In sum, despite electoral crises in 1991 and 1994, the PRD survived and pressed forward. In a 2010 interview, party founder Carlos Navarrete summarized the early PRD's spirit of resistance:

[PRI president Carlos Salinas's 1988–1994 term] was a very hard time. . . . They were times of persecution, of hundreds of dead activists. They were times in which they stole elections from us, covering the width and depth of the country. They were times in which the government besieged us. They were times of *resistance, fundamentally, of not giving up, of maintaining and raising our flags.*⁹³

The Institutionalization of the PRD The PRD's development since the mid-1990s is well-known and widely studied.⁹⁴ The PRD has become institutionalized as Mexico's third major party. In 2006 and 2012, the PRD's Andrés Manuel López Obrador came close to winning the presidency. Between 1994 and 2015, the PRD received at least 10 percent of the vote in Mexico's lower house of congress (see Appendix B), with a higher average vote share than Brazil's PT. The PRD also won over a dozen governorships between 1998 and 2015, and it held the Mexico City mayoralty—perhaps the second most important elected office in the country—continuously from 1997 to 2015.

The PRD's success since the mid-1990s stems from several factors, including media liberalization,⁹⁵ the PRD's co-optation of regional PRI elites and their machines, and the party's increased use of paid activists.⁹⁶ Above all, though, the PRD's gains reflect the solidification and expansion of its brand. Since 2000, most Mexicans have been able to locate the PRD party symbol, an Aztec Sun, on the left-right spectrum,⁹⁷ and partisan voters have guaranteed the PRD a solid electoral floor at the national level.

For the PRD, collapse remains unlikely despite the recent defections of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the party's founder, and Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the party's 2006 and 2012 presidential candidate.⁹⁸ The PRD's core electorate virtually guarantees it a high baseline level of access to office. It also guarantees access to financial resources; the landmark electoral reforms of 1996, which tied generous public financing to parties' congressional electoral performance, have filled PRD coffers. Additionally, PRD activists remain an important electoral asset.

The PRD has paid an electoral price for catering to its base.⁹⁹ In particular, the presidency continues to elude the PRD. Many scholars treat the PRD as a failure or underachiever, citing its repeated presidential defeats and internal dysfunction.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the PRD has established itself as a perennial contender for national power, something very few new parties in Latin America, left or otherwise, have achieved. Thus, the achievements of the PRD have received too little emphasis. In comparative terms, the PRD is an unmistakable case of successful party-building.

In explaining this success, what is critical is that the PRD survived its formative period. The Salinas years, and specifically the PRD's early electoral defeats, seriously

tested its durability. The PRD ultimately took root because it managed to survive early crisis, drawing on a committed activist base forged in the crucible of authoritarianism.

FREPASO in Argentina

In contrast to the PT and PRD, Argentina's Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO) is an opposition party that formed under democratic, relatively advantageous conditions, did not invest in organization, and collapsed after suffering an early electoral crisis. FREPASO's origins lie in a 1990 schism within Argentina's governing Peronist Party (PJ). In 1989, president Carlos Menem (PJ) reneged on populist campaign promises and implemented extensive neoliberal reforms, provoking opposition from a bloc of left-leaning PJ congressmen. Eight of these congressmen, known as the "Group of Eight" and led by Carlos "Chacho" Álvarez, defected from the PJ in mid-1990. The initial electoral vehicles that they created failed, but political opportunity struck after the congressional elections of October 1993. In November 1993, Raúl Alfonsín, the leader of the PJ's main opposition party, the Radical Civil Union (UCR), signed the Olivos Pact, which pledged UCR support for a controversial constitutional amendment allowing Menem to run for reelection in 1995. The UCR's perceived "subordination" to Menem's institutional tampering provoked a backlash among its own middle-class constituency.¹⁰¹ Álvarez and the Group of Eight, now leading the center-left party, the Big Front (FG), quickly became the public face of opposition to *Menemismo* and UCR complicity.¹⁰² In the April 1994 constituent assembly elections, the FG made an electoral breakthrough, winning 13 percent of the national vote, up almost ten percentage points from the congressional election just months earlier.¹⁰³ This result marked the beginning of the FG's meteoric, five-year path to national power. From the mid- to late 1990s, Álvarez and fellow FG elites forged a succession of increasingly centrist alliances, making anti-corruption and ethics the centerpiece of their platform and backtracking on their original opposition to neoliberalism.¹⁰⁴ In late 1994, the FG joined forces with center-right ex-governor of Mendoza province, José Octavio Bordón, and his new party, PAIS, to create the center-left party FREPASO. In 1995, FREPASO's Bordón/Álvarez ticket¹⁰⁵ placed second in the presidential election, behind Menem, and FREPASO placed third in the congressional election, behind the PJ and UCR. In 1997, FREPASO moved further to the center by forming an electoral coalition with the UCR, the Alliance for Justice, Work, and Education. In 1997, the Alliance won control of the congress, and in 1999, the Alliance won both the congress and the presidency, with Fernando de la Rúa (UCR) and Chacho Álvarez (FREPASO) on the winning presidential ticket. In the span of five years, then, FG/FREPASO rose from electoral marginality to national power. How was this achieved?

FREPASO's Organizational Weakness: State, Media, and Mobilizing Structures

Mass media, and especially television, were the "primary engine" of FG/FREPASO's meteoric growth.¹⁰⁶ Party leaders made "efficient and intense use" of mass media,

constantly holding televised press conferences, participating in television, radio, and newspaper interviews, and making TV-tailored “political displays.”¹⁰⁷ Chacho Álvarez, in particular, was a “media phenomenon” who “charmed the media with [his] irreverence toward the traditional rituals of politics, [his] ease of manner and speed.”¹⁰⁸ According to one ex-FG member, Álvarez’s political genius lay in his ability to anticipate public opinion shifts and in his recognition of “the importance of media, above all television.”¹⁰⁹ Álvarez’s media charisma crystallized in late 1993, when he became the most visible antagonist of *Menemismo* and corruption during the Olivos negotiations and backlash.¹¹⁰ From late 1993 onward, Álvarez “began to be required by the press” due to his charisma, eloquent critiques, and rapid responses to events.¹¹¹

Álvarez and the FREPASO leadership considered media a highly desirable, even necessary, alternative to organization-building. Throughout the 1990s, FREPASO’s founders were engaged in a near permanent campaign, competing in national elections in 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, and 1999. Building a strong organization would have consumed energy and resources while important national elections loomed.¹¹² As one party member succinctly put it: “There was no time to build an organization.”¹¹³ Chacho Álvarez provided the same assessment in a 1997 interview, stating that he and fellow party leaders could not devote energy to organization-building with major elections constantly on the horizon.¹¹⁴

FREPASO leaders also recognized that, if a party organization was established, internal decision-making procedures would slow elite response time. FREPASO prized the capacity for rapid response. A party observer recalled that Álvarez wanted to “move nimbly.”¹¹⁵ Contemporary politics required quickness, he said, as journalists often appeared with a microphone and FREPASO had to respond. FREPASO leaders “always fought to have freedom of action, hoping not to be tied down by institutional procedures when making decisions . . . [T]he party’s nucleus . . . considered Álvarez’s speed of response an important requirement.”¹¹⁶

Moreover, a large activist base would have denied FREPASO leaders, especially Álvarez, ideological and tactical flexibility. Through the 1990s, Álvarez and other party elites had ties to left-wing mobilizing structures with national reach, including several radical left parties and, most importantly, Argentina’s two largest anti-Menemist union confederations, the Argentine Workers’ Central (CTA, est. 1991) and the Teachers’ Confederation of the Argentina Republic (CTERA). FREPASO’s leaders, however, rejected incorporating these groups into the party and using them as a platform for organization-building.¹¹⁷ A party organization composed of such groups might have selected unelectable candidates or pressured its candidates to refuse centrist alliances and take extreme policy positions. Such decisions would have satisfied the base but alienated the middle-class voters that FREPASO was successfully targeting. By keeping the organized left at a distance, Álvarez and fellow elites could make the most electorally rational decisions on program, coalitions, and party candidacies without consulting members.¹¹⁸ In the words of one former member, the “hypercentralization” of decision-making within FREPASO allowed for “extreme operational flexibility.”¹¹⁹

In short, FREPASO leaders recognized that by relying on mass media and restricting decision-making power to a tiny elite (often to Álvarez alone), FREPASO could rise quickly. Organization-building would impede rapid progress. Thus, after 1991, “[t]he idea of building a solid and stable party organization was never in [the] minds” of “Álvarez and his followers.”¹²⁰

By the end of the 1990s, FREPASO dominated the left side of the Argentine political spectrum, but its organization was “practically non-existent.”¹²¹ The party never employed more than five staff.¹²² In 1998, party members Novaro and Palermo noted that “the FG and then FREPASO seem to have an almost ghostlike existence outside of the media arena.”¹²³ One campaign strategist for the Alliance described FREPASO simply: “There was no organization.”¹²⁴

Crisis and Collapse in 2001 Like the PT and PRD, FREPASO faced an early electoral crisis. Upon entering office in December 1999, the Alliance government inherited a shrinking economy and expanding debt, and its orthodox policies did not stem the tide. The Alliance’s problems multiplied in late 2000 when a Senate corruption scandal erupted, implicating several Alliance senators and two Alliance ministers (including one from FREPASO). Through September of 2000, Álvarez privately urged De la Rúa to fire the two implicated ministers. After de la Rúa refused, Álvarez tendered his resignation in October 2000. Following Álvarez’s resignation, Argentina’s economic and fiscal crises worsened, and in the 2001 midterm congressional elections, voters harshly punished the Alliance. The PJ retook the lower house, and the Alliance’s vote share plummeted to 23 percent, down nearly half from 44 percent in 1999. For FREPASO, the outcome was especially dire. While the UCR lost 27 percent of its congressional seats, FREPASO lost 59 percent (37 to 15). Two months later, amid riots triggered by a national bank freeze, President De la Rúa resigned, and the PJ returned to the presidency in late December 2001.

In 2001, then, both the UCR and FREPASO suffered electoral crisis.¹²⁵ An important difference between the two parties, however, was that the UCR had a national party organization, while FREPASO did not. On the strength of this organization, the UCR survived, albeit in diminished form, and to this day remains a major player in Argentine politics, currently holding more than 20 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In contrast, FREPASO in 2001 was nothing but a small elite network, wholly dependent on its brand. Thus, “when FREPASO lost its image, it lost everything.”¹²⁶ After the 2001 election, FREPASO’s members defected to preserve their careers. Most returned to the PJ, to smaller left parties, or to PJ satellite parties. FREPASO disappeared from the electoral arena (see Appendix B). Summarizing FREPASO’s collapse, an Alliance campaign consultant invoked a metaphor: “Building an image through the media is like building with mud.”¹²⁷

Conclusion

The divergent trajectories of the PT, PRD, and FREPASO illustrate how fragile new parties are if they only exist in voters’ minds.¹²⁸ A party’s formative years are critical

because most parties, early on, are still in the process of crafting, disseminating, and solidifying their brands. In this respect, the PT and PRD are no different from FREPASO. Like FREPASO, the PT and PRD did not have strong brands early in their development; they suffered devastating electoral defeats that evidenced considerable brand weakness. But the PT and PRD survived, and they did so because they existed on the ground, not just in voters' minds. By the time crisis struck, both the PT and PRD had built strong grassroots organizations made up of committed activists, and their activists "stuck it out."

Committed activists, of course, are not uniformly positive in their effects. As Greene (2007) has cogently argued, niche parties—parties composed of ideological activists—often engage in electorally suboptimal behavior long after birth, as the PT did throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and as the PRD did throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Nevertheless, committed activists are also critical for early survival, and thus are best seen as a mixed blessing for new parties.

The formative struggles that produce masses of committed party activists do not last forever (e.g., Brazil's new union movement, Mexico's post-1988 pro-Cárdenas movement). Paradoxically, once these formative struggles end, access to the state may become critical for parties' longer-term survival. In the longer term, patronage becomes an asset that party leaders can use to attract new activists and retain the services of old ones. Thus, even if state resources do not generate strong party organizations, they may help sustain or even expand them. Both the PT and PRD, for example, have used public monies to expand their organizational reach since the formative period.¹²⁹

In short, the conditions for party survival appear to change over time. As parties exit the formative period, patronage and public finance often become essential, greasing the wheels of party machines and contributing to long-term consolidation. But in the beginning, adversity is critical.

NOTES

1. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (Toronto: The Free Press, 1967). Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). John A. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

2. See, for example: Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Adrienne LeBas, *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Steven Levitsky, Loxton James, and Van Dyck Brandon, "Introduction: Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America," in Steven Levitsky, Loxton James, Van Dyck Brandon, and Domínguez Jorge, eds., *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1–48.

3. Thomas J. Mustillo, "Modeling New Party Performance: A Conceptual and Methodological Approach for Volatile Party Systems," *Political Analysis*, 17 (June 2009), 311–32. Levitsky et al. (2016).

4. See Brandon Van Dyck, *The Paradox of Adversity: New Party Survival and Collapse in Latin America*, Ph.D. dissertation (Harvard University, 2014), ch. 1.

5. The third wave is conventionally dated from the mid-1970s onward globally, but from 1978 onward in Latin America. See Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Frances Hagopian and Mainwaring Scott, eds., *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

6. Steven Levitsky and Roberts Kenneth, "Introduction: Latin America's Left Turn: A Framework for Analysis," in Steven Levitsky and Roberts Kenneth, eds., *Latin America's Left Turn* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 1–28.

7. Mustillo; Levitsky et al. (2016).

8. See Appendix A for universe of cases. Due to space constraints, the Appendix is not in the print version of this article. It can be viewed in the online version, at www.ingentaconnect.com/cuny/cp.

9. Frances Hagopian, *Reorganizing Political Representation in Latin America: Parties, Program, and Patronage in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

10. In his seminal analysis of party-building in America and Europe, Martin Shefter argues that parties founded by leaders without powerful offices must build mass organizations in order to "bludgeon their way into the . . . system" (p. 5). This article builds on Shefter's insight.

11. Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 26–30.

12. Aldrich.

13. Angus Campbell, Converse Philip, Miller Warren, and Stokes Donald, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960); Ted Brader and Tucker Joshua, "The Emergence of Mass Partisanship in Russia, 1993–1996," *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (January 2001), 69–83; Noam Lupu and Stokes Susan, "Democracy, Interrupted: Regime Change and Partisanship in Twentieth-Century Argentina," *Electoral Studies*, 29 (March 2010), 91–104.

14. Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

15. Levitsky et al. (2016).

16. Lupu.

17. Lupu argues that parties are more likely to suffer electorally if they dilute their brand by reversing earlier positions and/or failing to differentiate themselves from rival parties. Meguid argues that new niche parties are more likely to decline electorally if mainstream rival parties use dismissive or accommodative (as distinct from adversarial) strategies against them. See: Bonnie M. Meguid, *Party Competition between Unequals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

18. *Strong (territorial) organization* denotes a large membership and infrastructure of party offices and nuclei.

19. For similar arguments, see Jennifer Cyr, *From Collapse to Comeback?: Explaining the Fates of Political Parties in Latin America*, Ph.D. dissertation (Northwestern University dissertation, 2012); Margit Tavits, *Post-Communist Democracies and Party Organization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

20. Hale.

21. Scott Mainwaring and Edurne Zoco, "Political Sequences and the Stabilization of Interparty Competition: Electoral Volatility in Old and New Democracies," *Party Politics*, 13 (March 2007), 155–78.

22. Hale.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Mainwaring and Zoco, 156–57.

25. Quoted in Scott Mainwaring, *Rethinking Party Systems in the Third Wave of Democratization: The Case of Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50.

26. Mainwaring and Zoco.

27. See Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), ch. 8.

28. See, for example, Herbert Kitschelt, *Logics of Party Formation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); LeBas. In some cases, the state apparatus itself has served as an organizational platform for party-building; see Shefter on internally mobilized parties.

29. Panebianco, 26–30.

30. Shefter; Kenneth Greene, *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

31. See, for example, Steven Levitsky and Way Lucan, *Competitive Authoritarianism: International Linkage, Organizational Power, and the Fate of Hybrid Regimes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

32. E.g., The US Democratic and Republican Parties, which were founded by officeholders (Shefter); Chile's Party for Democracy, which was born with access to mass media and did not build a strong organization but managed to survive.

33. See Appendix A for a note on case evidence.

34. Pedro Ribeiro, *Dos sindicatos ao governo: A organização nacional do PT de 1980 a 2005* (São Paulo: EdUFSCar/FAPESP, 2010), 111. Dollar figures adjusted for 2010 inflation levels.
35. Mauro Porto, "Mass Media and Politics in Democratic Brazil," in Maria D'Alva Kinzo and James Dunkerley, eds., *Brazil since 1985: Economy, Polity and Society* (London: ILAS, 2003), 294.
36. Mauro Porto, *Media Power and Democratization in Brazil: TV Globo and the Dilemmas of Political Accountability* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 63.
37. Quoted in *Beyond Citizen Kane*. Prod., John Ellis. Dir., Simon Hartog. BBC television documentary (1993).
38. Porto, 2012.
39. BBC documentary, *Beyond Citizen Kane*.
40. See Van Dyck, Ch. 2.
41. Margaret Keck, *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 77–79.
42. *Ibid.*, 78–79.
43. Lincoln Secco, *História do PT (1978–2010)* (São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2011), 47–49; Keck, 79–81.
44. Keck, 110.
45. Ribeiro, 24.
46. *Ibid.*, 244.
47. See, for example, p. 90 of Djalma Bom, interview with editors, in Marieta De Moraes and Fortes Alexandre, eds., *Muitos Caminhos, uma Estrela: Memórias de Militantes do PT* (Sao Paulo, Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2008), 79–103. Also see Van Dyck, Ch. 2.
48. Author's interview with Antônio Donato, May 4, 2010.
49. Keck, 141–44; Bom, 96.
50. Bom, 96.
51. Keck, 149, 152–53, 156.
52. *Ibid.*, 197.
53. Secco, 113.
54. *Ibid.*, 119.
55. Talk by PT historian Lincoln Secco at PT zonal office in Pinheiros, São Paulo. Accessed on December 16, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3wlv-Y5tOw> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW2FEfwmsx4>.
56. See, for example, David Samuels, "From Socialism to Social Democracy? The Evolution of the Workers' Party in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies*, 37 (November 2004), 999–1024; Wendy Hunter and Timothy Power, "Rewarding Lula: Executive Power, Social Policy, and the Brazilian Elections of 2006," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 49 (April 2007), 1–30; Wendy Hunter, *The Transformation of the Workers' Party in Brazil, 1989–2009* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ribeiro; Secco; Cesar Zucco, "When Payouts Pay Off: Conditional Cash-Transfers and Voting Behavior in Brazil 2002–2010," *American Journal of Political Science*, 57 (October 2013), 810–22.
57. Hunter.
58. Greene.
59. Hunter, 202.
60. The Appendix can be viewed in the online version, at www.ingentaconnect.com/cuny/cp.
61. Samuels; Hunter.
62. Adriana Borjas, *Partido de la Revolución Democrática: Estructura, organización interna y desempeño público, 1989–2003* (Mexico City: Ediciones Guernika, 2003), 297.
63. Kathleen Bruhn, *Taking on Goliath: The Emergence of a New Left Party and the Struggle for Democracy in Mexico* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998), 189.
64. Author's interview with Adriana Borjas, July 11, 2011.
65. Greene, 107–14.
66. Juan Molinar and Weldon Jeffrey, "Electoral Determinants and Consequences of National Solidarity," in Wayne Cornelius, Craig Ann, Fox Jonathan, eds., *Transforming State-Society Relations in Mexico: The National Solidarity Strategy* (La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD, 1994), 123–41.
67. Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).
68. *Ibid.*, 29.
69. *Ibid.*, 30.
70. Tania Rodríguez, *Estrategias políticas, desafíos organizacionales y campañas presidenciales en democracias emergentes: los casos del Partido dos Trabalhadores y del Partido de la Revolución Democrática*, Ph.D. dissertation (El Colegio de México, 2010), 190.

71. Bruhn, 280.
72. Silvia Gómez, *La transición inconclusa: Treinta años de elecciones en México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, 1997), 16; Borjas, 430–31, 513–35, 571, 587.
73. Víctor Martínez, *Fisiones y fusiones, divorcios y reconciliaciones: La dirigencia del Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) 1989–2004* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2005).
74. Borjas, vol. II: 410–11.
75. Martínez, 53, 55.
76. Rodríguez, 257–58; Bruhn, 225.
77. Guillermo Correa, “Muñoz Ledo: “El gran dilemma de 1994 es democracia o dictadura,” *Proceso*, no. 820, July 18, 1992. Also, Borjas, 519 and vol. II: 74.
78. Borjas, 371.
79. Author’s interview with Silvia Gómez, July 4, 2011.
80. Rodríguez, 284.
81. Miguel Ángel González, Ortíz Onel, Rojo Gabriela, and Sánchez Rubén, “Los Congresos Nacionales,” in Miguel Ángel González, Ortíz Onel, Rojo Gabriela, and Sánchez Rubén, eds., *20 Años: Un futuro con historia* (Mexico City: Agencia Promotora de Publicaciones, 2010), 66; Jesús Zambrano, Interview with editors in “*Conversaciones*” section, in González et al., eds., 284; Bruhn, 202; Borjas, 45, 341, 436; Rodríguez, 284.
82. Rodríguez, 297.
83. Borjas, 388.
84. Quoted in Borjas, vol. II: 408.
85. González et al., 66.
86. Author’s interview with Salvador Nava Jr., July 9, 2011.
87. Author’s interview with Paco Saucedo, July 9, 2011.
88. Borjas, 490–91.
89. Greene.
90. González et al., 66; Borjas, 507.
91. Author’s interview with Salvador Nava, July 9, 2011.
92. Borjas, vol. II: 94, 599–600.
93. Carlos Navarrete, Interview with editors in “*Conversaciones*” section, in González et al., eds., 265, emphasis added.
94. See Borjas; Martínez; Rodríguez; Dag Mossige, *Mexico’s Left: The Paradox of the PRD* (First Forum Press: Boulder, 2013).
95. Lawson.
96. Van Dyck, Ch. 4.
97. 2000 Mexico Panel Study. Accessed on Dec. 16, 2014, <http://web.mit.edu/clawson/www/polisci/research/mexico06/Papers.shtml#TSAccordionHead296290>.
98. AMLO left the PRD shortly after his loss in the 2012 presidential election. He now leads the National Renovation Movement (MORENA), a left party in Mexico that became officially registered in 2014. Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas left the PRD in late 2014, citing a range of unresolved differences with the current party leadership.
99. Greene.
100. Mossige; Greene; Bruhn.
101. Eduardo Jozami, *Final sin gloria: Un balance del Frepaso y de la Alianza* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2004), 19, 56.
102. Luis Pazos and Camps Sibila, *Ladran, Chacho: Quién es Carlos “Chacho” Álvarez, Líder del Frente Grande?* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1995), 180, 215.
103. Juan Abal Medina, “The Rise and Fall of the Argentine Centre-Left: The Crisis of Frente Grande,” *Party Politics*, 15 (May 2009), 368.
104. Jozami, 26–27, 123–39; Lupu.
105. FREPASO held an open primary to nominate its presidential candidate, and Bordón won a surprise victory largely due to his organizational base in Mendoza.
106. Marcos Novaro and Palermo Vicente, *Los caminos de la centroizquierda: Dilemas y desafíos del Frepaso y de la Alianza* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1998), 117.
107. Novaro and Palermo, 117, 150–51.
108. Abal Medina, 369.
109. Quoted in Pazos and Camps, 263.
110. Pazos and Camps, 180, 215.

111. *Ibid.*, 179.
112. Novaro and Palermo, 116.
113. Author's interview with Héctor Mazzei, July 12, 2012.
114. Álvarez's interview with Steven Levitsky, July 29, 1997.
115. Author's interview with Aldo Gallotti, August 3, 2012.
116. Abal Medina, 360.
117. See Van Dyck, Ch. 7.
118. Pazos and Camps, 263–64.
119. Author's interview with Edgardo Mocca, August 5, 2012. See also Abal Medina, 361.
120. Abal Medina, 360.
121. *Ibid.*, 364.
122. *Ibid.*, 363.
123. Novaro and Palermo, 151.
124. Author's interview with Francisco de Santibañes, Aug. 2, 2012.
125. One might argue that FREPASO's governing crisis, rather than its organizational weakness, fundamentally caused its collapse. This argument, however, rests on a false choice. Organizational strength and activist commitment matter precisely because they help new parties survive crises. In general, new parties do not fail because of crisis *or* organizational weakness; they fail because of the two factors combined. Indeed, many parties with strong organizations and cores of rank-and-file believers have withstood and rebounded from crises due to the resilience of activist networks in territorial bastions. As already demonstrated, Brazil's PT rebounded from a disastrous election in 1982, while Mexico's PRD rebounded from back-to-back electoral crises in 1991 and 1994. Another example, in some ways more relevant, is the UCR, FREPASO's senior partner in the Alliance coalition, and the one party held even *more* responsible than FREPASO for Argentina's economic crisis and corruption scandal. The UCR survived and recovered from this crisis, evidencing the critical importance of territorial organization and committed activist networks.
126. Author's interview with Héctor Mazzei, July 12, 2012.
127. Author's interview with Francisco de Santibañes, August 2, 2012.
128. Levitsky et al., 2016.
129. Van Dyck; Borjas.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Case Universe

Below is the article's universe of cases (i.e., left parties born during Latin America's third wave [1978–1995]) that attained national prominence. To attain “national prominence,” a party must have won at least 10 percent of the vote in at least one national legislative election.

- Argentina's Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO)
- Brazil's Workers' Party (PT)
- Chile's Party for Democracy (PPD)
- Colombia's Democratic Alliance April 19 Movement (AD M-19)
- El Salvador's Democratic Convergence (CD)
- El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)
- Guatemala's New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG)
- Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)
- Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)
- Paraguay's National Meeting Party (PEN)
- Peru's United Left (IU).

Operationalization Criteria for Table 1

All operationalization criteria for Table 1 are limited to parties' first five years of existence, given the article's argument that parties' incentives and capabilities during the initial several years tend to determine whether they invest in, and succeed in constructing, strong organizations.

Access to the state If, within five years of creation, the party won the presidency, it receives a “full” score. If it won a major subnational position, it receives a “medium.” Otherwise, it receives a “none.”

Access to mass media If, during the party's first five years, mass media were independent and free of systematic conservative bias, the party receives a “full” score. If mass media were independent but systematically conservative, it receives a “medium.” Otherwise, it receives a “none.”

Access to mobilizing structures If, during the party's first five years, it had ties to nationally organized mobilizing structures, it receives a “full” score. If it had ties to regionally organized structures, it receives a “medium.” Otherwise, it receives a “none.”

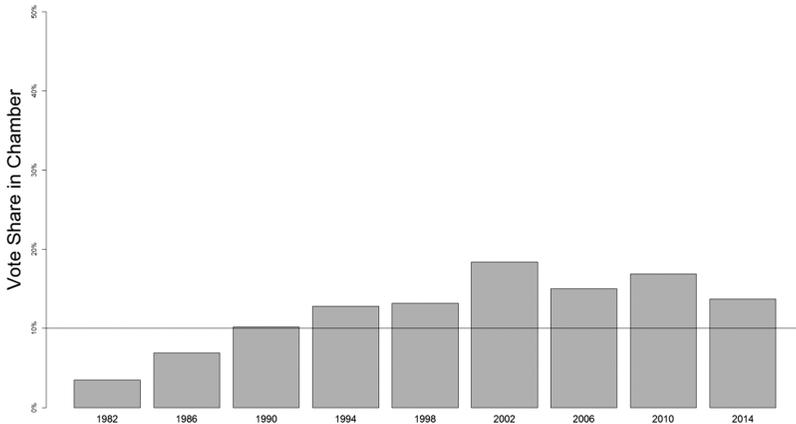
Strong territorial organization with committed activists The party receives a “yes” score for this composite intermediate variable if, during its first five years, it: (1) recruited one member for every 1,000 citizens and established branches in 20 percent of the country's municipalities; and (2) primarily depended on unpaid volunteers for campaign work.

Note on Evidence

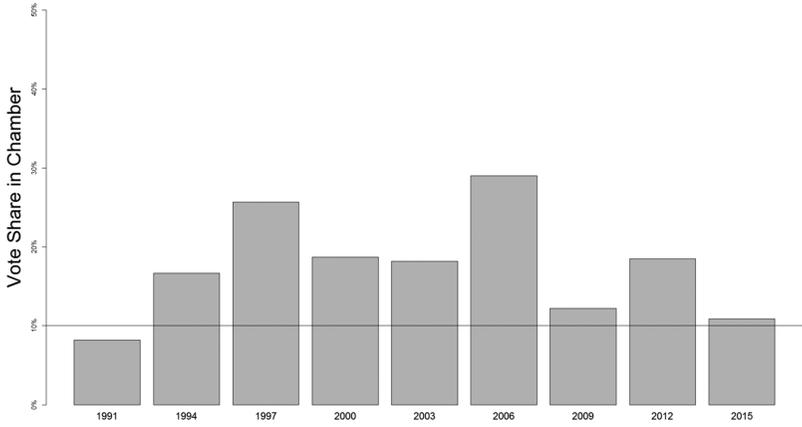
The three case studies in this article are highly condensed versions of the case studies presented in Chapters 2, 4, and 6 of Van Dyck (2014). Both the original case studies in Van Dyck (2014) and the condensed versions in this article draw on evidence from 12–13 months of interviews and archival research in São Paulo, Campinas, and Brasília, Brazil; Mexico City, Mexico; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. The author conducted approximately sixty interviews with party elites, activists, observers, and country-based scholars and examined over 1,000 documents from official party archives, newspaper archives, and interviewees' personal archives. The case studies draw on numerous additional sources, including dozens of published interviews with party members, retrospective first-hand testimonies, and detailed scholarly analyses conducted by party members.

Appendix B

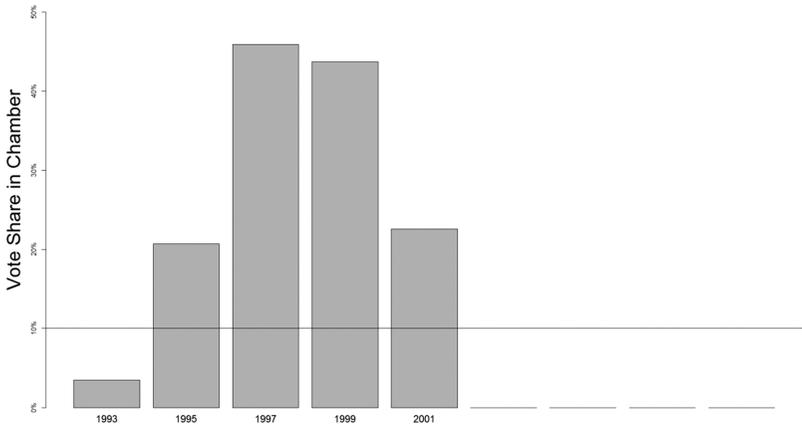
PT Vote Share in the Lower House of Congress



PRD Vote Share in the Lower House of Congress



FREPASO Seat Share in Lower House of Congress



Note: Since FREPASO ran with the UCR from 1997 to 2001, specific vote share figures for FREPASO are not available.