

The background of the cover is a vibrant yellow with a textured, slightly mottled appearance. Overlaid on this are several large, stylized hexagonal shapes that resemble three-dimensional cubes. These shapes are outlined in a thin, bright yellow line. The faces of the cubes are filled with different colors and textures: some are a solid, deep green; others are a light, marbled grey; and some are a solid, medium grey. The arrangement of these shapes is scattered across the cover, creating a complex, geometric pattern.

**BANKRUPT  
REPRESENTATION  
AND PARTY SYSTEM  
COLLAPSE**

**JANA MORGAN**

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REPRESENTATION  
AND PARTY SYSTEM  
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**JANA MORGAN**

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FOR MY PARENTS, *who always believe*

AND FOR NATE, *who helps make dreams come alive*



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## ABBREVIATIONS

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ABP     | Alianza Bravo Pueblo (Venezuela)                      |
| AD      | Acción Democrática (Venezuela)                        |
| ADN     | Acción Democrática Nacionalista (Bolivia)             |
| AN      | Alleanza Nazionale (Italy)                            |
| ANDI    | Asociación Nacional de Industriales (Colombia)        |
| ANUC    | Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (Colombia) |
| AP      | Acción Popular (Perú)                                 |
| APRA    | Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (Perú)       |
| ASP     | Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (Bolivia)    |
| BJP     | Bharatiya Janata Party (India)                        |
| BSP-PSB | Socialist Belgian Workers' Party                      |
| BTV     | Banco de los Trabajadores de Venezuela                |
| CDN     | Comité Directivo Nacional (Venezuela)                 |
| CEN     | Comité Ejecutivo Nacional (Venezuela)                 |
| CEPB    | Confederación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia      |
| CGIL    | General Confederation of Italian Labor                |
| CISL    | Italian Confederation of Free Trade Unions            |
| CN      | Comité Nacional (Venezuela)                           |
| CNE     | Consejo Nacional Electoral (Venezuela)                |
| CNE     | Corte Nacional Electoral (Bolivia)                    |
| COB     | Confederación Obrera Boliviana                        |
| COMIBOL | Corporación Minera de Bolivia                         |
| CONDEPA | Conciencia de la Patria (Bolivia)                     |
| CONIVE  | Consejo Nacional Indio de Venezuela                   |
| CONV    | Convergencia Nacional (Venezuela)                     |

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| COPEI       | Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (Venezuela)       |
| COPRE       | Comisión Presidencial para la Reforma del Estado (Venezuela)              |
| CPI         | Consumer Price Index  |
| CPN         | Comité Político Nacional (Venezuela)                                      |
| CTC         | Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia                                 |
| CTV         | Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela                                |
| CVP-PSC     | Christian Democratic Party (Belgium)                                      |
| DC          | Christian Democratic party (Italy)  |
| EMU         | Economic and Monetary Union (European Union)                              |
| ENP         | Effective number of parties   |
| FA          | Frente Amplio (Uruguay)   |
| FCV         | Federación de Campesinos de Venezuela                                     |
| FEDECAFE    | Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia                              |
| FEDECAMARAS | Federación de Cámaras y Asociaciones de Comercio y Producción (Venezuela) |
| FIDES       | Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización (Venezuela)            |
| FREPASO     | Frente País Solidario (Argentina)   |
| FRG         | Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (Guatemala)                               |
| IDB         | Inter-American Development Bank   |
| ILO         | International Labour Organization   |
| IMF         | International Monetary Fund   |
| INC         | Indian National Congress (India)  |
| ISI         | Import-substitution industrialization                                     |
| IU          | Izquierda Unida (Perú)  |
| JAC         | Juntas de Acción Comunal (Colombia)                                       |
| JD          | Janata Dal (India)  |
| LCR         | La Causa R (Venezuela)  |
| LN          | Lega Nord (Italy)   |
| LPP         | Law of Popular Participation (Bolivia)                                    |
| MAS         | Movimiento al Socialismo (Venezuela and Bolivia)                          |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| MEP     | Movimiento Electoral del Pueblo (Venezuela)                         |
| MIP     | Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (Bolivia)                             |
| MIR     | Movimiento (de la) Izquierda Revolucionaria (Venezuela and Bolivia) |
| MNR     | Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Bolivia)                    |
| MNRI    | Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de la Izquierda (Bolivia)    |
| MR      | Movimiento Reformador (Guatemala)                                   |
| MVR     | Movimiento Quinta República (Venezuela)                             |
| NF      | National Front (Colombia)   |
| NFR     | Nueva Fuerza Republicana (Bolivia)                                  |
| NPE     | Nueva Política Económica (Bolivia)                                  |
| OPEC    | Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries                       |
| PAN     | Partido Acción Nacional (Mexico)                                    |
| PAN     | Partido de Avanzada Nacional (Guatemala)                            |
| PCB     | Partido Comunista de Bolivia  |
| PCI     | Communist Party of Italy  |
| PCV     | Partido Comunista de Venezuela                                      |
| PDS     | Democratic Party of the Left (Italy)                                |
| PDS     | Partido Social Democrático (Brazil)                                 |
| PDVSA   | Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (Venezuela)                            |
| PFL     | Partido da Frente Liberal (Brazil)                                  |
| PJ      | Partido Justicialista (Argentina)                                   |
| PJ      | Primero Justicia (Venezuela)  |
| PLI     | Liberal Party of Italy  |
| PLRA    | Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (Paraguay)                        |
| PMDB    | Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (Brazil)                |
| PODEMOS | Poder Democrática y Social (Bolivia)                                |
| PP      | Partido Patriota (Guatemala)  |
| PPI     | Partito Popolare Italiano   |
| PPT     | Patria Para Todos (Venezuela)                                       |
| PRD     | Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Mexico)                       |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| PRI     | Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Mexico) |
| PRI     | Republican Party of Italy                     |
| PSDI    | Social Democratic Party of Italy              |
| PSI     | Socialist Party of Italy                      |
| PSN     | Partido Solidaridad Nacional (Guatemala)      |
| PSUV    | Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela         |
| PV      | Proyecto Venezuela                            |
| PVV-PLP | Liberal Party (Belgium)                       |
| RC      | Refounded Communists (Italy)                  |
| UCR     | Unión Cívica Radical (Argentina)              |
| UCS     | Unidad Cívica Solidaridad (Bolivia)           |
| UDP     | Unión Democrática y Popular (Bolivia)         |
| UIL     | Union of Italian Labor                        |
| UNE     | Unión Nacional de la Esperanza (Guatemala)    |
| URD     | Unión República Democrática (Venezuela)       |
| UTC     | Unión de Trabajadores de Colombia             |

# **PART 1**

UNDERSTANDING PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE:  
CONCEPTS AND THEORY



## INTRODUCTION: THE CATASTROPHE OF COLLAPSE

Political parties created democracy and . . . modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties. As a matter of fact, the condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime.

—E. E. Schattschneider, *Party government*

In the 1970s, prospects for democracy in Venezuela seemed limitless. Competitive elections installed political leaders. Control of government peacefully changed hands from one established political party to another. By 1973, the militant left laid aside its weapons and entered electoral politics, and two parties consolidated their positions as the primary actors linking society and the state. These parties, Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente), and the party system they formed were widely regarded as pivotal for Venezuelan democracy. In the 1970s and 1980s, over half the population identified with AD or COPEI, and nearly 85 percent of voters cast their ballots for them. At the same time, the economy prospered. Oil prices more than tripled in the 1970s, nearing \$10 per barrel (OPEC 1999), and government revenue and GDP per capita increased significantly (Karl 1997; Baptista 1997).

Today, however, Venezuela's political and economic landscape is almost unrecognizable. Virtually no traces of AD or COPEI remain; they hold only 13 percent of seats in the legislature. In their place stands the personalistic, hegemonic government of Hugo Chávez, who has cultivated an impressive following but increasingly disregards democratic norms and practices. Elections are held regularly, but Chávez's opponents insist that fraud is rampant despite close international scrutiny. The control that Chávez exercises over



the National Assembly, Consejo Nacional Electoral, Tribunal Supremo de Justicia, and many other institutions raises concerns about horizontal accountability. The left has gained substantial influence; moreover, some of Chávez's most loyal supporters, including governors, National Assembly deputies, and cabinet officials, were once members of the militant left, which was supposedly incorporated into the regime decades ago. Rather than relying on support from unions and professional associations, as AD and COPEI had done, Chávez has cultivated support among the historically marginalized.

The economic situation has also changed radically since the 1970s boom. Although oil prices rose in the mid-2000s, they had hovered around \$5 per barrel for over a decade (adjusted for inflation; OPEC 2001); GDP per capita is down over 40 percent from the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Inflation is in the double digits, although this is an improvement from its 1996 high of 100 percent.<sup>2</sup> Debt service is more than twice what it was thirty years ago.<sup>3</sup> And the portion of the population in poverty has nearly doubled since the 1970s, increasing from 33 to almost 60 percent (CISOR 1975, 2001).

What has happened in Venezuela since the 1970s? Given the institutionalization of the party system and the oil wealth the nation enjoyed, Venezuela seemed to be safely on route to democratic consolidation. But as the economy deteriorated and the parties did little to respond, people began defecting from the party system. A strong signal of mounting frustration came in the 1989 Caracazo, when violent protests erupted in response to President Carlos Andrés Pérez's neoliberal program. In 1992, factions of the military attempted two unsuccessful coups, and Pérez was impeached in 1993. By the early 1990s, new parties had begun to appear and contested the 1993 elections, which were won by former COPEI leader Rafael Caldera, who ran as an independent supported by a diverse set of parties. But during his presidency, Caldera found his strongest ally in AD—his longtime nemesis. As the traditional parties closed ranks, Venezuelans found no meaningful alternatives in the party system and turned elsewhere for representation. The prolonged crisis also provoked radical social change, which undermined the parties' bases of support and increased the numbers of the poor and unemployed, who were excluded from the party system. As a result, the parties lost ties to large swaths of society, encumbering stressed

1. Data are for 1974 and 2003, expressed in constant 1984 currency units. Source: Banco Central de Venezuela.

2. Inflation was 14.4 percent in 2005. Source: Banco Central de Venezuela.

3. Debt service equaled 16 percent of export earnings in 2004. Source: World Development Indicators.

clientelist networks with greater pressure to deliver votes. When financial scarcity and political reforms limited the parties' resources, clientelist capacities contracted, further weakening their draw.

By the end of the 1990s, the party system collapsed. First, a volatile multiparty system emerged, but Hugo Chávez gradually solidified a near-hegemonic hold on power. Chávez's repeated reelection and his efforts to restructure institutions and society suggest that Venezuela made a complete break with its history as an institutionalized party democracy.

While particularly severe and surprising in Venezuela, the dynamics and traumatic consequences of party system collapse seen there are not unique. In Italy, the Christian Democrats (DC) dominated post-World War II politics, controlling government with their frequent allies, the Socialists, for over four decades. Italy's postwar economic resurgence was touted as a miracle. But in the 1980s, public debt escalated and unemployment rates reached double digits. International commitments limited the parties' ability to address these problems, and patterns of coalition government discredited all the viable system alternatives. Class and religious cleavages lost salience, and economic realities and political reforms strained clientelist resources. By the mid-1990s, the DC and the Socialists had almost evaporated, and the permanent opposition party, the Communists, splintered. In the aftermath, uncharacteristic upheaval, even for Italy, plagued politics, and media baron Silvio Berlusconi monopolized power.

The Venezuelan and Italian systems faced challenges from economic crisis, social change, and political reform, while constraints hindered adaptation, causing collapse. Alternatively, other party systems in countries like 1990s Argentina, which was beleaguered by severe crises, and 1970s Belgium, which faced intractable ethnic divisions, managed to adapt and survive. Why do some party systems collapse when faced with considerable pressures while similar systems confronting seemingly insurmountable obstacles endure? Why do people reject not just the incumbent but the entire menu of options in a party system? What are the implications of this rejection for democracy? This book answers these questions, explaining how breakdowns in party politics occur and examining the ramifications of collapse.

## PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE AND DEMOCRACY

Political parties are pivotal players in contemporary democracies, serving as vehicles for representation, accountability, and governability, and the system

of interactions they form (Sartori [1976] 2005) shapes political contestation and government outcomes. A party system collapses when the parties decay and the structure of the system changes. As a result, patterns of representation, accountability, and governability are likely to change, and processes of contestation are prone to restructuring. The collapse of an entire party system, therefore, marks the complete reshuffling of the democratic order. Explaining this phenomenon, then, is crucial not only for illuminating party system dynamics but also for understanding democratic politics.

Parties are the primary agents of representation and often the only actors with access to elected positions in democratic systems (Hagopian 1998). By channeling the pursuit of interests into an institutional structure, parties peacefully frame competitive politics and allow divergent interests in society to participate through democratic means (Morales Paúl 1996; Przeworski et al. 1995). Parties also help voters hold elected officials accountable, providing heuristics at the polls and facilitating identification of those responsible for government outputs (J. Aldrich 1995). Significant changes in parties, especially the deterioration associated with collapse, may threaten the fulfillment of the crucial tasks that parties perform in democracy.

Changes in party *systems* likewise have important implications. Party systems organize contestation, shape which interests are articulated and how, and direct government outputs. It follows that modifications in party system structure will have important ramifications, reconfiguring contestation and reshaping policy outcomes. The volatility associated with change may also increase conflict and weaken accountability.

The potential impact of party system *collapse* is even more profound. The rupture in a party system's structure and the disintegration of its component parties, which together constitute collapse, have substantial consequences. When collapse occurs, the tasks typically performed by parties, such as promoting accountability and governability, may go unfulfilled. Meanwhile, as interparty interactions undergo dramatic restructuring, the regime may be exposed to instability and conflict. Most ominously, collapse may make the democratic regime vulnerable. The instability of the collapse period makes democracy more tenuous, at least in the short run, as citizens are caught in uncertainty. Collapse also opens the door to new and at times unpredictable actors. Although new groups may address previously unanswered clamor for access, their jockeying for position is likely to elevate conflict. Some emergent actors may directly undermine regime survival by disrespecting democratic norms or threatening entrenched interests. Given the significance of collapse for democracy, analyzing the factors that cause

this outcome and examining its consequences provide important insight. Moreover, understanding what causes party systems to be susceptible to collapse may allow policy makers and party leaders to avoid some of the pitfalls that precipitate such catastrophe.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Many have explored the reasons for and implications of changes in parties and party systems. Scholars have examined the emergence of new parties (Kitschelt 1995), adaptation efforts of existing parties (Kitschelt 1994; Levitsky 2003b), electoral shifts between parties (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Miller and Schofield 2003), and party failure (Lawson and Merkl 1988), among other types of change. Despite this plethora of scholarship on party dynamics, it is not clear whether these arguments, which were largely developed to explain individual party performance, may be directly extended to explain party system collapse. While explanations of collapse may draw inspiration from studies of party dynamics, a successful theory must explain why all the system parties fail simultaneously with changes in the system structure. Nevertheless, much of the existing research on party system collapse emphasizes the features and behavior of individual parties without considering how the entire party system is made vulnerable, neglecting theoretical advancements that account for the system-level features of collapse.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the processes that produce disintegration across entire party systems, I develop a theory of collapse.<sup>5</sup> Based on insights from research examining changes in individual parties and party systems and from studies that have theorized about party system structure, I argue that a system will collapse when it fails to fulfill its primary role in democracy—linking society to the state. Such failure is caused when a party system faces challenges to its core linkage strategies and when specific institutional and environmental constraints limit the ability of the system and its component parties to respond appropriately to these challenges. The party system's resulting inability to perform the critical task of linkage causes its collapse.

4. Work by Dietz and Myers (2007) provides an exception. Coppedge (2005) and K. Roberts (n.d.) take a system-level approach in examining the related issue of democratic decay in Venezuela and Peru; however, their work does not seek to explain party system collapse but rather examines regime-level processes.

5. I expound the theory much further in chapter 3.

Studies on individual party change demonstrate that for parties to survive, they must channel public concerns (Levitsky 2001b; Panebianco 1988b). Research analyzing electoral shifts within stable system structures argues that failed responsiveness leads voters to abandon one party and embrace another (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984). Studies explaining continuity and change in system structures suggest that for a system to be effective, it should mirror the demands and configuration of society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Jointly, then, the literatures on party dynamics and party system structure suggest that the extent to which a party system provides linkage affects its ability to survive.

Building on these literatures, I argue that for party systems to survive, they must channel and respond to public concerns; without linkage, the system will collapse. To explain why party systems cease to provide adequate linkage, I contend that a system is at risk when structural changes challenge its core linkage profile, demanding a response. If the challenges emerge in a context that limits the parties' ability to maneuver and address them, linkage deteriorates. The theory synthesizes sociostructural and institutional approaches, delineating how conflicting pressures generated by structural changes and by contextual constraints undermine ties between parties and voters. Unlike more deterministic explanations that view collapse as a natural outcome of threats like economic crisis or corruption (Hillman 1994; Molina and Pérez 1998), my focus on decaying linkage acknowledges the pressures that such challenges present but also analyzes the party system's response. By examining exactly how the ties between voters and politicians deteriorate in the period leading up to collapse, I illuminate the process through which threatening structural changes generate mounting demands for linkage and how specific constraints restrict the system's ability to respond to these pressures.

As countries change and evolve, party systems face countless challenges to their ability to provide linkage. Economic crisis, social change, and political reform may complicate a party system's job. But according to their specific linkage portfolios, different party systems are threatened by distinct challenges and find specific constraints especially difficult to overcome. To explore how particular challenges and constraints make different linkage strategies vulnerable to decay, I consider three main avenues through which party systems respond to demands for linkage: programmatic representation, incorporation of major social interests, and clientelism. In chapter 3, I detail the specific challenges and constraints expected to undermine each type.

## EXPLAINING COLLAPSE: RESEARCH DESIGN

I trace how structural changes amid contextual constraints led to severe linkage decay and produced party system failure across a diverse group of collapse cases. First, I carry out a detailed examination of Venezuela as a least-likely case. Then, I conduct a cross-national analysis, comparing Venezuela and three other instances of collapse with four cases in which party systems survived despite serious threats. Throughout, I employ large-*N* statistical analysis, quantitative content analysis, qualitative analysis of interviews and documents, and comparative historical analysis. The data include public opinion surveys, legislative archives, news reports, interviews with party elites, election returns, and government and party documents, as well as secondary sources.

I analyze the Venezuelan collapse in greatest depth because the institutionalized nature of its party system made collapse due to failed representation improbable and surprising. Although Venezuela is not the only long-standing party system that has encountered the trial of collapse, the quality and complexity of the linkage mechanisms in Venezuela rendered complete failure more unlikely there than in the other countries that have experienced collapse.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, collapse has been particularly challenging for the stability and quality of Venezuelan democracy, making it an excellent case for understanding the ramifications of party system failure.

Explaining complex processes like party system collapse requires detailed analysis, and my treatment of Venezuela constitutes such an approach. But collapse is not a distinctively Venezuelan phenomenon. Therefore, I expand the analysis to consider a broader set of cases that includes instances of both collapse and survival. I conduct comparative analysis of other instances of collapse, demonstrating how the patterns present in Venezuela are replicated in other cases. Linkage failure, caused by particular structural challenges in a context of specific constraints, led to collapse in cases as diverse as Bolivia, Colombia, and Italy.

I also show how other at-risk party systems avoided collapse. I pair each of the four cases of collapse with a similar party system that managed to survive serious threats, matching them on linkage profiles, party system features, and important shared pressures on linkage.<sup>7</sup> I contrast Venezuela to Argentina, Bolivia to India, Colombia to Uruguay, and Italy to Belgium. Analyzing these matched cases of survival clarifies how countries facing

6. See chapter 2 for more details concerning the selection of Venezuela.

7. See chapter 9 for a detailed discussion of case selection.

some similar challenges avoided collapse by providing at least one form of linkage. In these instances of survival, I find that either the challenges facing the party system did not seriously undermine all components of the system's linkage profile or the context did not impede the system's capacity to adapt. When systems failed, foundational threats and limits on appropriate accommodation were present. When systems averted disaster, one of these conditions was absent.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into three parts. In the rest of part 1, I lay the book's theoretical foundation. Chapter 2 addresses conceptual issues. I distinguish between party system collapse and other sorts of party or party system change, placing collapse within the broader literature and spelling out how collapse is distinct. I conceptualize collapse as involving the concurrent decay of the major parties and a fundamental transformation in the structure of an established system. Operationalizing this idea, I identify all collapse cases in Europe and Latin America from 1975 to 2005. Then, I explain my rationale for focusing the most detailed analysis on Venezuela's party system collapse. This chapter will be especially useful to scholars concerned with how collapse fits into the broader panorama of party system change and to those interested in classifying cases of collapse.

In chapter 3, I develop the book's central theoretical argument. Collapse occurs when structural challenges and constraints on adaptation cause entire party systems to fall short of performing their central task of linkage. I specify three major strategies that parties might employ in fulfilling this task: programmatic appeals, interest incorporation, and clientelism. Then, I develop specific expectations concerning the structural changes that threaten each type of linkage and the constraints that limit the system's response. If all facets of linkage encounter core challenges that the parties are together unable to address, the system collapses. Readers interested in understanding the theoretical foundations of the causal process underlying collapse will find this chapter particularly valuable.

Those who are most interested in deciphering the Venezuelan case may wish to focus on part 2, which presents the empirical analysis of Venezuelan collapse. Throughout this portion of the book, I draw on considerable original data collected during fifteen months of field research in Venezuela. The data include interviews with eighty-nine political elites, thirty years of

public opinion surveys, all laws passed from 1974 to 2004 and news coverage for the same period, documents from party and government archives, election returns, and social and economic data. I elaborate on the collection and analysis of these data in chapter 4, other portions of part 2, and the data appendixes.

Chapter 4 sketches the Venezuelan party system's founding and evolution. I outline the system's linkage portfolio at its apex in the 1970s, revealing a multifaceted strategy that included programmatic representation, interest incorporation, and clientelism. But by the late 1980s, rising pressures complicated linkage, and support for the traditional parties began to wane. Then, as chapter 4 describes, in 1988 the system collapsed. The subsequent chapters in part 2 explain this collapse, analyzing decay in each linkage type and showing how linkage failure caused collapse in Venezuela.

In chapter 5, I examine programmatic decay. Economic crisis heightened pressure on the parties to provide a policy response to worsening conditions. However, analysis of an extensive database I compiled, which details the quantity and significance of policy making on important issues, reveals that responsiveness declined considerably in the late 1980s and 1990s.<sup>8</sup> Rather than responding to the crisis, the parties froze, succumbing to constraints imposed by conflicting incentives that pitted historical legacies of state-led growth against international pressures toward neoliberalism. At the same time that responsiveness failed, the major parties ceased to offer meaningful programmatic alternatives. Patterns of interparty agreements produced ideological convergence among the parties and made it impossible for voters to find alternatives to the status quo within the system. The absence of policy responsiveness and lack of ideological differentiation between major parties produced programmatic discrediting across the entire system.

Chapter 6 explores how incorporation deteriorated in the face of dramatic social change. In the 1990s, the formal sectors of the economy, around which the traditional party system had been built, shrank, while the ranks of the poor, unemployed, and informal sector expanded to over half the population. However, the parties' incorporation strategies were strongly rooted in the decaying social structure, and conflict between the goals and organizational structures of new and entrenched interests made innovation risky.

8. I use public opinion data to identify important national problems, and then I assess the amount and significance of policy outputs dealing with these issues. I determine contemporaneous significance by analyzing news reports at the time policies were passed and identify retrospective significance using expert analysis. See appendixes B and C.



As a result, they did not pursue the political potential of these burgeoning groups, allowing incorporation to wither.

Chapter 7 shows that clientelism likewise crumbled as the parties faced growing demands, resource shortages, and clientelism-constraining reforms. Increased poverty and uncertainty motivated more Venezuelans to seek clientelist benefits. But the economic situation also limited resources available for political distribution, and the party apparatuses were increasingly shut out of patronage opportunities as technocrats took control of the state and fiscal decentralization rerouted resources to smaller, local or regional networks. At the same time, the introduction of separate, subnational elections increased the number of electoral processes for which clientelist resources were needed and undermined interdependence between the parties' geographical units, thereby increasing clientelist demand while reducing the gains achieved through each exchange.

By 1998, programmatic representation, interest incorporation, and clientelism were all floundering. Representation was bankrupt. Chapter 8 brings together the components of the previous three chapters to chronicle the system's collapse in the 1998 elections and provides a summary of the central arguments concerning the Venezuelan case. By using survey data to analyze Venezuelans' (lack of) support for the traditional parties at the time of these pivotal elections, I show that the absence of programmatic appeals, failure to incorporate new groups, and clientelist decay were together instrumental in producing the exodus from the old party system.

Part 3 extends the analysis beyond Venezuela, comparing instances of collapse and survival and exploring the ramifications of collapse. The material in this part will be especially relevant to those interested in a broader test of the theoretical argument or in the specific dynamics of the seven cases analyzed here. Chapter 9 outlines the rationale behind the selection of the four sets of paired comparisons between cases of collapse and survival: Bolivia-India, Venezuela-Argentina, Italy-Belgium, and Colombia-Uruguay. Chapter 10 examines Italy, Bolivia, and Colombia, assessing how threats and constraints produced system collapse in each. Through these comparisons, I demonstrate how the patterns in Venezuela were replicated in other cases of collapse. Chapter 11 contrasts the collapse cases with the paired survival cases. As opposed to the collapse cases, in which structural changes threatened core linkage strategies and constraints limited the parties' response, in the survival cases either significant threats were absent or the pattern of constraints did not impede all successful adaptation, and at least one type of linkage was sustained, enabling the systems' endurance.

Finally, chapter 12 provides a summary of the book's major insights and explores the aftermath of collapse. Using evidence from the four collapse cases analyzed here, I detail how post-collapse party systems make up for the representational failings of their predecessors, and I discuss how collapse poses a variety of challenges to democracy, including personalism, de-institutionalization, instability, and conflict. I conclude by suggesting some ways in which future episodes of collapse might be averted.

## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: SYSTEM CHANGE, TRANSFORMATION, AND COLLAPSE

Party system change occurs when a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system into another. . . . The importance of the appearance or disappearance of a party . . . relates to [its] systemic role.

—Peter Mair, *Party system change*

Party system collapse is abrupt and catastrophic, presenting exaggerated challenges to the democratic system. But while collapse is rare and momentous, similarities exist between collapse and other, more ordinary party system dynamics, which often leads to confusion. This murkiness makes defining collapse and placing it in a broader context important, but the disparate research on party and party system change often renders conceptual clarity elusive (Langston 2009).

This chapter defines party system collapse, situating it within the broader literature on party system change and spelling out the core features of collapse in order to distinguish it from other sorts of change. Specifying how collapse is both distinct from and related to other, more common forms of change provides opportunities for theoretical leverage and for advancing understanding of why some systems fail and others do not. Delineating the intension of the collapse concept and identifying its essential elements clarifies its meaning and also enables me to develop a portable operationalization of collapse that is in line with the concept (Goertz 2006). I then employ this operational definition (Sartori 1970, 1045) to identify each collapse case in Europe and Latin America from 1975 through 2005. I conclude the chapter by discussing why I opt to focus the most in-depth analysis on Venezuela,

as a case well suited for theoretical advancements in understanding the problem of collapse.

## DEFINING PARTY SYSTEM CHANGE

A sizeable body of literature explores various facets of change in parties and party systems, ranging from studies of organizational change in individual parties to analyses of shifts in the mass electorate (Kitschelt 1995; Lawson and Merkl 1988; Levitsky 2003b; Mair 1997). In part, such diversity is useful and provides empirical and theoretical insight. But it also renders the concept vague, making cumulative theoretical and empirical advancements difficult because different types of dynamics are often grouped together or confused (Sartori 1970). Unifying theories about disparate phenomena may be sensible if they share common essential characteristics. However, in the party system change literature, different studies often explore distinct phenomena, failing to justify their treatment as analyses of the same basic concern. For example, realignment studies examine the causes behind electoral shifts that occur between parties within a *stable* system structure (Burnham 1970; Hurley 1989; Key 1955), while studies of major party decline often involve implicit analysis of changes in the system structure itself (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Greene 2007), and other analyses consider dynamics that do not necessarily have electoral manifestations, like deinstitutionalization or organizational adaptation (González 1995; Kirchheimer 1966). These contrasts are just a few of the many divergent dynamics joined under the broad banner of party system change. The empirical diversity and conceptual confusion that characterize this literature make theory building difficult. Here I resolve some of this lack of clarity, particularly as it relates to our understanding of party system collapse.

Elucidating the idea of party system collapse and how it relates to party system change more broadly first requires specification of the core concept—the party system. I follow Sartori in conceptualizing a party system as “the *system of interactions* resulting from inter-party competition” ([1976] 2005, 39; emphasis in original). This conceptualization has become a standard in the literature (Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Mair 1997) because it acknowledges that a party system is not just the sum of its parts but is also constituted by the structure of interparty competition. Party systems are not simply composed of individual parties operating independently, unaffected by competition and coalitions with other organizations in the system. Rather,

the parties and their behaviors are interdependent, such that the system “displays properties that do not belong to a separate consideration of its component elements” (Sartori [1976] 2005, 39). This view of a party system as consisting of its constituent parties as well as the patterns of interactions between them becomes especially significant in conceptualizing and theorizing party system collapse, because the collapse of a system involves more than decay in its component parties and must also include foundational changes in the structure of the system.

With this definition of party system in hand, I turn to identifying fundamental similarities and differences among patterns of party system change. The party system concept I employ suggests that system change can be broken into two essential types: system-maintaining change, which primarily involves changes in the component parties, and system-transforming change, which extends beyond the parties alone to encompass shifts in the basic structure of interactions in the system.<sup>1</sup> System-maintaining changes occur within the system, without disrupting the overarching framework of interparty interactions or altering the essential structure of the system. System-transforming changes involve shifts in the structure of interparty interactions, which occur when a party system moves from one major type of structure to another. Internal changes and structural changes are likely to be produced by different kinds of causal processes. Thus, demarcating the two types enables greater accumulation of knowledge about the causes and consequences of party system change, because analyses will not suffer from the muddling of distinct processes.

Both types can be properly understood as changes in the system because they involve modifications in interparty interactions, but only system transformations involve restructuring the overarching framework in which these interactions occur. Many of the most important or fundamental changes occur when a system transforms, and transformation has wide-ranging implications. Other less momentous, but not necessarily trivial, changes that do not restructure the system fall into the category of system maintenance. Modifications in nondefining facets of the system, like party organizations or platforms, are qualitatively different from changes in the structure of the system itself (Mair 1997). But because even these sorts of changes have

1. This distinction is in part inspired by Mair’s (1997) recommendation that party system analyses should differentiate between electoral stability and system stability, which can be achieved by distinguishing between changes to a party system and changes to the parties within the system. Confusion between these different phenomena led to the mistaken view that many European party systems underwent radical transformation in the 1980s and 1990s, when in practice the *systems* were stable.

ramifications for system features like representation and competition, they are appropriately treated as instances of system change, albeit of a different sort than transformations in structure.

When the internal characteristics or components of a party system vary but the system structure remains constant, we are observing system-maintaining change. Often it is precisely the changes made within the system—be it in organization, ties with voters, or policy positions—that enable the system structure to remain intact. This sort of change includes adjustments in individual parties or in the interplay between parties, as long as these changes are not part of a fundamental restructuring of the entire system.

System-maintaining change may entail shifts in the electoral fortunes of existing parties or the emergence of new parties that replace or augment existing options without challenging the basic structure of the system. System-maintaining changes may also manifest outside the electoral arena. Parties frequently change ideologically and organizationally (Kirchheimer 1966), and this type of change may actually sustain the parties and promote electoral stability (Dittrich 1983; Mair 1997).<sup>2</sup> Essentially, system-maintaining changes involve internal modifications and adaptations that do not reshape the system but instead occur within the structure already in place.

The second type of change, system transformation, involves a fundamental shift in system structure that “occurs when a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system into another” (Mair 1997, 52). Changes involving significant restructuring of the basic patterns of system interactions are qualitatively distinct from changes that take place in the context of a stable structure, as system-transforming changes reorder the core logic and principal incentives of interparty competition and cooperation. Transformations in party system structure may be less common than system-maintaining changes, but their impact is likely to be more significant. Transformation may carry ramifications for policy, stability, governance, and representation.

## CONCEPTUALIZING COLLAPSE: SIMULTANEOUS SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION AND PARTY DECAY

Clarifying the distinction between system-maintaining change and transformation is important because I view party system collapse as an especially

2. For instance, in the Irish case, apparent electoral stability between the 1930s and 1980s masked dramatic changes in the parties’ ideologies and organizations as well as increased interparty competition (Mair 1987, 1997).

dramatic kind of transformation in system structure. Some scholars have set forth a view of collapse that only requires the sustained deterioration of major parties (e.g., Seawright 2003). While collapse naturally involves party decay, I consider it to be more than just the decline of individual parties. Approaches to conceptualizing collapse that are exclusively concerned with party decline fail to recognize that party *system* collapse transcends the fortunes of individual parties and necessarily involves the fate of the whole system in which the parties interact. If we conceive of party systems as the set of interactions created by patterns of competition and cooperation between parties, then we must view collapse as more than mere party decay and develop a definition of system collapse that looks for changes not only in the parties themselves but also in the structure of the relationships between them.

To align our understanding of collapse with this view of party systems, I specify the intension of the collapse concept as including both party deterioration and transformation in system structure. *Collapse occurs when an established party system changes in type (transforms) concurrently with decay in the system's major parties.*<sup>3</sup> An entire party system, both its components and its structure, is democratically dissolved and gives way to a different system type with new parties (Dietz and Myers 2007). In this sense, collapse is a particular subtype of transformation. It is not simply a system-maintaining change that entails parties decaying in an undisturbed structure, but also involves fundamental alterations in the system structure itself.<sup>4</sup>

For change to constitute collapse, then, it must satisfy two necessary and sufficient conditions:<sup>5</sup> the system must simultaneously experience (1) a significant decline in its major component parties and (2) a transformation in the established system structure. If the components of the old system decay but the system structure does not transform at the same time, we do not have *system* collapse, but only the decay and replacement of old parties within a stable system structure.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, if the system transforms but

3. Name changes and divisions or mergers of existing parties do not constitute instances of party decay.

4. This approach to conceptualizing collapse also has ramifications for theoretical development, because accounts of collapse must explain not only the decay of individual parties but also the disintegration of the entire system. I briefly discuss these implications later in this chapter and expand and act upon them as I develop the theory in chapter 3.

5. See Goertz (2006, 35–39) for a discussion of necessary and sufficient concept structures like that applied here.

6. This distinction is important, as it is possible for some or even all the parties in a system to fail without precipitating the breakup of the system. Consider Ecuador, where the two largest parties in the 1979 and 1984 elections, Concentración de Fuerzas Populares and Izquierda Democrática, declined dramatically by the 1990s. Despite party decay, the system's structure was

the traditionally significant parties remain important players within the new structure, transformation has occurred, but without major party decay, this change likewise fails to meet the requirements for collapse.

Context and timing are also important elements of the collapse concept. As stated in the definition above, only established party systems can experience collapse. By established systems, I mean those that have some regular patterns of interaction, as opposed to emerging or highly volatile systems where dramatic fluctuations in system structure are commonplace and do not reflect a significant break with existing patterns. By restricting collapse to established systems, we avoid confusing it with generalized patterns of volatility. Furthermore, the idea of collapse implies that a fairly consistent pattern of interparty interactions is in place and that the major parties are identifiable, so that we can recognize fundamental shifts in the structure of these interactions and point clearly to decay in the system's core parties. This is *not* to say that a system must be institutionalized or entrenched for it to experience collapse, but only that the structure of interparty interactions and the major parties must be in place for enough time so that transformation constitutes a significant break with existing patterns.<sup>7</sup> Timing is also pivotal. The two necessary processes that constitute collapse, system transformation and party decay, must happen over a short period. They cannot be separated by an extended stretch of time and still be properly viewed as a single event.<sup>8</sup> Temporal distance implies two disconnected processes, not a unified incident of collapse.

Taken as a whole, then, this approach to conceptualizing collapse reflects the idea that party systems are composed not only of parties but also of the structure in which the parties interact. Because collapse constitutes an extreme sort of transformative change, rather than system maintenance, it is likely to be most closely linked empirically and theoretically to other sorts of transformation. In the next chapter, I theorize about collapse, drawing from existing studies on party system maintenance and transformation, with an emphasis on the latter. I take care to treat collapse as a systemic problem so

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unaffected, preserving an extended multiparty system. Although the Ecuadorian system experienced volatility and replacement of its component parties, its basic structure remained unchanged (Conaghan 1995). Ecuador, therefore, provides an example in which major party decay was not part of a collapse incident, as the decline of individual parties altered interparty interactions but did not produce a fundamental transformation in the structure of those interactions.

7. Below, I operationalize this element of the concept by requiring that a system structure with the same major parties must be in place for at least two complete election cycles before the system can experience true collapse.

8. In the operationalization section below, I specify that transformation and decay must occur within one full election cycle to meet the requirements of collapse.



that the theory explains individual party decay as well as the system-level failure inherent to collapse. But first, in the rest of this chapter, I operationalize the collapse concept and identify cases of the phenomenon.

## OPERATIONALIZING PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE

To differentiate between cases of collapse and other sorts of party system change, I determine whether a case satisfies the two facets of collapse: transformation of the system and substantial decline of the major parties. If both of these elements occur concurrently within an established party system, the observed change can be properly treated as collapse.

### **Distinguishing System Transformation from System-Maintaining Change**

Identifying instances of transformation requires us to determine when a party system shifts from one structure to another, thereby distinguishing transformations from system-maintaining changes. While both types of change may have implications for interparty interactions, only transformations involve the kind of dramatic shifts in the structure of these interactions that are an essential element of collapse. To determine when a party system crosses from one structure to another and thus transforms, we must be able to differentiate clearly between major types of party system structures.

Isolating system transformations, then, demands a categorization of party system structures, which allows us to pinpoint instances in which a system shifts from one system structure to another. Given that the purpose of this categorization is to identify system transformations, a necessary component of collapse, the typology should be parsimonious, measurable, and broadly relevant. The goal is to develop a classification strategy that captures the major patterns and structures of interparty interactions within a manageable, portable scheme that is neither overly complex nor indeterminate, qualities that might render reliable measurement unattainable. Various strategies for classifying party systems have been developed (Blondel 1968; Duverger 1954; Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Mair 2002; Rokkan 1970; Sartori [1976] 2005; Siaroff 2000).<sup>9</sup> The typology I employ builds on this literature with an eye toward capturing the essence of the major structures in which parties interact, while still retaining enough simplicity to

9. See Mair (1990, 1997) and Wolinetz (2006) for more detailed accounts of different classification systems.

make categorizing systems and identifying transformations clear and feasible. Ultimately, I identify five major types of party systems or frameworks that structure interparty interactions, which I discuss below.

In developing a classification of major types of party system structures, Sartori's ([1976] 2005) typology, which has been the standard in the field for several decades, provides a logical starting point. His approach combines simplicity with some nuance, thereby satisfying at least some of the requirements I have set forth for a categorization strategy designed to identify system transformations. Furthermore, my conceptualization of party systems mirrors that of Sartori, making his classification scheme a good foundation.<sup>10</sup> However, Sartori's approach has some weaknesses, which I remedy in my final typology.

Sartori built his typology on two facets: fragmentation and polarization. Fragmentation is measured using the number of relevant parties and considers parties' roles in coalitions and policy making when counting, thereby highlighting that this facet is more than mere numbers and that it successfully encapsulates meaningful features of interparty competition. Polarization, which is reflected in the distance between parties, sheds light on the potential for conflict in the system.

On its face, this two-dimensional scheme might seem excessively complex, potentially generating numerous combinations and complicating the task of categorizing party systems. But in practice, the classification remains simple because Sartori sees fragmentation and polarization as highly correlated. As a result, he identifies only four major types of competitive party systems: predominant party systems, two-party systems, moderate pluralism, and polarized pluralism ([1976] 2005). The predominant party system has very low fragmentation and polarization, and the two-party type, which is reminiscent of Duverger's (1954) categorization, also possesses relatively low fragmentation and polarization. Only when we come to the multiparty category does Sartori's scheme create some complexity, but it does so in a place where it is sorely needed. Even a cursory review of party systems around the world demonstrates considerable substantive differences in the structure of interparty interactions among those that would nevertheless fall into the same catchall multiparty category. In response to this now obvious insight, Sartori divides the multiparty group based on ideological

10. Mair (1997) also relied on Sartori's definition of party system when distinguishing between changes in party system structure and other sorts of change—the same distinction upon which I build the concepts of system-maintaining and system-transforming change, which I am seeking to differentiate here.

polarization, calling systems with moderate to high fragmentation but low polarization “moderate pluralism” and those with high fragmentation and more extreme ideological differences “polarized pluralism.” He also goes to great lengths to identify the “distinctive features” of polarized pluralism, which in practice extend well beyond his two initial criteria ([1976] 2005, 117–23). These features paint a rather stylized picture of polarized pluralism that closely resembles the peculiar features of party systems that possessed significant communist parties around the time of Sartori’s writing. And as Mair has pointed out, the decline of traditional communist parties has made it “more and more difficult to find any sustained cases of polarized pluralism” (2005, xvii), raising questions about the utility of this category.

Sartori’s typology of party system structures meets the goals of parsimony and measurability and is also widely regarded as successful in capturing the most significant patterns of interparty interactions. But his approach to dividing the multiparty category constricts the relevance of that component of the classification system to a specific, bygone historical era and limits the typology’s portability. Additionally, the empirical overlap between fragmentation and polarization raises questions about the purchase we gain from Sartori’s exact strategy for separating the multiparty grouping, because the only category where polarization comes into play is the now obsolete polarized pluralism, which possesses high scores on both dimensions.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Sartori’s intuition to divide the multiparty category based on different structures of interparty interactions remains perceptive and aligns with my goals and conceptual premises concerning party systems and system-transforming change. In light of the diminished relevance of polarized pluralism and the decreasing number of systems fitting the two-party category (Mair 2002; Wolinetz 2006), innovations in differentiating systems within the diffuse multiparty category remains a pressing issue, which my typology addresses.

My typology begins by recognizing the continued purchase of portions of Sartori’s approach, especially its ability to join simplicity and nuance in identifying some major, recognizable system structure types. Specifically, I employ Sartori’s predominant party and two-party system categories.<sup>12</sup> In

11. Empirically, systems with low fragmentation are treated as having low polarization, while high fragmentation accompanies high polarization. Systems with five or fewer parties are in the moderate pluralism category; those with six or more tend to fall into the polarized pluralism group. Sartori views this as an empirical artifact, but the overlap between criteria suggests that the number of parties actually tells us a lot about interparty interactions (Wolinetz 2006).

12. Like Sartori, I exclude one-party systems, in which there is only one legal party, and hegemonic systems, in which parties that are secondary to the dominant party do not compete on a

predominant systems, one party consistently wins a majority of legislative seats in competitive elections, and in two-party systems, two parties typically control at least 95 percent of seats. Both types have low fragmentation, but there are important differences in the levels of competition and the nature of interplay between parties, which clearly distinguish the structures of interparty interactions between the two categories.

To create the rest of the typology, I break down the common multiparty category, aiming to create more nuance in order to encapsulate major structures of interparty interactions while still maintaining a straightforward approach that is amenable to measurement. The few post-Sartori innovations in party system typology development have produced excessively complicated schema and/or employed continuous measurement strategies.<sup>13</sup> These approaches blur distinctions between types and impede identification of significant shifts from one category to another, which is essential in distinguishing between system maintenance and transformation—the central purpose of the typology employed here. Because Sartori’s approach to dividing the multiparty category based on polarization has lost leverage over time and more recent efforts to typologize party systems are overly complex and

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level playing field, because these types do not meet the basic requirement that a party system in a democracy include free and fair competition among its components.

13. For instance, Siaroff (2000) considers the relative size and strength of parties and specifies eight categories of party systems. But under his typology, classifying party systems and identifying changes in type becomes quite messy, as his approach creates the appearance that some clearly stable systems endure for only one election before giving way to another, slightly different type (Wolinetz 2006). This classification strategy does not identify *major* changes in system structure. Mainwaring and Scully (1995a) have classified systems based on institutionalization. Party system institutionalization had previously gone unexamined in the party system typology literature, which developed with reference to advanced democracies where institutionalization was often taken for granted. But in other contexts, institutionalization varies. Despite the utility of understanding institutionalization particularly in new democracies, I do not include this dimension in my typology for assessing transformation. This decision is based on several considerations. First, adding institutionalization would make the typology extremely complex, with at least ten potential types, even if institutionalization were treated as dichotomous. If institutionalization were measured more finely, then the typology would expand beyond utility. Second, determining institutionalization is difficult and entails analyzing multiple dimensions of a party system. Assessing shifts in institutionalization may be feasible in a single country over time or in several countries at a fixed point in time. However, using institutionalization to identify system transformation in numerous countries would require evaluating dozens of party systems in a comparable way over a thirty-year period. Such a task would be daunting if not impossible (Hartlyn 1996). The difficulty of arriving at valid assessments of institutionalization over time puts such an approach at odds with the goals for the typology stated above. Finally, institutionalization is likely to be a process that occurs over a long time period. Identifying the transformation of a system from inchoate to institutionalized would therefore be a complex and contested decision. Thus, while institutionalization is important, I view this characteristic as descriptive, rather than definitive of party system type.

difficult to operationalize, I propose an alternative that builds upon some of the intuition of previous scholarship but that also clarifies how the categories capture important differences in the structures of interparty interactions.

The multiparty categories I include are 2.5-party, moderate multiparty, and extended multiparty.<sup>14</sup> In creating these three types, I distinguish party systems based on the amount of competition, the need for cooperation and coalition building, and the nature and complexity of dealings among parties—all important elements that structure interparty interactions. I treat the 2.5-party system as a discrete type because multiple parties compete but two large parties dominate, typically winning 75 percent of legislative seats and controlling the executive. The logic of interparty competition in such a system is unmistakably distinct from that of multiparty systems in which several equal-sized parties compete and from that of pure two-party systems (Blondel 1968). The 2.5-party systems possess unique patterns of competition and cooperation, with two powerful parties regularly at odds with each other, but with governing coalitions often requiring support from smaller parties. In the moderate multiparty type, party power is more evenly distributed. Fragmentation and the complexity of interparty interactions are moderate, and competition is high but not intense.<sup>15</sup> In this system type, where three to five relevant parties typically compete, coalitions are frequently necessary, but only a couple of parties are required to form them. In extended multiparty systems, fragmentation is high, with the relevant parties typically exceeding five. This fragmentation complicates interparty interactions, requires coalitions among multiple parties, and intensifies competition.<sup>16</sup>

The complete typology, then, includes five categories: predominant party, two-party, 2.5-party, moderate multiparty, and extended multiparty systems. This approach distinguishes between the major structures of system dynamics, capturing the central features of interparty interactions. It also produces a manageable classification system that facilitates precise distinctions between types based on observable and measurable features, enabling

14. The term “extended multiparty system” is suggested by Wolinetz (2006, 60) as a neutral alternative to the more common term “extreme multiparty system,” which has negative connotations.

15. This type aligns in some ways with Sartori’s moderate pluralism, but I am agnostic as to the level of polarization. However, in practice, as fragmentation increases, polarization typically does as well (Mair 2005).

16. This type has some similarities with Sartori’s polarized pluralism but does not require high polarization, even though the extent of fragmentation makes polarization a likely outcome. Additionally, I have endeavored to rehabilitate his category by taking a more open approach that does not treat the specific features Sartori associated with polarized pluralism, like centrifugal competition and antidemocratic oppositions, as essential elements of extended multiparty systems.

clear identification of the structural changes that constitute transformation. Furthermore, the categories are neither unique to nor principally significant in a particular place or time, which promotes the broad relevance of the typology. Overall, then, this classification of party system structures meets the aforementioned goals of parsimony, measurability, and portability, while still capturing the most important patterns of interparty interactions.

Table 2.1 lists the five party system types with examples of each. They were categorized based on Sartori’s strategy for counting relevant parties, which views the number of parties as an indicator of the amount of competition, need for cooperation, and complexity of interactions in a system. I also report Laakso and Taagepera’s effective parties in the legislature measure (ENP) to provide a rough approximation of system structure, but ENP is not used to identify type.

The typology I have developed forms the basis for identifying system transformations and for distinguishing them from system-maintaining changes. Transformative changes in the structure of interparty interactions are marked by a party system shifting from one major system type to another. Using the five-category typology, I am able to identify transformations in party system structure by examining changes in the number of relevant parties in the legislature, which allows me to operationalize the first component of collapse. Table 2.2 displays some empirical instances of system transformation.

**Table 2.1** Examples of party system types

| Party system type   | Country        | Date | ENP in the lower house |
|---------------------|----------------|------|------------------------|
| Predominant party   | India          | 1984 | 1.68                   |
| Two-party           | Colombia       | 1982 | 1.98                   |
| 2.5-party           | United Kingdom | 2005 | 2.47                   |
|                     | Venezuela      | 1983 | 2.42                   |
| Moderate multiparty | Chile          | 2005 | 5.60                   |
|                     | Sweden         | 2002 | 4.23                   |
| Extended multiparty | Belgium        | 2003 | 7.02                   |
|                     | Brazil         | 2006 | 10.19                  |

Note: Dates reflect a specific election in which the party system fit the type. ENP is not used to determine type, but only to give readers a general sense of system structure.

Source: Author’s classification of party system type using relevant number of parties (Sartori [1976] 2005) and author’s calculations of ENP (Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Based on data from Payne et al. (2002), Electoral Commission of India, Ministerio del Interior (Chile), Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (Brazil), Political Database of the Americas, Consejo Nacional Electoral (Venezuela), and *European Journal of Political Research*.

**Table 2.2** Examples of party system transformation

| Country    | Date    | Type of transformation  |
|------------|---------|---|
| Austria    | 1990–94 | 2.5-party system transforms into moderate multiparty system           |
| Belgium    | 1978    | Moderate multiparty system transforms into extended multiparty system |
| Brazil     | 1990    | 2.5-party system transforms into extended multiparty system           |
| Costa Rica | 2002    | 2.5-party system transforms into moderate multiparty system           |
| Paraguay   | 1993    | Predominant party system transforms into 2.5-party system             |
| Portugal   | 1987    | Moderate multiparty system transforms into 2.5-party system           |
| Venezuela  | 1973    | Extended multiparty system transforms into 2.5-party system           |

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Payne et al. (2002), *European Journal of Political Research*, and Consejo Nacional Electoral (Venezuela).

### Identifying Major Party Decay

To operationalize the second element of collapse, I must determine whether the major system parties decayed. There are two steps in making this assessment: identifying the parties that are major components of a system and determining whether these core parties have decayed sufficiently to constitute collapse. The impact of individual party decay varies according to a party's role in the system. So pinpointing a system's central parties is crucial for distinguishing system decay from the decline of other, less crucial elements of the system (Mair 1997).

Identifying the major parties in predominant, two-party, and 2.5-party systems is straightforward. Predominant systems have only one major component—the party that consistently wins a supermajority of legislative seats. Two- and 2.5-party systems have two major components—the two large parties that dominate the system.

Isolating the major parties in moderate and extended multiparty systems is slightly more complicated. I consider a party to be a major player in these systems if it holds a significant share of seats in the legislature. Substantial legislative representation suggests that a party's presence is important in elections and policy making, and using legislative seat share, rather than vote share, to identify major parties mitigates the potential effect of different rules for translating votes into seats and facilitates cross-national and cross-temporal consistency. Exactly how many seats parties must hold to meet the criteria of having a significant block will vary from one system to the next. If seats are divided among only a handful of parties, a party would need to

hold a larger percentage to be a major player than if the seats were distributed among a dozen parties. To establish a threshold separating major parties from minor ones, I divide the number of seats in the legislature by one plus the average effective number of parties in the lower house (ENP+1). Parties, which on average hold at least this number of seats over the system's lifespan, meet the criteria for being a major component of the system.<sup>17</sup> This approach accounts for the number and relative size of parties in establishing the percentage of seats a party must hold to be classified as a significant element of the system. This logic may be expressed as follows:

*Definition 1:*  $M_i$  is a major component party iff  $s_i \geq S/(1+ENP)$

where  $M_i$  is a political party

$s_i$  is the percentage of seats in the legislature held by  $M_i$

$S$  is the total number of seats in the legislature

$$ENP = 1 / \sum_{i=1}^n P_i^2$$

and  $P_i$  is the proportion of seats held by the  $i^{th}$  party in the lower house

If a legislature has 100 seats ( $S$ ) and ENP is four, then party  $M_i$  would be considered a major component of the system if it holds at least 20 ( $100 \div 5$ ) seats. This definition consistently identifies the parties that experts consider to be the most important in a system. For example, the major parties in contemporary Mexico identified by this approach are the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), PAN (Partido Acción Nacional), and PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática).

The next step is to develop a decision rule for evaluating when a system's major parties have decayed significantly. By definition, the major component parties will together control a substantial portion of legislative seats. Therefore, I determine when the major parties have decayed based on their loss of legislative impact. Specifically, if the joint seat share of these parties drops below a majority, then they have clearly lost influence. When this condition obtains, the major component parties have decayed sufficiently to satisfy the second criteria of collapse:

17. To identify major parties in a system over its lifespan, I use the average ENP and a party's average seat share to determine whether a party meets the threshold.



*Definition 2:* The major parties have decayed when  
 $S_{m1} + S_{m2} + \dots + S_{mn} < (S/2)+1$   
 where  $M_i$  is a major component party  
 $S_{mi}$  is the percentage of seats in the legislature  
 held by  $M_i$   
 and  $S$  is the total number of seats in the legislature

### Accounting for Timing and Scope Requirements

Identifying collapse also requires determining whether transformation and party decay occurred concurrently in an established party system. Neither transformation followed after some time by party decay nor party decline followed much later by transformation should be treated as an instance of collapse. To operationalize this intuition, I specify that transformation and party decay must take place within the span of one complete legislative election cycle for the case to constitute collapse. At the limit, then, a party system undergoes collapse if transformation occurs in one legislative election and the major parties lose control of the legislature in the subsequent election, or, alternatively, if the parties decay during the first election and the system transforms in the succeeding election. Of course, system transformation and major party decay also constitute a collapse event when they occur simultaneously in a single election.

Finally, as detailed above, collapse can only afflict somewhat established systems, such that change marks a significant and clear break with old parties and set patterns of interactions. We should not confuse collapse with ordinary volatility that characterizes new or unpredictable systems. To identify collapse and distinguish it from other sorts of system change, I specify that the momentous break with the past that defines collapse is only possible in established systems. By established systems, I mean those that have been intact, both in system structure and in major component parties, for at least two complete legislative election cycles before beginning the transformation and decay that constitute collapse. In this way, we differentiate between collapse and other forms of change. If political volatility, stemming from a democratic transition, endemic patterns of instability, or some other source, causes such uncertainty that the system changes in structure and components before it has been in place for two election cycles, then this change cannot be properly treated as collapse because the system was not remotely stable at the outset. Instances of transformation and decay that do

not satisfy this requirement, whether as a result of a recent regime transition when system dynamics and major parties are in flux or due to ongoing volatility that prevents any stable system from forming, do not satisfy the concept of collapse. The complete operational definition of collapse can thus be stated as follows: *Collapse occurs when an established party system transforms from one major type into another at the same time that the main component parties of the old system together lose control of the legislature.*

## IDENTIFYING INSTANCES OF PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE IN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

With this definition, I identify instances of party system collapse, assessing the utility of the concept and its operationalization while also clarifying the universe of cases for analysis. I applied the definition to all democratically elected legislatures in Latin America and Western Europe from 1975 to 2005.<sup>18</sup> I examined 19 European and 18 Latin American countries—nearly 300 legislatures.<sup>19</sup> In this context and time period, there have been eight events in which a party system transformed concurrently with major party decay. Of these cases, four occurred in established systems. The cases that fully satisfy the definition of collapse are detailed in table 2.3. They are Bolivia (2005), Colombia (2002), Italy (1994), and Venezuela (1998). Instances in which a system transformed and its parties decayed but the system was not intact for at least two complete election cycles include Brazil (1990), Guatemala (2003), Paraguay (1993), and Peru (1990). These cases of decay and transformation in less established party systems are detailed in table 2.4.

18. I focused on Europe and Latin America because the party literature on these regions is more developed, which facilitated case selection and analysis. Also, as the history of democracy is limited in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, leaving them out is unlikely to have excluded many suitable cases. Democratic elections are those held when the Polity IV score was seven or higher (Marshall and Jaggers 2009). For countries that had authoritarian regimes over the past thirty years, I consider only the democratic period since the most recent transition.

19. The European countries are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Latin American countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The data for Europe were compiled from the *European Journal of Political Research*. The data for Latin America through the mid-1990s were taken from Payne et al. (2002). The most recent Latin American data were compiled by the author from individual countries' electoral tribunal and legislative websites and the Political Database of the Americas. Information on party splits, mergers, and name changes was compiled from various country-specific sources. Party divisions or mergers do not constitute decay of the parties involved.

**Table 2.3** Collapse of established European and Latin American party systems, 1975–2005

| Country   | Date      | Transformation  | Major party decay   |
|-----------|-----------|---|---|
| Bolivia   | 2005      | Transformed from a moderate multiparty to a 2.5-party system in 2005.   | The major parties of the old system were the center-right Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), the right-wing Democratic and National Action (ADN), and the center-left Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). Following the 2002 elections, these parties barely held on to a majority in the lower house, and in 2005 their support dropped precipitously. Even including the new electoral movements spawned out of the old parties, the traditional political elite retained only 44 percent of seats (without the “new” movements, 5 percent). |
| Colombia  | 1998–2002 | Transformed from 2.5 parties to an extended multiparty system over 1998–2002.   | The major parties of the old system, Liberals and Conservatives, lost control of both houses of Congress in 2002. Their decline continued in subsequent elections.  |
| Italy     | 1992–94   | Transformed from a moderate to extended multiparty system over 1992–94  | The dominant Christian Democratic party (DC) won only 11 percent of the vote in 1994 under its new name, the Italian People’s Party (PPI). The Communist Party (PCI) split in two in 1992, and its remnants, the Refounded Communists (RC) and the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), received only 23 percent of seats in Parliament in 1994. Even the Socialist Party (PSI), which typically held about 10 percent of seats and was an important DC coalition partner, dropped to 2 percent of seats in 1994 and disappeared completely in 1996.         |
| Venezuela | 1993–98   | Transformed from 2.5 parties to a moderate multiparty system in 1993 and then to an extended multiparty system in 1998. | In 1998, the two major parties of the traditional system, Acción Democrática (AD) and COPEI, decayed and no longer held a majority of seats in Congress. Hugo Chávez’s Movimiento Quinta República (MVR) emerged as the main challenger.  |

Note: Only democratic elections, when a country’s Polity IV score is seven or higher (Marshall and Jaggers 2009), are included.

Source: Author’s calculations based on data from Payne et al. (2002), *European Journal of Political Research*, Consejo Nacional Electoral (Venezuela), Corte Nacional Electoral (Bolivia), and Political Database of the Americas.

**Table 2.4** Transformation and major party decay in less established party systems, 1975–2005

| Country   | Date | Transformation  | Major party decay   |
|-----------|------|---|---|
| Brazil    | 1990 | The transitional 2.5-party system shifted toward an extended multiparty system in 1990.                     | In the 1986 elections, the two major parties of the 2.5-party system were the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB) and a break-off group from the Partido Social Democrático (PDS)—the Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL). After the 1990 elections, these two parties held only 38 percent of seats in the lower house.   |
| Guatemala | 2003 | Transformed from a 2.5-party system to a moderate multiparty system.  | The two major parties of the 2.5-party system, the Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN) and Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG), together controlled only 37 percent of seats after the 2003 elections. They gave way to Unión Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE) and a coalition of the Partido Patriota (PP), Movimiento Reformador (MR), and Partido Solidaridad Nacional (PSN).   |
| Paraguay  | 1993 | Transformed from a predominant party to a 2.5-party system in 1993.   | The dominant Asociación Nacional Republicana (Colorados) lost control of both houses of Congress in 1993 with the increasing electoral strength of the Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA).  |
| Peru      | 1990 | In the post-transition period, transformed from a 2.5-party system to a moderate multiparty system in 1990. | APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana was clearly a major party in the 2.5-party system. The second major party in the first five years was Acción Popular (AP), but Izquierda Unida (IU) took over as the second major party in the second half of the decade. After the 1990 election, APRA and IU held only about 38 percent of seats in the lower house of Congress. |

Note: Only democratic elections, when a country's Polity IV score is seven or higher (Marshall and Jaggers 2009), are included.

Source: Author's calculations based on data from Payne et al. (2002), *European Journal of Political Research*, and Tribunal Supremo Electoral (Guatemala).

Distinguishing transformation and decay in established versus more transitory systems facilitates theoretical and empirical clarity. The causal processes that produce party system collapse in established systems are more likely to share common patterns and are therefore more suited for developing and assessing theoretically motivated explanations. Given the early stages of theoretical development concerning party system collapse, I focus my analytical efforts on the set of cases that satisfy all elements of the concept of collapse: simultaneous transformation of and major party decay in an established party system. Therefore, the potential cases for analysis are the collapses of established party systems in Bolivia, Colombia, Italy, and Venezuela. Theoretical explanations of collapse in these cases may also illuminate the processes underlying transformation in cases that meet some but not all the criteria for collapse, but I reserve efforts to extend the scope of the analysis for future research.<sup>20</sup>

#### RESEARCH DESIGN FOR EXPLAINING PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE

To explain why some party systems collapse while others avert failure, I conduct an in-depth examination of one case, as well as cross-national comparisons of collapse versus survival. Part 2 of the book presents a detailed analysis of a critical case, Venezuela, the selection of which I discuss below. Then, in part 3, I compare Venezuela and other collapse cases with instances in which party systems survived despite serious challenges. Given the nature of the collapse phenomenon and the state of the existing literature on collapse, in-depth case analysis is particularly suitable, as it enriches our theoretical understanding of the factors that cause the rare and complex process of collapse. At the same time, by testing the applicability of the theory in several cases, I strengthen the argument, demonstrating the power and generalizability of the explanation.

Identifying the incidences of collapse in Latin America and Europe over the past thirty years indicates that it is a relatively rare event. But in each case, the party system's collapse was momentous, shaping the nature and stability of democratic politics. Because party system collapse is a significant,

20. Research on momentous processes like party system collapse often necessitates restricting the analytical scope to cases most likely to yield theoretical insight. Once causal processes have been assessed based on these cases, then it is possible to extend the analysis (George and Bennett 2005; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003).

large-scale event, it is unlikely to be the result of a simple process (Eckstein 1975, 80). Rather, when an entire system gives way, a number of factors jointly precipitate collapse. In-depth case analysis is well suited to parse out the multiple and conjunctural causation likely to characterize collapse processes (Ragin 1987; Tilly 1997).

Additionally, as I discuss further in chapter 3, theoretical advancements in understanding party system collapse have been limited. Most of the hypotheses that can be set forth to explain collapse must be either extended indirectly from the literatures on party dynamics and on party system structure or drawn from more descriptive accounts of individual collapse cases. In-depth case analysis facilitates the development and deepening of theories in research areas that are not yet highly sophisticated, enabling clear specification and testing of hypotheses and identification of causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005).

Parts of the case analysis, most notably the statistical analysis of public opinion data in chapter 8 and the content analysis of legislation and news coverage in chapter 5, employ quantitative techniques and follow the oft-repeated recommendation of increasing the number of observations in order to engage in hypothesis testing (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994).<sup>21</sup> Although collapse is rare, it is possible to creatively expand relevant data within collapse cases and apply quantitative analysis to assess portions of the theoretical argument. Applying large-*N* techniques within a comprehensive case study and pairing them with qualitative analyses of interviews, news reports, and archival data, as well as cross-national comparisons, permits me to draw theoretical expectations from existing literature, further develop these ideas by examining the causal process in a critical case, and then test the hypotheses with numerous new observations from various data sources.

The comparative analysis in part 3 allows me to assess the applicability of the theory beyond the original case, extending the test to other contexts and different data. I analyze the other established party systems that experienced collapse—Bolivia, Colombia, and Italy—testing the theoretical argument across these diverse systems. By analyzing all four collapses, I consider each relevant case and am able to assess the extent to which the explanation accounts for every instance of the phenomenon (Ragin 1987). Furthermore, as I elaborate in chapter 9, the four collapse cases have important differences with regard to several potential explanatory factors, including electoral rules,

21. The universe of cases of collapse identified here is only four, making statistical analysis at the macro-process level difficult. But I expand the *N* by engaging in more micro-level analyses that test observable implications of macro-level theories.

type of government, and party system features, which casts doubt on these variables as alternative explanations (Przeworski and Teune 1970).

In addition to examining each relevant case of collapse, the comparative analysis also considers four relevant negative cases—instances in which collapse did not occur but seemed possible (Mahoney and Goertz 2004). I evaluate cases of survival in which systems confronted challenges similar to those that contributed to collapse elsewhere. These cases are Argentina, Belgium, India, and Uruguay. I pair each case of survival with one collapse case, matching them on key characteristics, including party and party system features, linkage profiles, and challenges faced. Analyzing negative cases strengthens the theoretical argument, demonstrating the importance of each aspect of the causal process and emphasizing how specific conjunctions of causes lead to collapse. This comparison also enables consideration of strategies for promoting system survival.

#### SELECTION OF A CRUCIAL CASE

Employing a research strategy that incorporates in-depth analysis of causal processes as one important component makes case selection important. Specifying instances of collapse, as I have done in table 2.3, isolates cases of the phenomenon and allows selection of the case that provides the greatest leverage on my explanation of collapse (Eckstein 1975; George and Bennett 2005). The rest of this chapter details the rationale for focusing the detailed analysis on Venezuela's party system collapse.

The decay of the once well-established and widely respected party system in Venezuela provides a particularly interesting opportunity for analysis. In part, the suitability of the Venezuelan case stems from its status as a least-likely case for the theory of collapse that I seek to test. Analysis of a least-likely case provides a particularly tough test of the proposed theory. A theory that is substantiated by evidence from a case in which it is least likely to be true has found strong validation (George and Bennett 2005), and the more crucial the case, the easier it is to draw strong theoretical inferences from the analysis (Eckstein 1975, 127).

In essence, my theory argues that the failure of the party system to provide linkage between society and the state causes collapse. Core challenges to linkage and constraints that limit party system capacity to confront these threats undermine linkage, and without linkage the system fails. I flesh out this argument and the nuances of the causal process that produces collapse

thoroughly in the next chapter. For our purposes here, demonstrating that linkage failure was unlikely to have been the cause of Venezuelan collapse positions Venezuela as a least-likely case for the theory posited here and strengthens the theoretical implications of the analysis that follows.<sup>22</sup>

Several features of Venezuela and its party system make it a particularly demanding test for the theory that bankrupt representation produces collapse. First of all, the level of institutionalization in the Venezuelan party system suggests that linkage failure would have been unlikely. Certain types of party systems are advantageous for representation (Diamond, Hartlyn, and Linz 1999), and leading scholars have argued that institutionalized systems are particularly effective because they offer benefits such as stability, governability, and accountability (Mainwaring and Scully 1995a). A strong party system with institutionalized and popularly supported parties is vital for the “institutional resilience of democracy” and “long-term consolidation of broad-based representative government” (Dix 1992, 489). Institutionalized systems have strong ties to society, and parties in these systems are viewed as legitimate and have stable and meaningful organizational structures. These factors should work to promote programmatic responsiveness as well as interest representation for major groups in society, leading to the expectation that an institutionalized party system would provide strong linkage.

The old Venezuelan party system was widely recognized during the golden years of the 1970s and 1980s as highly institutionalized (Kornblith and Levine 1995). The two main parties, AD and COPEI, and the system they formed were perceived as pivotal in the establishment and endurance of Venezuelan democracy, even as nearby countries succumbed to authoritarianism (Karl 1986; Kornblith and Levine 1995). The parties had close ties with important social groups, including unions, peasant organizations, and business associations. Party members constituted an unusually high portion of the population—more than any other country in the world (Coppedge 1994a, 30). The level of institutionalization in the system, with its stability, longevity, meaningful elections, and close ties to society, makes linkage failure an unlikely cause of this system’s collapse.

Institutionalization was stronger in Venezuela than in the other cases of collapse, making the other countries more vulnerable to linkage failure and

22. Cases that are not least likely for a theory can also provide considerable theoretical insight, particularly when paired with in-depth process tracing or compared to other cases, as I do here. Therefore, the significance of the insights from the Venezuelan analysis does not hinge entirely on its status as a least-likely case, but this status does serve to further enhance the theoretical impact of the analysis.



positioning Venezuela as a least-likely case. The Italian party system had some elements of institutionalization, such as legitimacy and low electoral volatility. But stagnant governing coalitions led to ideological uncertainty and undermined the parties' roots in society (Farneti 1983). In Colombia, the old party system possessed some elements of institutionalization, like stability in interparty competition, but fell short of Venezuelan levels because of factors like organizational incapacity and lack of party discipline (Archer 1995; Boudon 2000; Pizarro Leongómez 2006). In the case of Bolivia, scholars generally agreed that the party system was not at all institutionalized (Gamarra and Malloy 1995).<sup>23</sup> Mainwaring and Scully classified the system as inchoate, languishing among other historically weak party systems, like those in Ecuador and Brazil (1995a, 17).

Another feature that makes it unlikely that linkage failure caused collapse in the Venezuelan context is the multifaceted nature of the parties' ties to society. Although the parties' linkage capacity ultimately failed, at its peak the party system employed a diverse and successful linkage profile. Some voters were attracted to the parties through policy-based appeals, others through ideological affinity, some through membership in well-integrated sectors of society, and still others through direct, material appeals.<sup>24</sup> This complex, multilayered portfolio allowed the parties to reach different sectors of society with successfully targeted appeals, thus attracting broad and stable support.

In essence, we would not expect the Venezuelan system to collapse as a result of failed linkage. Venezuela's party system was highly institutionalized. The system's major component parties did not rely exclusively on non-programmatic linkages but also made programmatic and interest-based appeals. Although Venezuela was clearly not perfect before the system collapsed, the nature of the party system and the linkage options it provided make it an unlikely context for bankrupt representation to have caused collapse. Venezuelan party system collapse, therefore, presents an excellent opportunity to test the theory that linkage failure causes collapse because it serves as a particularly challenging case.

Other considerations also make Venezuela's collapse an appealing focus for analysis. Venezuela's party system decay marked a precipitous and surprising decline from a highly institutionalized party system in a prosperous polity to a failed system in a tenuous democracy. Although some scholars

23. However, see Mayorga (2005) for a divergent view.

24. See chapter 4 for a full discussion of the linkage strategies at the height of the traditional Venezuelan system.

observed cracks in the system and expected change or slow decay (Coppedge 1994a; Karl 1986; Myers and Martz 1986), complete collapse was largely unanticipated and caught many observers off guard. Venezuela, then, presents a puzzle: Why did unexpected, dramatic decay occur in what seemed to be a felicitous context for survival? Additionally, the traumatic failure of the Venezuelan party system had profound consequences, including the absence of institutionalized parties and the rise of Hugo Chávez—a personalist leader with increasingly questionable democratic commitments. These processes heighten theoretical and empirical interest in the case and create pressing implications for understanding its dynamics. The next chapter turns to the task of developing a theory that explains why collapse has occurred, in Venezuela and in other contexts.

## THEORIZING COLLAPSE: CHALLENGES, CONSTRAINTS, AND DECAYING LINKAGE

Parties in Latin America have not thus far responded to the challenges of representing the interests of citizens being discarded by decaying networks of representation.

—Frances Hagopian, “Democracy and Political Representation in Latin America in the 1990s”

The central task of parties and party systems is to provide linkage between society and the state. Parties that fail at this essential undertaking lose their reason for existence and become empty vessels without a base of support. If an entire party system is unable to provide sufficient linkage, it will collapse. Challenges to linkage, stemming from crises, social change, and political reform, threaten the system, while contextual constraints limit capacity for response. When challenges outstrip the system’s ability to cope, linkage fails and the party system with it. This chapter elaborates how demands and constraints cause the linkage failure that produces collapse.

### LINKAGE: THE TASK OF PARTY SYSTEMS

Research on parties and party systems repeatedly emphasizes that parties in democratic societies exist to serve as intermediaries between society and the state. Linkage provision is central for party and system survival, and linkage failure is pivotal in the theory of system collapse that I elaborate. By linkage, I refer to the various means by which parties connect society and the state—the strategies employed by political actors and people to exchange support and influence (Barr 2009, 34; Lawson 1980).<sup>1</sup>

1. I opt for the linkage terminology because it carries less conceptual baggage than the more common term “representation.” While the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably,

Successful links between society and the state take varied forms (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Lawson 1980; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007; Stokes 2005). Although programmatic ties are generally regarded as the most prized form of linkage because of the representational quality and electoral stability that tend to accompany them (Luna and Zechmeister 2005; Lyne 2008; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006; Mishler and Hildreth 1984), other linkages may also provide connections between society and the state (Kitschelt 2000; Levitsky 2007). The literature suggests three basic types of linkage: programmatic representation (J. Aldrich 1995; Budge et al. 2001; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Sartori [1976] 2005), interest incorporation (Collier 1995; Crisp 2000; K. Roberts 2002a; Schmitter and Lehmbruch 1979), and clientelism (Auyero 2000; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Calvo and Murrillo 2004).

These linkage types range from universal policy appeals to excludable goods directly exchanged for votes (Kitschelt 2000; Luna n.d.). Programmatic linkages are the unconditional offerings parties extend to voters through ideological commitments or policy responsiveness (Kitschelt et al. 1999; K. Roberts 2002a). Clientelism, on the other hand, entails conditional exchanges in which support is traded for excludable incentives (Kitschelt 2000; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007, 182; Piattoni 2001a). Incorporation, which may follow pluralist or corporatist patterns, normally involves integration of major societal interests by extending group-oriented benefits or identity-based appeals that attract support from specific sectors (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a).

The primary factor distinguishing the different linkage types is the level of conditionality attached to the benefits that the parties offer.<sup>2</sup> Programmatic links provide indirect, unconditional benefits that are available to all or most people in society, regardless of who they support at the polls

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representation carries positive normative connotations associated with accountability and responsiveness (Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Pizarro Leongómez 2006; O'Donnell 1999; Pitkin 1967), and scholars often reserve the term for those links considered supportive of liberal democratic ideals, most notably programmatic linkage (Eulau and Prewitt 1973; K. Roberts 2002a). Less frequently, representation is also applied to group-based linkages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; K. Roberts 2002a). The term "linkage," on the other hand, is more neutral, facilitating its generic application to diverse types of state-society ties (see, for example, Kitschelt 2000; Lawson 1988; Levitsky 2003a; Lyne 2007; K. Roberts 2002a). I use "linkage" to refer to all strategies for connecting society and the state, reserving the term "representation" for programmatic ties only. For variety, I also use the terms "appeals" and "ties" interchangeably with linkage.

2. The linkage types may also be distinguished based on the nature of the beneficiaries, with programmatic appeals being universal in nature, incorporation being group based, and clientelism targeting individuals or families.

(Kitschelt 2000; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007). Clientelism entails direct, conditional exchanges that offer excludable benefits in return for party support (Medina and Stokes 2007; Stokes 2005). Incorporation falls between clientelism and programmatic linkage in the level of conditionality in the relationship. Incorporating ties restrict benefits to those aligned with a particular social group or interest and are, therefore, somewhat conditional. But parties that use these encapsulating linkage strategies (K. Roberts 2002a) cannot control benefit distribution within the targeted group, making incorporation a less direct and less conditional linkage form than clientelism (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007).

Incorporation may include tactics associated with clientelism, like distributing material benefits based on membership in a targeted group. It may also involve strategies associated with programmatic links—for instance, policies aimed at helping certain sectors, such as labor laws that only protect unionized workers. In this way, targeted programs or clientelist exchanges may be designed to appeal to specific groups, thereby bolstering interest incorporation. The literature refers to these kinds of targeted programmatic appeals and group-based clientelist benefits as club goods (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a, 11–12; Kitschelt et al. 2010).

But incorporation goes beyond just employing programmatic or clientelist strategies to attract core constituencies. Incorporation is distinct from these other linkage types in terms of the level of conditionality as well as the nature of the target. Furthermore, while incorporating important societal interests may be partly achieved by implementing policies designed to benefit certain constituencies or by distributing material benefits based on group membership, other strategies for accomplishing incorporation are not captured within the dichotomy of programmatic and clientelist linkages. Tactics such as fostering the formation of organizations designed to promote specific interests, reserving spaces on party lists for representatives of targeted social groups, providing certain sectors guaranteed seats on party governing boards, allowing groups to shape administrative rule making in particularly relevant arenas, or protecting special channels of access for important interests may all be important elements of interest incorporation. However, these and many other strategies that aim to build linkage around group identities and interests are not captured empirically or conceptually by our typical understandings of programmatic and clientelist linkage. Rather, these incorporating strategies achieve linkage by creating organizational ties or identity-based appeals that involve neither the policy promises associated

with programmatic appeals nor the material exchanges associated with clientelism. So while interest incorporation overlaps somewhat with other linkage strategies in terms of certain tactics, all facets of group-based linkage cannot be subsumed under these two categories. Treating incorporation as a third type of linkage is therefore conceptually sound and empirically sensible. Furthermore, by considering incorporation as well as programmatic appeals and clientelism, we are able to construct more complete pictures of systems' linkage practices.<sup>3</sup>

Each of these linkage types provides something substantive to supporters, whether it is unconditional ideological appeals or policies such as better policing, guaranteed representation for core constituencies in party leadership, or direct clientelism like jobs or food. Using these strategies, parties fulfill their task of linking society to the state. How parties and systems combine programmatic, incorporating, and clientelist strategies in pursuit of support from different segments of the electorate constitutes a system's linkage portfolio or profile (Luna n.d.; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007).<sup>4</sup>

3. Also, as we will see below, including all three types is important for understanding how complete linkage failure occurs because by using this conceptualization of linkage, the theory and empirical analysis are able to explain the deterioration of programmatic appeals based on ideology or universal policies, the declining linkage capacity of appeals to core constituencies, and the decay of clientelism, which are each crucial elements of linkage failure.

4. While some scholars also consider charisma to be a form of linkage (Kitschelt 2000; K. Roberts 2002a), others explicitly exclude charisma (Barr 2009). In my view, charisma plays a role in *enhancing* a sense of connection between people and government, but unlike the three types of linkage outlined here, it is not rooted in substance or strategic exchange but rather draws support based on rhetoric and emotion. Charismatic leadership, when operating within a party system, may strengthen the bonds formed by policy offerings, incorporation, and clientelism. However, without some substance to linkage, charisma does not strengthen party ties but only builds personal followings that compete with party organizations (Knight 1998; Weber 1978). Charisma fluctuates over time with leaders' rise and fall. Even individual leaders themselves may find that their ability to use charisma varies with the success of their substantive linkage efforts. Think, for example, of how Carlos Andrés Pérez's charisma fluctuated. It was very high in his first term and second campaign, but then became extremely low during his second term as he championed unpopular economic policies. Without some substantive appeal, charisma loses its power, and it explains little about systematic factors that underlie system change (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a). To understand the processes of linkage failure and collapse, I focus on substantive linkage as composed of programmatic appeals, incorporation, and/or clientelism. Charisma remains outside the analytical framework. There is precedent for treating charisma as unique and transitory, tending to operate outside the party system. Some of the literature on populism treats charisma as being in direct competition with or serving as a temporary replacement for substantive linkage (Knight 1998; K. Roberts 1995). Others go further, treating charisma as an anomaly that necessarily lies outside systematic analyses of linkage (Kitschelt 2000; Müller 2007). Both views acknowledge the need to exclude charisma from a central role in systematic analyses of party systems. I view charisma as having the potential to multiply the draw of other linkage forms but unable to generate ties by itself. Charisma cannot substitute for substantive linkage.

Linkage portfolios take many forms. Each party system possesses a different linkage structure, depending on the tactics of its component parties and the interactions between parties in the system. The purest portfolios are found in systems that rely on one linkage type. In an important theoretical work on linkage, Kitschelt (2000) even argues that it is difficult for a party to pursue multiple linkage strategies simultaneously. Specifically, he contends that there is a trade-off between programmatic and clientelist appeals, such that provision of one type necessarily undermines capacity to deliver the other. But other authors have shown that in practice parties often minimize the theoretical trade-offs between linkage types and pursue a diverse portfolio (Levitsky 2003b; Luna n.d.; Piattoni 2001a; Stokes 2005).<sup>5</sup> Parties appeal to different constituencies with distinct forms of linkage, making mixed strategies theoretically possible and empirically desirable, particularly in countries with high inequality or at intermediate stages of development (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Coppedge 2001; Levitsky 2007; Luna n.d.). In this context, parties may employ a complex linkage portfolio, appealing to wealthier or more educated voters with programmatic appeals while attracting the working class with club goods and the poor with clientelism. However, at the extreme, excessive reliance on clientelism might make policy-based appeals ring hollow, particularly among voters who would prefer meaningful programmatic solutions and view clientelism as part of a corrupt system that gets in the way of these goals. But such contradictions are only likely to surface as a serious problem when linkage is already decaying and programmatic demands are going unmet at the same time that the parties' clientelist networks are under stress.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to individual parties pursuing mixed strategies, different parties in the system may employ distinct tactics, with some extending broad programmatic appeals while others rely on incorporating core constituencies or offering conditional material exchanges. Interactions between parties also shape the linkage profile of the entire system. For instance, programmatic linkage is frequently achieved when various parties in the system advocate distinct ideologies, thereby offering a range of policy visions that provide meaningful options to voters. Moreover, when different parties advocate on behalf of groups representing opposing sides of a salient social cleavage, together these parties provide linkage via interest incorporation to

5. Kitschelt himself implies as much in later work (see Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007b).

6. I flesh out the ramifications of this potential negative feedback in my discussion of clientelism below. I credit an anonymous reviewer for the Pennsylvania State University Press with highlighting this point.

wide swaths of society on both sides of the divide. The ways in which individual parties build support and the interactions among parties that generate state-society ties together shape a party system's overall linkage profile.

## CHALLENGES TO AND CONSTRAINTS ON LINKAGE MAINTENANCE

Because a party system's primary function is to provide linkage, failure to fulfill this task raises doubts about the system's effectiveness and foments pressure for change. Studies of individual party change (J. Aldrich 1995; Kitschelt 1994; Levitsky 2001b; Panebianco 1988a; Rose and Mackie 1988) and analyses of system-level change (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Lawson 1988; Mair 1997) suggest that for parties and party systems to survive, they must provide linkage. When demands on the system remain relatively constant, sustaining linkage is easy. But all systems eventually face threats to linkage. Responding to these challenges and sustaining adequate linkage enables a system to survive, while failure to adapt lets linkage atrophy, making the parties and the system vulnerable to decay (Lawson 1988).

The importance of adaptation in the face of challenges to linkage is a significant and persistent theme in research seeking to explain continuity and change in parties and party systems (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Panebianco 1988b). Party systems frequently face shifting demands. Typically, when confronted with such challenges, existing parties will respond and channel them into the system, perhaps requiring some adjustments but not demanding dramatic adaptive efforts. These are common, system-maintaining changes. But sometimes, representational challenges require more, necessitating a restructuring of the system—that is, transformation. At the extreme, if challenges test the existing system's capacity to respond, unmet linkage demands may cause the entire system to buckle under the strain. Why are some parties able to adapt to address changing pressures for linkage single-handedly, while in other cases linkage demands require system transformation? Why, in a few rare cases, is adaptation inadequate, abandoned, or never pursued, undermining the entire system as it fails to sustain linkage?

To answer these questions, studies of party system continuity and change typically either emphasize sociostructural changes that threaten to undermine linkage or focus on constraints that limit party or system adaptation. Research that examines the demand side of linkage argues that party



systems change because the pressures on the system shift. These studies emphasize threats to linkage as the primary motivator for change and focus their explanations on sociostructural factors such as economic challenges or social transformations, which demand adaptation or innovation for linkage to persist (Degregori and Grompone 1991; Hagopian 1998; Kenney 2000; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Morlino 1996; K. Roberts 2002a).

In the Venezuelan context, many scholars have pointed to structural factors and the challenges they posed as essential to understanding the crisis generally and party system collapse specifically. According to a common line of thinking in this literature, the threat posed by the country's severe economic crisis in the late 1980s and 1990s was too great for the parties to overcome—economic decline exposed the parties to increasing public frustration, which produced disenchantment with the entire party system and led to its collapse (see, for example, Borges Arcila 1996; Molina and Pérez 1998). Karl's (1997) work on the politics of petro-states follows a similar vein but specifies a more nuanced causal logic in which the structures and incentives stemming from the oil economy are pivotal in explaining Venezuelan politics. Although her work does not specifically tackle the issue of party system collapse, Karl's claim that the peculiar nature of the petro-state caused government and its clients to become addicted to oil rents suggests that linkages between society and the state were tenuous and highly susceptible to economic misfortune. Because the parties used petroleum income to distribute benefits and appease competing constituencies, sustained downturns in oil prices, like those endured from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, arguably made satisfying these interests unsustainable and triggered threats to linkage. Karl's argument therefore points to structural changes, particularly those related to shifts in the oil economy, as posing serious challenges to the party system.

Kenneth Roberts (2003a, 2003b, n.d.) also suggests that economic changes were important in the decay of traditional patterns of representation. However, his emphasis is not on the economy per se but rather on the social restructuring that occurred in the aftermath of economic crisis and neoliberalism. Roberts (2003a) argues that the Venezuelan economic crisis undermined the formal sector and increased informality and unemployment, which challenged traditional linkage patterns and opened the door to Chávez's populist appeals. In this articulation of the structural argument, economic crisis undermined linkage indirectly by eroding established linkage strategies and by demanding that the parties accommodate new and competing interests.

These sociostructural analyses emphasize challenges to linkage by underlining the major threats posed by crisis and societal restructuring. The literature on Venezuela that favors structural explanations provides insight that clarifies why it was imperative for the party system to adapt and adjust its linkage strategies in order to sustain ties between society and the state. But although these arguments explain why sweeping and exhaustive revisioning of linkage was necessary, they do not account for the parties' inability to respond appropriately to these challenges, nor do they explain the absence of system-level changes that could have refreshed linkage to avert collapse. These studies illuminate the severity of the threat facing the party system, but we must look elsewhere to decipher why the reaction to these threats fell short.

Assessing the capacity of a party system to meet the challenges posed by linkage threats is the strength of the second major strand of research on party system dynamics, which emphasizes factors that limit or aid adaptation. Prominent in this literature are explanations that stress how institutional patterns and organizational features facilitate or impede the adjustments necessary for linkage maintenance (Levitsky 2007; Mair 1997; Pasquino 1997; Tanaka 2005). For instance, in his account of Peru's party system decay and attendant crisis of democracy, Tanaka (1998, 2005) rejects structural explanations related to economic crisis and the growth of informality. Instead, he argues that intraparty factionalism and the run-off system for presidential elections caused the traditional parties to make grave mistakes, which opened the door for Alberto Fujimori's rise to power (2005, 270–71). Other studies of party system change that accentuate constraints on adaptation point to international institutions or commitments, like treaties or IMF agreements, as confining parties' flexibility in their linkage maintenance efforts (Barr 2005; Bohrer and Tan 2000; Carter 1998).

Some scholarship on Venezuela follows this emphasis on constraints, pointing to institutional or international factors as central in accounting for the parties' lack of response to the mounting crisis of representation. For example, in drawing comparisons between Argentina's Peronists (PJ) and other labor-based parties, like Venezuela's AD, Levitsky and Burgess argue that organizational flexibility enabled populist parties like the PJ to adapt while the institutional routinization of AD constrained its ability to adjust and maintain linkage (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Levitsky 2001b, 2003b). Coppedge (1994a) also accentuates party organizational features in explaining decaying party and democratic legitimacy, arguing that AD's hierarchical structure coupled with presidentialism created rigidity, which undermined

the quality of democracy.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Crisp (1996, 2000) stresses institutional features in explaining Venezuela's economic and political crisis. He emphasizes a restricted policy-making process that privileged traditional interests while limiting flexibility, which presumably undermined linkage. But Crisp also acknowledges that Venezuela's political crisis can only be understood fully if the challenges posed by the economic downturn are also taken into account.

The general argument of this approach, regardless of the specific institutions emphasized, is that the rigid nature of Venezuelan institutions made adaptation difficult. Why these institutional features became liabilities when they did and how they led to party system collapse are issues that remain undeveloped in most of these analyses.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, while Venezuela's institutional framework was inflexible, other countries with more malleable institutions, like Bolivia, also experienced system collapse. Understanding institutional constraints offers insight into the way parties (fail to) respond to pressures for linkage, but cannot explain the source of these pressures.

Much of the existing research on Venezuelan party system dynamics, as well as political party and party system change in other contexts, focuses on either challenges to linkage or constraints on adaptation, with the first type favoring sociostructural variables and the second stressing institutional and international factors. Rather than privileging one set of factors over the other, I join the two perspectives, deploying the strengths of each to gain insight into the aspects of collapse that each is best suited to explain. Analyzing challenges to party system survival, like economic crisis and social change, suggests why linkage is placed at risk and when adaptation is imperative. Exploring how constraints, like organizational patterns or international commitments, limit adaptation or create incentives for seemingly poor choices helps us understand why maintaining linkage in the face of these challenges is sometimes unattainable.

Some previous studies of party and system change have employed a similar analytical lens that considers challenges and constraints. In explaining individual party change, Panebianco (1988b), Aldrich (1995), and Kitschelt (1994) all argue that parties change when external pressures produce a crisis, which results in a mismatch between a party's organization and its

7. Coppedge's work was written well before the system's collapse. He was concerned with the general process of decaying support for the parties and the political system, as opposed to the specific collapse outcome.

8. None of the institutional analyses in the preceding paragraph specifically sets out to explain collapse.

goals. If the old structure is inadequate and not amenable to appropriate adaptation and if associated elites do not address the crisis, they are discredited and replaced—theorizing, in essence, that crisis and an inability to respond together produce changes within parties (Panebianco 1988b). Coppedge (2001) follows a similar synthesized logic in his work on Latin American party system evolution. He contends that the nature of demands, the extent of accommodation these pressures require, and the structural and institutional constraints parties face shape how systems change. The logic of this general argument is that party system change is shaped by challenges that require adaptation and by constraints on parties' responses to these demands.

However, these studies are primarily concerned with explaining change, not collapse. Aldrich, Kitschelt, and Panebianco analyze party change, and Coppedge examines the death or survival of individual parties. None of them offers an argument to explain total system failure. Here I follow this basic framework, exploring the nexus between structural challenges and contextual constraints, but extend it to the system level, detailing the processes by which individual parties' failures aggregate to yield linkage decay in an entire system, causing collapse. For the survival of an entire system to be at risk, serious threats from structural changes must undermine the primary linkage tactic(s) employed, and the parties as well as the system must be constrained such that appropriate adaptation is not possible and linkage decays across the entire system.

Different linkage profiles are placed at risk by distinct kinds of challenges. For instance, a party that utilizes policy-based appeals to attract supporters would not necessarily be affected by changes in the size of the electorate, whereas a party dependent on clientelism would be seriously threatened by exponential growth in the number of voters, as new participants demand material exchanges for their votes (Lyne 2008). The types of structural changes that challenge a party system are contingent on the parties' linkage strategies. When escalating pressures imperil the core linkage strategies of the major parties, the need for adaptation is especially intense, because normal tactics are no longer adequate (Hannan and Carroll 1995).

As pressures on linkage mount, parties have incentives to adjust their strategies to address new demands and thereby stay in power (Downs 1957). But rational political actors encounter considerable constraints imposed by organizational inertia—entrenched patterns and interests that impede innovation (H. Aldrich 1999; Arrow 1974; Kitschelt 1994). Leaders who try to adapt face considerable risk, because it is difficult to predict future

developments and because efforts to change may not have the intended effect. These complications, combined with an organizational equilibrium in which powerful ensconced interests are threatened by reorganization, make adaptation both risky and disruptive (Hannan and Carroll 1995). Challenges that threaten parties' central linkage efforts demand considerable adaptation, which is often difficult to achieve because of contextual features that impede modifications.

When the extent of new demands or the nature of the pressure on the parties requires them to change in ways that threaten core identities or that are highly constrained, their ability to provide linkage flounders. If the system as a whole is unable to adjust its linkage strategy to accommodate pressures for representation, linkage decay may occur across the system. The process of party system collapse, therefore, entails an onslaught of new demands that challenge the system's core linkage strategies. When these foundational demands develop amid constraints that cripple the system's capacity to adapt or that produce incentives for misadaptation, the party system's response to mounting pressures is inadequate and linkage fails. When linkage fails across the entire system, collapse results. This general model of party system collapse is illustrated in fig. 3.1.

This model provides an overarching framework to explain why linkage fails and causes party system collapse. But to understand collapse fully, it is important to specify the precise kinds of challenges and constraints that cause the failure of each type of linkage in a system's portfolio. What sorts of threats challenge a system's core linkage features, demanding considerable adaptive efforts? What constraints conflict with these specific demands,

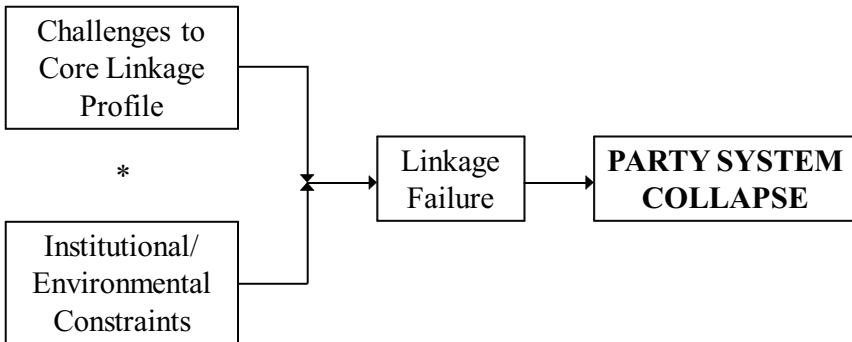


Fig. 3.1 General model of party system collapse

Note: \* stands for the logical AND. Joint arrows indicate a conjunction of necessary causes. Notation follows Goertz and Mahoney (2005).

rendering adaptation risky or infeasible? The answers to these questions will depend on a system's specific linkage profile, because different strategies are vulnerable to distinct challenges and the threat posed by those challenges is heightened by particular constraints that limit appropriate adaptation. To explore the combinations of challenges and constraints that are likely to threaten different linkage tactics, I detail the challenges expected to undermine each form of linkage and spell out the precise contextual features that limit the adaptations needed to respond to these challenges and maintain linkage. Furthermore, because I am concerned with explaining the system-level phenomenon of collapse, rather than the decay of individual parties, I focus on the mechanisms by which these factors threaten linkage maintenance across the entire system. For each strategy, I specify how linkage failure aggregates and infects all the parties, producing system-wide decay.

#### DIVERSE PORTFOLIOS: EXPLAINING WHAT CAUSES EACH LINKAGE STRATEGY TO FAIL

Because linkage failure involves the inadequacy of all forms of linkage, it is important to spell out exactly how each type decays across the entire party system. A complete model of party system collapse should specify the threats that pose particular challenges to each linkage type and detail the sorts of constraints that especially limit or undermine the adaptations necessary to address these challenges. I embark on this task below. By enumerating the process through which each linkage type fails and becomes broadly ineffective for all the major parties, I construct a general but detailed explanation of why entire systems collapse, which can be applied to different party systems according to their linkage profiles.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Programmatic Decline**

Programmatic representation, which may involve ideological appeals or valence policy responsiveness, has been traditionally regarded as a superior linkage form. Programmatic parties aggregate interests and implement

9. The following discussion focuses on challenges and constraints and how they threaten linkage across the entire party system. I do not consider explanations that only account for linkage decay in individual parties because one party's decay is not equivalent to system collapse. Instead, I focus on factors that contribute to system-level decay.

unconditional policies that seek the general interest or balance competing demands for the best aggregate outcome (J. Aldrich 1995; Lyne 2008; Piattoni 2001b). As a result, party systems that extend appeals rooted in policy or ideology are more likely to achieve what Hanna Pitkin has lauded as representation in which parties “look after the public interest and [are] responsive to public opinion” (1967, 224). Programmatic representation also promotes the development of long-standing partisan ties, which make linkage less vulnerable and promote stability (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006).

Despite their many benefits, programmatic linkages can be difficult to build and costly to maintain, and a variety of factors may weaken parties’ programmatic appeals (Grzymala-Busse 2002; Kitschelt 1994; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Stokes 2001). My primary concern here is not to explain individual parties’ programmatic shortcomings; rather, my goal is to specify how entire party *systems* lose programmatic linkage capacity. While this distinction may seem trivial, it is in fact quite significant. Given the unconditional nature of programmatic appeals, if the governing party fails to provide satisfactory policy responsiveness, other parties in the system may step in to fill the void, offering meaningful programmatic alternatives (Kitschelt et al. 2010). So the programmatic failings of one party simply provide opportunities for opposing system parties to strengthen and expand their programmatic appeals, producing ordinary ebbs and flows in support for different parties from one election to the next (Remmer 1991). Only when all the parties neglect programmatic responsiveness and none of the system parties offer meaningful alternatives to the failed status quo do we have system-level programmatic decay.

To explain this kind of system-wide decline in programmatic linkage, it is necessary to develop an explanation that demonstrates how *all* the system parties become programmatically discredited. I argue that generalized crises, which call into question the viability of a system’s established policy patterns, seriously threaten programmatic linkage. If such crises occur amid international constraints, which limit viable crisis responses to policies that conflict with the governing parties’ ideological commitments or to solutions that are unpopular, policy responsiveness decays. System-level programmatic decline results if all the parties are implicated in this failed responsiveness. The joint discrediting of all system parties occurs when programmatic differences between the parties are blurred and voters no longer view opposition parties as providing meaningful alternatives to the failed programmatic offerings of the incumbent. When the system parties are programmatically

indistinguishable from one another and their policy solutions are widely deemed to be deficient, programmatic linkage capacity decays across the entire party system.

Programmatic appeals require a party to develop an ideology and policies. Then, in the face of change, policy offerings must be adjusted to respond to new pressures while remaining consistent with established ideological legacies and entrenched patterns of policy making. If the contours of the policy arena remain constant, preserving programmatic linkage requires routine maintenance; major innovations or departures from ideological legacies are not needed. However, during crisis, sustaining programmatic linkage involves extensive ideological work and significant restructuring of policy appeals (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Kitschelt et al. 2010). Parties risk becoming programmatically irrelevant if they cannot update programmatic offerings in ways that provide relevant solutions to pressing problems while staying within their established ideology or policy-making framework.

Shocks to the policy-making arena demand that parties exert substantial effort in order to provide adequate answers, and crisis conditions therefore pose serious challenges to programmatic linkage (Borges Arcila 1996; Hagopian 1998; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Scully 1995b; Molina and Pérez 1998; Myers 1995). Profound economic or social crises, like recession, hyperinflation, or escalating violence, threaten programmatic representation for two main reasons. First, crises necessitate a policy response. Issues such as rampant crime, widespread insecurity, and deep recession cannot be ignored or outlasted. Such problems, which hurt broad swaths of society, demand a programmatic response—policy solutions that help alleviate the crisis for the many citizens affected. Second, crises frequently demand answers that go beyond ordinary policy making, challenging parties to move outside their comfort zone in search of innovative solutions for the problems at hand. In crisis circumstances, programmatic adaptation becomes both extremely important and especially difficult, requiring more drastic measures, an accelerated policy-making process, greater productivity, innovation, and more effective policy outputs.

Crisis are especially threatening to programmatic linkage when pressures for dramatic, innovative policy responses stem from the exhaustion or inherent shortcomings of an old policy model. In this context, normal policy tools become useless. For instance, if a crisis entails high unemployment, informality, and poverty, parties accustomed to following neoliberal principles, which are not focused on addressing these sorts of social problems, will be hard-pressed to resolve such issues using their ordinary repertoire of



responses. On the other hand, problems such as hyperinflation, fiscal deficits, and onerous foreign debt burdens often stem from the shortcomings of Keynesianism or import-substitution industrialization, making it particularly difficult to address these issues in contexts where such strategies have been habitually utilized. In other words, crises that threaten established policy-making patterns or call into question the viability of favored policy strategies pose especially strong challenges to programmatic linkage, because governing parties face formidable hurdles to identifying and implementing effective policy responses, which necessarily reside outside their normal repertoire. Where crises stem from the exhaustion of established programmatic models, parties are “compelled to embark on the arduous trajectory of devising new programmatic appeals . . . or quit the game of programmatic party competition altogether” (Kitschelt et al. 2010, 38–39). Thus, I argue that maintenance of programmatic linkage is seriously threatened when the party system confronts crisis conditions that call into question the viability of established ideological positions or customary policy-making patterns.

The struggle to sustain programmatic linkage in the face of these kinds of crises is exacerbated when boundaries imposed by international commitments or pressures limit policy options and constrain adaptation efforts. The demands of the global economy or the restrictions imposed by technocratic recommendations may undermine parties’ opportunities to enact responsive policies (Bohrer and Tan 2000; Mainwaring and Scully 1995b; Mair 1997). Specifically, the policy adjustments necessary to provide responses to important problems may be out of reach when the governing parties face international constraints that insist on a limited set of policies, which are either unpopular or contradict the parties’ ideological commitments.

Thus, the constraints imposed by the international context are especially strong when the party’s ideological identity or patterns of decision-making conflict with external incentives or pressures. A party’s legacy limits the range of policies it can credibly pursue, especially when its ideology or organizational patterns are well established (Coppedge 2001; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Kitschelt 1994; L. Roberts 2007). When international pressures constrain responses to those that contradict a party’s values, the party faces a lose-lose situation. It may attempt a response and thereby abandon its identity and risk alienating supporters, or it may stay true to its legacy but not address the crisis and thus frustrate people for having failed to deal with the country’s problems. Regardless of its choice, a party faced with this dilemma will experience decay in the success of its programmatic appeals. If it takes the first path, people will choose not to support the party because

of ideological inconsistencies. If it opts for the second, programmatic appeals lose their attractiveness due to unresponsiveness. In either case, programmatic linkage capacity decays. So, where the international context conflicts with ideological or policy-making legacies, the adaptation needed to sustain successful programmatic appeals becomes extremely difficult.

This dynamic played out among Latin American left parties in the 1980s, which were particularly ill-suited to handle the inflationary crisis that confronted the region because the policy response prescribed by international financial institutions directly contradicted these parties' ideologies (Coppedge 2001, 174). In countries where left parties followed neoliberal prescriptions, they violated their ideological legacies, saw programmatic capacity decline, and increased their reliance on other forms of linkage (Levitsky 2001b; Morgan 2007). Alternatively, where left governments attempted to reject neoliberalism, they faced severe retribution for failing to act and not alleviating the crisis (Cotler 1995; K. Roberts 1995).

When crisis conditions demand a policy response but international constraints conflict with party legacies, successful adaptation seems out of reach, as parties in government confront strong impediments to providing a solution to the crisis. Of course, decay in the valence policy responsiveness offered by the party/parties in power does not directly translate into the programmatic failure of the whole system. Only when all the system parties are implicated in this failed responsiveness is loss of programmatic linkage across the entire system likely. Therefore, aggregating the logic of programmatic decay to the system level requires specifying how all the parties are discredited.

System-level programmatic decay occurs when people reject the status quo and at the same time cannot find meaningful alternatives to the current state of affairs because they do not see distinctions among the policies or ideologies of any of the viable governing parties in the system.<sup>10</sup> When there are no pro-system parties offering alternatives that credibly promise to rectify the status quo of failed policy responsiveness, all the parties' policy appeals lose credibility. The absence of programmatic differentiation between parties indicates that none offers meaningful alternatives to the incumbent, and all the parties' promises to resolve the crisis ring hollow because they simply offer more of the same. Without programmatic differentiation between incumbent and opposition, all the parties are implicated in the

10. This logic does not apply to systems in which only one party employs programmatic linkage, and the loss of programmatic appeals by one party would constitute an absence of such linkage from the entire system. In such cases, party-level explanations of programmatic decay may be adequate.

failed status quo, and programmatic discrediting infects the entire system (Kitschelt et al. 2010, 45).

Such system-level discrediting is most likely to occur when interparty agreements, like grand coalition governments or pacts, include all the pro-system parties and thereby incriminate every viable governing option.<sup>11</sup> These arrangements obscure ideological differences between parties and eliminate meaningful alternatives from the system. When the parties collude in power, the programmatic and ideological distinctions between them are diluted. The policy failure of one party indicates that the others, and by extension the system, are also unable to provide programmatic representation. In this context, people transfer one party's policy failing to the other parties, and all share the blame. Interparty agreements undermine meaningful alternatives and therefore allow the contagion of programmatic decay to affect the entire system, as none of the parties are insulated from the failed response to the crisis (Borges Arcila 1996; Colazingari and Rose-Ackerman 1998).

In summary, when crisis conditions challenge established policy tactics and international constraints limit responses to those that contradict governing parties' legacies, policy responsiveness decays. If all the parties are discredited through programmatic convergence, most likely created by interparty agreements that undermine differences between the parties and eliminate meaningful alternatives to the failed status quo, programmatic linkage deteriorates across the entire system. Fig. 3.2 illustrates this programmatic decay process: a crisis of the policy model demands that the parties in power make herculean adaptations to provide a response, while international constraints in conflict with established patterns limit their ability to introduce necessary policy innovations, and interparty convergence and collaboration blur programmatic distinctions and undermine the credibility of viable pro-system alternatives, weakening the pull of programmatic appeals across the whole system.

### **Limited Interest Incorporation**

Parties may also furnish linkage by incorporating major interests, offering semi-conditional benefits to important sectors of society. As long as the

11. Loss of differentiation between the parties could also theoretically occur when all the parties pursue similar policies during a sustained crisis that remains unresolved even after party control of government changes hands (Kitschelt et al. 2010; K. Roberts 2003a). But typically, when such extended crises occur, the parties also enter into pro-system coalitions to help them weather the storm. I found no evidence of extended crises and common policies across all the major system parties where interparty agreements were not also in place.

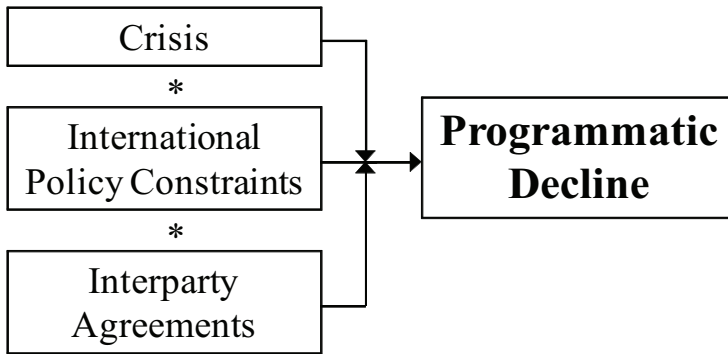


Fig. 3.2 Programmatic linkage decline

Note: \* stands for the logical AND. Joint arrows indicate a conjunction of necessary causes. Notation follows Goertz and Mahoney (2005).

structure of societal interests does not change drastically, incorporation provides a steady base of support due to the strong ties often forged between significant sectors and the parties that give them access and voice (Rose and Mackie 1988). Interest integration may take the form of corporatism in which important sectors like labor or business are granted special access. Alternatively, different groups may compete more openly in a pluralist system.<sup>12</sup> Both corporatist and pluralist systems aggregate interests and tend to involve significant sectors in policy making (Collier 1995; Piattoni 2001b; Schmitter 1974). Regardless of its precise form, incorporation affords linkage to much of society while also providing a stable base for parties.

In fact, in their classic work on party system formation and structure, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) argue that major societal interests, or cleavages, form the foundation of party systems. Although the specific details and implications of their argument have been debated, many scholars agree that the structure of salient social cleavages and their transference into the political sphere play important roles in shaping party system dynamics.<sup>13</sup> Depending on which cleavages are politically salient, parties and systems that employ interest incorporation tend to prioritize certain kinds of interests over others.

12. In practice, systems often fall between pure corporatism and pure pluralism (Collier and Collier 1979).

13. Even work that emphasizes the impact of electoral rules suggests that salient social cleavages, together with the strategic incentives of electoral institutions, determine party system structures (Cox 1997; Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994). In essence, these works argue that electoral institutions generate a limit on the number of parties in a system, but the cleavage structure determines whether the system reaches this limit.

Rarely are all potential concerns politicized as relevant cleavages. As a result, incorporation strategies frequently favor certain interests and neglect those that do not fit dominant incorporation patterns (Diamond 1999; Piattoni 2001b). For instance, where incorporation is based on class, ethnic interests may be neglected or vice versa. As long as parties tap politically significant interests and the system as a whole represents the main facets of salient social divides, then incorporation is effective in linking much of society with the state.

But because this strategy bases linkage on the structure of society and the nature of politically significant interests, incorporation faces challenges from changes in salient cleavages. If social changes simply entail shifts in the relative size of already integrated interests, then dynamics within the system may be altered, increasing the appeal of parties that represent growing interests and weakening the draw of parties that base their support on shrinking groups. But the relative waxing and waning of existing salient interests does not challenge the fundamental logic of incorporation in the system. While individual parties may be unable to sustain successful incorporation if their traditional social base declines, the entire system is unlikely to lose incorporating capacity as long as other parties already accommodate the concerns of groups on the rise. For example, if a system's incorporation strategy is based on traditional class cleavages, with one party appealing to the working class and another attracting support from white-collar professionals, then declines in the industrial sector and growth in the service sector are likely to weaken support for the worker party and increase support for the professional party. But because these changes do not challenge the logic of incorporation, while individual parties may lose ground, the entire system does not see incorporating linkages decay.

However, some social transformations threaten the very logic upon which party systems structure incorporation and therefore pose serious challenges to the maintenance of such linkage throughout the whole system (K. Roberts 2003a). Significant transformations that threaten incorporation at the system level, instead of just weakening individual parties, are manifested in two possible ways. First, realignments of societal interests around new *kinds* of concerns menace incorporation because they alter the types of group identities that are salient, demanding that all parties in the system drastically reshape how they construct incorporating appeals. For example, in a system where incorporation was historically based on functional interests, the escalating salience of an ethnic divide may wreak havoc with established patterns of integrating interests based on class. Because the system

as a whole traditionally worked to incorporate competing functional groups, the declining significance of the class cleavage and the reorientation of interests around a newly activated ethnic divide calls for all the parties to engage in dramatic restructuring of incorporation. The adaptations necessary to adjust to a shift in the nature of relevant cleavages are traumatic, requiring new types of appeals based on different identities and directed toward altered constituencies. Social transformations in which traditionally significant interests lose salience and previously inconsequential concerns take on new political relevance threaten the very structure of incorporation and expose the entire party system to linkage decay.

Second, social transformations that stem from changes in the *structure* of the dominant cleavage may also threaten incorporation at the system level. Effective incorporation strategies integrate most sectors of society but are not exhaustive in integrating every potential interest produced by the dominant cleavage. Frequently, party systems do not incorporate smaller, unorganized, or less influential groups. If these excluded interests do not constitute a significant portion of society, their omission from incorporation does not dangerously undermine linkage. However, if society changes such that previously neglected sectors grow or gain political significance, their exclusion undercuts the system's incorporating capacity. For instance, if a party system traditionally targeted interests based on the worker-owner cleavage but disregarded the concerns of a small or politically immaterial informal sector, the rapid growth of informality would require the system to reconfigure its incorporation strategy in response to mounting pressure from this group. The emergence or growth of previously neglected interests, therefore, necessitates innovation in the party system, requiring either adjustments by existing parties or the introduction of new parties in order to capture emerging demands. Each of these potential avenues for accommodating new concerns requires considerable adaptation. In the face of a restructured dominant cleavage in which previously excluded groups grow and become politically relevant, the party system must rethink how competing interests are effectively integrated.

Fundamental societal changes that threaten the party system's conventional structure of incorporation expose a significant vulnerability of this linkage strategy. If a party system does not respond to challenges posed by significant social transformations in the *kind* of salient interests or in the *structure* of the dominant cleavage, incorporation will cease to provide meaningful linkage because growing sectors of society are no longer linked through traditional incorporation mechanisms.

When confronted with dramatic social transformations that threaten existing patterns of incorporation, party systems must adapt their strategies to accommodate new or growing interests. However, there is considerable risk and uncertainty associated with investing the resources necessary to build incorporating links to new interests. Contextual factors alleviate or intensify these risks, influencing whether a party system rises to the challenge posed by social transformation or falters and allows linkage to deteriorate. In the case of incorporating linkages, the party organizational context plays a central role in shaping parties' incentives and capacity to adapt and respond to new demands stemming from changes in the type or structure of the dominant social cleavages.

A large body of literature has emphasized how organizational flexibility enhances parties' ability to adapt to pressures for linkage, while highly routinized organizations constrain party latitude in adjusting to new demands and thus have more difficulty making the adaptations needed to reach out to new kinds of interests (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Coppedge 1994a; Levitsky 2001b, 2003b). This literature would suggest that when existing patterns of incorporation are highly entrenched and the goals or organizational structures of emerging groups directly threaten the interests of already integrated sectors, the risks and challenges associated with adapting to social change are exacerbated. In this kind of organizational context, parties face especially high obstacles to adapting their incorporation strategies and run aggravated risks associated with failed efforts. Therefore, I argue that parties' capacities to respond effectively to social transformation and accommodate new interests are severely constrained when well-established structures and the entrenched interests they represent conflict with the organizational patterns and concerns of emerging sectors.

If emerging interests cannot be accommodated through existing strategies and instead demand innovation, the effort required to integrate new concerns is strenuous, involving considerable resource expenditure in exchange for uncertain outcomes (Levitsky 2001b; Navarro 1995). Existing system structures tend to privilege certain types of interests and patterns of incorporation. If new interests are structured in ways that follow traditional incorporation configurations, their integration into the system simply requires the extension of existing arrangements. For instance, parties accustomed to incorporating traditional agricultural interests through centralized peasant associations could potentially reach out to the organized working class through national labor federations, as both sets of interests follow common hierarchical patterns that can be accommodated through similar

strategies and mechanisms. But when social transformations produce emergent interests that are not easily slotted into established patterns, the parties must engage in more extensive and inventive adaptations. For example, the proliferation of grassroots social movements based on ethnic identities fundamentally challenges incorporation strategies built on hierarchical and centralized, class-based organizations. Parties with established incorporation patterns designed to integrate class-based peak associations find that their old strategies cannot be easily translated into the context of identity politics, forcing these parties to step outside their comfort zone and get creative if they are to integrate ethnic movements (Barr 2005; Domingo 2001; Yashar 1999). Thus, when parties' conventional incorporation strategies do not align with the organizational structures of emergent interests, they face considerable obstacles to achieving the adaptations they must implement in order to maintain this form of linkage.

Parties also carry considerable inertia in their structures. Institutions tend to take on a life of their own, reinforcing established patterns and discouraging innovation. This inertia often makes adaptation difficult and risky (Hannan and Carroll 1995).<sup>14</sup> Organizational inertia is especially likely to impede the incorporation of new groups if their concerns conflict with the goals of powerful entrenched interests already integrated into the system (Greene 2007; Levitsky 2001b). The stronger entrenched interests are and the more threatened they feel by new groups, the more dangerous adaptation becomes, as reaching out to new groups might alienate important elements of parties' existing support bases (Levitsky 2007). Rather than adapting to incorporate new but potentially conflicting interests, parties may opt to protect old allies, hoping to sustain the status quo and avoid upsetting the political equilibrium within their organizations (Hannan and Carroll 1995). Furthermore, if emergent interests are unorganized or diffuse, trading established (albeit shrinking) incorporated sectors for a flimsy new base of support poses very high risks in exchange for what seem to be few potential rewards, thereby creating a disincentive for making the adaptations needed to accommodate new interests. Party systems will have particular difficulty accommodating new or burgeoning groups when they do not fit the dominant channels of representation or when they have goals in competition with entrenched interests, especially when incorporation patterns are well established (Diamond 1999; Levitsky 2003b; Piattoni 2001b).

14. These challenges are heightened when organizations are internally institutionalized (Levitsky 2001b).



In summary, when confronted with extreme social disjuncture, party systems must adapt to include emerging interests or risk declines in the linkage capacity of interest incorporation. Adaptation, however, is a precarious proposition, one that is particularly risky if organizations are highly routinized and emerging interests either cannot be absorbed through existing channels or their concerns threaten already established groups. Uncertainty about the potential contributions that new but unorganized groups might offer for the system's support base further complicates adaptive attempts. Even less institutionalized or newer parties may find it difficult to innovate beyond tried and true incorporation patterns in such a context. The costs and risks associated with overcoming the collective action problem and inventing new incorporation strategies discourage all parties in the system from trying to represent emerging groups. Established parties control patterns of representation and may erect barriers to entry for pioneering parties, whereas a new party that mimics common strategies does not threaten the existing system. These incentive structures make innovation perilous even for new organizations.

Fig. 3.3 illustrates the process through which social transformation and organizational constraints together cause the deterioration of incorporation. Transformations in the structure or kind of salient cleavages pose serious challenges to the entire system's linkage strategies by menacing the very logic of incorporation. If emergent groups challenge powerful existing interests or entrenched patterns of integration, the party system may find it especially costly to expand or reinvent incorporation in order to accommodate them. If social change persists or escalates and the system does not respond, incorporation narrows, such that it is no longer a viable form of linkage for the great majority of the population.

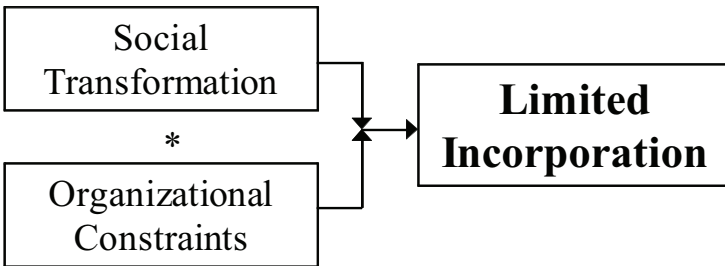


Fig. 3.3 Narrowing of interest incorporation

Note: \* stands for the logical AND. Joint arrows indicate a conjunction of necessary causes. Notation follows Goertz and Mahoney (2005).

## Decay of Clientelism

Clientelism is usually considered the least desirable form of linkage (Landé 1973; Shefter 1994). But despite its atomistic nature and potential for weakening accountability (Lyne 2008; Piattoni 2001b), clientelism still involves satisfying certain demands, enabling parties to provide some linkage between people and the state (Kitschelt 2000; Levitsky 2007; Richardson 1997).

As long as the system possesses sufficient resources to meet demand for benefits in exchange for votes, clientelism may persist for some time. But clientelist linkage is fragile and vulnerable to failure when demands cannot be met, especially when other linkages that promote more general public interest, like programmatic and incorporating ties, are absent. Unlike these other linkage strategies, which typically foster strong partisan ties, clientelism is highly contingent on recent performance. Absent a programmatic or interest-based foundation, clients are not loyal partisans. Rather, they look out for individual or familial interests and tend to have short time horizons. Without a recent investment, clients withdraw their support. When parties lack sufficient benefits to satisfy demand, people become suspicious about misuse of resources (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a). Therefore, clientelist parties must sustain the benefit flow to attract votes, and as a result, they are vulnerable to pressures from increased demands and dwindling resources, which threaten their capacity to buy support (Landé 1973; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007; Piattoni 2001b).

The central challenges to clientelist linkage stem from structural changes that escalate demand for direct exchanges, while limits on the resources available for partisan ends constrain parties' ability to adapt and satiate these increased demands. Specifically, certain kinds of social changes and electoral decentralization heighten pressure for clientelist benefits, even as economic crisis and restrictions on partisan manipulation of state resources limit parties' clientelist capacity. Together, challenges from increased demand and constraints on resources undermine the system's ability to sustain adequate clientelist linkage.

Social changes that expand the ranks of those seeking party-based material benefits in exchange for their vote pose a considerable challenge to clientelist linkage, pressuring parties to find a way to meet growing demand (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Levitsky 2003a; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007; Piattoni 2001a). For instance, when parties rely on clientelism to attract support, growth of the electorate through the extension of suffrage, population booms, or dramatic episodes of immigration stresses

linkage, because the parties must invest in additional material exchanges in order to build linkage with new voters (Lyne 2008).<sup>15</sup> Other social changes, such as increased poverty or uncertainty, also heighten demand for benefits, because desperate people turn to clientelism in an effort to satisfy immediate needs (Auyero 2000). People living in conditions of poverty or uncertainty are much more inclined to seek the immediate, tangible benefits offered in clientelist exchanges, rather than hope for future programmatic improvements that may never be implemented or that may not help them in a meaningful way (Piattoni 2001a). If the poverty rate escalates, the masses seeking clientelist benefits will expand, as more people are unable to wait for the fulfillment of programmatic promises (Hale 2007; Levitsky 2007; Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, and Estévez 2007). Likewise, uncertainty about the future due to economic crisis or security threats may push people to opt for immediate clientelist exchanges instead of risking the ambiguity of potential long-term solutions (Hopkin and Mastropaolo 2001; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Piattoni 2001b).

In a similar way, social restructuring that destroys traditional networks increases the number of individual clients seeking direct exchanges from parties. When old networks built on community ties, social class, or ethnic identities crumble, parties are no longer able to deliver benefits efficiently to many people through a single hierarchical network. Instead, as each voter or family pressures parties for clientelist exchanges outside these traditional avenues, the efficiency of old distribution patterns deteriorates and the number of claims on the parties expands (Escobar 2002; Gutiérrez Sanín 2007; Yashar 1999). Furthermore, if a party has a strong reservoir of support based on a tradition of linkage provision, people may be willing to overlook a temporary inability to furnish clientelist benefits, delaying the effects of resource shortages. But as the reserve of goodwill dries up, a party is much more vulnerable to escalating demands. Overall, then, social changes that increase the number of voters seeking material exchanges threaten the core logic of clientelist linkage, pressuring parties to find new resources to meet demand.

Reforms that create inefficiencies in clientelist delivery and thus necessitate more resources are another cause of strain on clientelism. In particular, political decentralization that proliferates the number of separate electoral

15. Such expansions of the voting population do not threaten systems able to integrate new voters through established programmatic or incorporating linkage mechanisms. But where new voters can only be accommodated with conditional exchanges, their entrance requires additional clientelist inputs from the parties.

contests at the subnational level requires more clientelist inputs and undermines the mutual dependence fostered under hierarchical clientelist delivery systems. I argue that these reforms threaten clientelism, and therefore party system survival, because each separate election requires provision of a new benefit, which delivers a vote for just one or two candidates and does not serve the party as a whole (Dávila and Delgado 2002; Gutiérrez Sanín 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Luna 2004, 2007).

These expectations concerning the consequences of political decentralization for linkage maintenance may seem to contradict conventional wisdom about the impact of these reforms. Many scholars have emphasized the positive, intended consequences of decentralization, making the case that it creates openings for participation (Blair 2000; Grindle 2000; Huther and Shah 1999), provides a civic training ground (Fox 1994; Tocqueville [1848] 1988), promotes efficiency (Artana and López Murphy 1994; Oates 1972; Rondinelli, McCullough, and Johnson 1989; Tiebout 1956), and fosters accountability and responsiveness (Abers 1996; Fox 1994; Nickson 1995; Selee 2011). Some have even equated political decentralization with democracy, arguing that electing subnational leaders is crucial for the deepening of democratic regimes (Diamond and Tsalik 1999; Fox 1994; Grindle 2000; Huther and Shah 1999). Decentralizing reforms were frequently advocated by the development community as a strategy for moving “government closer to the people” and promoting laudable and seemingly innocuous goals such as efficiency, accountability, and transparency (BID and PNUD 1993; Blair 1996; Campbell 1993; Dillinger 1994; Faguet 2001; Huther and Shah 1999). Moreover, politicians across the developing world who sought to overcome governance and legitimacy crises and to please international lenders or donors often turned to decentralization, perhaps hoping that it would foster support at home and abroad (Grindle 2000; Kornblith 1998b; Myers 2004; O’Neill 2003). Frequently, this scholarship focused on general indicators of democratic quality and did not explore the potential ramifications that decentralization might have for parties and party systems, except to suggest that the reforms might eliminate particularism, vote buying, and corruption (Borja 1989; Fox 1994; Huther and Shah 1999).

However, a growing body of research has begun to suggest some potentially destabilizing effects that decentralization may have on parties and party systems, shifting focus to unintended consequences of the reforms (Goldfrank 2011). This scholarship suggests that corruption and clientelism are actually more prevalent locally than nationally and that decentralizing to lower levels of government only exacerbates these problems (Prud’homme

1995; Ryan 2004; Samuels 2003). Decentralization also undermines the nationalization of party systems, promoting regionalization and fragmentation, especially in emerging democracies (Brancati 2008; Harbers 2010; Lalander 2004; Ryan 2004; Sabatini 2003; Stepan 2001). To the extent that decentralization promotes dispersion and parochialism, political instability is likely and national goals and accountability may be more difficult to achieve (Chandler 1987; Harbers 2010; Sabatini 2003).

Decentralization is particularly threatening to party systems that employ clientelism to attract support (Harbers 2010). Political decentralization, which occurs via the establishment of separate subnational elections, intensifies demand for clientelist exchanges because parties must unearth enough benefits to mobilize voters and activists in order to win electoral support, not only in occasional national contests but also in numerous subnational races across the country. Unlike other forms of linkage in which people vote based on general policy positions or interest-based appeals, under clientelism people use their votes as leverage to extract something tangible. Because clients repeatedly seek to trade their vote for material benefits during each trip to the polls, more elections mean more demands (Dávila and Delgado 2002).

Furthermore, the introduction of separate subnational elections decouples local and national politics (Luna 2007; Ryan 2004). Locally elected officials are increasingly autonomous, with their own bases of support (Falleti 2010; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Luna 2008; Sabatini 2003). This disconnect between the central party apparatus and subnational elites undermines traditional pyramidal patterns of exchange and heightens clientelist demand (Luna 2004). When nationally elected politicians appoint subnational officials or when centralized concurrent elections determine local political outcomes, support for the party organization across all territorial levels is purchased with a single material exchange furnished by the central party and distributed by loyal local leaders. These hierarchical networks reinforce interdependence across different levels of the party apparatus (Grindle 2000). Local politicians rely on the central party for continued access to political positions, and national party leaders depend on subnational affiliates to deliver votes for the party organization. However, as decentralization promotes local leaders' autonomy, these mutually reinforcing ties disintegrate (Falleti 2005; Harbers 2010; Ryan 2004; Sabatini 2003). Instead of national networks efficiently delivering support that enhances the electoral fortunes of the entire party and all its candidates, we observe the emergence of "parallel clientelistic structure[s]" (Ryan 2004, 88) in which empowered local

leaders build their own personal networks. These parallel networks serve the political ambitions of individual politicians rather than the goals of the party (Crook and Manor 1998; Grindle 2000; Luna 2008).

As political decentralization causes the parties to lose control over their local agents, they face increased pressures for clientelist resources, not only from the voters but also from empowered subnational elites seeking to further their own purposes. And because the parties are no longer able to exercise effective control over these leaders, the central apparatus cannot ensure that the benefits it channels through subnational networks are used effectively to benefit the party across all levels (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Luna 2007; Sabatini 2003). Frequently, political decentralization undermines the efficiency of resource distribution, necessitating more inputs in order to purchase support comparable to levels achieved with fewer resources in the pre-decentralization period. Thus, like social change, political decentralization heightens demand for clientelism.

For parties to maintain clientelism in the face of these threats, they must unearth adequate resources to satisfy pressures for direct exchange, or risk the decay of clientelism as an effective linkage strategy. As Scherlis notes, “Parties in which material benefits constitute the prime inducement for participation become reliant on the availability of those resources for their stability and survival” (2008, 580). Without sufficient resources to meet escalating demand, clientelism deteriorates. Two main factors affect parties’ ability to distribute enough benefits to sustain clientelist linkages: economic conditions and the parties’ ability to access state resources.

Economic crises reduce both public and private resources available for clientelism (Hopkin and Mastropaolo 2001; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Lyne 2008). State resources are likely to dry up during economic downturns. As the tax base shrinks, export income declines, or the debt burden grows, funds available for parties to politicize for clientelist distribution dwindle. Parties that appeal to private donors may also find that their funding slows to a trickle during crisis, constricting the resource base. Even membership dues, which are especially relevant in mass parties, are likely to decline during hard times as unemployed or impoverished party supporters may allow their memberships to lapse.

Political reforms that limit party control of state resources also constrain the supply of fuel for clientelist machines. Efforts to professionalize the bureaucracy take many government jobs off the patronage rolls, as people are hired based on their qualifications rather than their political connections. Reforms associated with neoliberalism, which rationalize the allocation of

state benefits and may place social programs and other public funds beyond the reach of partisan manipulation, hamper parties' access to resources they would customarily trade for votes (Hale 2007; Warner 2001). Fiscal decentralization may also reduce resources available to the central party, especially when the national party organization cannot exercise control over local elites who now manage the decentralized funds and programs. Frequently, autonomous subnational politicians do not use these resources in service to the party apparatus, but channel them to reward their own supporters and build their personal clientelist networks (Crook and Manor 1998; Harbers 2010; Luna 2007; Sabatini 2003). Alternatively, if parties are able to protect their access to state funds, maintain patronage distribution of jobs, or sustain discretionary distribution of public goods and services, they can sustain or even expand their resources for clientelism (Hopkin and Mastropaolo 2001; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a).

Reforms that limit parties' capacity to monitor clientelist exchanges also strain their resource base. Monitoring tactics like party-printed ballots and highly disaggregated election returns enable parties to identify people who violate their end of the clientelist bargain, limiting the potential for mis-spent funds (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a; Medina and Stokes 2007). If reforms weaken parties' monitoring capabilities, voters are more likely to shirk their promise to a party, undermining the efficiency of distribution and exacerbating resource strain (Lyne 2008).

If economic crisis and political reforms constrain resources at the same time that demand escalates, a party's clientelist capacity decays. When one party cannot sustain clientelism, clients seeking material exchanges will readily turn to other parties in search of some benefit, because clientelism does not foster strong and stable partisan affinities. Of course, this process only heightens the demands placed on other parties, thereby spreading the effects of increased pressures for clientelism to all the parties in the system. One party's inability to deliver on promises for clientelist linkage, therefore, ripples throughout the entire system, threatening the maintenance of adequate clientelist linkage at the system level. If limitations on resources produce shortages for all the parties, then these demands will go unmet. Thus, social change and political reforms heighten the demand for clientelism across the whole system, while economic crisis, bureaucratic professionalization, and other reforms that limit access to the state undermine the ability of all parties to furnish enough benefits to satiate this demand. In this way, individual parties' failure to deliver clientelism can easily infect the linkage capacity of the entire system.

When there are not enough resources to satisfy escalating pressure for exchange-based linkage and none of the system parties furnish the benefits that voters seek, people become frustrated with the entire system. Paradoxically, in the absence of meaningful programmatic and incorporating linkage, parties' desperate efforts to satiate clientelist demand escalate (the appearance of) corruption, and those voters who disdain the clientelist elements of parties' linkage profiles are ever more likely to condemn the entire system as corrupt (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007a). Furthermore, as fewer potential clients receive the benefits they seek, they also become frustrated and vilify the clientelist system, from which they have been excluded. If clientelism cannot meet the demands of many and if other forms of linkage are absent, people reason that the explanation for the parties' failure to deliver must be corruption. Among those who do not receive benefits, clientelism loses its acceptance because it ceases to provide widespread linkage between society and the state, and instead enriches the select few who benefit. The decay of clientelism, therefore, provokes mounting disenchantment with the whole system (Hopkin and Mastropaolo 2001).

The process by which proliferating demands and resource constraints produce the decay of clientelism is portrayed in fig. 3.4. Social changes and political decentralization heighten petitions for clientelism. Increased demand challenges the parties to find enough resources to continue furnishing linkage, but crisis conditions and political reforms that limit party

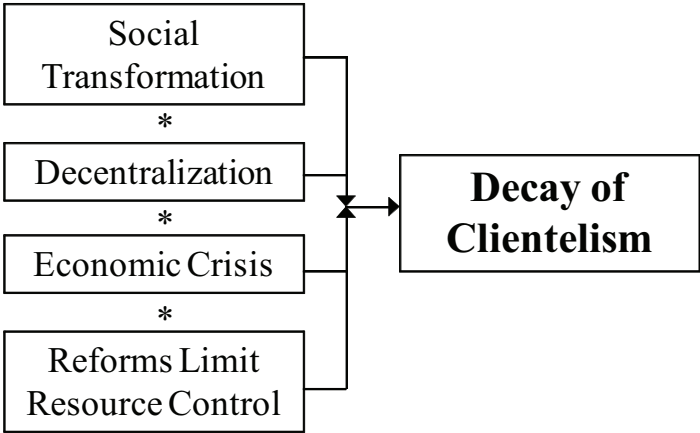


Fig. 3.4 Decay of clientelism

Note: \* stands for the logical AND. Joint arrows indicate a conjunction of necessary causes. Notation follows Goertz and Mahoney (2005).



control over state funds shrink resources, widening the gulf between pressures for material exchange and the parties' capacity to deliver. If resources do not meet demand, clientelism decays.

## LINKAGE FAILURE AND PARTY SYSTEM COLLAPSE

Different factors provoke the failure of each kind of linkage, but the general causal pattern underlying linkage decay involves new demands, which stem from structural changes that threaten the core logic of the linkage strategy and require significant adaptation. If these challenges arise amid specific contextual constraints that restrict the latitude for response, the system is unable to answer pressures for linkage. When threats to linkage emerge and constraints impede appropriate adaptation, linkage decays. If all the linkage strategies employed deteriorate across the entire party system, collapse results. Systems that rely on one type of linkage fail if that form is exhausted, unless the system can develop other linkage strategies to replace what was lost. Systems with mixed linkage profiles must experience the decay of all their strategies in order for the system to collapse. Having outlined the general process through which linkage failure produces party system collapse and detailed the structural changes that challenge each linkage type, as well as the specific contextual constraints that limit adaptation in the face of these challenges, I bring these elements together in a two-level theoretical framework in fig. 3.5.

The figure depicts the overarching theory of party system collapse, which stipulates in the core model that the failure of all three types of linkage produces collapse. The secondary level of the model identifies the specific challenges and constraints hypothesized to undermine each linkage strategy. Crises, specifically those that stem from the exhaustion of established policy models, threaten programmatic representation. When international constraints limit parties' policy options for addressing the crisis to those that contradict their ideological or policy-making legacies, then the governing parties face a lose-lose situation and policy responsiveness deteriorates. If all the parties are programmatically discredited because ideological distinctions between them are blurred, likely as a result of interparty agreements, all the parties are implicated in this failed policy responsiveness and programmatic linkage deteriorates throughout the whole system. Incorporation suffers if the structure or kind of salient cleavage changes, challenging the logic by which interests were traditionally integrated. If the parties'

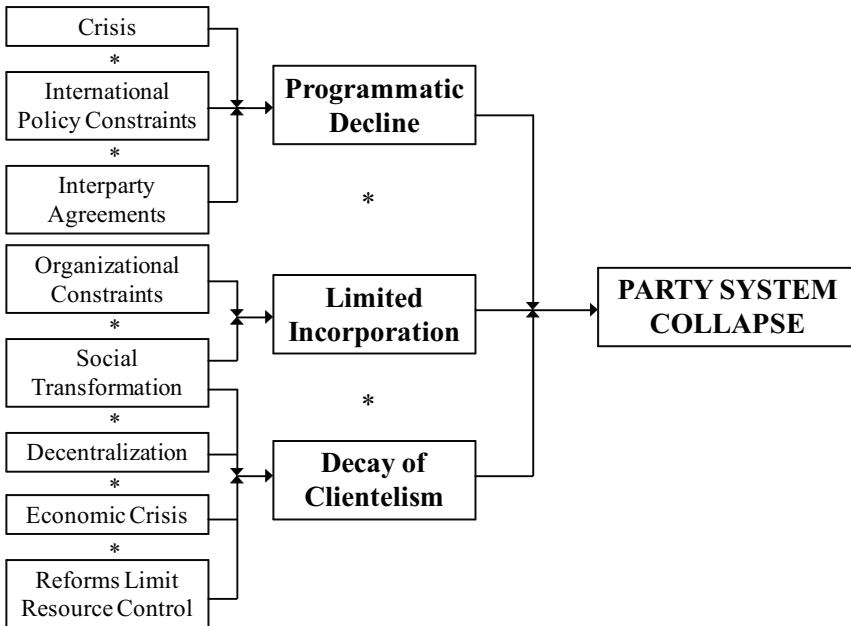


Fig. 3.5 Full model of party system collapse

Note: \* stands for the logical AND. Factors in bold are part of the core theoretical model; factors in standard font are part of the secondary model. Joint arrows indicate a conjunction of necessary causes. Notation follows Goertz and Mahoney (2005).

organizational structures make reaching out to new groups risky or infeasible because routinized incorporation patterns are not easily translated to new groups or because new and old interests conflict, then adaptation flounders and incorporation narrows. Finally, clientelism loses the capacity to win support when social changes and electoral decentralization heighten demand for direct exchanges at the same time that the parties lose resources for distribution as a result of economic crisis and reforms that constrain partisan manipulation of the state. Without sufficient fuel to feed their hungry machines, clientelism decays.

Structural changes endanger linkage and require a response. If these challenges occur in a context that constrains adaptation, linkage fails. When a party system is unable to sustain meaningful programmatic appeals, does not incorporate major societal concerns, and cannot satisfy clientelist demands, the system collapses. This is the argument that I examine throughout the rest of the book, assessing the threats to linkage and the limitations on adaptation that produced bankrupt representation and party system collapse in

Venezuela as well as Bolivia, Colombia, and Italy. In the analysis that follows in parts 2 and 3, I find that collapse occurs when all linkage strategies fail across the party system. Furthermore, the analysis of cases of collapse as well as instances of survival suggests that the combinations of structural challenges and contextual constraints outlined here effectively explain the decay of each linkage type.<sup>16</sup> Where the hypothesized causal patterns are present, linkage decays; where the patterns are not complete, linkage persists and the party system survives.

16. Note that I am only examining whether these hypothesized combinations of causes account for the system-level linkage decay that leads to collapse. Because I am primarily concerned with explaining collapse, as opposed to analyzing linkage decay as an end in itself, I do not test the theory in every instance where any sort of linkage deterioration has occurred. Testing the general applicability of the hypothesized causes of causes to all cases of linkage decay is beyond the scope of this project, and I leave this task for future research.