

# The Fates of Political Parties

*Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and  
Change in Latin America*

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## Introduction

In 1998, an extended political crisis in Venezuela culminated in the “collapse” of the party system and the virtual disappearance of the country’s two major parties from national politics. Since then, Hugo Chávez and his movement have controlled politics in the country. Meanwhile, the two formerly predominant parties, *Acción Democrática* (AD) and *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente* (COPEI), struggled to regain their former national-electoral importance. After forty years of monopolizing politics in Venezuela (Norden 1998), both parties essentially disappeared from the national stage as independent electoral entities (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012).

Despite this shared experience of national-electoral collapse, the trajectory of AD and COPEI since 1998 has been markedly different. COPEI’s vote share, which had been widespread in scope, was reduced to its historic strongholds. AD, however, continued to perform strongly in subnational elections across the country. Its countrywide subnational presence eventually became indispensable for the electoral viability of the opposition that formed against Chávez. AD revived after national-electoral collapse by forging a strategic role in that opposition. COPEI, alternatively, has fought to remain electorally relevant outside of its long-standing bastions.

The different fates of AD and COPEI after the shared experience of national-electoral collapse are puzzling but not rare. Recently, party systems throughout Latin America faced devastating crises that, while similar in intensity, impacted their parties differently. In 1990, the party system in Peru was rejected *en masse* by the broad majority of the population. This crisis led to the effective disappearance of the system’s three major



parties, *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA), *Partido Popular Cristiano* (PPC), and *Acción Popular* (AP), from national politics (Kenney 2003; Seawright 2012; Tanaka 2006). Since then, AP has struggled to return to national politics. APRA, by contrast, regained a large presence in Congress in the 2001 general election. PPC, like APRA, experienced revival. It returned to national politics as a primary partner in the coalition, *Unidad Nacional* (UN).

As in Venezuela and Peru, the Bolivian party system experienced crisis and collapse (Morgan 2011). Unlike in Venezuela or Peru, however, the three major parties have been virtually absent from national politics since the 2005 collapse. This includes the country's most important party, *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR).

This book builds from these distinct post-crisis trajectories to identify and explain the different "fates" that parties can experience after major national-electoral crisis. It asks, what happens to parties after they suffer a major loss of votes at the national level? In what ways can parties survive a major loss of votes? Why do certain parties survive while others do not? Additionally, why do only some parties revive and recover their national-electoral importance? These questions strike at the heart of our theoretical drive to understand party continuity and adaptation (see, e.g., Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Katz and Mair 1995; Kirchheimer 1966; Levitsky 2003; Lupu 2016). This literature tends to view party adaptation dichotomously. Parties may evolve and adapt to changes and continue to thrive in national elections. Alternatively, parties may fail to adapt and disappear, sometimes overnight (Lupu 2014).

From the perspective of this literature, examples of failed adaptation but continued survival and potential revival are very puzzling. Many existing theories struggle to explain the non-linear electoral trends that parties may experience in the aftermath of a major national-electoral crisis. Rational choice and new institutionalist scholars would predict the death of a party *qua* electoral institution that could not successfully contest national elections (Aldrich 1995; Downs 1957; Snyder Jr. and Ting 2002). Demand-oriented accounts would assert that parties without enduring societal support face extinction (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Overall, party survival and revival after a major loss represent an interesting paradox.

This book addresses the paradox head-on to build a general theory of party survival and revival. The premise is that a party's likelihood to survive and revive after national-electoral crisis, or a sudden and dramatic loss of votes at the national level, is greatly enhanced by the resources it

has at the time of crisis. In what follows, I show that national-electoral crisis provokes a loss of many resources upon which parties typically rely to remain influential in national politics, including money, patronage, and a pool of viable national candidates. Nevertheless, parties that retain other kinds of resources may use them to continue to operate in other spheres of political life. Survival occurs in these other spheres. Organizational resources, or a wealth of party members, local committees, and party locales, allow a party to survive by remaining competitive in subnational elections. Ideational resources, or a stock of core principles or ideas that define how a party is known in society, enable a party to survive as a participant in the public debate.

Party revival, or the recovery of a party's national-electoral relevance, occurs when a party's resource wealth gives it a strategic, competitive advantage in the post-crisis political system. Not all resources, I postulate, are equally valuable for a party that attempts to return to national politics. When, however, a party's resource wealth aligns with the particular dynamics of the post-crisis party system, then its likelihood of revival increases. Alternatively, a party that is resource poor may seek to revive via reinvention. In this other path to revival, party leaders create a new party or organization in the hope of escaping the resource scarcity of their former party. Overall, parties will experience survival and choose strategies of revival as a function of the resources they have at their disposal.

#### Party Survival and Revival Matter

Despite the theoretical puzzle that party survival and revival represent, the reality is that patterns of electoral competition in much of the world are not stable (Mainwaring 2016, 693). Instead, they are often non-linear and fluctuate up and down, at times erratically. Certainly, Latin America is known for the precariousness of its democratic institutions and, especially, the volatility of its parties (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring et al. 2006; Roberts and Wibbels 1999). Aside from the examples of party-system collapse underscored above, party systems in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala have undergone dramatic bouts of change driven in large part by the uneven electoral draw of their established parties. For example, Colombia's Liberal and Conservative parties – some of the oldest and historically most stable in the world – suffered a major loss of votes in 2002 before slightly recovering and stabilizing their vote once more in the following two elections (2006 and 2010). Argentina's *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) oscillated in and out of power throughout the 1990s and



2000s. As a major coalition partner, it captured over 40 percent of the vote in the 1999 legislative elections. The party's vote share declined precipitously throughout the 2000s, only to surge once more to 21.3 percent in 2013, this time in coalition with the Socialists. Several Latin American parties have experienced a sudden loss of votes in one election only to recover them – at least partially – in later electoral cycles.

These trends extend beyond Latin America. Parties have experienced major and at times erratic shifts in voter popularity throughout the world, including in Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Parties as ideologically diverse as the extreme, right-wing Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Turkey, and the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party in the Czech Republic (KDU-CSL), experienced crisis and subsequent comeback. In some cases, as with MHP, crisis involved losing half of its vote share from one election (1999) to the next (2002). MHP lost all 129 seats it won in the previous election. In 2007, it recovered seventy-one of those seats, capturing 14.3 percent of the votes. Similarly, KDU-CSL lost a third of its votes between 2006 and 2010, failing to seat a member of parliament (MP) for the first time in decades. Its vote share rebounded again in 2013, when it recovered the seats it had lost and gained an additional seat.

Or consider the All People's Congress (APC) of Sierra Leone. The party ruled as a single party from 1978 until the early 1990s. Once elections became competitive, its vote share dropped to the single digits (e.g., 5.7 percent in 1996). By the 2000s, however, it had reclaimed significant electoral ground. In 2007, it regained power with over 40 percent of the vote. Finally, the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) was the primary opposition party in Mozambique throughout the 1990s, capturing well over one-third of the national vote before dropping to 17 percent in 2009. By 2014 its vote share shot up once more, when the party garnered over 32 percent of the legislative vote.<sup>1</sup>

Each party lost a large portion of votes in one national election, only to recover a significant portion of them later. These parties differed in terms of their ideological predispositions and relative electoral importance. Yet, high electoral volatility – or the transfer of votes between parties or from one set of parties to another – affects political systems in much of the world (Ferree 2010; Hicken and Kuhonta 2011; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Tavits 2008). Overall, it is possible to identify non-linear party

<sup>1</sup> See Adam Carr's Election Archive for more information on these electoral returns (<http://psephos.adam-carr.net>).

electoral trends under multiple institutional contexts. National-electoral crises are not infrequent events. The need to survive can be vital to a party's institutional longevity.

Certainly, theoretical imperatives also motivate the pages that follow. For one, despite the empirical reality that national-electoral crisis and later electoral revival have been frequent events in a variety of democracies throughout the world, we know very little about what happens *after* crisis occurs. We cannot explain why only some parties experience revival after national-electoral crisis. To date, no comparative work has built a general theory of party endurance after a major electoral shock.

Additionally, party survival and revival matter. Parties that experience a sudden and dramatic loss of votes at the national level may continue to earn high vote percentages in subnational elections. This was the case with APRA and AP in Peru, as we see in Chapter 5. They may also continue to speak out on policies and programs that are of acute national interest. This occurred with APRA in the 1990s and the MNR in Bolivia after 2005. Their continued coverage by the national press allowed each party to represent constituents and shape public opinion from outside of elected office, as Chapters 5 and 7 demonstrate. Surviving parties influence politics in a variety of ways. Party influence does not emanate exclusively from the national-electoral realm.

One theoretical contribution of this book is to revitalize the notion of parties as complex entities. The book recalls the multiple functions, electoral and otherwise, that parties perform in a democracy. It demonstrates that, while parties most effectively exercise those functions from national-electoral office, it is not the *exclusive* venue for doing so. It therefore challenges an assumption that implicitly underpins the literature on party development (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Duverger 1954; Katz and Mair 1995; Kirchheimer 1966; Levitsky 2003). Much of this work views party growth and change as Darwinian exercises. Parties either successfully evolve to the structural or institutional changes that occur and continue to thrive in national elections, or they become broadly irrelevant. This book provides nuance by seeing beyond the national-electoral lens through which party success is typically defined (Cyr 2016a). It views a party's life cycle through the multiple spheres in which it competes, including the national and subnational electoral spheres, as well as the public sphere. It demonstrates that parties may not remain active in the national-electoral realm, but they will *survive* to the extent that they continue to operate in these other realms.



The conceptualization of party fates developed here therefore argues strongly against viewing parties as unitary, national actors that respond mainly to (electoral) market forces and coordinate strategically to maximize their electoral presence (see, e.g., Cox 1997).<sup>2</sup> The following pages demonstrate that parties that no longer compete in national level races may “selectively enter” subnational contests (Potter 2013). Moreover, parties compete in subnational contests not just as the result of cost-benefit calculations regarding institutional conditions at the local level (Cox 1997; Potter 2013; Tavits 2006). They may also do so as a survival tactic following national-electoral crisis. Parties retreat to subnational elections, or find refuge in the realm of the public sphere, to wait out the period of hostility (Tavits 2013) that follows crisis. By revitalizing the notion of parties as complex entities, we can delineate the multiple strategies that produce party survival and enable, in some cases, party revival.

To be sure, party *revival* also matters for national politics. When a party recovers national-electoral relevance, it shapes patterns of party competition and inter-party coordination. In other words, it exercises influence from national elected office once more. We will see that AD in Venezuela and APRA and PPC in Peru revived, albeit in different ways. The three parties returned to national politics. Their presence affected the coalitions that were built, the laws that were proposed, and, in the case of AD, the evolution and quality of the democratic regime.

From an institutional perspective, the dual phenomena of party survival and revival reinforce the notion that institutions are remarkably resilient (North 1990; Pierson 2004; Shepsle 1986) if never completely static (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Streeck and Thelen 2004; Thelen 2004). This is true even after the shock of national-electoral crisis. For some scholars, institutions persist because of the positive externalities that these create and the negative externalities that other institutional alternatives increasingly represent (Pierson 2004). For others, institutions persist because they evolve in productive, gradual ways to changing circumstances (Streeck and Thelen 2004; Thelen 2004). This book underscores another source of continuity upon which representative institutions can rely: the multiple spheres in which they operate. Specifically, in the face of electoral hardship at one level of government, parties can find recourse for survival in other levels. When confronting electoral scarcity more generally, parties can find temporary refuge in the public sphere.

<sup>2</sup> There is a long literature on strategic coordination. See Ferrara and Herron (2005) for a review.

This institutional continuity is noteworthy precisely because it is so unexpected in the countries where national-electoral crisis tends to happen. The chronic political instability of the Andean region – the empirical focus of this study – has long been a subject of scholars (Drake and Hirschberg 2006; Mainwaring, Bejarano, and Leongómez 2006; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). But the sudden and dramatic loss of votes by a party is likely to occur in any country whose democracy is relatively new and therefore largely unsettled. There, formal institutions lack the experience and longevity to be fully credible, the possibility of economic crisis is ever-present, and the memory of past authoritarian periods looms large. Political uncertainty reigns (Lupu and Reidl 2013). Is it any wonder that parties lack strong, enduring roots in society (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006)? The continuity of these parties is remarkable because it is under-predicted theoretically.

Yet, in uncertain contexts, party continuity is clearly impactful. When parties revive after national-electoral crisis, they represent an instance of institutional stability in an otherwise changing political landscape. In some cases, this continuity can be crucial for regime survival (see, e.g., Mainwaring 1998; McGuire 1997). In Venezuela, for example, AD returned to national politics as the territorial anchor of the opposition to Chávez. As we will see, its widespread organizational resources enabled the opposition to register important electoral victories. AD helped cement an electoral opposition that could then push back against Chávez’s authoritarian tendencies. By identifying the territorial dimensions of party survival and revival, we outline conditions under which an opposition may begin to organize against an increasingly autocratic leader.

The book’s emphasis on party resources is paramount. It is also, in itself, innovative. Resources are increasingly equated with capacity when it comes to successful party-building and development over time (see, e.g., Galvin 2012; Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck 2016; Tavits 2013; Van Dyck 2014). Still, we have not yet thought systematically about those resources. This book identifies and conceptualizes the different resources parties use to remain active in politics. It therefore opens up the “black box” of party organization once more (Levitsky 2001, 103). It builds off of the work of other scholars who have taken a party’s internal life seriously<sup>3</sup> – but it does so with a novel focus on the broad range of assets that make party life possible.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Coppedge 1994a; Duverger 1954; Key 1949; LeBas 2011; Levitsky 2003; Michels 1911; Ostrogorski 1902; Panebianco 1988; Roberts 1998; Schlesinger 1984; Wills-Otero 2015.



Furthermore, the book shows that parties that draw upon a wider variety of resources are better placed to withstand the vagaries of electoral competition. In developing a resource-based argument, it offers a new perspective from which to explain a party's performance across time, including "unlikely" national-electoral comebacks (McClintock 2006a) and other, non-linear, electoral trajectories. Importantly, this perspective privileges the party itself, rather than the institutional or structural context in which it operates, as the primary driver of survival and revival. It therefore heeds the call to critically engage with complex organizations as autonomous in their own right, rather than simply subject to individual self-interest or formal political institutions (Luna, Murillo, and Schrank 2014, 4).

Finally, a resource-based approach allows us to examine party continuity and change from a positive normative perspective. Theoretically, all parties have access to the resources that are identified and conceptualized below. To be sure, the choice to invest in these resources and/or retain them over time can vary. Still, the possibility of their acquisition or retention is not, in principle, a function of external circumstance. By adopting a resource-based theoretical perspective, this book emphasizes the assets that parties have rather than highlighting what they lack, either in terms of their institutionalization (e.g., Mainwaring and Scully 1995), their "rootedness" (e.g., Mainwaring and Torcal 2006), and/or their linkages with society (Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Luna 2014). A focus on resources, in other words, allows us to level the playing field in terms of studying parties across multiple countries, "developed" or otherwise, as well as distinct institutional and regime contexts.

#### Identifying and Explaining Party Survival and Revival

This book explains two distinct but interrelated phenomena: party survival after national-electoral crisis and party revival. A party *survives* crisis when it continues to exercise its primary functions in non-national-electoral spheres of political life. A party can survive in two different ways. It may survive as a subnational electoral entity. In this case, the party is not competitive in national elections, but it remains competitive in elections at the subnational (regional and/or municipal) level. It may also survive as a participant in the public debate. Here, the party does not have a prominent role in national government, but it will continue to receive coverage by the national media on issues of national importance.

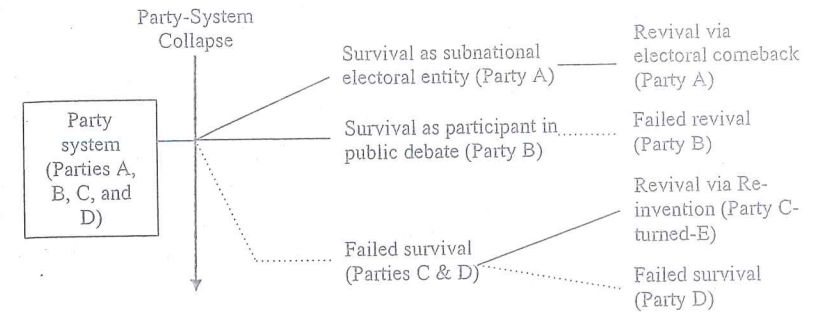


FIGURE 1.1 Survival and revival following party-system collapse

Each type of survival allows a party to remain active in politics outside of the national-electoral realm.

Party *revival* occurs when a party recovers its national-electoral relevance, such that it shapes and informs the national party system once more. Revival can be a function of the recovery of a party's independent vote share in a presidential or legislative election. A party may also revive as a major player in an electoral coalition (Laver and Schofield 1998), such that its participation therein is vital for the viability of the coalition as a whole. Finally, a party may revive as a kingmaker (Siaroff 2003), exercising a decisive role in the formation of a governing coalition. In each case, the party exercises influence once more in national politics. It has recovered, at least partially, what it lost at the time of national-electoral crisis.

A party may also revive via reinvention. Here, party leaders bypass surviving and reviving as an independent electoral entity. They forego most ties with their former party and dedicate their time and energy to the creation of something new. They may join forces with other actors and groups and merge into a new party (Bélanger and Godbout 2009). They may also retain their party moniker and place their electoral hopes in a new coalition. In the first case, the formerly predominant party ceases to function. In the second, the former party is sidelined in favor of forging a new, enduring political movement. In either case, party leaders stop promoting their original party, choosing instead to launch a new political project.

The differences between revival strategies are not insignificant. Where a party revives as an unchanged, independent entity, it must first survive the trauma of national-electoral crisis. In Figure 1.1, Parties A and B



survive in different ways after party-system collapse. Party-system collapse is a particularly acute form of crisis. Where it occurs, every major party experiences a sudden and dramatic loss of votes (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012). Some parties will successfully survive, like Parties A and B. Both may not revive, however. Party A successfully revives by recovering an important portion of its previous vote share (“electoral comeback” in Figure 1.1). Party B, alternatively, does not. In each case, revival as an unchanged entity involves first surviving the initial shock of national-electoral crisis. Revival via electoral comeback is possible only after party survival.

Where a party revives via reinvention, alternatively, party leaders will not attempt to revive the formerly predominant party in its independent state. Reinvention occurs precisely because the party cannot survive as an independent entity. In Figure 1.1, Parties C and D fail to survive in the aftermath of party-system collapse. Party C, however, experiences revival via reinvention. Its party leaders leave Party C to form a new party, Party E. Under this new party, the leaders orchestrate a national-electoral comeback. Survival is, therefore, not always a precursor of revival.

Party survival and revival are not easy to accomplish. When a party suffers a major national-electoral loss, much of the population has rejected it as a viable political alternative for national office. Opinions of the party will be very low. Hostility (Tavits 2013), in general, will be very high. Many parties will not survive this kind of environment. Few may revive. What, then, separates successful from failed cases of party endurance in the face of crisis? Why, in other words, do party survival and revival occur?

No general theory of party survival and revival exists. Many of our theories, in fact, would predict that parties simply would not survive. This is the case for those who view parties as instruments that solve coordination dilemmas for electorally ambitious individuals (see, e.g., Aldrich 1995; also Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Downs 1957; Mayhew 1974; Snyder Jr. and Ting 2002). If a party can no longer solve the coordination problems it was created to address, then rational politicians should look elsewhere to take up this task.

Yet, it is clearly the case that poorly performing national parties continue to compel at least some politicians and supporters to remain loyal despite a loss of votes. In some cases, the party may have forged an “electorate of belonging” (Panebianco 1988) such that the institution, rather

than serve as a means to an end, becomes an end in itself.<sup>4</sup> This was the case, for example, with the *Justicialista*, or Peronist, Party in Argentina (Levitsky 1998, 2003) and, as we will see below, with APRA in Peru. These parties cultivated strong *ideational resources* based on idiosyncratic properties associated with their party brand (Lupu 2014). These resources, I argue, are an important calling card for specific constituents during campaign season.

It is also true that some politicians become inextricably linked to their parties. As undisputed party leaders (Haslam, Reicher, and Platow 2013), these individuals come to define the party just as the party comes to define them. Their credibility as political actors is closely tied to a particular party. Leaving the party would mean endangering their own political careers. These leaders can be valuable *elite resources* for the party, even as their own political careers are constrained by their ties with the struggling party. Overall, though it may rationally make sense for savvy politicians to leave an electorally weak party, there are compelling reasons why this may not occur.

Scholars that base party endurance on the support that parties cultivate within a population (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006; see also Morgan 2011 and Seawright 2012) would also be highly skeptical that a party could survive a serious loss of votes at the national level.<sup>5</sup> National-electoral crisis by definition involves the rejection of a party by many citizens and therefore reflects an unmooring from its larger support base. This focus on continued political support is extremely useful for understanding over-time electoral success. Many theories base successful party adaptation on the capacity of parties to harness votes even as crisis and external pressures force party leaders to adopt positions that could alienate them from their constituencies

<sup>4</sup> Aldrich’s focus on party activists, as a subset of party members, comes close to reflecting this kind of devotion to the party (1995). Still, Aldrich identifies largely rational reasons for party activism. Activists may be seeking specific (personal) benefits or may be pursuing specific policy positions (Chapter 6). In either case, the goal of a person’s activism falls outside the realm of the party institution. Devotion to the party as a valued end in itself is largely absent from this account.

<sup>5</sup> At the heart of this approach is the notion that parties are the “political creatures of social groups” (Mudge and Chen 2014, 311). Parties are the expression of salient social divisions that predominate in a given society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990; see Deegan-Krause 2007 for a review of the literature). When parties lose this capability—that is, when they no longer serve this expressive function—then their value for channeling demands from below becomes null.



(Gibson 1997; Levitsky 2003). Put simply, parties that no longer attract a large group of supporters should be more likely to enter into decline and disappear.

Political support, however, is very different from the strong partisan ties that can develop between active party members, or what Duverger called “party militants” (Duverger 1972, 61), and the party itself. Party militants make up the party’s close community of followers. They are intimately involved in its organization and operation (*ibid.*, 90). Whereas electors and supporters develop contingent or ephemeral ties to the party, militants are regularly active in the party, both during and, crucially, *between* electoral campaigns. This kind of support, whereby parties capture the “hearts and minds” of individuals (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002), is less rational in its substance and therefore more enduring in nature. Even a small group of party identifiers, through their commitment to and participation in the party, can keep a party active during periods of electoral scarcity (Tavits 2013). As we will see below, these party militants are fundamental to the *organizational resources* upon which a party can rely to survive as subnational electoral entities.

The supply- and demand-oriented accounts highlighted thus far tend to adopt the perspective that parties endure when they are useful to electorally ambitious individuals or attractive to the wider population. Each set of accounts views parties as institutions that exist almost exclusively for electoral ends. Yet, inherent to party survival is the notion that at least some individuals within the party wish to see it endure, even though its national-electoral function has been suspended. The goal of survival implies that the party has taken on a life of its own. Once this occurs, the view of a party as a means to an electoral end alone no longer makes sense. We should therefore study party survival and revival as processes that are internal to the institution itself.

Many scholars of party adaptation view it as endogenous to the institution (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Kitschelt 1994; Levitsky 2003; Roberts 1998; Tanaka 2006). For some, this has meant exploring the nature of the party’s organizational structure. Several scholars contend that party organizational characteristics hinder or enable adaptation (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Levitsky 2003; Roberts 1998; Seawright 2012; Wills-Otero 2015). Weak institutionalization, for example, allows for greater flexibility at moments when adaptation is deemed crucial (Levitsky 2003, 231; see also Burgess and Levitsky 2003 and Roberts 1998). Successful adaptation occurs when the organizational

structure is not so institutionally entrenched that leaders are prevented from orchestrating certain necessary changes.

This approach focuses exclusively on the constraints that organizations place on national leadership. Paradoxically, highly routinized or bureaucratic parties, which are often viewed as preferable to parties that are subject to the interests of party leaders (see, e.g., Janda 1980; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006), lack the flexibility needed to weather exogenous challenges. Crisis occurs precisely because parties fail to reform in the face of changing circumstances. Yet, the institutional rigidities fostered by high routinization may actually help a party during periods of electoral scarcity. A “functioning bureaucratic hierarchy,” which can prevent adaptation (Levitsky 1998, 83), may actually keep a party afloat after crisis occurs. The eight parties considered here experienced a national leadership vacuum in the immediate aftermath of crisis. Yet, several parties retained a functioning committee structure at the local and regional level. This resource allowed those parties to organize campaigns at lower levels of government. The party’s ability to survive as subnational electoral entities increased, thanks to its ‘functioning bureaucratic hierarchy.’

The work of Levitsky and others (Roberts 1998; Seawright 2012) convincingly demonstrates that high levels of routinization impede adaptability in the short-term. I do not challenge these findings. Instead, I simply underscore that the value of certain party traits, such as high routinization, will change given the context. Institutional rigidity is neither always desirable nor always disadvantageous. The same holds true, as we will see subsequently, with the different resources upon which a party can rely.

Rather than focus on the constraints that a party’s structure may pose for leadership autonomy, other works directly highlight leadership capacity as the cause of successful or failed party adaptation. Kitschelt (1994), for example, finds that leadership autonomy was vital for the adaptation of social democratic parties in Spain, France, and Italy. Grzymala-Busse (2002) argues that certain Communist party leaders successfully harnessed past governing legacies in ways that renewed their party in the post-Communist era. Tanaka (2006) posits that parties fail to adapt when leaders cannot manage internal schisms in the midst of growing external crisis (69). In each of these accounts, adaptation is a function of skillful and strategic leadership.

As with other party resources, we can expect that the relative value of party leadership will shift after national-electoral crisis. At that point, party leaders must first decide their own fates. Ambitious leaders may



choose to abandon a party and join other groups or movements to advance their own careers. Others may leave politics altogether. Party leaders that choose to remain with a party are likely to be unpopular, at least immediately following the crisis. Under any of these circumstances, national party leaders can be a liability. On its own, therefore, national leadership autonomy is unlikely to explain party survival.

Finally, one might turn to electoral rules to explain the survival and revival trajectories outlined here. Parties that face lower barriers to entry, thanks to more permissive electoral systems, might have a greater chance of surviving as a subnational entity and also reviving at the national level (Duverger 1954; Lijphart 1994; Shugart and Carey 1992; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Alternatively, changes in electoral rules might explain the timing of a party's revival (Norris 2004). In effect, in each country under investigation here, governments implemented a constitutional overhaul after party-system collapse (Negretto 2013, 21). The national-electoral revival of APRA and PPC in Peru and AD in Venezuela could be due to the changes in electoral law that these overhauls produced.

Electoral rules on their own, however, cannot account for the different fates that we see in the Andean region.<sup>6</sup> Let us take, as an example, AD's revival in the late 2000s. In 1999, Venezuelans approved a new Constitution, which, among other things established a new formula for allocating seats in the National Assembly that greatly favored *chavismo* (Monaldi 2015). Despite the highly unfavorable electoral law, AD revived to occupy multiple seats in the National Assembly in 2008. If electoral laws fully explained post-crisis party fates, we would be skeptical of AD's capacity to revive, especially given COPEI's weak electoral showing that same year. In any case, my empirical analysis includes variation on the dependent variable both within and across countries. Consequently, I control for the particular institutional dynamics in each country.

In sum, no existing theory sufficiently explains why parties that perform poorly in national elections may continue to survive in other ways. At the heart of the problem is the notion that parties serve electoral, and, in many cases, national-electoral, ends. Yet, party survival, and the possibility of revival, inherently occur outside of the national-electoral realm. A resource-based approach is more appropriate, because it allows us to

<sup>6</sup> Electoral law can, however, condition revival and survival trajectories. For example, a party cannot survive as a provincial entity if there are no provincial elections. APRA and AP in Peru could not have survived as regional-electoral entities in Peru precisely because President Alberto Fujimori eliminated regional elections after coming to office.

account for the multiple arenas in which a party operates. Let us turn, then, to my argument, which I introduce here and explore with more detail in Chapter 3.

### The Resource-Based Argument, In Brief

To explain party survival and revival after national-electoral crisis, this book focuses on the resources that parties utilize to perform their primary functions in a democracy. Resources make goals actionable. They "supply capacity" to an institution (Galvin 2012, 52). Without money, people, places, and even expertise and ideas, institutions would be hard-pressed to operate on a daily basis. Despite this rather evident statement, most works that incorporate resources into their explanations do so only implicitly or without fully conceptualizing what they mean (Zald and McCarthy 2002, 544-545; Galvin 2012).<sup>7</sup>

This book addresses the role of resources head-on. It elaborates a list of resources that parties utilize (Chapter 2) and then builds a general theory of party survival and revival that is based largely on a party's resource wealth (Chapter 3). A point of departure for what follows is that the kinds of resources upon which parties rely are variable, and not all parties will invest in or retain the same set of resources (Ganz 2000; Galvin 2012). Indeed, a party's resource wealth is not something we can take for granted. It must be actively and carefully measured.

All parties rely on at least some resources to operate. A political party is an institution that competes, successfully or otherwise, in elections (Sartori 1976). Beyond this minimum definition, the form a party takes can vary greatly. A party may exist primarily to promote the presidential aspirations of a single individual. Its structure, beyond this individual and a close group of advisors, will be non-existent. Alternatively, a party may have a massive bureaucratic structure with a hierarchy of committees and branches and a solid list of members. Parties may exist to pursue one specific policy or law. They may also adopt a more pragmatic platform that fluctuates over time. Each type of party relies upon different resource-sets to operate.

I argue that the resources a party has at the time of crisis will largely condition, first, *whether* the party will survive that crisis, and second, *how*

<sup>7</sup> An exception comes from the work on party-building, which has started to take the role of organizational resources seriously and explicitly. See, e.g., LeBas (2011); Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck (2016); Tavits (2013), and Van Dyck (2014). I return to this point in more detail in Chapter 2.



the party will survive. For example, a party that maintains organizational resources – defined as local headquarters, local committees, and, especially, party militants – can utilize them to remain competitive in subnational elections. Parties will perform better in those subnational contests where they retain organizational resources. They survive as subnational electoral entities. A party that has ideational resources – or a stock core of principles or ideas for which the party is broadly known in society – can use those resources to remain a credible voice on certain issues of national importance. Parties rich in ideational resources appear more regularly and frequently in the news cycle. They survive by remaining active participants in the public debate.

These two resource-sets are distinct from other resources upon which parties rely, including money, patronage, and party elites. The latter resources are relatively easy to cultivate in times of electoral success, but they tend to disappear in the wake of electoral crisis. I call these low-cost resources. Organizational and ideational resources, by contrast, require considerable time and energy to cultivate. Yet, they are much more durable to the winds of electoral change. These are high-cost resources. The resilience of high-cost resources allows a party to continue participating in politics after a poor national-electoral turnout. High-cost resources enable party survival.

They also help a party revive. A party with organizational resources spread throughout the country will have a clear, territorial advantage in a political system dominated by regionalized parties. Alternatively, a party rich in ideational resources will have a reputational advantage against personalist parties and electoral movements. In either case, the party's resource wealth helps the party establish a strategic advantage vis-à-vis its competitors, increasing its probability for revival. Not all resources are equally valuable in a particular post-crisis party system. Revival is most likely when a party's resource wealth conforms to the logic of competition that operates after crisis.

Parties that retain distinct resources, therefore, can use them to survive and potentially revive after crisis. In what follows, I measure the resource wealth of the eight parties under investigation at the time when national-electoral crisis strikes. The resource wealth of parties varies dramatically. Yet, as we see moving forward, this variation is not systematic, nor is it attributable to some other cause. Parties have considerable autonomy to decide *if* they will invest in resources and *which* resources they wish to cultivate (Galvin 2012).

In sum, I argue that resources enable party survival and increase the likelihood of party revival. To demonstrate the cogency of these arguments, we must first measure the resources a party has at the time of the crisis. Second, we must analyze how those resources were expended to enable survival and assess whether their use increased the probability of revival. The next section explains the methods I use to undertake each of these tasks.

### Applying the Resource-Based Argument: The Research Design

The arguments on party survival and revival developed here should apply to any party that experiences a sudden and dramatic loss of votes at the national level. Parties that experience this kind of voter rejection undergo a serious existential crisis. Party leaders will feel compelled to act in the face of continued decline and permanent irrelevance. Incentives to survive and revive should immediately set in.

Despite the broad applicability of my argument, I focus my empirical lens in this book on the most dramatic type of national-electoral crisis – that of party-system collapse. Conceptually, party-system collapse occurs when two conditions are met. First, patterns of inter-party competition must be disrupted. Second, the primary actors that constitute the party system must completely change (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012).<sup>8</sup>

In practice, party-system collapse means that all of the major parties are collectively and simultaneously voted out of national office.<sup>9</sup> The national-electoral viability of every major party is, in other words, abruptly suspended. Consequently, each party enters into existential crisis. To date, three countries in Latin America have undergone the

<sup>8</sup> The two primary works on party-system collapse (Morgan 2011 and Seawright 2012) agree that party-system collapse disrupts the patterns of competition among the primary electoral alternatives while also changing the actors that constitute the primary electoral alternatives. For Seawright, however, collapse is a national-executive phenomenon. It occurs when none of the major parties captures first or second place in a presidential election. For Morgan, alternatively, collapse is a legislative phenomenon and occurs when established parties are unable to collectively capture 50 percent of the congressional vote share. This conceptual disagreement aside, it bears mentioning that most scholars agree that collapse occurred in Peru (e.g., Dietz and Myers 2003; Kenney 2003; Tanaka 2006; Seawright 2012), Venezuela (e.g., Dietz and Myers 2003; Kenney 2003; Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012), and Bolivia (e.g., Cyr 2012; Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012).

<sup>9</sup> This *en masse* voter rejection must occur in at most two consecutive elections (Seawright 2012).



experience of party-system collapse. Peru's collapse occurred in the early 1990s; Venezuela's in 1998; and Bolivia's in 2005.<sup>10</sup> I restrict my empirical analysis to the eight parties that were predominant in these party systems and subsequently disappeared as independent, national-electoral entities. These parties include: APRA, PPC, and AP in Peru;<sup>11</sup> AD and COPEI in Venezuela; and MNR, ADN, and *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR) in Bolivia. Individual parties are the study's unit of analysis.

There are good methodological and theoretical reasons for focusing on the parties that underwent the shared experience of party-system collapse in Latin America rather than examining a selection of the more numerous instances of less dramatic national-electoral crisis. For one, by restricting our analysis to instances of party-system collapse, I address those cases where party survival and revival should be *least* likely. Party-system collapse represents the most dramatic type of party-system change (Mair 2006; Seawright 2012). Disenchantment, disgust, and all-out anger must be so pronounced that an entire citizenry simultaneously and collectively becomes risk acceptant (Weyland 2002; Seawright 2012) and votes for

<sup>10</sup> Other party systems, including that of Ecuador and Colombia, have undergone major changes (see, e.g., Mainwaring et al. 2006). Still, there is considerable disagreement over whether these count as instances of collapse. For example, in the 2006 presidential election, the Ecuadorian party system experienced major upheaval. Rafael Correa, a political outsider, was elected president, marking the disappearance of a majority of the country's parties. While, on its own, the election appears to fit the conditions of party-system collapse, I side with the likes of Morgan (2011) and Seawright (2012), who argue that party-system collapse in Ecuador is impossible because a party system never existed to begin with. Its parties were highly regionalized (Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001; Pachano 2005) and had few incentives to coordinate with each other. Consequently, the parties never formed a party system in the Sartorian sense (1976) and therefore could not collapse. Morgan (2011) essentially stands alone in arguing that the Colombian party system collapsed. Although the PL and PC experienced a loss of votes in the 2002 election, both parties continued to capture double-digit votes in the legislative elections that followed. Neither party disappeared from the national party system. Instead, they gave up votes to new party entrants. I therefore consider the Colombian case one of party-system expansion rather than collapse (see, e.g., Seawright 2012, Chapter 2).

<sup>11</sup> I do not include the leftist coalition, *Izquierda Unida* (IU), in this project, although it captured important vote shares throughout the 1980s alongside APRA, PPC, and AP. IU included the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP), Popular Democratic Unity (UDP), and other small, workers' or revolutionary parties. I exclude it because of its coalitional nature. Coalitions include multiple parties or groups. These parties may have multiple, potentially contradictory interests (Przeworski and Sprague 1986) and different party brands (Lupu 2016) to negotiate. In addition to strategically expending resources, therefore, coalitions face an additional hurdle to survival: managing diverse assets and interests and forging a coherent identity. These challenges are analytically distinct to those that independent parties face. It is for this reason that I exclude IU from this analysis.

TABLE 1.1 *The Fates of Parties in Peru, Venezuela, and Bolivia*

Country	Party	Survival as a Subnational Entity	Survival in the Public Debate	Revival
Peru	APRA	✓	✓	✓
	AP	✓		
	PPC			✓ (Reinvention)
Venezuela	AD	✓		✓
	COPEI	✓		
Bolivia	MNR		✓	
	MIR			
	ADN			

unknown rather than known candidates. Party-system collapse, therefore, produces serious obstacles for survival. Anti-party sentiment tends to be pervasive. Politicians will view parties as an impediment for career advancement (Levitsky and Cameron 2003, 2). The media will tend to cover new candidacies more favorably (Conaghan 2005). All told, the convergence of citizen discontent, party-adverse candidates, and a biased media will make the post-collapse political landscape particularly hostile (Tavits 2013) to the formerly predominant parties. By successfully identifying and explaining cases of party survival and revival under such extreme circumstances, I demonstrate the cogency of the arguments developed here (Seawright and Gerring 2008, 303–304). If parties can use their resources to survive under extreme hostility, we may also expect them to survive under less antagonistic circumstances, as when only one party (versus the entire party system) undergoes crisis.

Moreover, the three instances of party-system collapse in Latin America yield a total of eight cases for analysis that exhibit the full range of fates that a party may experience in the aftermath of crisis (Table 1.1). Four parties (APRA, AP, AD, and COPEI) experienced survival as a subnational electoral entity. Two parties (APRA and MNR) survived in the public debate. Three parties (APRA, AD, and PPC) experienced revival, of which one (PPC) revived through the alternative strategy of reinvention.

By comparing fates that vary across and also within countries, I control for many potential variables that could confound the arguments developed here, including the institutional, structural, and cultural factors unique to each country. Yet, by restricting the empirical scope to the Andean region, I exploit enough cross-country similarities to make



comparison viable. I also control for each party's relative importance. In the three countries, one party had an historical role unmet by its counterparts. APRA in Peru, AD in Venezuela, and MNR in Bolivia were uniquely important for their country's political system. But their fates, too, were distinct after party-system collapse (Table 1.1). APRA survived as a subnational electoral entity and as a participant in the public debate. It eventually revived as an independent, unchanged entity. AD survived only as a subnational electoral entity. It, too, revived, although this occurred as part of a larger opposition movement. The MNR survived in the public debate but could not revive.

Scholars might wish to interject here and question my empirical focus on the three instances of party-system collapse in Latin America. They might suggest that no two collapses are the same and that the nature of collapse will affect the probabilities and types of survival and revival that occur. I disagree with this assessment for several reasons. First, several authors (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012; Zoco 2008) have produced major works identifying the common causes of party-system collapse across the cases of interest here and elsewhere (e.g., Italy in 1994). Their explanatory works establishes a precedent for truncating my empirical focus to these cases.

Moreover, as explained above, party-system collapse represents the most traumatic type of party-system change. Patterns of inter-party competition are completely upended. The primary actors in the party system change. Party-system collapse provokes the emergence of a new party system. Survival and revival must occur in that new system. This was true across the three countries under consideration. Consequently, the post-collapse challenges that each set of parties faced were similar. In particular, hostility toward parties was very high.

Yet, despite a similar experience of party-system collapse, the new party system that emerged in each country was markedly different. My argument accounts for these differences and incorporates them into a party's likelihood of revival. All in all, party-system collapse provokes an existential crisis for each of the formerly predominant parties. It levels the playing field for every party that seeks to survive and revive. What varies, as we see moving forward, are the tools upon which each party can rely to survive and revive in the new competitive political landscape.

To demonstrate the cogency of the arguments developed here, the book adopts an integrative mixed-method research design. This kind of research design employs the use of several methods in support of a single causal inference (Seawright 2016, Chapter 1). Unlike with

triangulation, where a researcher uses different types of data to test the same research question, an integrative mixed-method research design taps into the strengths of each data collection method. Although one method produces the final inference, other methods design, refine, or bolster the analysis producing that inference. Therefore, the researcher maximizes each type of method for "what it is especially good at" (Seawright 2016, 16-17).

The theoretical argument developed here identifies multiple pathways that lead to survival and, potentially, revival. This book brandishes evidence for each pathway. It uses different methods to, first, demonstrate the correlation between certain resources and survival and, second, elucidate the mechanisms that connect one step to the next in the causal chain.

For example, to connect a party's organizational resource wealth to survival as a subnational entity, I first measure the organizational resources of each party under investigation. It is notoriously difficult to establish an accurate count of party members, locales, and committees (see, e.g., Duverger 1972; Levitsky 2003). I therefore incorporated multiple sources to code this variable. I used a quantitative survey carried out with a randomly selected group of subnational party leaders (Seawright 2012). This survey gave me an initial sense of the number of organizational resources each party had at the time of collapse.

The advantage of this randomized survey is that the results attained therein were generalizable to the party overall. A weakness is that the results may reflect considerable social desirability bias (King and Bruner 2000), especially if party leaders felt compelled to overstate the extent of their party's resource wealth in their municipality. I therefore refined and bolstered these findings with two additional data sources. First, I carried out interviews with national and subnational party leaders. I asked leaders to evaluate their organizational resource wealth, but also the resource wealth of other parties. Incentives to overstate the assets of *other* parties should be low. I therefore rely on these evaluations to corroborate the survey results. Finally, I undertook a survey with experts in each country. I asked them to assess how widespread each party's resources were. These expert assessments refined the stated spatial distribution of each party's organizational resource wealth. Overall, each additional data source allowed me to refine and bolster the findings of the original survey data.

To measure the ideational resource wealth of each party, I explicitly chose *not* to use data collected via representative surveys. Instead, I opted for a novel, but arguably more appropriate, approach to data collection:



focus groups. A party's ideational wealth is based on notions about the party that exist among the general population. These notions are socially created and reproduced (Ehrlich 1973). It makes sense, therefore, to measure them using focus groups, an inherently social data collection method. One advantage of the focus group is that it reveals the nuanced perceptions that participants can have about complex phenomena (Cyr 2016b). Still, its results are not typically generalizable. Therefore, I bolstered and refined the focus group findings with interviews and secondary sources.

Multiple data sources allow me to connect organizational resource wealth to subnational survival and ideational resource wealth to survival in the public debate. I use process tracing to re-construct the narrative through which these resources were actually exploited to enable survival. This last step, that of process tracing, reveals the mechanisms that connect a party's resource wealth to survival and potential revival.

The book's empirical analysis rests upon multiple types of data collected over several years of fieldwork. In addition to the self-reported party leader survey, the party expert survey, and the focus groups carried out in each country, I carried out more than 130 interviews with national and subnational party leaders across all eight parties, as well as several interviews with academics and other country analysts. I also engaged with a broad set of secondary sources and, where applicable, incorporated my own observations from my time in each country. Overall, the analysis employed a wide range of data collected via a variety of sources. These data allowed me to demonstrate the multiple steps connecting the incentives to survive following national-electoral crisis, to the act of survival, and, in some cases, to revival.

#### The Analysis to Come

The chapters that follow undertake the multiple steps connecting resources to party survival and revival. Chapter 2 explains the importance of adopting a resource-based perspective on parties. It shows that, although resources regularly enter into our explanations of party formation and development, they have received little systematic treatment in the literature. It then identifies and conceptualizes four resource types: material, elite, organizational, and ideational. Furthermore, it categorizes them as either low-cost or high-cost in nature. Low-cost resources are easy to cultivate but difficult to retain, especially in the absence of votes. High-cost resources require more investment to develop but are remarkably sticky once they have been cultivated.

Chapter 3 spells out the multiple steps of the theoretical argument linking the national-electoral collapse of a party to its survival and revival. First, it fully identifies and conceptualizes the survival and revival fates. Then, it argues that high-cost resources are essential for enabling party survival. It further shows that they can be instrumental in increasing a party's likelihood of revival.

The paths to survival and revival are, therefore, a function of the resource wealth that each party has at the time of the national-electoral crisis. Chapters 4–7 turn to the empirical cases to demonstrate the cogency of the theoretical argument. Chapter 4 codes each of the eight parties under investigation in terms of their resource and ideational wealth at the time of national-electoral crisis. The remaining empirical chapters examine the survival and revival paths of every major party in three countries: Peru (Chapter 5); Venezuela (Chapter 6); and Bolivia (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 concludes by, first, applying the arguments developed here to other examples of parties that experienced national-electoral crisis in Latin America and elsewhere. It then provides some final thoughts regarding the implications of the resource-based theory for a party's life cycle.