

**GOVERNING ON THE LEFT: ESSAYS ON GOVERNANCE AND PARTY  
DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA**

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES  
(Political Science)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
(Vancouver)

June 2022

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Governing on the Left: Essays on Governance and Party Development in Contemporary Latin America

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submitted by Fabio Resmini in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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## Abstract

This dissertation is comprised of three chapters that explore the governance challenges of left-wing presidents in Latin America and the instrumental role that political parties play in solving these challenges. It builds on extensive fieldwork in Ecuador and Bolivia and interviews with former ministers, congresspeople, party officials, media owners, journalists, and experts.

Chapter 2 looks at the widespread phenomenon of personalist electoral vehicles and examines why some develop into full-fledged organized parties while others do not. Through a mixed-method approach combining process tracing on the case studies of Venezuela's *MVR/PSUV* and Ecuador's *Alianza PAIS* and large-N statistical analysis, the chapter finds that leaders' formative political experiences shape whether such parties decide to invest in party organization. Party officials that were socialized in radical left parties early in their career are more likely to advocate for party building and their presence within party cadres is associated with stronger party organization.

Chapter 3 explains variation in the communication strategies of left-wing incumbents in response to hostile media environments. Through process-tracing of the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, the chapter finds that the composition of governing parties' core constituencies shapes the communication strategy of left governments. Parties whose core constituencies are unorganized lack societal channels of communication with the electorate and are forced to create and use state-controlled media structures to disseminate information. On the contrary, parties that draw support from organized constituencies take advantage of affiliated societal organizations to communicate with their electoral base, and do not depend on mediatized communication.

Chapter 4 explains the dramatic downfall of *Alianza PAIS*, the most electorally successful party in Ecuador's recent history. It shows how, after his switch to a neoliberal policy agenda, President Moreno (2017-2021) dismantled his own party by starving it of the resources necessary to thrive. The chapter marshals evidence from interviews, newspaper articles, and roll call votes to demonstrate how three conditions were causally important for this outcome to happen: the top-down structure of the party, the support Moreno received from the opposition, and the fact that *Alianza PAIS* represented a future threat to Moreno's policy legacy.

## Lay Summary

This dissertation is composed of three chapters on the development of left-wing governing political parties in Latin America. Chapter 2 explores why some personalist parties grow to become strong parties while others remain weak. Findings suggest that the presence of party officials who engaged in radical left partisan activism early in their career makes party building more likely. Chapter 3 investigates the different communication strategies governments undertake when they face a hostile media. It finds that, while governments that have strong political parties use them to communicate with their constituents, governments that have weak political parties are forced to rely on state-controlled media to do the same. Chapter 4 seeks to explain the collapse of Ecuador's ruling party *Alianza PAIS*. Findings show that party leader Moreno allied with the opposition and deliberately dismantled the party because he considered it a threat to his new policy agenda.

## **Preface**

This dissertation comprises original work. Fieldwork interviews were approved by the UBC Behavioral Research Ethics Board (application #H19-00374).

Chapter 2 was co-authored with Dr. Jared Abbott (Ph.D. Harvard 2020), a postdoc at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research at Tulane University. We contributed equally to the development of the relevant research questions and research design. I cleaned the data from the PELA-USAL dataset, while Jared merged it with the V-Dem party dataset and ran the statistical analysis. Jared wrote the case study of Venezuela, the discussion of the results from the statistical analysis, and generated the graphics for the chapter. I wrote the bulk of introduction, discussion of relevant literature, theoretical framework, case selection and methods, the case study of Ecuador, discussion of alternative explanations. We contributed equally to the conclusion. The chapter was presented at the annual conference of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) in May of 2022. Interviews conducted by Jared in Venezuela were approved under Harvard University's IRB protocol IRB18-1237.

Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5 of this dissertation were constructed entirely by me. I formulated the research questions, discussed the relevant literature, and collected and analyzed the data. Earlier versions of the chapters were presented at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research at Tulane University.

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## Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the culmination of a long intellectual journey. First of all, I would like to thank Dr. Alan Jacobs for taking me under his wing and provided me with plenty of opportunities to grow professionally and intellectually. Alan never drew boundaries to the topics I could explore and encouraged me to put my voice into my work.

I would like to thank Dr. Max Cameron for encouraging me when I was taking my first steps into the study of Latin American politics and for introducing me to key pieces of scholarly work that still inform my thinking about the region. Likewise, I am thankful to Dr. Katherine Reilly for enthusiastically accepting my invitation to participate in the committee and for always pushing me to be bolder in my theoretical statements. I also would like to thank Dr. Lisa Sundstrom for believing in me since the very beginning of my UBC adventure. If it hadn't been for her initial support, none of this would have been possible. I wish to thank everyone at the Department of Political Science at UBC, the staff and Josephine Calazan in particular, who have always been friendly, professional, and humane.

The fieldwork necessary for this dissertation was particularly arduous due to a quite unique combination of factors: the social and political turmoil following the implementation of austerity measures in Ecuador, a coup in Bolivia, and a global pandemic. I would not have been able to conduct the interviews that I needed without the help of great people I met in Vancouver, Guayaquil, Quito, and La Paz. My dear friend Diego Bastidas, Augusto Verduga and the collective "La Kolmena," Carol Murillo from the *Universidad Central del Ecuador*, and Hugo Pereyra, Consul of Peru in Guayaquil, made my interviews in Ecuador happen; Linda Farthing, Daniel Agramont from the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* foundation, and Ricardo Bajo from *Radio*

*Illimani* did the same in Bolivia. This dissertation would have been impossible without the helpfulness of all of my interviewees, who patiently answered my questions and shared their knowledge and invaluable experience, and of the Orozco family in Piura and Lima, who hosted me and cheered me up in between fieldwork trips. I also wish to acknowledge the support I received from the Sutton McGregor Doctoral Student Research Award in Political Science, which partly funded my fieldwork.

Over the last academic year, I was a Pre Doctoral Fellow at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research at Tulane University. Here I met an extraordinary group of scholars who provided me with excellent feedback on previous versions of the chapters included in this dissertation. I thank them for it. Jared Abbott, a great colleague and co-author on one of the chapters, deserves a particular mention.

I wish to thank the wonderful people I met in Vancouver and that I can now call my friends: Dominique, who convinced me to embark on this intellectual trip to Latin America, Byron, Dani, Daniel, Josh, Michelle & Pippo, Roberto, and Don Eduardo Olivares at *Latino Soy*. A special thought goes to Óscar Villalobos, poeta y luchador, who lived long enough to see his Chile rise up and shatter the legacy of the dictatorship.

Finally, I would like to thank my *necessary* conditions: my friends from beautiful Cassina, gli amici dei parchi Bezzin, Derry, Dilan, Duca, Faas, Frenk, John, Miguel, Nic, Nezi, Riz, Shud, Tab, for always making me feel like I never left; mio fratello Mauro, my trailblazer, for paving the way for all of this, and Vivi (and Camillone!) for loving him; mia mamma Lia e mio papà Renato, for giving me everything and making all of this possible; and my wife Zará, for explaining me all I know about Latin America, for always believing in me even when I don't, and for sticking by my side through riots, coups, pandemics, and hurricanes. Thank you,

Lucrecia, for such a beautiful gift. Finally, I can't help but think about my grandparents, who passed down to me their passion for politics and their political commitment. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

*Ai miei nonni – Gianna, Gino, Maria e Paolo.*

*E al loro antifascismo.*



## 1 Introduction

Over the last two decades, the election of left-wing governments<sup>1</sup> all over Latin America has inaugurated a new period of dispute between different developmental paradigms. Progressive candidates were swept into power on the promise of overcoming the neoliberal developmental model that fostered gross inequality and socioeconomic exclusion in the periphery of the world capitalist system (Silva 2009). In their attempt to transition away from neoliberalism, these new governing coalitions had to face the reaction from powerful socioeconomic sectors, who defended the economic and political structures that guaranteed their privilege. This backlash gave rise to intense conflict and polarization between governments and popular sector organizations on one side and business elites and right-wing political forces on the other.

The dispute over the developmental model entailed a distributional conflict that heightened polarization and created problems of *governability* for the newly elected left governments. For the first time since the beginning of the neoliberal wave, governments had to face often unified opposition from powerful unelected actors within and outside the state, who are traditionally aligned with right-wing agendas. State security forces – i.e. the military and the police – have routinely engaged in threat or use of violence to overthrow democratically elected left governments (Rittinger and Cleary 2013). The oligopolistic private media, whose owners took advantage of neoliberal market de-regulation and amicable relations with governments to amass ownership (Fox 1988; Fox and Waisbord 2002; Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez 2014),

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<sup>1</sup> I consider as left wing those parties that are ideologically committed to the values of equality and solidarity and make class appeals to subordinate popular sectors (Huber and Stephens 2012).

have also been historically opposed and often outright hostile to left-wing forces, to the point of passively supporting and even actively participating in coup plots (Cannon 2016).

The confrontation between governments and this array of powerful opposition forces has produced political instability. Between 2000 and 2020, left-wing presidents in Latin America suffered four military or police-led coups attempts (Venezuela 2002, Honduras 2009, Ecuador 2010, and Bolivia 2019)<sup>2</sup> and two controversial impeachments – sometimes defined as “parliamentary coups” (Paraguay 2008, Brazil 2016). This wave of attacks on the executive came after a decade that saw only one coup, the lowest number in over a century (Moreno and Figueroa 2019). At the same time, left-wing presidents were not mere passive victims of this political warfare, as demonstrated by the self-coup perpetrated by Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela 2017) and the numerous accusations against Rafael Correa (Ecuador 2007-2017), Cristina Fernández (Argentina 2007-2015), and Evo Morales (Bolivia 2006-2019) of weakening mechanisms of horizontal accountability.

These challenges to governability and threats of removal posed two main *governance dilemmas* for Latin American left presidents. The first dilemma concerned the *policy content* of governmental action – in particular, decisions around which policies to pursue and which to compromise on in order to appease or avoid backlash from powerful opposition sectors. This dilemma has been extensively explored, especially regarding welfare and taxation policy (Reygadas and Filgueira 2009; Flores-Macías 2010; Pribble 2013; Campello 2015; Fairfield 2015; Koivumaeki 2015, among others).

The second dilemma, which has gathered less attention, revolved around the political strategy that left governments adopted to sustain governmental action and attain their policy

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of “coup” in relation to the events in Bolivia and Ecuador is debated. For more in-depth discussions of the two cases, see Farthing and Becker (2021) and Becker (2016), respectively.

goals. In particular, I refer to the governing parties' strategies with regards to their *organizational capacity*, which can be strengthened by establishing linkages with societal organizations and by investing in the construction of political parties. Because political organization provides a solution to collective action problems and facilitates coordinated political action (Aldrich 1995; Kitschelt 2000), an increased organizational capacity constitutes an advantage in terms of power of mobilization – both electoral and extra-electoral – in defense of the government and its policies. Arguably, governments with a more organized social base have more leeway to implement their policy agenda and more resources to defend their policy legacy. However, building up organizational capacity entails high costs with uncertain results. Alliance with societal organizations often implies ceding decision-making autonomy to directly incorporate these social actors in the policy process, and building party organization requires investing resources in a lengthy process with uncertain long-term returns.

This dissertation explores questions related to this latter dilemma – the organizational strategies of left governments – with a specific focus on the role of party organization. While in democratic context parties have been traditionally conceived as organizations that act as channels for societal representation and collective interests (Sartori 1976; Luna et al. 2021, among others), in autocracies they have been treated as institutions the regime turns to in order to increase its chances of survival (Geddes 1999; Smith 2005; Magaloni 2006; Brownlee 2007; Gandhi 2008). The conception of political organization I adopt in this dissertation cuts across these two notions. I emphasize the role of political parties as *instruments* in the hands of governments, who, precisely because of the *democratic* context in which they operate and the uncertainties it entails, might decide to invest in political organization to provide coordinated support to their policy action and strengthen themselves vis-à-vis their political and social opponents. This conception

of political parties seems particularly relevant in the current historical context of generalized party weakness, where a significant number of candidates reach the national executive running on electoral vehicles with little to no organizational structure.

There is great variation in how much importance governments give to political organization and how much organized political support they muster. *When and why do incumbents invest resources into party building? What functions can parties fulfill for incumbents? When do parties become redundant or even counterproductive for incumbents?* These are some of the questions this dissertation seeks to answer.

What emerges from the findings of this dissertation is that incumbents are more likely to invest in party building when they face opposition from powerful social actors and they lack an adequate organizational backing from social movements to endure the conflict. Organizational capacity – whether sourced through linkages with social movements or through territorial party organization – constitutes a strategic advantage for governments vis-à-vis the opposition, as it allows them to mobilize support in favor of their policy agenda and counteract attempts at policy reversal. As a result, political organization is necessary for any government who seeks not only to restructure the country’s developmental model and the political, social, and economic structures that sustain it, but to ensure that these changes will be long-lasting.

Conversely, incumbents find parties to be redundant or even detrimental to their agenda when they enjoy the support of powerful social actors – such as economic elites, the security apparatus, and the mass media. With these actors on their side, incumbents face much more limited challenges to governability and threat of removal. As a result, party organization tends to appear to incumbents mostly as a constraint on their action with little strategic advantage.

The dissertation also brings attention to an overlooked function fulfilled by political parties and their linkages with societal organization – the communicative function. My findings show that organization can work as a channel of communication between state and society and allow governments to disseminate political information to their constituents without depending on the oligopolistic private media, which often use their gatekeeping role for political purposes.

This dissertation situates itself at the intersection between the literature on political regimes (esp. O’Donnell 1994, 2010) and the literature on interest intermediation (Collier and Collier 1991; Silva and Rossi 2018). My argument starts from the idea that in Latin American polities presidents are “constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations” (O’Donnell 1994: 59). Given the wide room for maneuver that incumbents have, it should be apparent that the organizational strategy that they pursue influences the nature of the political regime – that is, what mediates relations between the state and society – and the way and degree to which societal interests that the incumbents represents will guide governmental decision-making and policy action.

This dissertation focuses on three governing parties: the *Movimiento Al Socialismo* (MAS) in Bolivia (2006-2019), the *Movimiento Alianza PAIS* (AP) in Ecuador (2007-2021), and the *Movimiento V República/Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (MVR/PSUV) in Venezuela (1998-2013). All three cases came to the fore and were swept into power as a result of the wave of anti-neoliberal mobilization of the 1990s and 2000s but differed greatly in their organizational capacity. In particular, the three cases exemplify three different *trajectories* of organizational development over time: the MAS was born and remained strongly organized, AP was born weakly organized and was ultimately dismantled, and the MVR/PSUV was born weakly organized but developed into strongly organized ruling party.

Among the three cases, *Alianza PAIS* occupies a central role in the analysis because it is particularly revealing of the short and long-term consequences of organizational weakness. Born as a personalist electoral vehicle, AP was the political instrument of the Correa government, which pursued a program of sociopolitical change with widespread popular support but abstained from cultivating organizational capacity. The neglect of the organizational issue created problems of governability and condemned Correa's extensive post-neoliberal reforms to be wiped out while his social bases were demobilized and unable to oppose the policy reversal. Tellingly enough, the neoliberal realignment of Ecuador was carried out by Correa's former vice-president and hand-picked successor, Lenín Moreno, who turned on his former co-partisans and allied with the right-wing and business sectors to cancel the political and economic legacy of *Correísmo*. Moreno's bait-and-switch move was made possible by the absence of organized party bases that could mobilize to keep AP's new leader accountable for his campaign promises. On the contrary, Moreno found immediate support in the abovementioned powerful unelected powers – state security forces and the media – which rallied behind his governmental action and ensured governability, crucially during the indigenous anti-neoliberal mobilization of October 2019. For that reason, Moreno did not need a party to buttress the organizational capacity of his government and actually strove to dismantle AP, the party that brought him to power and that constituted a potential threat to the survival of the neoliberal order in Ecuador.

The Bolivian MAS and Venezuelan MVR/PSUV, on the contrary, are cases of parties with stronger organization. The MAS is an example of mass mobilization party endowed with great organizational capacity and demonstrates what happens when a party is not built from the top down but from the bottom up, and on the basis of a tight-knit network of social movements. The MAS was born in the mid-1990s out of rural popular sector organizations such as peasant

and indigenous groups, and it progressively encompassed other societal organizations as it started to gain ground into the cities and gather the consensus of urban sectors. Throughout its trajectory in government the MAS never lost its organic linkages with social movements and maintained an outstanding mobilization capacity (Anria 2019). This capacity allowed the MAS to survive a coup in November 2019 and the repression unleashed by the following de facto government of Jeanine Áñez. The MAS then managed to win the 2020 elections with a new presidential ticket that did not include its historical leader Evo Morales.

By contrast, the initial trajectory of the MVR/PSUV is remarkably similar to that of AP. The MVR/PSUV was created as a mere electoral vehicle to support the candidacy of its leader – Hugo Chávez. Similarly to his Ecuadorian counterpart, Chávez governed the first few years without any significant organizational structure to lean on. However, the developmental trajectory of the MVR/PSUV diverged from that of AP when the Chávez administration endowed itself with a thicker organizational texture by building a strong party and more permanent linkages with societal organizations. The combination of organizational capacity and support from the military played a key role in the continuity of the *Chavista* regime after the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013, as it allowed his successor Nicolás Maduro to break vertical accountability with a self-coup against the opposition-led National Assembly without the threat of being overthrown. An analysis of the PSUV under Maduro, however, lies outside the scope of this work.

This dissertation is organized as a collection of three chapters, which are ordered according to an almost temporal sequence. The first chapter explores the question of party building and the reasons behind leaders' decision to invest in party organization. The second chapter investigates the communication challenges of parties that lack organizational linkages

with society as an instance of the problems of governability that weakly organized parties are confronted with. The third chapter examines how neoliberal restoration led to the destruction of a governing party that had no significant degree of autonomy from the executive and whose social bases were largely unorganized. In parallel, the chapters recount the birth, life, and death of AP as a cautionary tale of what happens when weakly organized parties undertake radical transformative projects.

The first chapter, coauthored with Jared Abbott, asks why and when personalist electoral vehicles – i.e. parties that are created ad hoc to support the candidacy of their leader – develop into full-fledged political parties. By combining in-depth analysis of the case studies of Ecuador (2007-2017) and Venezuela (1998-2013) with a large-N statistical analysis, the chapter finds that a key explanatory variable for the organizational development of personalist electoral vehicles lies in the presence among party cadres of what we call party militants – i.e. party officials who were socialized into radical left-wing parties early in their political careers. Given their formative political experiences, these party officials are more likely to advocate for party building, and their degree of density within the party leadership will positively influence the party’s organizational strength. The theoretical framework of the chapter combines this socialization-ideational variable with conditions identified by the literature as conducive to party building. What emerges from the study is that polarization and conflict can lead to party building (and thus to efforts to increase the government’s organizational capacity) conditional on the presence of party militants who actively advocate for it.

The second chapter asks what explains variation communication strategies across left-wing governments. The chapter adopts a historical institutionalist approach to argue that the prior organizational legacies of left-wing governing parties shape their communication strategies and



the degree of reliance on state-controlled media structures. The chapter problematizes the role of the private media and understands its bias in favor of right-wing and business sectors as a central political and governance challenge for left-wing governments in the region. Through mobilization of qualitative evidence from interviews with key decisionmakers in Bolivia and Ecuador, the chapter is able to show that the heavy reliance on state media that we observe in a number of left-wing governments in the region – such as that of Rafael Correa in Ecuador (2007-2017) – is a consequence of the lack of organizational linkages to communicate with their constituents. On the contrary, the less media-intensive strategies – such as that of the Morales government in Bolivia (2006-2019) – have their rationale in the government’s capacity to communicate with constituents via affiliated societal organizations and party structures. The main contribution that this chapter seeks to make is to show how social and political organizations fulfill an important yet understated communicative function.

Like the first chapter, the third takes a voluntarist approach to the study of party development, and investigates the dramatic and puzzling downfall of *Alianza PAIS*, arguably the most electorally successful party in the history of Ecuador. How could a dominant party collapse while being in government? Through the use of interviews with high-ranking AP officials and journalistic accounts, the chapter reconstructs the deliberate strategy undertaken by President Lenín Moreno (2017-2021) after his abrupt neoliberal turn to starve his own party of resources and ultimately dismantle it. Evidence is marshaled to show that the top-down structure of AP and the support of the opposition allowed Moreno to launch an assault on the formally governing party, which given its connections with *Correismo* represented a threat to the future viability of Moreno’s neoliberal reforms. This chapter explores the other side of the instrumental use of parties, i.e. what happens to them when they become a complication .

Except for the statistical analysis in the second chapter, I support my arguments mainly through in-depth qualitative analysis of the case studies and the use of the process-tracing technique. Process tracing is particularly suited to exploring, identifying, and testing new theoretical arguments (Collier 2011), such as the ones that I am advancing in this dissertation. Moreover, the causal mechanisms I examine hinge on the strategic decision making of key government and party officials, and on their motivations and preferences. The focus on elite decisionmakers, on the one hand, limited the possibility of using experimental methods, forcing me to stay within the “observational realm”; on the other hand, it called for a methodology that allowed me to empirically test my theories against evidence drawn from these actors’ first-person testimonies, or from their actual behavior (especially costly signaling) in case they had incentives to misrepresent their true motivations or if their motivations could not be tapped through interviews.

Indeed, while they were not my only source of evidence, interviews were crucial for the empirical research included in this dissertation. The core of the evidence on which this dissertation is built was collected through 70 interviews conducted in Spanish during four months of fieldwork in Ecuador and Bolivia between September and December 2019, and two additional rounds of interviews conducted online in May and June 2020 and in November and December 2021. Interviewees comprise three broad groups: (1) government and party officials and (2) media actors and (3) experts and civil society actors. The different interview guides and the list of interviewees can be found in Appendix C and D.

The political and social turmoil that Bolivia and Ecuador were going through during the period between September and December 2019 presented additional challenges in carrying out fieldwork. The accusations of electoral fraud and the subsequent coup in Bolivia in October-

November made getting in contact with MAS government officials extremely complicated. Likewise, the indigenous protests in Ecuador in early October disrupted my research. Luckily, I was able to conduct some of the interviews in September. My plans to go back to Bolivia and Ecuador in 2020 to continue fieldwork were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, thanks to the contact I made while on the field and the availability of the interviewees, I was able to complete my interviews online in 2020 and 2021.

## **2 Get the Party Started: Party Socialization, Party Building, and the Fate of Personalist Parties in Latin America**

*with Jared Abbott*

### **2.1 Introduction**

Recent scholarly work on political parties has made strides in identifying mechanisms that lead to successful party building (e.g. Levitsky et al. 2016). There is, however, an increasingly large subset of cases that has been understudied – that of personalist electoral vehicles, i.e. parties that are created *ad hoc* to support the candidacy of their leader. These parties are characterized by a high concentration of power in a dominant leader and start out with very little (if any) organizational structure or organizational inheritance from social movements. Personalist parties are remarkably widespread. Examples can be found in both authoritarian and democratic contexts all over the world (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014) – from Africa (Van den Bosch 2021), to Europe (Gunther 2005; Levitt and Kostadinova 2014; Pasquino 2014), to the post-Soviet space (Isaacs and Whitmore 2014; Isaacs 2020).

Latin America is an ideal region to study personalist parties. Its tradition of *caudillismo*, a particular form of personalist rule that persists to this day, makes personalist parties especially common in the region. In some countries – like Colombia (Albarracín et al. 2018) and Peru (Levitsky 2018) – the personalization of politics is so pervasive that most if not all parties are personalist electoral vehicles. In other countries, personalism is more prominent in certain sectors of the party system: third parties in Argentina (Gervasoni 2018), the opposition to the

MAS in Bolivia, and the two main party contenders – Guillermo Lasso’s and Rafael Correa’s – in Ecuador.

Because the *raison d’être* of personalist vehicles is to support the political ambitions of a leader, they wager everything on the leader’s popularity and capacity to win votes, which makes them less likely to build organization (Gunther and Diamond 2003; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014). Personalist parties depend primarily on the charismatic authority of their leaders to connect with voters and sustain electoral coalitions. As a result, mass media is the primary means through which personalist parties convey messages to constituents, making organization building a worthless investment (Levitsky and Cameron 2003).

However, some personalist vehicles do develop a strong organizational structure and transform into full-fledged political parties. On the one hand, there are parties like Costa Rica’s *Movimiento Libertario* (ML) and Guatemala’s *Partido Unionista* (PU), which have competed in national elections continuously for over twenty years but remain among the weakest and poorly organized parties in Latin America. On the other hand, there are personalist parties like Panama’s *Centro Democrático* (CD) and El Salvador’s *Gran Alianza por la Unidad Nacional* (GANU). These parties have also competed in national elections for decades, but, unlike the ML and PU, they have experienced dramatic increases in the strength of their party organization. For example, according to V-Dem data, CD has seen an over five-fold increase in its local level party presence over the past two decades and has more than doubled the extent of its local-level party organizing efforts. Today CD is the second largest party in Panama.

How can we explain the divergent outcomes of these personalist parties, which, according to most accounts, should be much more limited than we observe empirically? We propose a theory of party building that moves beyond structural explanations to include actors’

preference and beliefs about the importance of party organization. We argue that party elites' formative political experiences shape whether personalist parties decide to invest in party organization. We posit that when party officials start their political careers – and are thus socialized politically – in radical left parties, they are more likely to advocate for party building than other politicians. This difference is explained by the fact that radical-left parties, steeped in Marxist and Leninist theories that place a high value on the importance of party organization, are more likely than other parties to instill a commitment to party building in their leaders. We thus expect that a strong presence of these party officials – who we call party militants – within party cadres will lead to stronger party organization.

To assess the plausibility of our theory, we take a mixed-method approach. We first systematically process-trace the evolution of the party-building initiatives of two personalist parties – Venezuela's *Movimiento V República/Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (MVR/PSUV) and Ecuador's *Alianza PAIS* (AP). We select these cases because they present extreme values on the independent variable (Seawright 2016) and similar values in all the other variables identified by the literature as causally relevant for party building. Evidence was collected through 103 in-depth interviews with high-ranking party officials, cabinet ministers, party activists, journalists, and academics, and through newspaper articles and party documents. We use process tracing because the lack of exogenous variation in leaders' socialization into radical left parties prevents us from specifying the direction of causal effects without the assistance of careful within-case qualitative analysis.

Both MVR/PSUV and AP were born as skeletal electoral vehicles to support the candidacy of a charismatic outsider, but while the MVR/PSUV managed to build a strong, enduring organizational apparatus and convert itself into one of the most successful parties in

Latin America, AP did not make substantial progress in its organizational structure and collapsed precipitously after dominating Ecuadorian politics for a decade. We show how structural conditions play a role in decreasing and increasing the salience of the party-building issue within party decision-making circles, but stress that it was ultimately the prominence of party militants in the Venezuelan case what determined the success of party-building efforts.

Finally, to assess the external validity of our theory for personalist parties across Latin America, we constructed a unique dataset of 359 party-term observations based on 8551 unique interviews with legislators from across Latin America that we have mapped onto 101 parties' degree of organizational strength between 1993 and 2021. Consistent with our expectations, we find that as the share of party leaders who started their political careers in a radical-left party increases, so too does parties' organizational strength. Further, while we find evidence that radical-left socialization is positively correlated with party organization for *all* parties in Latin America, the relationship is particularly robust among personalist parties.

This article seeks to fill a gap in the literature on party building by developing a theoretical framework to account for the evolution of personalist parties, which combines macro and meso structural conditions identified in the literature with micro-level variables concerning the preferences of decisionmakers. In this way, this article brings to light a new mechanism to explain variation in party-building outcomes – one which gives prominence to ideational factors, in particular to party officials' beliefs regarding the usefulness of party organization. This study shows how these beliefs – informed by socialization processes occurring during past left party activism – guide actors' strategic decision making and shape the developmental path of political organizations.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we discuss the limitations of the existing literature in explaining variation in personalist party-building success and the overlooked role of actors' preferences and beliefs originating from past party socialization. Second, we put forward a theory of how personalist parties can develop from personalist vehicles to full-fledged political organizations. Third, we explain our case selection and methodology, drawing a set of observable implications from our theory. We then test our theory on the cases of Venezuela's MVR/PSUV and Ecuador's AP, and address one possible alternative explanation. Finally, we assess the external validity of our findings through a large-N analysis. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

## **2.2 Unexplained variation in personalist party development**

Much of the classic literature on political parties has taken party building for granted, often assuming that democracy naturally fosters it. This argument has a supply-side version – positing that politicians are incentivized to “turn to parties” to achieve collective and personal goals (Aldrich 1995) – and a demand-side one – showing how partisan attachments develop as a result of repeated elections (Campbell et al. 1960). These accounts were mostly based on studies of the United States and Western Europe, where political parties took root and party systems institutionalized across the board. The case of Latin America provides little empirical evidence for this assumption, as four decades of uninterrupted elections have produced comparatively few cases of successful party building (Levitsky et al. 2016).

A more recent strand of literature – plus a few earlier pioneers – have problematized the idea that institutional incentives and repeated interactions lead to strong parties, and have identified more specific conditions to account for the wide variation in party-building outcomes



across the globe. Some authors have focused on the role of polarization and conflict to explain the emergence of stable parties (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Huntington 1968; Levitsky et al. 2016). Others have emphasized the availability of preexisting organizational structures (LeBas 2011; Levitsky et al. 2016; Barndt 2016; Loxton 2021) and the importance of grassroots organizations and links to organized civil society (Samuels and Zucco 2015; Anria 2019; Pérez Bentancur et al. 2020) as factors fostering party development. Scholars have also identified positive incentives for party building – such as the presence of extraelectoral threats (Kalyvas 1996; Roberts 2006) – and negative ones – e.g. access to state resources (Shefter 1994; McGuire 1997; Hale 2006; Van Dyck 2016) and the mass media (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Van Dyck 2016).

Despite this flourishing of scholarship on the determinants of party building, variation in the fate of one increasingly prevalent class of parties – personalist electoral vehicles – remains underexamined. These parties are born specifically to support the candidacy of a leader to executive office. The origin of personalist parties leaves them with two distinct birthmarks: (1) a high degree of concentration of decision-making power in the leader and (2) a low degree of organization.

Personalism and party organization seem to be irremediably at odds with each other. With the exception of Andrews-Lee (2021), who contends that charismatic leadership itself can spur successful party building, existing theories of party building assume that parties with a high degree of personalism have little incentives to invest in organization. Yet, many such parties do successfully build stronger organization (Roberts 2006). Indeed, in the Latin American context there is a great deal of variation in the organizational strength of personalist parties, suggesting that personalism and party organization are not necessarily incompatible.

As we show in Table 1 and Figure 1, the 34 personalist parties we identified in Latin America between 1993 and 2021 vary dramatically with respect to party organization and endurance. In keeping with our definition of personalist parties as parties that show a high degree of power concentration in the hands of a dominant leader, we use the V-Dem Party Dataset party personalization index to identify them. The index is generated by experts' answers to the question "To what extent is this party a vehicle for the personal will and priorities of one individual leader?" and ranges from 0 ("*not focused* on the personal will and priorities of one individual leader") to 4 ("*solely focused* on the personal will and priorities of one individual leader"). We identify as personalist those parties that score in the top two deciles of the index. To specifically capture parties that were created as personalist vehicles to support the political ambition of a leader (as opposed to those that descended into personalism at a later point in their lives), we coded as personalist only those parties that score within the top two deciles of the personalization index in the first year for which the score available and if that year falls within five years of the party's foundation.

Table 1 demonstrates that personalist parties range from flash in the pan parties that exist only to elect a presidential candidate in a single election, to parties that compete effectively for decades. Some personalist parties never achieve more than a few percent of the vote in national elections while others dominate national politics for years and send multiple candidates to the presidency. In turn, Figure 1 plots how widespread local party offices are in each country against how active parties' organizational apparatus is at the local level for all parties in Latin America, which we divide into personalist (plotted in red) and non-personalist (plotted in gray) parties. The plot shows that, while personalist parties are relatively weak on average – as expected given

their dependence on a single leader – they can nonetheless be found across the distribution of party organizational strength.

**Table 1. Personalist parties in Latin America (1993-2021)**

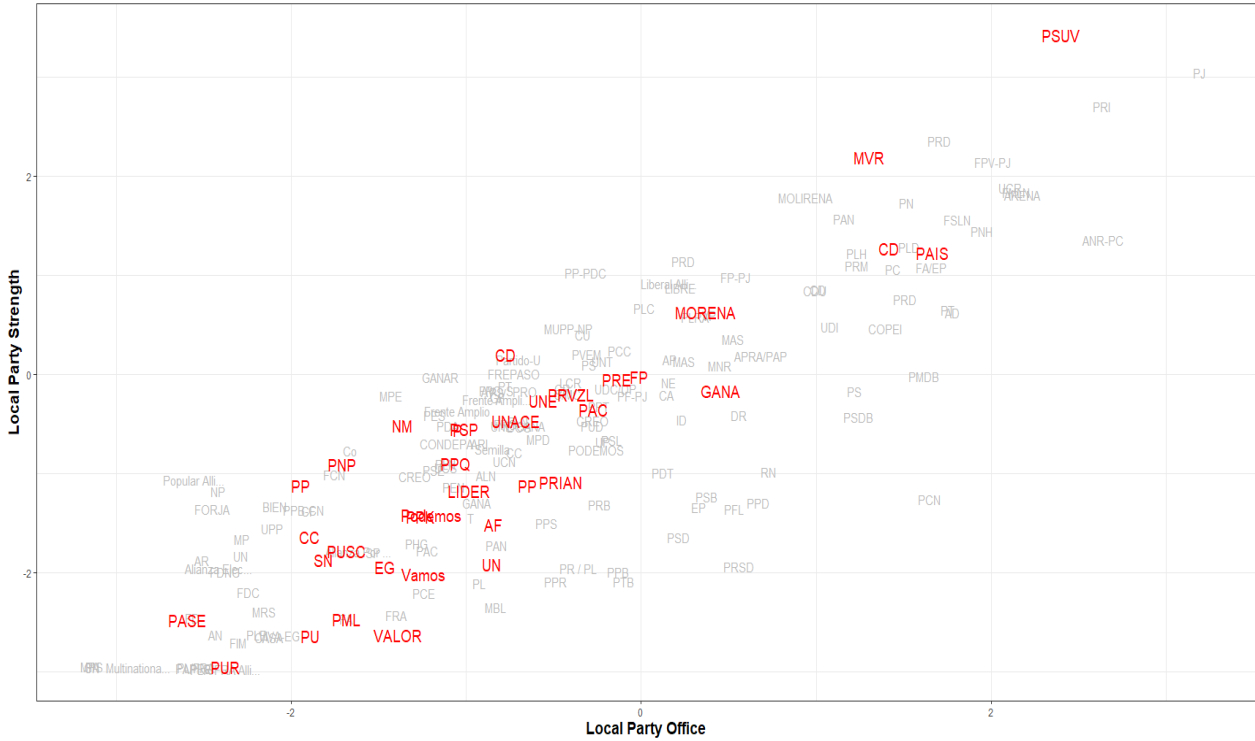
<b>Party</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Consecutive Elections 10% National Vote Share</b>	<b>Won National Executive ?</b>
Alianza por el Futuro	Perú	1	No
Comunidad Ciudadana	Bolivia	2	No
Centro Democrático	Colombia	1	Yes
Encuentro por Guatemala	Guatemala	0	No
Frente Republicano Guatemalteco/ Partido Republicano Institucional	Guatemala	5	Yes
Fuerza Popular	Perú	2	No
Gran Alianza por la Unidad Nacional	El Salvador	3	Yes
Libertad Democrática Renovada	Guatemala	1	No
Movimiento Libertario	Costa Rica	2	No
Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional	México	1	Yes
Movimiento Patria Querida	Paraguay	1	No
Movimiento Quinta República/ Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela	Venezuela	6	Yes
Movimiento Alianza PAIS (Patria Altiva i Soberana)	Ecuador	4	Yes
Partido Anticorrupción de Honduras	Honduras	1	No
Partido Nacionalista Peruano	Perú	1	Yes
Partido Patriota	Guatemala	3	Yes
Podemos	Bolivia	1	No
Podemos Perú	Perú	2	Yes
Peruanos Por el Kambio	Perú	1	Yes
Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano	Ecuador	8	Yes

<b>Party</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Consecutive Elections 10% National Vote Share</b>	<b>Won National Executive ?</b>
Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional	Ecuador	2	No
Proyecto Venezuela	Venezuela	0	No
Partido Sociedad Patriótica	Ecuador	3	Yes
Partido Unidad Social Cristiana	Costa Rica	7	Yes
Partido Unionista	Guatemala	0	No
Partido Unidad Republicana	Ecuador	0	Yes
Perú Posible	Perú	1	Yes
Partido Solidaridad Nacional	Perú	2	No
VALOR	Guatemala	0	No
Vamos	Guatemala	1	Yes
Unión del Cambio Nacional	Guatemala	0	No
Frente de Unidad Nacional	Bolivia	1	No
Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos	Paraguay	2	No
Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza	Guatemala	4	Yes

*Source:* Author's compilation. Data from V-Dem Party Dataset.

*Note:* Personalist parties are coded as any party scoring in the top 20% of V-Dem's party personalism score when the party was founded. Since there is often a discrepancy between year of party foundation and the first year personalism scores are available in the V-Dem dataset, we code cases as personalist if they score within the top 20% of V-Dem's party personalism score for the first year a personalism score is available in the dataset and if that year falls within five years of the party's foundation.

**Figure 1. Distribution of political parties according to levels of party organization in Latin America (1993-2021)**



*Source:* Author’s compilation. Data from V-Dem Party Dataset.  
*Note:* Personalist parties are plotted in red, other parties are plotted in gray. Personalist parties are coded as any party scoring in the top 20% of V-Dem’s party personalism score when the party was founded. Since there is often a discrepancy between year of party foundation and the first year personalism scores are available in the V-Dem dataset, we code cases as personalist if they score within the top 20% of V-Dem’s party personalism score for the first year a personalism score is available in the dataset and if that year falls within five years of the party’s foundation. The X axis reports the extent to which parties have local offices across the country, while the Y axis reports the extent to which parties have active local-level party organizations across the country. Reported scores are party averages across all available years.

To explain variation in the party-building capacity of personalist parties, we argue it is necessary to open the black box of party organization (Levitsky 2001) and look at party leadership’s preferences and decision making. As Roberts (2006: 128) notes, leader preferences are particularly salient in the case of personalist parties since they concentrate so much decision-making authority at the top. Except for a few cases, existing explanations of party building have

underscored the importance of exogenous political and social environmental factors in shaping parties' development. Without discounting the importance of structural-environmental factors, we argue that to explain why party building is successful in some cases but not in others, we must look at the preferences of actors involved in the process, those who make the decisions about engaging or not in party-building efforts.

### **2.3 From personalist vehicles to full-fledged parties: a theoretical framework for personalist party building**

Personalist parties evolve from electoral vehicles into well-organized parties through a combination of broad sociopolitical conditions and party cadres' strategic choices, influenced by their preferences with respect to building party organization. Given their lack of organizational structure, personalist vehicles seek out alternative resources that they can use to substitute for the role that would otherwise be played by party organization – e.g. patronage, the mass media, the leader's charisma and popularity, etc. After acquiring these alternative resources for conducting effective electoral campaigns and governing, personalist parties' incentives to invest in party organization decreases further still, making them even less likely, other things equal, to become organized parties. A vicious cycle thus develops wherein weak party organization leads to the development of substitute mechanisms, which further decreases parties' incentives to build organizational capacity.

Yet, scholars have also identified several countervailing factors that can incentivize party building among personalist parties – such as polarization, opposition from powerful elites, extra-electoral threats, and unexpected electoral setbacks. We agree that these conditions can increase personalist parties' incentives to invest in party organization. Indeed, as we show below in the

cases of Venezuela's MVR/PSUV and Ecuador's AP, existential threats in the form of coup attempts and unanticipated declines in electoral competitiveness produced repeated calls from within both parties for stronger party organization. Yet such calls were heeded only in the case of the MVR/PSUV and were largely overlooked in the case of AP.

Even when positive and negative incentives for party-building increase, then, the likelihood of party-building remains unclear. Thus, we turn to party elites' preferences about party building to provide us with an additional mechanism to explain variation in party-building outcome where existing explanations fall short. To provide a fuller account of the trajectories of party-building among personalist parties we develop a theoretical framework that incorporates both party elites' preferences about party building as well as a range of abovementioned conditions identified by previous scholars as having an impact on party-building outcomes (access to state resources, extra-electoral threats, polarization, etc.).

Our call to incorporate key actors' decision making into explanations of party building requires defining party-building preferences, theorizing about how these preferences are formed, and looking at variation of preferences among party elites. Party building implies a tradeoff between short-term costs and long-term benefits. Indeed, building party organizations is a costly process – both in terms of resources and time – that generates no immediate results that can be used to justify the investment. In fact, parties can and regularly do win elections and govern with very little organizational structure. Personalist parties are a case in point, as they rely on the charisma of their leader to do many things that party organization does, like building electoral coalitions and establishing durable linkages with their supporters. However, territorial organization provides crucial advantages to parties, such as the capacity for coordinated action and mobilization during and in between elections and the formation of new party cadres to

ensure continuous ideological commitment. These functions, which can only be fulfilled by party organization, can make the costly enterprise of party building worthwhile.

Party officials who hold preferences for party building appreciate the advantages of organization and believe that political objectives can only be achieved (or can be achieved more easily) through forms of collective organization aimed at acquiring and exercising political power. These party officials are thus more willing than other actors to incur short-term costs of building party organization, as they believe that these costs are going to be offset by the long-term benefits that organization brings.

How are these preferences formed? There is a long but overlooked scholarship showing how social and political background informs political attitudes and preferences (e.g. Searing 1969). This work has shown how past political party affiliation is one of the strongest predictors of preferences on political issues (Edinger and Searing 1967). Another strand of literature more directly concerned with the effects of party affiliation has shed light on the socialization role that they play (Kornberg 1966; Clarke and Price 1977; Dodson 1990; Saalfeld 1995; Rehmert 2021). These works, which focus on parties in Anglo-America and Europe, have found that socialization into a political party influences ideological beliefs and strengthen party commitment (Kornberg 1966; Dodson 1990), forms legislators' conception of party politics and their role in it (Clarke and Price 1977), and shapes behavior – either by fostering continued involvement in party activities (Dodson 1990) or by promoting voting discipline in the legislature (Saalfeld 1995).

These findings are complemented by a more recent literature that shows how socialization effects are stronger and more long-lasting if they happen earlier in the life of a person, when attitudes and preferences are still malleable (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Rehmert



2021). On the contrary, people that join organizations at a later stage in their lives are less likely to update their beliefs to adapt to the new social environment, as their preferences are more rigid (Roberts et al. 2006).

We build on this literature to argue that partisan political activity early in a politician's career positively affects their preferences for party building. Early activism in a political party entails processes of socialization not only into party's values and norms, but also into beliefs about the utility of political parties more broadly. Someone who was been a member of a political party, particularly early in their career, is more likely to believe in the usefulness of political parties than someone who has not.

However, not all parties are likely to have the same socializing effects on their members. Political parties vary in the degree to which they put emphasis on the importance of party organization as a key resource to achieve political objectives. As a result, we should expect early partisan political activity to have different socializing effects on beliefs about the importance of party organization depending on the type of party.

One set of parties that is particularly known for valuing party organization is radical left-wing parties. These parties are directly or indirectly inspired by Marxism-Leninism, which puts party organization at the center of its political strategy. The importance of party organization for Marxism goes back to the political thought of Marx and Engels, who argued that the only way for the working class to confront the collective power of propertied classes was to constitute itself into a political party (Johnstone 1967; Steenson 1991; Nimitz 2017). The centrality of the revolutionary party was then taken up by Lenin (1963 [1902]), and Marxists ever since have considered the formation of an organized party as the only way to achieve political goals (Lusting 1977). Indeed, Marxists and Leninist have consistently held that "without a

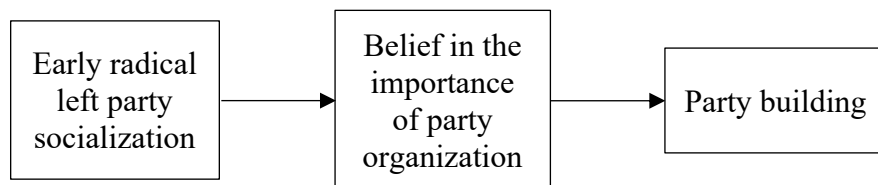
revolutionary party there can be no revolutionary movement” (Lustig 1977: 27). Radical left parties are thus more likely, we argue, to nurture particularly intense processes of socialization into the importance of party organization and they generate what we call party militants.

*Party militants* are politicians who start their political career in a radical left-wing party and who, as a consequence, undergo an early process of intense socialization into the importance of party organization. We posit that these party officials hold strong preferences for party building and that their presence among party cadres will have a positive impact on party-building success. The more party militants occupy influential places in party decision making, the more likely it is that the leadership will undertake action to strengthen the organizational structure of the party. We expect party officials who are socialized early in their career into a radical left-wing political party to value party building more than people with different political trajectories because they are socialized to believe in the importance of parties for achieving political objectives. There is thus reason to expect that politicians who engage in early partisan political activity in the radical left are more focused on party organization and that their presence among party cadres will be positively correlated with greater levels of party organization. Figure 2 below summarizes the posited mechanism.

Another aspect of party-building among personalist parties that has received insufficient attention to date is temporality. There is reason to believe that some conditions will matter early on in the development of a personalist vehicle, while others start to exert their influence at a later stage. For instance, if personalist vehicles succeed in propelling their leaders to the highest office, the role of negative incentives in the causal story will increase. When they become incumbents, personalist party leaders gain access to new resources that can substitute for party structure (Shefter 1994; Hale 2006; Van Dyck 2016) – such as patronage that encourage

electioneering outsourcing to allies controlling clientelist networks, but also public money, infrastructure, and personnel – and the mass media, which can be used to directly appeal to voters without any organizational intermediation (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Van Dyck 2016). When these resources become available, further electoral success does not require organization – particularly if the leader enjoys a high level of popularity.

**Figure 2. The mechanism: from early party socialization to party building**



*Source:* Authors' elaboration

The structure of incentives for party building can change with the inception of conflict between personalist parties and their opponents. Indeed, most positive incentives for party building – high levels of polarization, opposition from powerful actors, and extraelectoral threats (Kalyvas 1996; Roberts 2006; Levitsky et al. 2016) – stem from political strife. These threats to the continuity of the government and the implementation of its policy agenda have a positive effect on party building, as they induce leaders to devote resources to building a real organization that can mobilize to defend the government and its policies (Roberts 2006).<sup>3</sup> In other words,

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<sup>3</sup> There are three reasons to believe that these positive incentives would not emerge immediately after taking office but would need some time to start operating. First, the government must show its true policy intentions and start implementing reforms that touch the interest of powerful actors before actually causing a reaction from them and intensify polarization. Second, there must be a period of strategic adjustment on the part of the opposition (both political and social) to realize how much of a threat the government poses to their interests and what course of action they want to pursue. Third, this period of strategic readjustment involves the government as well, as the new positive incentives must outweigh the pre-existing negative ones in its considerations to realize that at an organized party might be a possible solution to its problems.

political strife opens up a critical juncture where party building becomes possible where it was not before, but not inevitable.

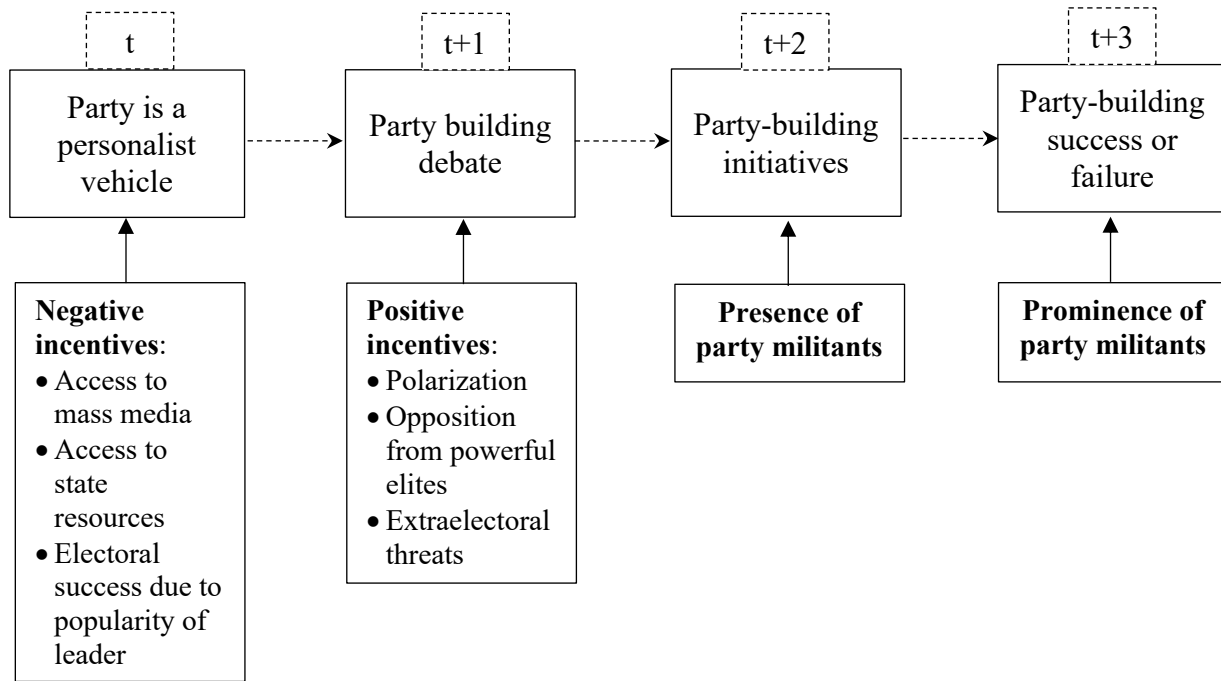
Once political conflict increases the salience and apparent usefulness of party building, party leaders' preferences and strategic choices acquire an important causal weight in the story. Actors' preferences regarding party building entail how much they value party organization as compared to other means to obtain collective benefits for their political sector – e.g. such as developing connections with powerful elites, securing access to patronage resources, or entering into strategic alliance with other parties. As previously discussed, despite the high short-term costs that building party organization imposes, party militants should see higher payoffs in the future benefits that it brings.

Preferences for party building are shaped during previous processes of socialization within left-wing parties, which are built on ideological tenets that place a premium on party organization to attain political objectives. There is good reason to expect that being a member of a radical left party entails a particularly intense process of socialization into the importance of party organization. So, membership in these parties is arguably more likely to produce politicians focused on building party structures and organization vis-à-vis parties of other ideological orientations.

We thus argue that once party building acquires strategic relevance in the context of intense political conflict, the “ideas that are lying around” – i.e. the distribution of preferences for and against party building – in party decision-making instances will determine how the party leadership responds to positive incentives for party building. We posit that the higher the number of party militants within decision-making circles (vis-à-vis actors with different preferences

regarding party building), the more likely the party leadership is of devoting significant resources to party building and succeed in the effort. Our theory is summarized in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3. The path of personalist parties: from electoral vehicles to full-fledged parties**



Source: Authors' elaboration

## 2.4 Case selection and methodology

To assess the validity of our argument, we consider the cases of Venezuela's *Movimiento V República/Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (MVR/PSUV) and Ecuador's *Alianza PAIS* (AP). The two parties are similar in many ways and represent the prototypical cases of the Latin American "populist Left" (Levitsky and Roberts 2011) over the last three decades. They were both born as electoral vehicles to support the presidential candidacy of an outsider – Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (1998-2013) and Rafael Correa in Ecuador (2007-2017), a military officer and an academic economist, respectively. Both won the presidency on their first attempt –

Chávez in 1998 and Correa in 2006 – and established left-wing governments that were considered “radical” as opposed to more moderate counterparts in the region (Castañeda 2006; Weyland, Madrid and Hunter 2010).

Apart from their similarities, which allow us to control for a number of potentially explanatory variables, we selected these two case studies because they feature extreme values on the main independent variable – i.e. the ratio of party militants in the cadres of the party. Selecting extreme cases on the main independent variable is a fruitful strategy when the main goal is discovering causal pathways (Seawright 2016: 75-106). Given that we are positing a new, previously untested, mechanism to explain variation in party-building outcomes on the basis of party officials’ past socialization experiences, this case selection technique is particularly well-suited for our purposes. However, in selecting our extreme-on-X cases, we avoid including a case where the value of the X is zero. The reason for this is that we want to be able to trace the effect of the independent variable in the low-scoring case and to do this we need to select a case where the value on the X is low but positive. In other words, we need a case where party militants are not the majority of party elites but are nonetheless present. Venezuela’s MVR/PSUV and Ecuador’s AP meet these requirements. According to our analysis of data from the parliamentary elites survey PELA, 31.9% of *Chavista* deputies in 2001 had started their political careers as militants of radical left-wing political parties, while only 7% of AP deputies in 2007 did.

Moreover, MVR/PSUV and PAIS share all the conditions identified in the literature as conducive to (or inhibiting) successful party building (see Table 2). Both parties were characterized by the presence of charismatic authority and the absence of pre-existing organizational structures. They also both lacked links to civil society organizations. Since they

won presidential election at their first attempt, both AP and the PSUV enjoyed access to state resources and mass media early on in their development. In particular, the creation (in the case of Ecuador) and use of public mass media to connect directly with the electorate was a defining trait of both the Correa and the Chávez government. Both parties also governed in a highly polarized sociopolitical environment and faced opposition from powerful economic elites. Equivalent scores on a number of potentially explanatory variables allows us to isolate their effect and focus on the causal role of our main explanatory variable.

**Table 2. Conditions for party building in Ecuador and Venezuela**

<b>Conditions (references)</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Venezuela</b>
<b>Charismatic authority</b> (Andrews-Lee 2021)	1	1
<b>Organizational inheritance</b> (LeBas 2011; Levitsky et al. 2016; Barndt 2016; Loxton 2021)	0	0
<b>Links to social movements</b> (Samuels and Zucco 2015; Anria 2019; Pérez Bentancur et al. 2020)	0	0
<b>Access to state resources</b> (Shefter 1994; McGuire 1997; Hale 2006; Van Dyck 2016)	1	1
<b>Access to mass media</b> (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Van Dyck 2016)	1	1
<b>Polarization</b> (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Huntington 1968; Levitsky et al. 2016)	1	1
<b>Extralectoral threats and opposition from powerful elites</b> (Kalyvas 1996; Roberts 2006)	1	1

*Source:* Authors' elaboration.

We test our theory by systematically process-tracing the evolution of party-building efforts of within the MVR/PSUV and AP. We divide each step of the causal chain into exhaustive sub-conditions and outcomes that must be met to demonstrate the presence or absence of each step. The separation between conditions and outcomes allows us to maintain a theoretical distinction between independent and dependent variable, i.e. between conditions for party building (including the presence of party militants) and changes in party organization. Next, observable implications are marshaled to confirm that each sub-condition is met. Finally, additional observable implications are examined that cast doubt on a critical alternative hypothesis. Process-tracing is more appropriate for this study than other methods due to (1) its unique capacity to illuminate complex causal processes and the causal mechanisms connecting explanatory and dependent variables, and (2) the nature of the variables examined. Specifically, the fact that the outcome of interest can only be observed at the national level restricts the number of observations available, thus limiting the power of quantitative causal identification strategies. Further, while below we leverage cross-national data to assess the generalizability of our theory to the rest of Latin America, the absence of plausibly exogenous variation in leaders' socialization into political parties limits our capacity to specify the direction of causal effects without the assistance of careful within-case qualitative analysis.

If the theory is valid, at time  $t$  we expect to observe:

*Condition 1A – Absence of party apparatus:* personalist parties should lack permanent party organization that acts separately from the state. Observing evidence of this condition establishes that the causal story begins with the parties having no organizational structure.



*Condition 1B – Use of state resources and media:* the party leader should resort to state resources and media as substitutes for party organization to connect with constituents and mobilize them electorally. Observing this evidence would suggest that negative incentives for party building are at work.

*Outcome 1 – Lack of party-building efforts:* in this initial phase we should not see any effort to build party organization. The lack of party-building efforts should establish that the leadership is responding to negative incentives.

At  $t+1$ , we should observe:

*Condition 2A – Increasing polarization and opposition from powerful groups:* we should see increasing polarization and overt opposition from powerful groups as a consequence of parties consolidating power. Observing this evidence would suggest that positive incentives for party building are at work.

*Outcome 2 – Debate about party building begins:* we should observe signs that building party organization starts to be considered as a strategic option in the president's inner circle. Observing this evidence should establish that the leadership is responding to positive incentives.

At  $t+2$ :

*Condition 3A – Party militants advocating for party building:* party officials who were socialized in radical left-wing parties should advocate for party building; party officials who were not socialized in radical left-wing parties should be opposed or uninvolved in party

building. Observing this evidence would lend support to the existence of a connection between past party membership in the radical left and preferences for party building. This observable implication seeks to capture the effect of our main explanatory variable and it is the most unique implication of our theory.

*Condition 3B – Party militants’ prominence and party-building initiatives:* where party militants have a stronger presence, we should observe the party leadership taking major successful steps to increase the party’ organizational apparatus. Where party militants have a weaker presence, we should observe party-building initiatives frustrated or incomplete. Observing this evidence would lend support to our hypothesis that the relative influence of officials who were socialized in radical-left parties affects parties’ ultimate decision to invest in party building or not.

At  $t+3$ :

*Final Outcome – Party consolidation:* Where party-organization efforts are robust, candidates have a strong commitment to the party and the party achieves near universal active party presence at the local level, allowing it to compete effectively across the country. Where party-organization efforts are weak, these outcomes do not occur. To operationalize our outcome of interest, we mainly rely on two variables from the V-Dem Party Dataset that capture the territorial and organizational presence of political parties: “local party office” and “local organizational strength.” The first variable is generated by experts’ answers to the question “Does this party maintain permanent offices that operate outside of election campaigns at the local or municipal-level?”, while the second variable is averaged out of answers to the question

“To what degree are party activists and personnel permanently active in local communities?”. To provide a more complete picture of the degree of party consolidation beyond the territorial-organizational dimension, we supplement our two main indicators with two additional variables drawn from the parliamentary elites survey PELA: party voting discipline in the legislature and the degree of support for expelling party dissidents among party legislators. While we acknowledge that these variables do not perfectly overlap with the concept of party organization, we think that they are suggestive of coordinated party action and of the importance that party members give to the party collective vis-à-vis individual aspirations. We thus think that, together with the territorial-organizational variables, they add to our understanding of the degree of party consolidation.

## **2.5 Case studies**

In this section we conduct case studies of Venezuela’s MVR/PSUV and Ecuador’s AP. In our analysis, we will proceed narratively but we will annotate key pieces of evidence with labels indicating which of the observable implications each piece of evidence is referring to.

### **2.5.1 Venezuela**

Hugo Chávez was catapulted to national prominence in Venezuela after a failed coup attempt in 1992 that turned the young colonel into a folk hero. Chávez, highly critical of Venezuela’s traditional political parties – which he held responsible for the country’s increasingly severe economic and social crises during the 1980s and early 1990s – was loathe to channel his increasing popularity into a new political party (Hetland 2016: 20). Indeed, as a former MVR leader explained “Chávez came from a military background, and the military is much more

corporatist than political parties. Chávez never understood the idea of loyalty to the party, when your loyalty should be to the country” (interview with Carlos Luis Rivero). Instead, Chávez created an “electoral vehicle” (the MVR) to support his successful 1998 bid for the Venezuelan presidency. *[Condition 1A]*

In addition to Chávez’s personal antipathy toward political parties, the access he gained to state resources upon taking office (particularly through the state-owned oil company PDVSA) further disincentivized investments in party organization. First, in 1999 Chávez took advantage of his control of the state-run television channel *Venezolana de Televisión* to launch a weekly, hours-long television program, *Aló Presidente*, through which the President had a direct line of communication with Venezuelans to promote his political agenda and critique his opponents. On the social policy front, beginning in 2001, the Chávez began an extended campaign to redirect the country’s substantial oil rents toward Venezuela’s popular sectors, culminating in 2003 with the creation of a vast range of “missions” meant to offer a range of services – from healthcare and education to food assistance and housing – to his supporters (Hawkins et al. 2011: 190) *[Condition 1B]*.

Chávez’s electoral efforts between 1998 and 2000 were spectacularly successful: the MVR triumphed in the presidential election of 1998, elections to the Venezuelan Constituent Assembly in 1999, a national referendum in 2000 to approve the 1999 constitution, as well as municipal, regional, parliamentary, and presidential elections that same year. Since it was intentionally constructed to *not* consolidate into a political party, few efforts were made to institutionalize the MVR, and during the first years of his presidency Chávez’s electoral efforts depended primarily on the President’s personal charisma and a series of parallel, ephemeral campaign structures (Hetland 2016: 20) *[Outcome 1]*. Calls to invest seriously in party

organization would not become prominent in *Chavista* thinking until a series of crises that nearly brought down Chávez's government. In other words, in the first years of his administration, Chávez had few incentives to invest in party organization.

The incentives of Chávez and his political movement, commonly referred to as *Chavistas*, changed, however, between 2002 and 2004. Increasing political polarization culminated in a dramatic series of events including a short-lived coup against Chávez in April 2002 and an anti-government lockout of oil workers that brought the country's all-important oil production to a halt between late 2002 and early 2003 (Ellner 2008). As one interviewee explained, “[between 2002 and 2004] we were in permanent conflict with political forces that were trying to throw us out of power” (interview with Carlos Luis Rivero) [*Condition 2A*]. The events of 2002-2004 laid bare the organizational weakness of the MVR and the need to build more effective political organization, and it was during this period that Chávez and other government and MVR leaders began discussing the need for more robust party organization (Hetland 2016: 21). [*Outcome 2*] Guillermo García Ponce, one of Chávez's closest advisors at the time and former member of the Communist Party of Venezuela in his teenage years, for instance, declared in 2001 that “Revolutionary organizations cannot be a mess of factions and tendencies, of groups and rivalries, to the contrary, it must be a unified and disciplined force to achieve its ends. Once a decision is taken democratically, the organization closes ranks like a single man to carry out the decision” (Von Bergen Granell 2018: 110) [*Condition 3A*].

While the series of opposition threats between 2002 and 2004 certainly opened space for discussion of party building within *Chavista* leadership, extra electoral threats alone are not a sufficient motivating factor to ensure personalist leaders will invest in effective party organization. In the case of personalist parties, the leader has outsized influence on party

strategy, and if he or she is predisposed to oppose strong party organization this can be a difficult obstacle to overcome, even in the face of new information suggesting that increased organizational capacity may be in the leader's political self-interest. Thus, it is important to note that Chávez initially had a decidedly negative predisposition to party organization. Chávez not only attacked and demonized political parties ad infinitum during the first years of his presidency – railing against “partyocracy” and accusing parties of being nefarious agents of corruption and elitism – but he also had no personal experience with radical-left parties, nor commitment to socialist ideology. As one respondent – a former militant of the radical-left party *Bandera Roja* and future vice minister under both Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro – who first met Chávez in 1991 explained, “When I first met Chávez he was not a socialist, he had a right-military ideology. He hadn't read Marx or Lenin's work at all.” (interview with Carlos Luis Rivero).

We can only comprehend how Chávez was able to put aside his previous biases against party organization and push the MVR into a full-fledged party if we understand the preferences of the leaders around him. While Chávez himself had no history of party militancy prior to the MVR, an unusually large percentage of those around him did, and they – like García Ponce – favored stronger party organization. Indeed, according to our analysis of PELA data, 31.9 percent of parliamentarians came from radical left parties in 2001. This puts the MVR within the 92nd percentile of parties with respect to leaders who were socialized in radical-left political parties, and among only a handful of parties with this profile that have reached national power.

*[Condition 3B]*

Many of those closest to Chávez similarly cut their political teeth in radical left parties. Looking at Chávez's cabinet in 2006, the year he decided to create a new, centralized party

apparatus, we see a remarkable number of party militants from parties ranging from the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), Fatherland for All (PPT) Socialist League, *Bandera Roja*, and the Venezuelan Revolutionary Party (PRV), among others. Many of these party militants occupied key cabinet posts, such as Alí Rodríguez (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Jorge Giordani (Planning Minister), Elias Jaua (Minister of the Economy), Aristóbulo Istúriz (Minister of Education), and Rafael Ramírez (President of PDVSA/Energy Minister). Other key advisors around Chávez who began their political career with radical-left parties included Nicolás Maduro (President of the National Assembly/Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2006) Adán Chávez (Presidential Secretary in 2006) and Delcy Rodríguez (Presidential Secretary before Adán Chávez). One respondent claimed that of these, the group that had the greatest influence on Chávez's understanding of the revolutionary party came from the PRV, including figures such as Alí Rodríguez and famed ex-guerrilla leader Douglas, in addition to the PRV's chief theoretician, Kleber Ramírez – who died in 1998, but whose ideas were cited by respondents as key to Chávez's decision to focus on building organizational strength through local-level party-linked institutions such as the communal councils. As one respondent described:

One person in particular, I believe, was the intellectual author of the whole process [of moving toward greater territorial organization]: Kléber Ramírez. Ramírez had been in the leadership of the PRV, and Chávez was very close to the PRV, indeed the PRV was the most influential leftist organization around Chávez going back to his attempted coup in 1992. Many of Chávez's key political ideas, including the communal councils [which played a key role in the development of the PSUV], came from Ramírez...Ramírez was

the theoretical architect much of Bolivarianism [Chávez's political ideology]. (interview with Carlos Luis Rivero). [*Conditions 3A and 3B*]

Other veterans of leftist parties also shaped Chávez's thinking around the importance of territorial organization during this period, such as Fernando Soto Rojas, Julio Chávez, and the Chilean revolutionary journalist Marta Harnecker (interviews with Chino Martínez and Fernando Soto Rojas). Chávez was also increasingly influenced during this period by one of the most successful party builders in history, Fidel Castro, who pointed out to him that if he (Chávez) were gone the movement would not be able to sustain itself – unlike in Cuba where Castro's passing would not be a big problem due to the party's strong organization (Von Bergen Granell 2018: 134). One respondent emphasized the importance of Castro's influence on Chávez during the years when Chávez began to focus on party-building: ...after [the turmoil of the events between 2002 and 2004] Chávez began to radicalize. Why? Well, of course due to all the turmoil that there was...but I think another factor was his closeness to Fidel Castro. That definitely had an important influence on Chavez's political thinking" (interview with Carlos Luis Rivero). [*Conditions 3A and 3B*]

The influence of party militants who were socialized in radical left parties helped Chávez put aside his antipathy to party organization, and allowed him to process the strategic importance of party building in the wake of opposition attacks. Chávez began to place greater value on the importance of territorial organization. One respondent explained that during these years, Chávez began to understand that "to have a revolution, it was essential to have the support of a revolutionary party. During the first years of Chávez's presidency, he explained the party were very dispersed, atomized, and consequently "it became necessary to build a hegemonic, strategic vision, to consolidate political hegemony... Chávez believed that it was crucial to bring all the



different social organizations that were developing in the early years of his presidency into a single, territorial organization.” (interview with Julio Chávez).

Rather than immediately set out to build a centralized party apparatus, however, given Venezuelans’ marked antipathy toward political parties – support for political parties in Venezuela was only around 35% in 2000 (Hetland 2016: 21) – the *Chavistas* initially undertook this work indirectly, through mass organizations linked to, but not technically organs of, the government/MVR. The first expression of *Chavista* leaders’ increasing focus on the importance of party organization was the creation of the Bolivarian circles in 2001 (Hawkins 2010; McCarthy 2016: 180-229). The circles were local-level cells of *Chavista* militants that served, in the words of Hugo Chávez, as “a popular force spread out in slums, towns, countryside and cities to consolidate, ideologize, and reinvigorate itself, thus contributing to the Bolivarian revolution” (Chávez, quoted in García Guadilla, 2003: 192).

After several years, however, *Chavista* leaders felt that the Bolivarian Circles were no longer an ideal vehicle for laying the groundwork for a new mass party, especially after the immediate existential threats of 2002-2004 had passed (Hawkins 2010). Though *Chavismo* won a majority in congress in 2005 legislative election, they only did so due to opposition abstention, and the MVR suffered many internal conflicts that resulted in decreased voter mobilization in 2005 (Von Bergen Granell 2018: 103). The result, according to one MVR leader, was that by 2005 the MVR had not been able to consolidate, “an organic political force capable of being the fundamental instrument of transformation in Venezuela” Indeed, a low percentage of Venezuelans identified with the MVR.

Finally, by the end of 2006, Chávez was ready to formally launch a centralized political party that would unite all the disparate strands of *Chavismo* into a single, unified political party:

“I declare today that I am going to create a new party. I invite everyone [from all the smaller allied parties in the government coalition] to join me...Parties that wish to remain independent of the new party may do so, but they will leave the government. I want a party to govern with me” (Chávez, quoted in Lander 2005). In part, this decision reflected ongoing concerns that the *Chavistas* faced serious electoral liabilities in the absence of a more consolidated party. After all, the *Chavistas*’ takeaway from 2006 elections was that they did not have a consolidated base, that a large percentage of their support was still due to clientelism, and they needed to think in terms of longer-term stable support by increasing ideological commitment and party identification (Von Bergen Granell 2018: 133).

In another sense, Chávez’s decision to formalize a new party structure in 2006 was a logical outgrowth of the previous years’ efforts to build the party through other means, which party leaders decided to formalize once it was clear that public sentiment was more favorable to the idea than it would have been several years before.<sup>4</sup> One respondent explained Chávez’s decision in the following terms: “In revolutionary theory, the necessity of the party as the vanguard for the development of the revolutionary project is key. For Chávez the party became indispensable for both carrying forward the revolutionary project and for winning elections” (interview with Gustavo Villapol). In this way, as McCarthy explains, “the party [PSUV] was built on the back of a pattern of state sponsored partisan spirit expressed through the Communal Councils and associated communal spaces” (McCarthy 2016: 298).

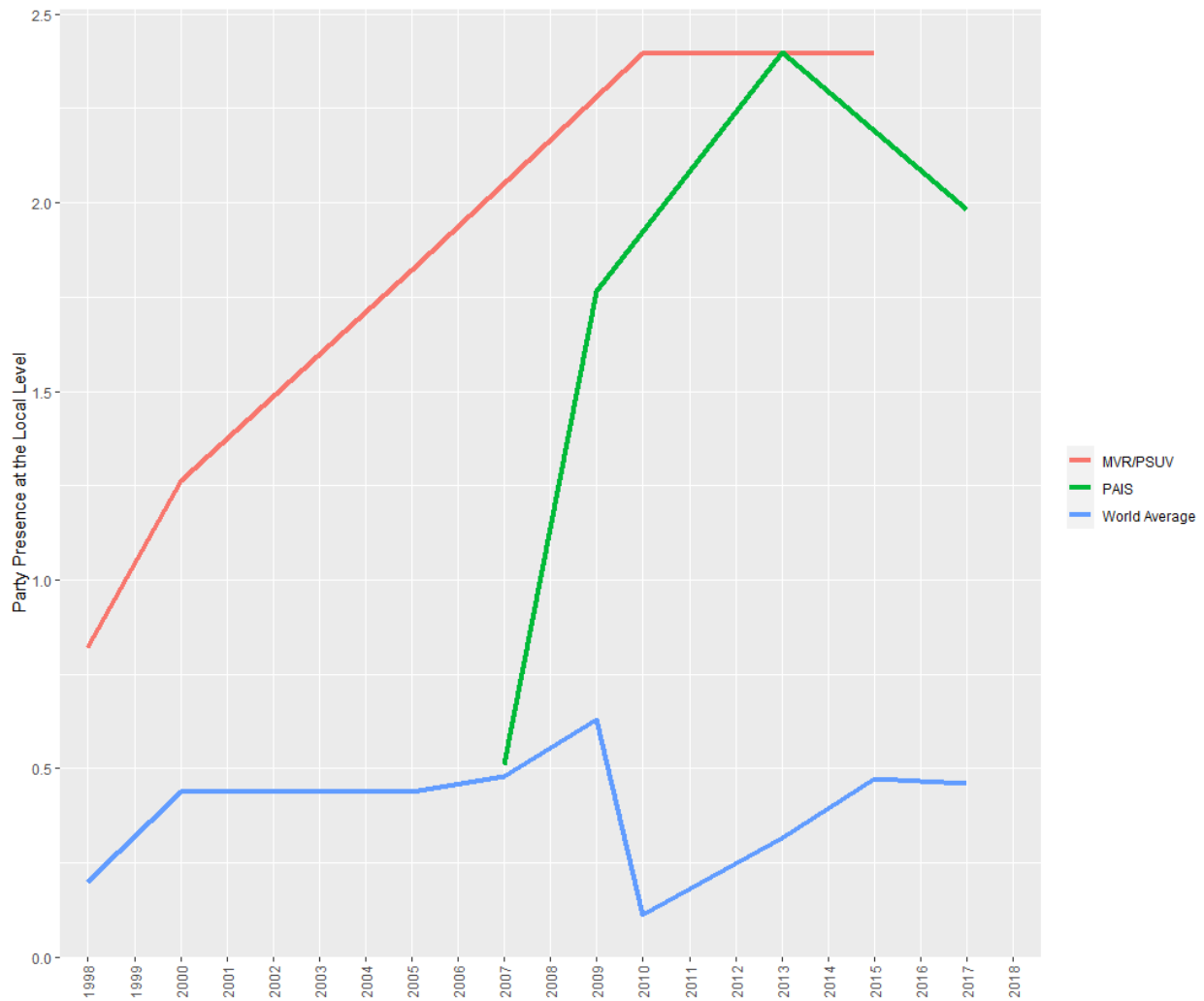
Within a matter of years, the PSUV evolved into one of the largest, if not *the* largest political parties in all of Latin America, claiming over 7 million members by 2009 (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela 2009). V-Dem and PELA data provide clear evidence of the

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<sup>4</sup> Support for parties in Venezuela reached as high as 66% in 2005 (Hetland 2016: 21).

party's success in building strong organizational capacity. As shown in Figures 4-7, for example, the PSUV reached an extremely high degree of local-level organizational capacity and internal party cohesion. The party's local-level organizational capacity more than doubled between 1998 and 2010, when it achieved a higher-level of organizational capacity than virtually any other party in the region (Figures 4-5). Similarly, party legislators' commitment to party-line roll-call votes and support for expelling party dissidents rose dramatically between 2001 and 2016 (the other years for which data are available) (Figures 6-7). *[Final Outcome]*

**Figure 4. Party presence at the local level of MVR/PSUV and AP**



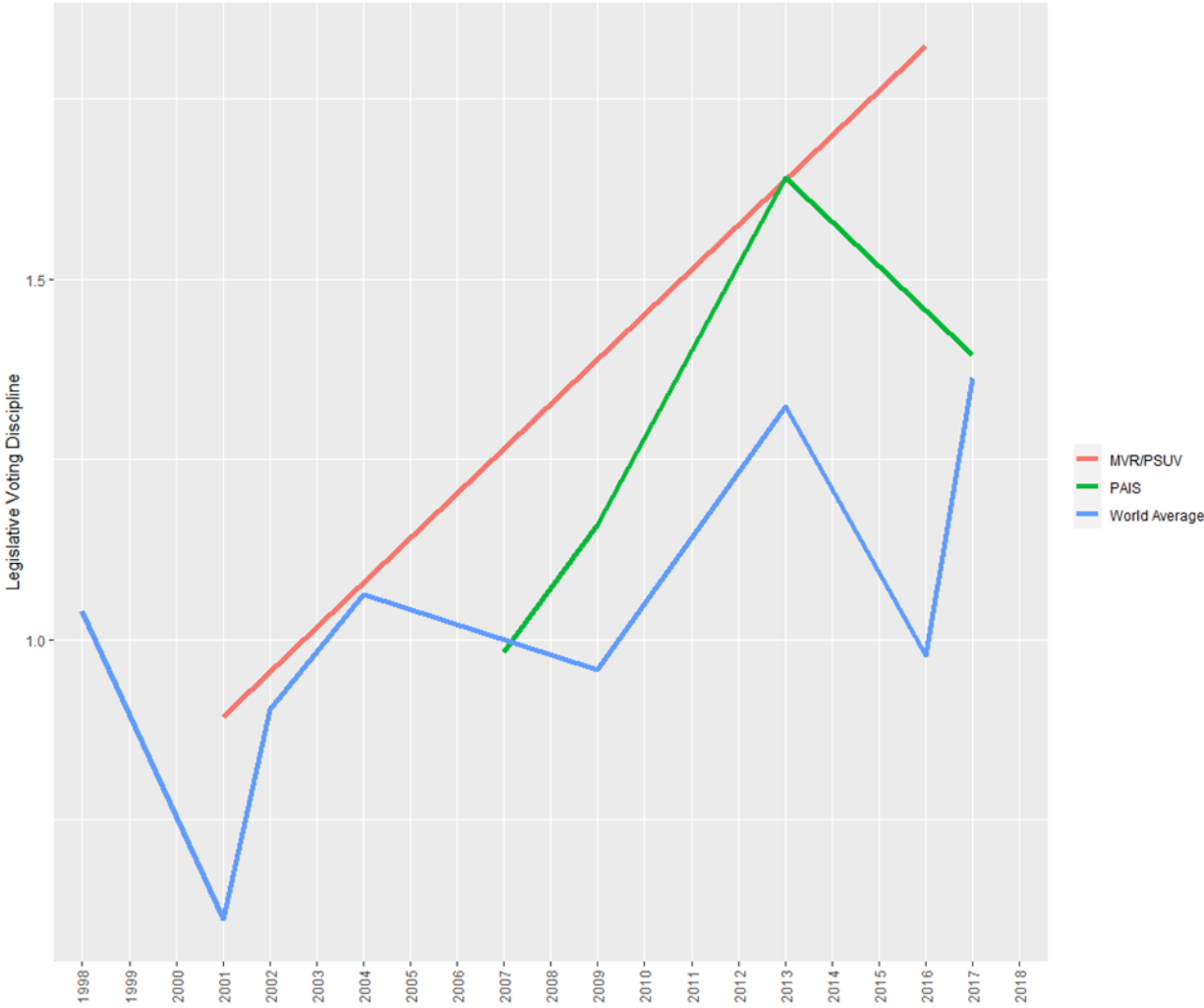
Source: V-Dem Party Dataset.

**Figure 5. Local party strength of MVR/PSUV and AP**



Source: V-Dem Party Dataset.

**Figure 6. Legislative voting discipline of MVR/PSUV and AP**



Source: PELA-USAL surveys on parliamentary elites.

**Figure 7. Support for expelling party dissidents of MVR/PSUV and AP**



Source: PELA-USAL surveys on parliamentary elites.

In turn, PSUV’s formidable party apparatus played a crucial role in helping Chávez and especially his successor Nicolás Maduro maintain power in the face of multiple existential crises between 2014 and 2020, including waves of waves of mass protest in 2014 and 2017, an increasingly severe economic embargo imposed by the United States and a host of other countries beginning in 2017, and the creation of a parallel government in January 2020 that received official recognition from dozens of countries around the world. One respondent, for

example, explained that the networks of local-level party organizations created around the country was responsible for the survival of the Bolivarian revolution since the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013. The government would not have survived had it not been for this organization (Abbott and McCarthy 2019).

### **2.5.2 Ecuador**

Just like the MVR, during the first phase of its life (2006-2009) AP lacked any form of party apparatus or autonomy from the government. The movement was characterized by no significant level of institutionalization or routinization (Levitsky and Roberts 2011), had no national organizational structure, and was not holding national conventions (Conaghan 2021). All the upper echelons of AP were holding public office, whether in the executive, the Constituent and then the National Assembly, or local governments (interviews with Galo Mora and Doris Soliz). As AP leader Gabriela Rivadeneira put it: “there was no party structure during the first few years, [AP] was just the political arm of the government.” [*Condition 1A*]

As the incumbent, party leader Rafael Correa enjoyed access to state resources and mass media, which discouraged party building. The financial, infrastructural, and human resources wielded by the executive could be used to buttress Correa’s charismatic appeal and strengthen the position of AP vis-à-vis other political forces without undergoing any significant organizational development. State infrastructure and personnel could be used to mobilize support (Herrera Llive 2017). Patronage distribution and clientelistic practices – either through local political barons or without intermediaries (Tedesco and Diamint 2014) – yielded electoral rewards without incurring any organization-building costs (Conaghan 2021). The executive also invested in the creation from scratch of a public media structure, which included Ecuador TV,

Ecuador Public Radio, and newspaper *El Telégrafo* – confiscated in 2002 after the owner’s conviction for bankruptcy fraud and resurrected as a public newspaper. The Secretariat of Communication (SECOM) was expanded to include a system of autonomous production and diffusion of news and media content. Like Chávez, Correa had his own weekly program called *Enlace Ciudadano* (Citizen Link) where he would give updates on the implementation of the government’s plan, respond to critics, and discuss current political events. All these mechanisms were compensating for the lack of party organization and allowed the executive to connect directly with its constituents while foregoing party building. *[Condition 1B]*

The early governing experience of AP did not produce any effort in terms of organization building. “In the first few years, we had elections all the time, so we focused on winning them instead of building a permanent political party with strong territorial presence,” explained AP official Gabriela Rivadeneira. Another prominent figure within AP recounted how “in an early phase, the lack of party organization went unnoticed, as we completely focused on governing.” (interview with Doris Soliz). As a result, from 2006 to 2009 no significant strides in party building were made. As we can see from figures 4 and 5 above, to an increase in the number of party offices at the local level to “some municipalities” – to be expected from an incumbent party – did not correspond an equivalent increase in active permanent organization, which remained below “noticeable”. *[Outcome 1]* However, electoral performance was unaffected, as AP – behind a very popular president – won the 2007 referendum on the constituent assembly and assembly elections, the 2008 constitutional referendum, and the 2009 national elections.

Things started to change after the approval of the new constitution and the landslide re-election of Correa in 2009. At that point, the government had already proved its willingness to carry out deep changes, which, along with its stronger grip on power, led to an increase in



polarization. [*Condition 2A*] The level of perceived threat from powerful actors was rising and, in late 2009, President Correa publicly stated that building party organization was fundamental to defend the Citizen Revolution:

We have a great challenge, we have a great political capital that doesn't translate into organized and mobilized structures, hence we are vulnerable, we could fall prey to small groups with great economic, social, informational, even religious power. Thus, the big challenge in this new phase of the revolution is to create in every home a revolutionary committee, in every neighborhood a committee in defense of the national government and the Citizens' Revolution to be ready before those who seek to destabilize us"

(Correa, quoted in Herrera Llive 2017).

While the fact that a non-party-militant like Correa made such a statement could be seen as cutting against the theory, we interpret this piece of evidence as a sign of the emergence of real debate within AP about the importance of building party organization. If a notable party militant had made this statement, it would have been difficult to make the case that a generalized debate about party building was brewing within AP. But to have a non-party-militant making such declarations indicates that the question of building party organization was salient in the minds of *all* AP party elites. [*Outcome 2*] Moreover, while AP elite Doris Soliz confirmed that "Correa was aware of the fact that we lacked political organization, especially once the honeymoon of the first few years was over" (interview with Doris Soliz), Correa actually never followed through on his publicly stated intentions, which lends support to the idea that he was paying lip service to party building, perhaps to appeal to the party-militant faction within AP.

Indeed, members of the president's inner circle – the so-called *buró político* (political bureau) – with a past in radical left parties started to put the issue on the table. Gustavo Baroja, Miguel Carvajal, Virgilio Hernández, Galo Mora, Ricardo Patiño, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz have all been part of radical left-wing parties early in their career, including the Ecuadorian Communist Party, the Ecuadorian Socialist Party, the Broad Front of the Left (*Frente Amplio de Izquierda* – FADI) and indigenous party *Pachakutik*. When asked about their opinion on the importance of party building, they all mentioned how their past political experiences convinced them of the necessity of a political organization to support any credible project of sociopolitical change (interviews with Gustavo Baroja, Miguel Carvajal, Galo Mora, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz). In the words of Gustavo Baroja:

I have been a left-wing militant for a very long time, since my youth, my teenage years. I received my political education in that context. [...] For us [lifelong left-wing militants] the party has always been the only way of doing politics... (interview with Gustavo Baroja). [*Condition 3A*]

On the contrary, the faction within AP coming from a more technocratic background saw things differently. Technocrats did not have a past in political parties, let alone radical left ones, and some lacked any political experience altogether (interviews with Galo Mora and Doris Soliz). As a consequence, technocrats “did not see the strategic importance of a political party” (interview with Doris Soliz). To them party organization was at least a waste of time (they “did not necessarily oppose party building, but it was not a priority, and they didn't know how to do it” in the words of Soliz) and at most a nuisance: “for the *técnicos* it was easier to do without a

party structure, so they didn't have to consult with anyone and could make decisions alone" (interview with Gabriela Rivadeneira). *[Condition 3A]*

The balance of power within the president's inner circle was not in favor of party-building advocates, as technocrats were occupying most of the important positions within the government (De la Torre 2013). They were the majority within the inner circle, while people with a "Marxist background" were the minority (interviews with Gustavo Baroja and Doris Soliz). Data from the parliamentary elites survey PELA shows that in 2007 just 25% of AP constituent legislators began their political careers in a political party and only 25% had ever been members of a radical left party. *[Condition 3B]*

In 2010 polarization rose and reached its peak on September 30, when police and military officers protesting the passage of new public service law held Correa captive and seized airports and the National Assembly building (Becker 2016). The protesters who took it to the streets to prevent Correa's removal convinced AP cadres that the government had latent mobilizational power that somehow needed to be channeled into organization (interview with Doris Soliz). Less than two months later, at the first national convention, AP took significant steps towards party building. Its organizational structure was formalized (Movimiento Alianza PAIS 2010) and the different movements that were part of AP were dissolved to converge in a unitary structure (Hernández and Buendía 2011). Galo Mora, who was not occupying any government post, was elected the executive secretary in an attempt to grant the party some degree of autonomy from the government. Party militants took action to push this process of organizational strengthening forward, but their initiative was blocked when the majority of the convention participants repealed Gustavo Baroja's suggestion to transform AP into a full-fledged political party with a more complex structure (Hernández and Buendía 2011). *[Condition 3B]* Galo Mora, who started

his political career in the Communist party and voted in favor of the party thesis, explained how in his view “the thesis of the movement won because the movement was less constraining than the party and allowed more flexibility” (interview with Galo Mora).

The party-building debate regained momentum in 2014. Correa had just been re-elected with more than 30% difference and AP won the biggest legislative majority in the history of Ecuador (100 seats out of 137), giving the government *carte blanche* to pass reforms. Such a landslide victory further fueled polarization. *[Condition 2A]* In the following year at the local elections – which for the first time did not coincide with national elections – AP suffered a major defeat, losing the mayoral race in all major cities. This electoral setback showed the limitations of AP electoral prowess when Correa was not on the ballot, which cast a shadow over the survival of the political project given that Correa was not going to run again in 2017 (interview with Galo Mora and Doris Soliz). *[Outcome 2]* The circumstances momentarily empowered party militants, who could now make a stronger case:

Right there it became evident that it was fundamental to form organic leadership at the local level because when Correa was not the candidate, he didn't have all that power of endorsement. So, we decided to undertake the hard task of building a real political party, with organizational structure, schools of formation, to overcome the shortcomings in training new party leaders (interview with Doris Soliz). *[Condition 3A]*

AP, under the leadership of executive secretary Doris Soliz, adopted a number of significant party-building initiatives, which included the expansion of the party membership to about 1.5 million; the bureaucratic development of the party with the creation of new

secretariats; the creation of a permanent school for political training of future cadres and an institute of political and economic thought for the development of public policy; and the routinization of monthly meetings of the national committee with the participation of President Correa (Movimiento Alianza PAIS 2017).

However, once again these attempts were frustrated and failed to produce game-changing results in party development. AP remained marginal in government decision making. The executive secretary, who represented the party in cabinet meetings, said “it was evident” how she had “very little influence in government decision making, which was still dominated by technocratic officials without any political background” (interview with Doris Soliz). The situation was similar in the selection of candidates. While the selection of candidates based on popularity – regardless of political background and ideological orientation – was always the *modus operandi* of AP, this “electoral efficiency” strategy was criticized by party-building advocates, who wanted to nominate trained party officials to ensure ideological consistency (interview with Galo Mora, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz). After the party-building efforts started in 2014, however, not much changed, as candidates’ popularity was still the dominant selection criterion in 2017 (interviews with Galo Mora and Doris Soliz). [*Condition 3B*]

The organizational strength and reach of AP also did not benefit from the party-building initiatives of 2014-2017. Party presence at the local level and party local strength actually dropped at the end of that same period (figures 4 and 5), and so did party members’ preferences regarding party discipline and party commitment (figures 6 and 7). These indicators are corroborated by the testimonies of some of those involved in party building, who recognized that the most important organizational shortcomings of AP were the lack of an active and militant

presence at the local level and of a disciplined party structure (Mora and Patiño 2019). *[Final Outcome]*

Interviewees pointed directly at internal disputes between party militants and technocrats as the explanation for the failure of party-building attempts. The executive secretary during the 2014-2017 period admitted that she “tried to institutionalize the political organization, but [she] did not succeed because of these internal disputes that we talked about” (interview with Doris Soliz). The predominance of the technocrats over the decision-making process combined with consistent electoral success proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to party militants:

The internal dispute [over the importance of building organization] was ultimately won by those who allowed us to win 13 elections in 10 years, and that was due mainly to public policy and political marketing. It was very difficult to change course after getting used to that successful model (interview with Gabriela Rivadeneira). *[Condition 3B]*

Given the fragile territorial organization of AP, chances for successful party building were hanging on the leadership transition from Correa to Moreno, who along with AP inherited the unchecked power to implement changes as he saw fit. The internal strife led to a split with the exit of the *Correista* faction, Moreno’s policy switch, and the hollowing out of AP, which only gathered 2% of the vote in the 2021 elections. Table 3 below summarizes the evidence presented in the discussion of the two case studies.

**Table 3. Summary of empirical evidence (chapter 2)**

<b>Observable Implications</b>		<b>Venezuela</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>
<i>Condition 1A</i>	<b>Absence of party apparatus</b>	The MVR remained a loose electoral coalition with no centralized party apparatus until 2006.	No party structure during the first few years. AP was the political arm of the government.
<i>Condition 1B</i>	<b>Use of state resources and media</b>	Chávez made direct appeals to the Venezuelan people through his weekly TV show and created “social missions” to funnel state resources to his supporters.	Correa made extensive use of state infrastructure to mobilize support and heavily invested in the creation of new public media structures.
<i>Outcome 1</i>	<b>Lack of party-building efforts</b>	Few efforts were made to invest in party organization between 1998 and 2003.	No significant increase in active permanent local organization between 2006 and 2009.
<i>Condition 2A</i>	<b>Increasing polarization and opposition from powerful groups</b>	Between 2002 and 2004, Chávez faced an aborted military coup, a devastating opposition-orchestrated lock out of the oil sector, and a failed recall referendum.	Landslide electoral victories in 2009 and 2013 fueled polarization, which reached its peak with the political crisis of September 30, 2010
<i>Outcome 2</i>	<b>Debate about party building begins</b>	In the wake of opposition attacks in 2002, Chávez and other government and MVR leaders began discussing the need for more robust party organization.	AP leadership starts to discuss the need for more robust party organizations. Non-party-militant Correa makes public statements about party organization.
<i>Condition 3A</i>	<b>Party militants advocating for party building</b>	Party leaders around Chávez with early partisan activism in the radical left started voicing calls for increased party organization as early as 2001.	AP elites with early partisan activism in the radical left advocated for party-building initiatives. AP technocratic elites did not care or opposed.

Observable Implications		Venezuela	Ecuador
<i>Condition 3B</i>	<b>Party militants' prominence and party-building initiatives</b>	A large number of Chávez's key advisors were socialized in radical left parties, as were almost a third of all <i>Chavista</i> members of the national assembly.	Balance of power was unfavorable to AP party militants, who were not the majority.
<i>Final Outcome</i>	<b>Party consolidation</b>	Indicators of party local strength and party members' preferences regarding party discipline and party commitment increased dramatically between 2001 and 2016.	Indicators of party local strength and party members' preferences regarding party discipline and party commitment dropped between 2013 and 2017.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

**2.5.3 Alternative hypothesis: leaders' predisposition about party building**

One alternative explanation for divergence in party-building outcomes across the two cases might be that it is actually the presidents' pre-existing preferences what drives their decisions about party organization and not the composition of the inner circle, which the presidents might choose exactly to fit their own pre-existing ideological views, including his position on party building. In this case, the degree of radicality of the president should explain the outcome of interest and the composition of the inner circle would be simply epiphenomenal, not causal. However, there are three reasons why this explanation is unsatisfactory.

First, neither Chávez nor Correa have a history of radical left activism – the first was formed in the military, the second in academia – which would lend some support to the idea that the two – and in particular Chávez as the more likely case – did not have pre-existing ideas in favor of party organization. Second, they both initially neglect party building and go through an initial phase where party building was not on the agenda – which lasted approximately 6-7 years



for Chávez and at least 3 for Correa. It took some time even for Chávez – the more radical president – to decide to invest in party organization. We interpret this as further evidence against the theory of the importance of the president's pre-existing views on party building. Third, in Correa's inner circle there was a significant contingent of people with a Marxist background, just not enough – we argue – to tilt the balance of power in their favor.<sup>5</sup> This piece of evidence contradicts the theory that presidents choose inner circles that fit their view on party building. There is reason to believe that presidents pick members of their inner circle for a variety of reasons (for ideological, professional, personal connections), and we showed that the ideological composition of the inner circle has an independent effect on the president's decision to invest in party building at a later point in time.

## **2.6 Assessing external validity**

After specifying and testing our causal mechanisms with a close look at the cases of Venezuela and Ecuador, we want to determine the scope of our theory and assess whether its explanatory power extends beyond the two cases analyzed in the previous section. If our theory is valid, the political background of party officials should be correlated with the degree of party organization. In particular, we should observe that to a higher the ratio of party officials socialized in radical left parties should correspond a higher degree of party organization, as outlined by our theory.

We thus zoom out and explore whether our theoretical expectations are consistent with personalist parties across Latin America between 1993 and 2021. To do this, we employ two datasets: the Latin America Elites Project of the University of Salamanca (PELA-USAL) and the

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<sup>5</sup> “Rafael very much believed in a balance between people from the left and people from the right, so he surrounded himself with people of different background that he would consult to make decisions” (interview with Gabriela Rivadeneira).

V-Party dataset from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). The first is a collection of elite parliamentary elite from 18 countries Latin American carried out since 1994, with information on elites' demographics, background, and ideological and policy preferences. The second is a dataset that includes global data on political parties with party indicators, including cohesion, territorial presence, local organizational strength, and ties with social movements. The merged dataset yields 359 party-term observations covering 101 Latin American political parties (all parties, not limited to personalist parties), averaging 3.5 legislative cycles for each party in the sample.

We first assess the validity of our baseline assumptions about the relationships between personalist parties and party organization. First, given that personalist parties generally place a low value on party organization, we expect that, in general, personalist parties will be negatively associated with party organization. Our first primary independent variable captures the presence or absence of personalist parties. We operationalize personalist parties as any party in the top two deciles of the distribution of V-Dem's personalism variable at the time of its founding, yielding a dataset of 55 party-term observations across 23 parties. While an admittedly arbitrary threshold, it effectively captures a wide range of prominent personalist parties from PAIS and the MVR to López-Obrador's MORENA in Mexico and Fujimori's *Fuerza Popular* in Peru. We provide a list of all the parties coded as personalist in Appendix A.

That said, in Appendix A we present robustness checks with stricter cutoff points, and the results yield few substantive differences compared to our primary operationalization of parties in the top two deciles of V-Dem's personalism score at the time of their founding (see Table 18 in Appendix A). We do not present estimates including a more expansive operationalization of personalism. Including cases that fall lower on V-Dem's personalism score would stretch the

concept of personalism too far by including parties with strong, influential leaders, but are clearly not the driving force without which the party would cease to be competitive. Finally, we only consider parties personalist if they were highly personalist at the time of their founding. We make this decision to match our theoretical framework as closely as possible, which is based on a temporal sequence beginning with parties' origins and development over time. While well-organized parties can become increasingly personalist over time (for example the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) in Nicaragua and the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) in Brazil), their trajectories are fundamentally different than personalist electoral vehicles – i.e. parties founded to advance the career a single leader and that draw upon few or no preexisting political or civil society organizational structures.

Our primary dependent variables are measures of party organization drawn from V-Dem: the extent to which the party has local offices across the country (*local\_office*), the extent to which parties have active local-level party organizations (*local\_org\_strength*), an aggregate measure of local-level party organizing summing the two previous variables (*local\_aggregate*), and a measure of the strength of party ties to prominent social organizations (*soc\_orgties*).

For these and all the following analyses, we run OLS regressions with standard errors clustered by party to account for serial correlation of party residuals. We also include several control variables to adjust for potential confounding generated by a series of factors that are likely to be correlated with both early party socialization and party building: average age of legislators, percent of legislators who are female, average ideological position of legislators on a left-right spectrum, average education attainment of legislators, and whether the current party is a radical left party. Older legislators likely started their career in a time when parties were fulfilling a more central role in politics and society. They are thus more likely than their younger

colleagues to have begun their career in a political party and to believe that parties matter. We include a gender variable too, as recent research has shown that women play an important role in party building (Goyal and Sells 2021). We also include an indicator of legislators' ideological self-placement to capture the effect of ideological beliefs on both our independent and dependent variable. Next, we include a control for legislators' level of education, based on the assumption that more educated legislators might have more opportunities to self-select into political parties and to carry ideas about the importance of party building.

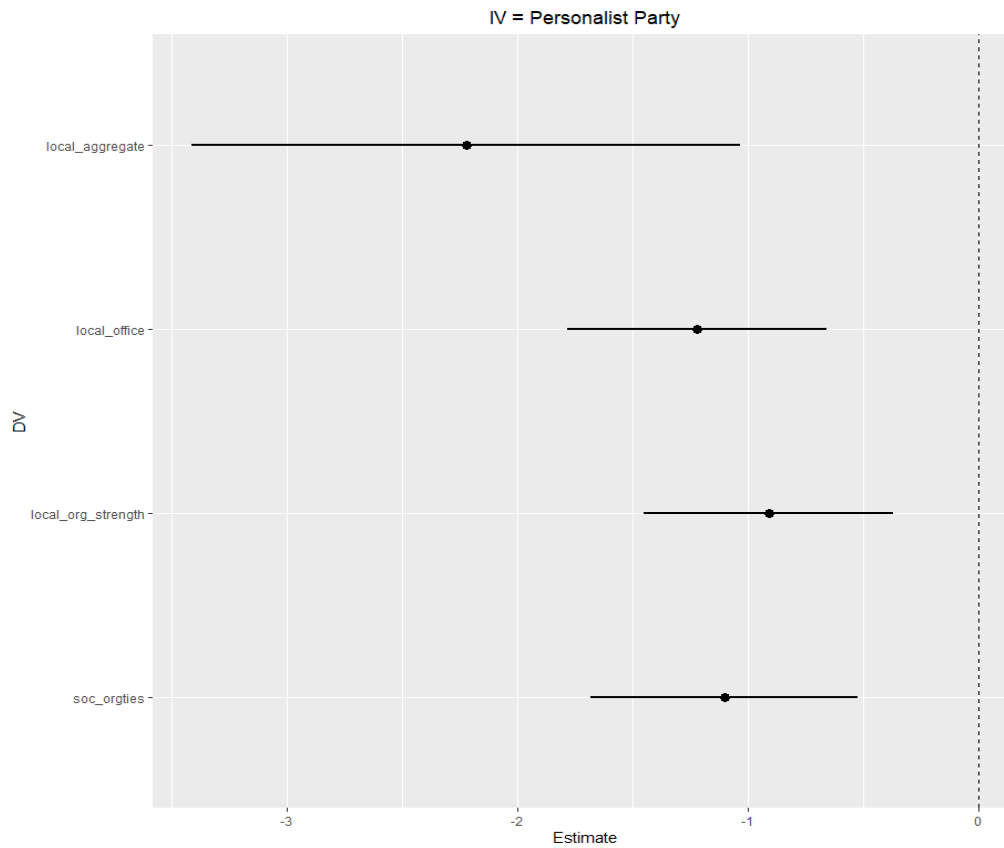
Finally, it is possible that our results are driven not by socialization in radical left parties but simply by the fact that the current party is a radical left party. As we have discussed, radical left parties are more likely to value strong internal organization than other parties. If, as is likely, many legislators who began their careers in radical left parties are still members of radical left parties, our results could simply be capturing the influence of left parties themselves, not early socialization of leaders in left parties. To address this possibility, we include a control for whether a party is on the radical left. Given a lack of systematic data on party ideology, to identify radical left parties we compiled a list of keywords that are likely to be included in the name of left-wing political organizations: *comunista* (“communist”), *socialista* (“socialist”), *revolución/revolucionario/revolucionaria* (“revolution/revolutionary”), *rojo/roja* (“red”), *obrero/obrera/obreros* and *trabajador/trabajadora/trabajadores* (“worker/workers”), *trabajo* (“labor”), *izquierda* (“left”), *marxista* (“Marxist”), *leninista* (“Leninist”), *trotskista* (“Trotskyist”), and *maoista* (“Maoist”). Any party with at least one of these keywords in their name is coded as a radical left party.

We estimate the following simple model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Personalist Parties}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Controls}_{it} + u_{it}$$

Where  $Y_{it}$  represents the value of the dependent variable for the  $i$ th party in the  $t$ th legislative cycle,  $\alpha$  represents a vector of constants,  $\beta_1$  represents the coefficient of the dummy variable for personalist parties,  $\beta_2$  represents the coefficient of the control variables, and  $u_{it}$  is a vector of error terms. Our first results are presented in Figure 8. We find clear and consistent evidence that personalist parties are negatively associated with party organization across all dependent variables. All estimates are in the expected direction and are significant at the .05 level (see Tables 17 and 18 in Appendix A for full results). In general, then, personalist parties build weaker party organizations than other parties.

**Figure 8. Correlation between personalist parties and party organization in Latin America**



*Note:* OLS regressions, 95% confidence intervals reported. All estimates include cluster-robust SEs, clustered by party. Controls included for age, gender, political ideology, education, and radical left party. Alternative specifications and full regression results are provided in Appendix A.

We turn now to a test of our central theoretical question: is the relationship between radical left party socialization and party organization we document above in Ecuador and Venezuela consistent with personalist parties in Latin America generally? To explore this question, we estimate the same model described above, only this time including a radical left party socialization variable and an interaction term for radical left party socialization and personalist parties. Our primary independent variable ‘radical left party socialization’ captures the percentage of legislators from each party in each legislative cycle who reported beginning their political career in a radical left party, operationalized according to the abovementioned procedure. To construct party-legislative term estimates, we simply calculate the share of legislators in the PELA sample for each party in each legislative cycle who reported beginning their political career in a radical left party.

Specifically, we estimate the following model:

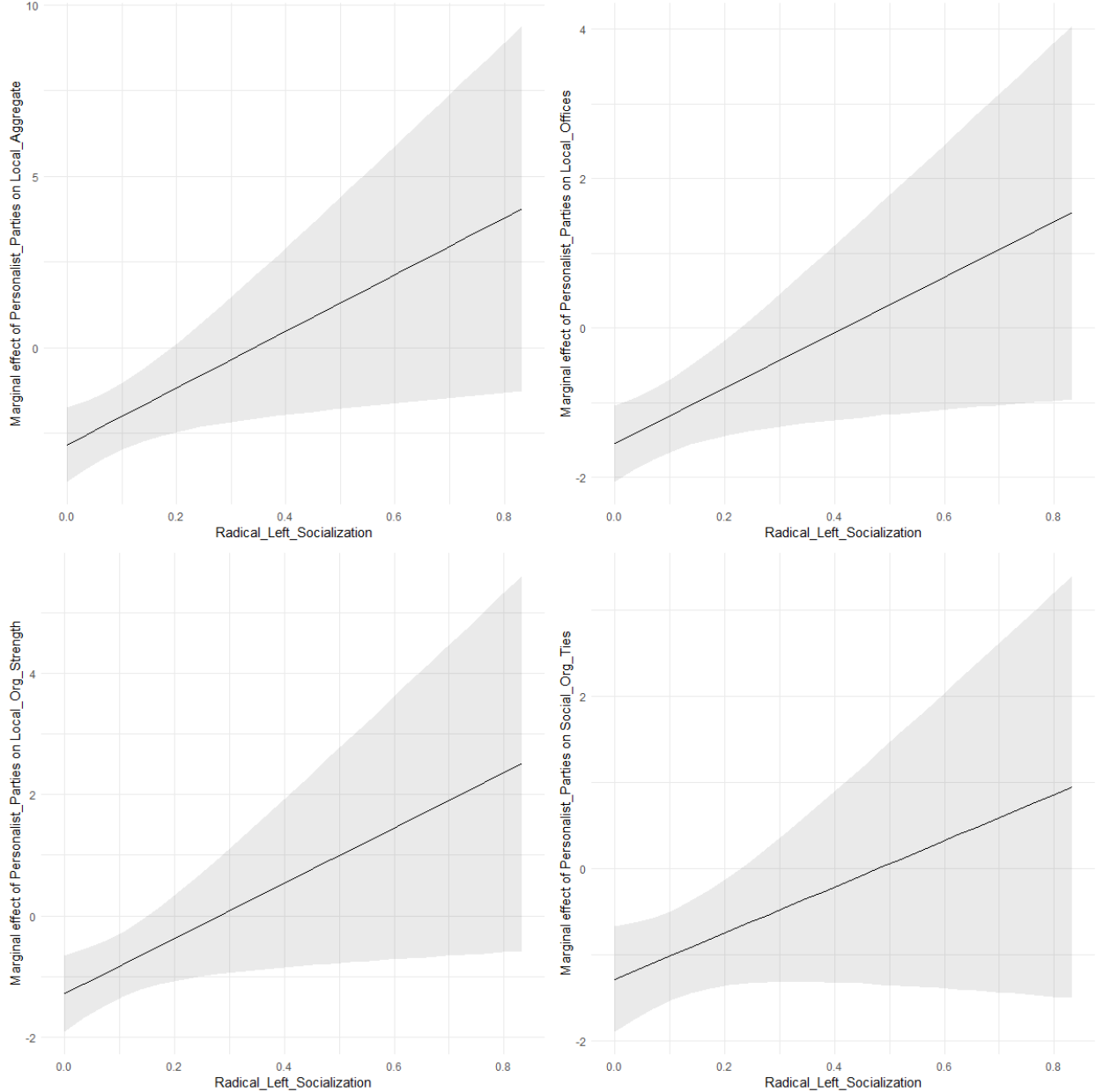
$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Left Party Socialization}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Personalist Parties}_{it} \\ + \beta_3 \text{Left Party Socialization}_{it} \text{Personalist Parties}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{Controls}_{it} + u_{it}$$

Where  $Y_{it}$  represents the value of the dependent variable for the  $i$ th party in the  $t$ th legislative cycle,  $\alpha$  represents a vector of constants,  $\beta_1$  represents the coefficient for the radical left party socialization variable,  $\beta_2$  represents the coefficient of the dummy variable for personalist parties,  $\beta_3$  represents the interaction of socialization in radical left parties and the presence or absence of personalist parties,  $\beta_4$  represents the coefficient of the control variables, and  $u_{it}$  is a vector of error terms.

Figure 9 plots the marginal effects of personalist parties on party organization across levels of radical left party socialization. The interaction term for personalist parties and party

organization is positive and statistically significant at the .05 level for each outcome, with the exception of personalist parties and ties to social organizations ( $p = .11$ ). In each case, we can see that personalist parties with no or comparatively few legislators who were socialized in radical left political parties are negatively associated with party organization. By contrast, when a substantial percentage of a party's legislators were socialized in radical left parties (between 30% and 50%, depending on the measure of party organization), personalist parties are positively associated with party-building (see Tables 19 and 20 in Appendix A for full results). Thus, we find that our case studies are remarkably consistent with regional patterns, since 31.9% of the PSUV's national legislators in 2001 were socialized in radical left parties, compared to just 7% for PAIS in 2007.

**Figure 9. Marginal effects of personalist parties on party organization in Latin America across levels of radical left party socialization**

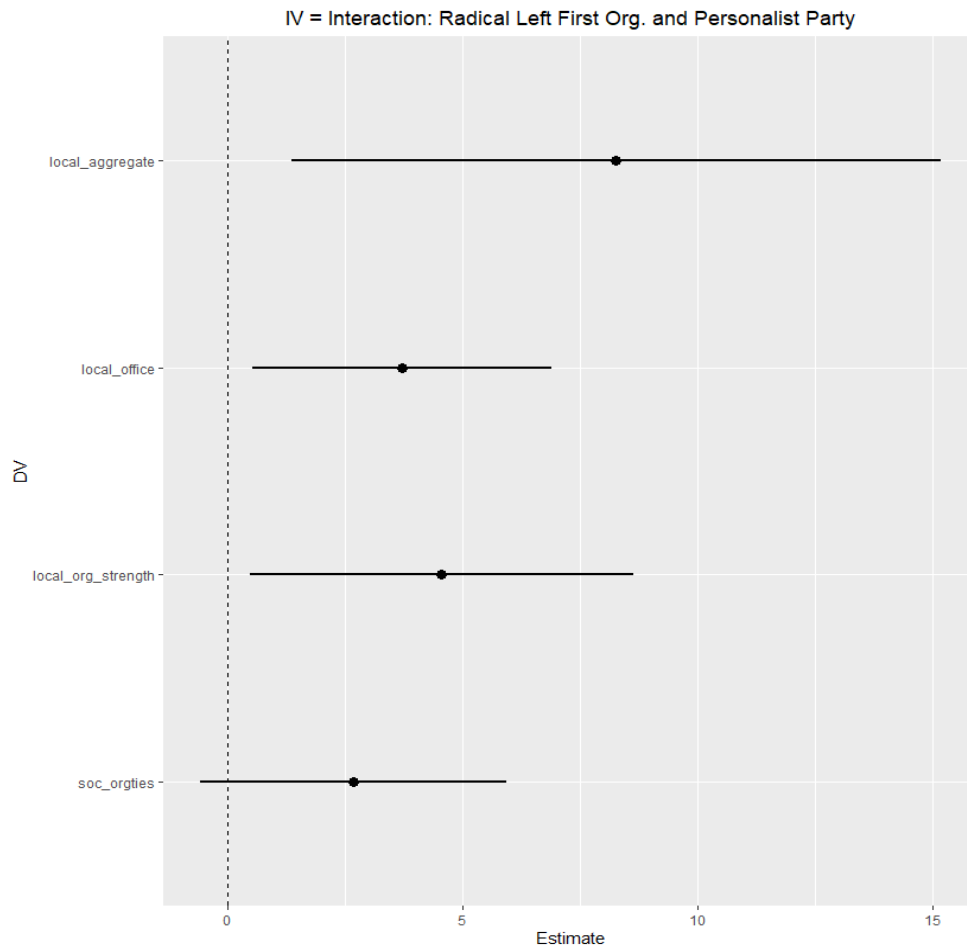


*Note:* OLS regressions, 95% confidence intervals reported. All estimates include cluster-robust SEs, clustered by party. Controls included for age, gender, political ideology, education, and radical left party. Alternative specifications and full regression results are provided in Appendix A.



In addition to documenting a clear positive relationship between radical left socialization and party organization among personalist parties, we also find evidence, consistent with our theoretical expectation that the views of party officials matter more for decision-making in leader-dependent personalist parties than other parties, that the impact of radical left socialization is particularly strong among personalist parties. As shown in Figure 10, the interaction between the prevalence of a party's legislators who began their political careers in radical left parties and the presence of personalist parties is positive and statistically significant for all indicators except for ties to social organizations, indicating that personalist parties are particularly susceptible to the influence of leaders with a radical left past pushing for stronger party organization. This may be a result of the fact that personalist party leaders, by definition, have more freedom than leaders of other parties to change strategic course in the face of electoral setbacks, political destabilization, or exogenous economic shocks. Alternatively, leaders of parties built upon the scaffolding of previous parties, unions, social movements, or other organizations may simply have weaker incentives to improve party organization over time.

**Figure 10. Interaction effect of radical left party socialization and personalist parties on party organization in Latin America**



*Note:* OLS regressions, 95% confidence intervals reported. All estimates include cluster-robust SEs, clustered by party. Controls included for age, gender, political ideology, education, and radical left party. Alternative specifications and full regression results are provided in Appendix A.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This article has presented a theoretical framework to explain the fates of personalist parties in Latin America. Through careful process tracing of the cases of Venezuela’s MVR/PSUV and Ecuador’s AP, it has demonstrated that the party-building preferences of high-ranking party officials influence the extent to which leaders invest in party organization. We have shown that

when the leaders of personalist parties are surrounded by advisors who were socialized in radical left parties— and whose Marxist or Leninist political origins predispose them to value party organization, party leaders are more likely to overcome anti-party biases and invest in party organization (Chávez in Venezuela) than leaders of personalist parties who are surrounded by advisors with different backgrounds who do not place a high value on party organization (Correa in Ecuador). Finally, we also found evidence suggesting that the explanatory power of our framework extends beyond the two case studies to personalist parties more generally. In our statistical analysis of all personalist parties in Latin America over the last three decades, we found support for the hypothesis that party officials' early socialization in a radical left political party is positively associated with the strength of party organization, and that personalist parties are particularly likely to be impacted by the presence of leaders who were socialized in radical left parties.

The implications of our findings are manifold. First, they highlight the importance of socialization processes to explain party outcomes by showing that party officials who experience militant party activism early in their career are more likely to contribute to building strong parties. In this sense, the article echoes Levitsky and Way (2012), who find that party cohesion can be a consequence of collective socialization in the context of violent struggle. We extend Levitsky and Way's insight about revolutionary parties to account also for the party-building impact of individuals who were socialized in revolutionary or other radical left parties on different parties in the future. Given the prevalence of leaders in Latin America who were socialized in radical left parties but who currently or recently have occupied influential positions in other parties – from Dilma Rousseff and José Mujica in Brazil and Uruguay, respectively, to

Gustavo Petro and Gabriel Boric in Colombia and Chile, respectively – this is a particularly salient question for understanding the trajectories of contemporary parties in Latin America.

Second, our findings prompt us to think about ideational factors in a different way – not only as party resources to acquire and maintain influence in the public sphere (Cyr 2017) or as party brands to stand out and send clear signals to voters (Lupu 2016) but as sets of beliefs that guide the action of party decisionmakers. These beliefs – disseminated through socialization – can shape the intertemporal party-building choices of party officials, lengthening their time horizon and lowering their discount rate. While obviously central to understanding party trajectories, structural/environmental and self-interested strategic decision-making cannot account for all important forms of variation in party-fates, particularly, as we have shown, with respect to variation in levels of party organization among personalist parties. Without accounting for the relative influence of groups in party leadership holding different ideas about party strategy, it is impossible to understand fully why some parties can overcome seemingly insuperable obstacles to successful party building while others cannot.

There are at least three important avenues for future research that follow directly from this study. First, future studies should broaden our analysis from Latin America to other regions. While we have focused on Latin America due to the prevalence of personalist parties in the region, similar parties are becoming increasingly prevalent in other regions of the world, including in Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where socialization in radical left parties is also common among contemporary political leaders, and is becoming increasingly common as radical left parties take advantage of the declining popularity of traditional social-democratic parties (Krause 2019). Given the ideological similarities between radical left parties across regions of the world – most of which share a Marxist or Leninist provenance to one

degree or another – it may be the case that radical left socialization plays a similar role in party-building efforts in places like Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it is also possible, for instance, that higher average levels of party organization in European parties compared to Latin American parties creates a ceiling effect that mitigates the impact of radical left party socialization. Likewise, politicians socialized in radical left European parties, many of whom have direct experience with Stalinist parties that governed their countries before the fall of the Soviet Union, may be particularly sensitive to the dangers of over-centralization, and may be skeptical of party-building efforts.

Second, future work might look at the impact of other kinds of early party-leader socialization on party trajectories. For instance, does early socialization of party leaders in labor unions, neighborhood associations, other organizations that, like radical-left parties also place a high value on internal organization, have a similar effect on party organization? Does the educational or occupational trajectory of party leaders affect party organization? Or, to take the inverse of the hypothesis advanced in this chapter, does the prevalence of individuals we would expect to resist party-building efforts – like political outsiders – in positions of power have a negative impact on party organization?

Finally, future work is needed to better understand the relationship between party organization and party longevity. Numerous studies have shown that stronger organizational capacity helps parties endure and succeed over the long-term (Cyr 2017; Pérez Bentancur et al. 2020, among others), but to date there has been little systematic comparative investigation of this question. Once we have a clearer sense of which specific aspects of party organization are most conducive to party endurance and electoral success, and which political, social, and economic contexts are more likely to facilitate these outcomes, we can make further progress in specifying

how ideas matter not just for party organization itself, but for the fates of political parties more broadly.

### **3 Will the Revolution Be Televised? Alliance with Societal Organizations and the Communication Strategies of Left-Wing Governments in Latin America**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The election of left-wing presidents in a number of Latin American states during the so-called “Pink Tide” has given governmental representation to longstanding social demands, thus bringing to the political foreground the latent social polarization typical of extremely unequal polities. This has opened up deep cleavages between governments and a number of social and political actors that often erupted into open confrontation. One of the most dramatic ways in which these cleavages have manifested is through the stormy relationship with the private mass media sector.<sup>6</sup> This conflict, though, has been generally overlooked by political scientists.

Historically, the oligopolistic Latin American private media has upheld the interests of conservative and business sectors (Becerra and Mastrini 2009; Hughes and Prado 2011; Boas 2013), who came out politically debilitated from decades of neoliberal policies (Silva 2009). With reformist governments swept into power and discredited right-wing parties unable to put up significant resistance within formal political institutions, private media outlets became the main voice of the opposition. They tuned into something of a last stronghold from which the region’s economic elites were launching attacks to discredit their political adversaries in the government. The ensuing no-holds-barred confrontation took center stage in public debates, with the media

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this article, I use the term “mass media” (or simply “media”) to indicate print media (newspapers and magazines) and broadcast media (television and radio). Social media is excluded from this definition because in the period I am analyzing (from mid-2000s to the mid-2010s) it still played a marginal role in regulating the flow of political information, especially compared to dominant role played by the mass media. Moreover, social media’s ownership structure and relationship with national governments differ substantially from the traditional mass media. Analysis of these factors lies outside of the purview of this study.

sector criticizing the government in an unusually vehement and monolithic fashion and the government openly accusing the press as a whole of lying and defending particularistic interests.

Yet, despite left governments' widespread critical tone – which went from defiant to belligerent depending on the cases – not all of them took active steps to challenge the oligopolistic control of private outlets on the national media sphere. On the one hand, governments in Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela moved decisively in a more aggressive direction, using different tools or a combination of them – including the creation or strengthening of public media, the passing of comprehensive media laws, and the presidency's active engagement in the production of media and news content; on the other hand, their counterpart in Brazil did not make any move to countervail the dominance of the private sector over the media, while Bolivia and Uruguay stand somewhere in the middle with timid attempts at reform.

What explains this divergence? One answer would immediately point to the different degrees of radicalism that the literature has attributed to left governments, with Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela representing the so-called radical, contestatory left, and Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and to a great extent Argentina representing the moderate, cautious one (Castañeda 2006; Weyland, Madrid and Hunter 2010). A stronger radicalism should correspond to a more aggressive media strategy. This explanation, however, fails to account for the regulatory initiatives of the Argentinian and, to a lesser extent, the Uruguayan governments on the one hand, and the relative inactivity of the MAS government in Bolivia on the other hand. There must be other factors at play to explain this variation.

In seeking to account for variation in media strategies on the part of left-wing governments, I understand the clash between them and the predominantly private media ultimately as a struggle over the dissemination of political information, whose flow is regulated



primarily by the media itself, which act as the main narrators of politics and providers of information about governmental activities.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, this chapter focuses in particular on one dimension of governmental media strategies, which I call *media activism* – i.e. the creation of alternative media channels to bypass the private media and obviate its dominance in the media sector. This should be interpreted as an attempt on the part of these governments to strengthen their ability to disseminate political information on governmental activity (e.g. policy goals, challenges, and results) to the electorate and issue stakeholders.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that an explanation to this variation in media activism among left-wing governments must be sought in the composition of their core constituency and their relationship with the societal organizations that provide organizational texture to organized constituencies. Parties whose core constituency is mostly unorganized or that tap into organized sectors but without establishing an alliance with societal organizations will find themselves without an effective societal channel of communication with the electorate and will thus be more likely to resort to the construction of a media structure to bypass private media and establish an alternative mediatized channel of communication. I call this the *media* communication strategy. On the contrary, governing parties that mainly draw support from organized constituencies *through* affiliated societal organizations – which I call mediating organizations – will take advantage of these existing channels to bypass national private media and diffuse information to

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<sup>7</sup> There are two reasons why the mass media is the primary regulator of information flows over social media: (1) the relatively low penetration of ICTs vis-à-vis the high penetration of radio; (2) the circulation of mass media content on social media, due to high levels of media concentration (Becerra and Mastrini 2017).

<sup>8</sup> In my analysis, I will leave aside initiatives to regulate the media sector via the passage of media laws because (1) the implementation of media laws was so tortuous that they often remained inconsequential – especially regarding the redistribution of broadcast frequencies – and (2) even in their most aggressive forms (e.g. de-concentration of ownership and regulation of content through monetary sanctions), media laws were more aimed at restraining the unchecked power of the private media than at *directly* amplifying the government's own voice.

their electoral base. They can thus largely avoid resorting to mediatized communication as their dominant strategy. I label this communication strategy *organizational*.

I also analyze the downstream consequences of the two strategies. While in the media strategy information flows unidirectionally from the top down and the governing party is dependent on state resources to implement it, the organizational strategy entails a two-way communication and it functions even when the party does not have access to state resources. These factors have importance implications for internal party democracy, their performance as opposition parties, and the democratization of the media environment.

I demonstrate the plausibility of this theory by examining a set of observable implications derived from it. To do so, I marshal empirical evidence from the cases of the governments of *Alianza PAIS* (AP) in Ecuador (2007-2017) and of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) in Bolivia (2006-2019). The two parties adopted very different communication strategies: while AP's was predominantly media-centered, the MAS relied heavily on organizational channels. These different strategies are a consequence of the organizational linkages that these two parties maintained with their core constituents. AP avoided building permanent alliances with social movements and relied mostly on the support of unorganized sectors, for whom the media is the sole source of political information. This lack of allied mediating organizations that serve as channels of communication with constituents motivated the AP government to resort to media activism to maintain electoral support. The MAS, on the other hand, built its basis of support on the membership of affiliated societal organizations, through which the government was able to communicate with its core constituencies. The government engaged in little media activism as the presence of a dense network of mediating organizations made it unnecessary.

This chapter seeks to make three important contributions. First, the chapter tries to shed light on the relationship between organization, communication, and party development. While comparative party literature rarely if ever includes communication of political information as one of the main functions parties fulfill, this chapter puts it at the center of the analysis on party development. Organization does not only help enforce party discipline, facilitate mobilization of resources, and keep leaders accountable. It also increases a party communicative capacity by facilitating connection between cadres and bases without relying on external (i.e. state) resources, keeping party activists both informed and engaged in decision making and thus decreasing the likelihood of defection. Moreover, while scholars evidenced how access to the media weakens incentives for party building (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Van Dyck 2016), I show, conversely, that the lack of party organization creates incentives for reliance on the media, particularly in contexts of intense polarization.

Second, the chapter highlights how communication capacity is crucial in the quest for governability, especially for governing parties committed to redistribution, which have a harder time making their voices heard in a public sphere predominantly shaped by private media conglomerates. This chapter shows that parties with strong organization have an inherent advantage in terms of communication capacity over weakly organized parties, which try to fill the organizational gap through the construction of media-based alternative channels of communication. This conflict over the dissemination of political information is particularly important for broader political outcomes – e.g. democratic stability and accountability, citizen engagement, policymaking – especially in today’s common context of passive citizenship and low political participation.

Third, this chapter shows that the organizational model of communication offers better prospects for informed citizen engagement and democratic control of political elites than the media model. While the latter remains unidirectional, top-down, and consolidates the detachment of party elites from the bases, the former entails bidirectional communication and immediate feedback from the social bases to the government, forcing it to remain responsive to grassroots demands. Interestingly enough though, the media model has a greater potential to ameliorate the dissemination of political information through the restructuring and diversification of the media environment, which the organizational model had no interest in transforming. Unfortunately, this is likely to lead to a contingent pluralization, as high political polarization creates strong incentives for the government to use the new media for its short-term political gains, impairing the autonomy of the new media, which can easily become a tool in the hands of the following right-wing government.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next two sections, I position my argument in relation to the broader literature on media and political parties and I provide some context on the media environment in Latin America and its relationship with economic and political actors. In the third section, I lay out a theory to explain why governments resort to different communication strategies, describe the features of each strategy, and derive observable implications from the theory. Then, I explain my methodology and provide a rationale for case selection before engaging in an empirical analysis to substantiate my theory and consider alternative explanations. Finally, I illustrate the downstream effects of adopting a media or an organizational communication strategy before drawing conclusions from the analysis.

### **3.2 Parties, media, and communication**

Classic works in political science have highlighted the importance of communication for governing (Deutsch 1963) and the connection between parties and communication (Sartori 1976). Sartori in particular argues that parties are “the central intermediate and intermediary structure between society and government” (1976: ix) and can be “best conceived as means of communication” (1976: 28). However, over the last half century parties have become less central as intermediaries between government and society as a consequence of two related processes: (1) the decline of political parties and (2) the spread of mass media technologies.

Scholars have long pointed to the decay of political parties across the globe, documenting decline in party membership (Mair and van Biezen 2001) and party identification (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Lupu 2016), cases of party-system collapse (Morgan 2011; Seawright 2012), and the diffusion of personalist parties (Pasquino 2014) and other diminished subtypes (Luna et al. 2021). This process of party decline has gone hand-in-hand with the expansion and ever-increasing penetration of both mass and social media, which have further crowded out party organization as a critical bridge between state and society. Authors have showed how the spread of media technologies has made high party membership rates and bureaucratic organization no longer necessary to win elections, thus severely weakening incentives for party building and contributing to the proliferation of weak parties (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Van Dyck 2016). However, we still do not know why and when political actors decide to rely on the media or party organization to connect with their constituents.

Scholars have also hinted at how parties and media compete in shaping the reception and interpretation of political information. In particular, strong and enduring party identification has been found to render voters more resistant to media influence (Lazarsfeld, et al. 1948; Campbell

et al. 1960; Converse and Dupeux 1962; Achen 1975; Green and Palmquist 1990; Schickler and Green 1997; Green and Yoon 2002). As a result, in polities where parties and party identification are weaker, citizens are more susceptible to media effects (Lawson and McCann 2005; Moreno 1999). There is thus good reason to believe that in these polities – which include Latin American ones – media influence is particularly important in determining political outcomes.

However, political scientists have not devoted much attention to the communicative strategies of political parties in Latin America. The most prominent studies have a specific focus on attempts at media reform across the region (Mauersberger 2012, 2016; Segura and Waisbord 2016; Kitzberger 2017) and do not delve into what motivates governments to adopt certain communication strategies,<sup>9</sup> focusing instead on the consequences of these strategies on the quality of democracy (Conaghan and De La Torre 2008). This chapter seeks to fill this gap by offering a systematic account of the communication strategies of left-wing governments in the region and of the factors that influence their decision to wager on the media versus party organization to communicate with their constituents.

### **3.3 Concentration and anti-progressive bias: the uneven playing field of Latin American media**

The increasing concentration of media ownership in a few private hands represents a serious challenge to democracy around the globe (UNESCO 2008; Norris 2010; Mendel et al. 2017). This is particularly true for Latin America, where the level of concentration is much higher than the global average, with a handful of families and conglomerates dominating domestic media systems (Becerra and Mastrini 2009). This dynamic is perilous for pluralism as it leads to the

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<sup>9</sup> In this sense, Kitzberger (2012, 2016) and Artz (2017) constitute partial exceptions.

homogenization of content across and within media sectors. Multidimensional integration and the consolidation of media conglomerates have led to the unification of editorial line across different media, with a consequent increasing lack of diversity of the social groups represented, deeper inequality in access, and the production of content that reflects the views and interests of the business sector and other powerful actors (Becerra and Mastrini 2009; Boas 2013; Hughes and Prado 2011).

This development has produced oligopolistic media systems that are unfavorable, or even outright hostile, to progressive political actors (Hughes and Lawson 2005; Hughes and Prado 2011; Cannon 2016). To be sure, the existence in the region of an uneven playing field for progressive politics is not new. Latin America has a history of conservative, authoritarian, and military governments collaborating with mainstream media in quid pro quo relationships (Conaghan 2002; Fox and Waisbord 2002; Porto 2012; Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez 2014). As a matter of fact, the most established commercial media took advantage of the selective repression of media outlets to acquire a progressively increasing share of the domestic media market and consolidate its dominance (Fox 1988; Fox and Waisbord 2002; Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez 2014).

Over the last decades, the private media sector in the region has continued to show signs of politicization, connection with right-wing politicians, and instrumental use by their owners for the pursuit of personal interests – both political and economic (Archondo 2003; Gómez Vela 2006; Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez 2014; Serrano 2016). Private media outlets often engage in informational battles against left-wing policy initiatives, making it harder to enact those initiatives by increasing the political cost of doing so (Fairfield 2015). This political activism on the part of the media constitutes an obstacle for governments that were elected on the promise of

carrying out social, economic, and political reforms that go against the interests of media owners and their social sector. To be able to enact those reforms, governments need to find a solution to this communication disadvantage. The theory I develop below seeks to explain variation in the type of solution that governments decide to pursue.

### **3.4 Explaining divergence in communication strategies**

In Table 4 below, we can see the variation in media strategies across countries with left-wing governments in the region, both in terms of media activism and regulation. Media activism refers to those initiatives directly aimed at expanding the government's voice (*vis-à-vis* private media) while regulation refers to actions aimed at imposing different types of legal restrictions to the usage of the media spectrum. In terms of communication, Ecuador and Venezuela stand out for their efforts at building new mass media outlets and for their quite radical strategy of direct televised communication between the president and the electorate. The other four cases have taken relatively limited steps in the creation of new avenues of communication. As for regulation, we see activism across the board but with varying degrees of intensity. The forms of regulation that we observe include the passage of media laws whose goals range from establishing a general framework for ownership and usage to imposing clear steps for ownership deconcentration measures or enacting libel and slander clauses. For this reason, Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela can be categorized as cases of high level of activism, while Bolivia and Uruguay as moderate ones. Brazil did not pass any media law and therefore can be labelled as a case of low level of regulatory activism. What then explains this divergence in media activism across left-wing governments?



**Table 4. The media strategies of left-wing governments: media activism and regulatory initiatives**

	<b>Media activism</b>		<b>Regulation</b>	
	<i>Major Initiatives</i>	<i>Level of Activism</i>	<i>Major Initiatives</i>	<i>Level of Activism</i>
<b>Argentina</b>	None	Low	• Media law (with ownership deconcentration measures)	High
<b>Bolivia</b>	None	Low	• Telecommunication law	Medium
<b>Brazil</b>	• New media	Medium	None	Low
<b>Ecuador</b>	• Weekly direct presidential communication • New media	High	• Media law (with libel and slander clauses)	High
<b>Uruguay</b>	None	Low	• Media law	Medium
<b>Venezuela</b>	• Weekly direct presidential communication • New media	High	• Media law (with libel and slander clauses)	High

Source: Author's elaboration.

As previously mentioned, this chapter focuses on explaining variation in media activism. I argue that, facing a hostile media environment, left parties in government need to communicate with their constituents information about policy initiatives – their goals, challenges, and results – to curb media manipulation. This urgency to counter messages from the private media forces them to make a choice in how to do it. The least costly choice is to communicate directly via mediating organizations (MOs) – i.e. organizational structures that can be used as channels to

disseminate information about governmental policy initiatives, challenges, and results.<sup>10</sup> But where this route is not available – that is, where the governing party lacks societal channels of communication with their constituents – left governments turn to media activism. We are more likely to observe media activism when the governing party has no alliance with societal organizations. The absence of affiliated societal organization implies that the party’s core constituency is diffused and unorganized or that the party taps into organized sectors to build its core constituency but does not have any organizational linkage with them. In both cases the governing party faces difficulties in reaching its core constituents because no mediating organization can do the work of communicating with them. It will thus need to rely more heavily on the media to disseminate information and resort to a media-centered communication strategy.

On the contrary, parties that have their core constituency in organized sectors and have formed an alliance with their societal organizations can rely on them as mediating organizations to disseminate information to their core supporters and will not have to resort to the media to do that. In this case we are less likely to observe intense media activism on the part of the government, which instead carries out an organization-centered communication strategy. More generally, the higher the ratio of constituents that cannot be reached through mediating organizations to organizationally connected ones, the more salient the media becomes for the government to diffuse political information about governmental activity. Figure 11 below provides a graphical illustration of the theory.

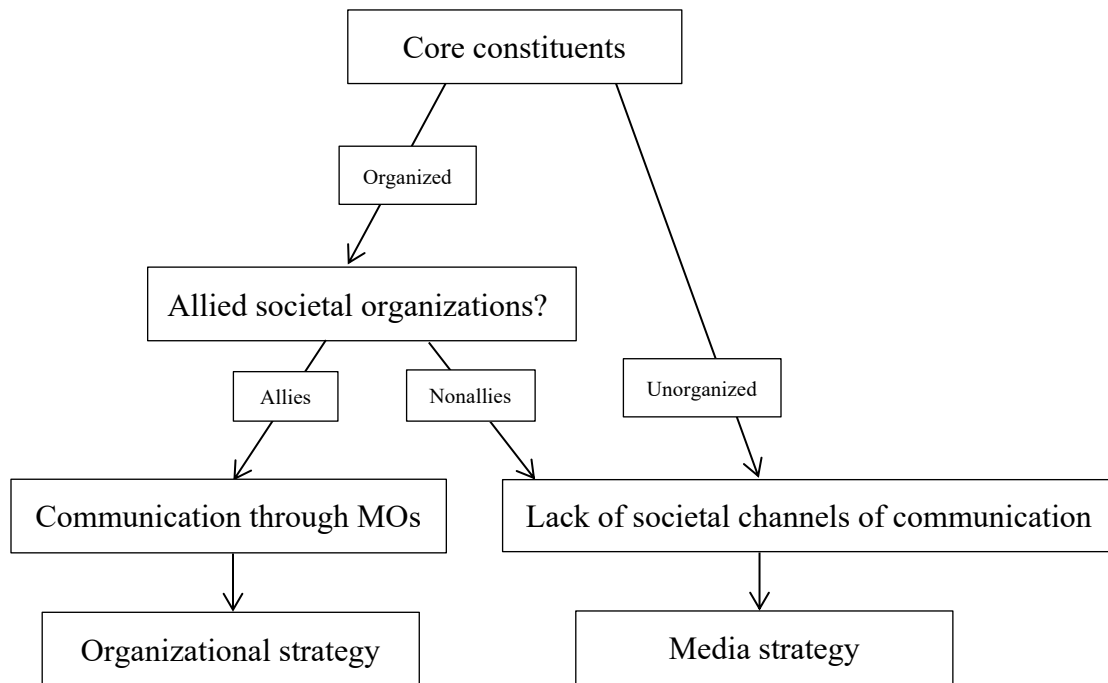
The two strategies can be distinguished based on dissemination scope, direction of communication, and dependence on state resources. These features have far-reaching

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<sup>10</sup> These structures can be societal organizations connected to the party or party structures per se (e.g. base committees). In my analysis I focus mainly on societal organizations as successful parties often build on them (Levitsky et al. 2016). I do not consider clientelist networks as MOs because while they deliver votes, they do not necessarily work to diffuse political information about governmental activities.

consequences on the party’s internal democracy and chances of survival. As such, they are likely to matter in party officials’ considerations when making the choice of which strategy to pursue. First, the media strategy has a wider scope of dissemination compared to the organizational one, as it can disseminate information among both organized and unorganized constituencies. On the contrary, the organizational strategy can encompass only constituencies that lie within the network of societal organizations.

**Figure 11. The theoretical argument: core constituents, organization, and communication**

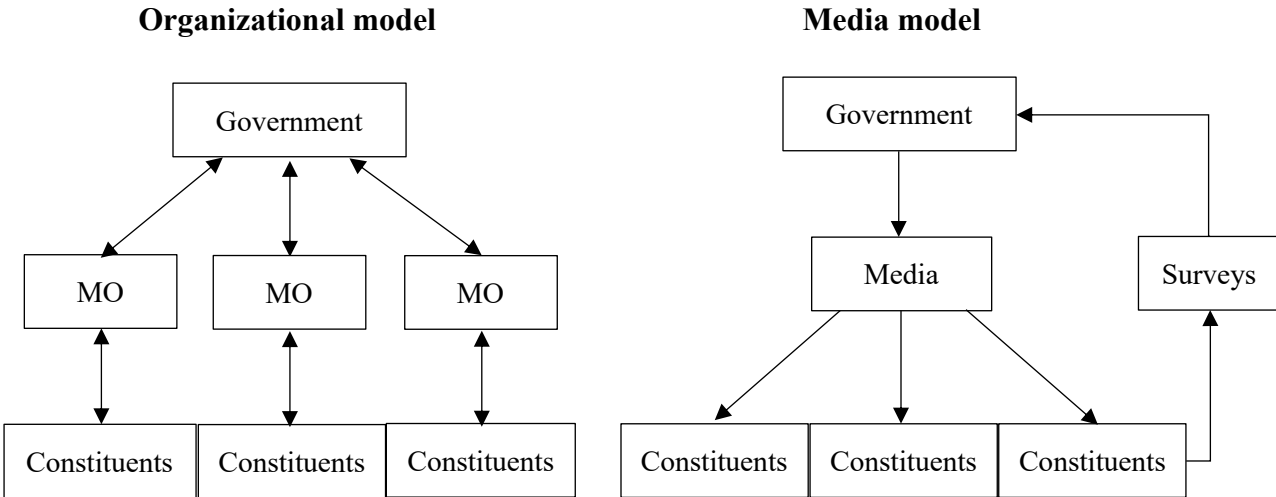


*Source:* Author’s elaboration.

Second, the media strategy is based on a unidirectional, strictly top-down form of communication, where constituents are merely the target of communication and have much more limited possibilities of utilizing the channel as active subjects compared to the organizational

model. Their feedback is usually gathered through surveys gauging approval towards the government in general or specific policies. The organizational strategy, on the other hand, includes an important bottom-up component, as it allows for the participation of constituents in the communication process – even though mediated by organizational structures. Constituents can take advantage, to varying degrees, of an avenue of communication with the government, often through the leadership of MOs. Figure 12 below illustrates the flow of information under the two models.

**Figure 12. Flow of information under the two communication models**



*Source:* Author’s elaboration.

Third, the implementation of the media strategy is dependent on access to state resources, as left-wing parties are less likely to find allies among economic elites who own or can found media outlets. This is especially true when they are not the ruling party. Parties thus use access to state resources to develop public media channels to bypass private media and disseminate information to their constituents. The organizational strategy on the contrary relies on

autonomous resources inherent to the party and its relationship with societal organizations, and it can be implemented regardless of having access to state resources. This makes the organizational strategy much more sustainable in the long term than the media one, especially when the party is at the opposition and has no access to state resources.

The media strategy is thus appealing for its wider scope of dissemination, but its structure of communication is strictly top down, inhibiting the direct participation of constituents. Moreover reliance on the media will create communication challenges to the party once it moves to the opposition, and this will negatively impact the party's long-term development and chances for survival. It is thus likely that actors will consider it as a suboptimal strategy. The organizational strategy has a more limited reach but its communication is bidirectional, leaving room for bottom-up constituents' participation, and parties which rely on it have better chances of remaining relevant even as opposition parties because their capacity to disseminate information is not affected by the change in access to state resources.

The theoretical logic explained above generates a set of observable implications (OIs) that I will test in the empirical analysis:

- 1. Building support in unorganized vs. organized constituencies:** we should observe some parties building support overwhelmingly in unorganized constituencies and other parties building support in organized constituencies through affiliated societal organizations that act as mediating organizations.
- 2. Tapping into organized constituencies:** parties should be able to win votes in organized constituencies even without having formed an alliance with the related societal organizations. Observing this evidence should demonstrate that the main explanatory variable is not the

level organization of constituents per se, but the presence or absence of alliances with societal organizations.

- 3. Perception of communication challenge:** parties that have no connection with mediating organizations should recognize the lack of societal channels of communication as a problem for disseminating information to their core constituents. On the contrary, we should not observe parties that have connection with mediating organizations treating the media as key to their communication strategy. Observing this evidence would suggest that media activism is the suboptimal strategy while the organizational communication strategy is the optimal one.
- 4. Main channel of communication:** parties that have no connection with mediating organizations should mainly resort to the media to communicate with their constituents, while parties that have connection with mediating organizations should take advantage of them to reach their constituents.
- 5. Investments to strengthen communication capacity:** parties that have no connection with mediating organizations should undertake investments to overcome the communication challenge, including (1) building new channels of communication through the media and (2) building new mediating organizations. Parties that have connection with mediating organizations should still demonstrate through costly signals that they care about communicating with their constituents. We should thus observe them making investments in building or strengthening communication channels with their electorate, possibly even in the media sphere.

### 3.5 Methodology and case selection

To show the empirical validity of my theory, I use a combination of process tracing and controlled comparison. While process tracing guarantees attention to causal processes *within* each case and illuminates the causal pathways connecting the explanatory variable to the dependent one, controlled comparison enhances external validity by selecting cases whose variation is representative of a broader population while maximizing control and reducing space of alternative explanations (Slater and Ziblatt 2013). This combination maximizes internal and external validity given the small universe of cases of left-wing governments in contemporary South America (n=6). The evidence has been collected from 21 original interviews; primary sources, such as party documents and newspaper articles; and secondary sources.

I substantiate my theory through an analysis of two case studies – the government of *Movimiento Alianza PAIS* in Ecuador and of the *Movimiento al Socialismo* in Bolivia. The two countries exhibit analogous levels of economic development and face similar deficiencies in terms of state capacity and level of institutionalization of their political systems. Both countries are characterized by lively civil societies, highly organized especially in their indigenous and peasant constituencies, and by a strong regional and ethnic cleavages. Moreover, Bolivia and Ecuador share a similar historical trajectory. They both returned to democracy at the beginning of the 1980s and were struck hard by neoliberal policies, which caused massive social and economic distress and a decade of political instability across the 1990s and 2000s that led to the election of reformist parties.

Their media environments are also similar, with no dominating conglomerate, a structure of ownership predominantly family-owned, and levels of concentration in line with the regional average (Becerra and Mastrini 2009). Although their national media does not feature big

corporations with monopolistic tendencies such as the Brazilian *Globo* or Argentine *Clarín*, it is still highly concentrated in the hands of a few families. In 2004 – a few years before left parties won office – the first four outlets combined made up 64 and 93 percent of the total revenue in the newspaper sector in Bolivia and Ecuador, respectively, with readership numbers around 65 percent in both countries,<sup>11</sup> consistent with the regional average (Becerra and Mastrini 2009).

The same pattern can be found in broadcast television, where the first four outlets concentrate 70 percent of the total revenue in Bolivia and 64 percent of the total audience in Ecuador, and in cable television, with audience percentages going from 82 in Bolivia to 100 percent in Ecuador (Becerra and Mastrini 2009). Public, government-run media was relatively weak in Bolivia (with one television channel of the eight national ones and one radio station) and nonexistent in Ecuador, where no television or radio was publicly owned and commercial media made up 95 percent of all radio and television licenses.

Despite the fact that AP and the MAS had very similar programmatic agendas and reaped important electoral success for over a decade, they built very different core constituencies around them – mostly organizationally disconnected in the case of AP and highly organized in the case of the MAS. This ample variation in explanatory variables allows me to highlight the different causal pathways that led to the adoption of different communication strategies, which underlie the visibly different degrees of media activism: while the government of Rafael Correa in Ecuador put in place a full-fledged media strategy, devoting resources to the construction of a mediatized channel of communication, the government of Evo Morales and the MAS in Bolivia generally disregarded the media thanks to the availability of societal channels of communication.

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<sup>11</sup> The number for Ecuador actually refers just to the two main national newspapers, Guayaquil's *El Universo* and Quito's *El Comercio*.



After explaining the criteria for selecting the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia, it is worth saying a few words about the cases that were left out. In particular, Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (1999-2013) is perhaps the more egregious case of media activism in the region. At the beginning of his mandate, Chávez also lacked any societal channel of communication with constituents and, as laid out in Table 1, he adopted very similar initiatives to Correa in the communication field. However, Chávez had to overcome fewer obstacles to undertake his media strategy. When he won office Venezuela already had a public media outlets that he could use as a springboard for his media activism. On the contrary, Correa had to build a whole new public media infrastructure from scratch, which made media activism comparatively much more costly. This important difference makes Ecuador a comparatively less-likely case of media activism and thus more theoretically enlightening, and more suitable to show the communication dilemma that weakly organized parties were facing.

Throughout his mandate, Chávez gradually complemented his communication strategy with an organizational component, which included building governing institutions to connect with grassroots movements – like the communal councils – and a new ruling party starting founded in 2006. This evolution makes the Venezuelan case theoretically relevant, and its implications will be discussed in the conclusion.

### **3.6 Empirical analysis: communication strategies in Correa’s Ecuador and Morales’**

#### **Bolivia**

*Movimiento Alianza PAIS – Patria Altiva i Soberana* (Movement Country Alliance – Proud and Sovereign Homeland) was officially founded on April 6, 2006 around the figure of Rafael Correa to support its presidential candidacy. Correa took center stage in Ecuadorian politics during his

very brief tenure as Minister of Finance (from April to August 2005) in the Palacio government, when he proposed radical change in economic policy after a period of great political and economic instability. He won the presidency in his first attempt in November 2006.

The political formation that later came to be known as “the MAS” was born in the mid-1990s as a small local party in the region of Chapare. It was created as the electoral arm of the largest peasant union in the country – the CSUTCB<sup>12</sup> – and in particular of coca growers, whose intention was to form a ‘political instrument’ to increase their influence on national policymaking and overturn the coca eradication policies implemented by the government. Its leader Evo Morales rose to the presidency in 2005 at its third attempt.

In the analysis of the two cases that follows, I will examine each of the five observable implication in turn and I will discuss evidence to assess whether the theoretical expectations outlined in the observable implications are met.

### **3.6.1 Ecuador**

*Alianza PAIS* (AP) founders did not have strong ties with broad-based social movements. Its leader Correa, who has a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Illinois, had no history of political militancy and little to no connection with societal organizations. Around his suddenly popular figure coalesced a group of mostly urban middle-class activists, intellectuals, and academics, linked through personal-professional connections and membership in issue-oriented loosely organized advocacy groups, such as the Jubilee 2000 movement, which sought to find sustainable solutions to the issue of foreign debt and became an important hub for the formation of future AP cadres (interviews with Alberto Acosta and Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008).

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<sup>12</sup> Unique Confederation of Rural Laborers of Bolivia (*Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*, CSUTCB)

*OI-1: Building support in unorganized constituencies*

AP built its bases of support among unorganized popular and middle-class sectors. However, the urban middle-class origin of AP did not foreclose the possibility of establishing a permanent alliance with societal organizations. As a matter of fact, a few prominent figures within AP had ties with indigenous movements and had been members of the indigenous party *Pachakutik*, the electoral arm of CONAIE.<sup>13</sup> However, AP founders saw societal organizations more as a hindrance than an advantage. Seeking a permanent alliance with them would have entailed long negotiations, political constraints, and the perpetuation of a corporatist logic that AP sought to overcome (interview with Franklin Ramírez; interview with Eduardo Paredes, in Harnecker 2008).

For this reason, priority was always given to building an autonomous structure, even when social sectors with high organizational capacity approached the party to offer organizational support (interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008). In the words of AP founder Gustavo Larrea, “the goal of AP when it was established was to take power now, not in 20 years, and this brought about the formation of a different organic structure that did not include social organizations” (Larrea 2008). Revealing a conception of the relationship between AP and societal organizations as a zero-sum game, Larrea explains how the rationale behind this decision was to avoid fighting over leadership within the popular sector. Entering into dispute with long-established movements with legitimate leadership – such as the workers’, indigenous, Afro Ecuadorian, human rights and women’s movements – he argues, would have meant losing “the chance to build a prompt political force” (Larrea 2008).

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<sup>13</sup> Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, the biggest indigenous organization in the country.

Instead of leaning on existing organizational structures, AP founders decided to build a parallel one that would relate to popular constituencies in a different, more direct way. The same decision to label it a “movement” and not a “party” was also to convey the idea of a spontaneous, decentralized structure with as little intermediation as possible between cadres and bases (interview with Doris Soliz; interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008). The founders of AP drew inspiration from the “Rebellion of the *Forajidos*”<sup>14</sup> in 2005 – which put an end to the government of Lucio Gutiérrez – and other urban uprisings in Latin America that emerged as a spontaneous manifestation of deep sociopolitical discontent, without a clear leadership and without the support of social organizations or political parties (interview with Doris Soliz; interview with Eduardo Paredes, in Harnecker 2008). These protests were multiclass in nature, lending themselves to be interpreted as the expression of the citizenry at large. Thus the “citizen” became the political subject around which AP tried to mold its constituency, as the name of its political and socioeconomic project – Revolución Ciudadana (Citizens’ Revolution) – reveals (interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008).

Indeed, the idea of AP founders was to build a linkage with constituents as individuals or as families – the most basic form of social organization – not as members of societal or political organizations. As AP founder Eduardo Paredes puts it:

Somehow what we did was to appeal to the citizens’ individual conscience. The “*forajidos*” were individuals, families, the urban citizen and dweller, who took to the streets to protest. We appealed to that conscience and we called them to build family committees to support Correa. We didn’t call the unions, we didn’t need associations,

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<sup>14</sup> “*Forajido*” can be translated as “outlaw”.

we didn't need the CONAIE, we didn't need these traditional social organizations, what we needed were the families (interview with Eduardo Paredes, in Harnecker 2008: 168).

AP cadres devised this electoral strategy to attract the votes of unorganized sectors, believing that the discredit of political parties and many societal organizations was one of the main sources of citizens' apathy and of the rift between politics and people (interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008). The goal was to try to involve people in politics and encourage political participation, especially of non-militants who were generally disillusioned with the utility of political action; in other words, to politicize the apolitical (interviews with Alberto Acosta and Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008).

The electoral strategy and the construction of this core constituency on unorganized sectors left a very specific imprint on the organizational development of AP. Organizational development was distinctly top down, with national-level party cadres actively engaged in the effort. The resulting "family committees," which were supposed to supplant the traditional electoral committees and local party branches, ended up becoming structures that – although useful during election times, for instance for door-to-door canvassing – were neither organic nor permanently active (interviews with Franklin Ramírez, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz; interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008; Larrea 2008). Thus, from the very beginning AP took the shape of an electoral machine instead of a political movement with a solid organizational structure (interviews with Doris Soliz and Gabriela Rivadeneira; interview with Alberto Acosta, in Harnecker 2008). This left AP without societal channels of communication

that could permanently be used to communicate political information and politicize the electorate.

To be sure, AP had the endorsement of societal organizations during presidential runoff and the convocation of the constituent assembly early in Correa's tenure; nonetheless, it was always external and never formalized into a political coalition, signaling that the alliance was conjunctural and contingent on defeating right-wing forces. AP cadres tried to form a presidential ticket with CONAIE for the 2006 elections but the leadership of CONAIE wanted to name the president and have Correa as vice-president, and that for AP cadres would have meant losing political autonomy, which they were not willing to accept (interview with Galo Mora; interviews with Alberto Acosta, Blanca Chancoso, Ricardo Patiño, and Ricardo Ulcuango, in Harnecker, 2008).

The logic of independence from societal organizations consolidated as AP started accruing electoral returns. After winning the 2006 elections and calling for a constituent assembly, the governing party further lost interest in power-sharing arrangements with other social actors. Patricio Carrión, political coordinator of AP in 2007, "admitted that a broader alliance was not in the interest of the movement" and "recognized that AP was seeking to lead electoral lists in the majority of highland provinces, given the support they received there in the referendum," and was thus not interested in a more stable alliance with the indigenous movement, which in exchange sought to better position its candidates in the electoral lists (Martínez Abarca 2011).

These conjunctural alliances with societal organizations proved short-lived. They soon broke down due to programmatic issues and, more decisively, questions around the participation of organized interests into the drafting of policies and management of public resources. CONAIE

already distanced itself from the government during the constituent assembly, when disagreements about environmental policy and the plurinationality of the state became evident (Becker 2011). The indigenous movement then moved firmly into the opposition when the Correa government deprived CONAIE of control over the National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education – which it held since its creation in 1988 – to place it under the Ministry of Education (El Universo 2009) and when it tried to pass a water law that did not include indigenous representatives into decision making about management (El Comercio 2010).

The relation with another important societal organization, the National Teachers' Union (*Unión Nacional de Educadores*, UNE) and the far-left political party controlling it – the Democratic People's Movement (MPD) – suffered a similar fate. UNE – which represented 120.000 teachers, about two-thirds of the country's total (Ospina Peralta 2010) – was one of the main allies of AP until the government decided to carry out a reform of the education system that imposed a new evaluation system on teachers to improve the quality of education (interview with Miguel Carvajal and Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008). UNE opposed this measure, demanding to be included in the drafting of the new evaluation system (El Universo 2009). The Correa government lost another important societal channel of communication, opting instead for keeping organized interests out of policymaking.

### *OI-2: Tapping into organized constituencies*

The rupture with key organizations in Ecuadorian civil society did not prevent the AP government to tap into their constituencies for electoral support. As a proof of this, already in 2006 – when AP did not have access to patronage yet – Correa performed very well in highland *parroquias* (akin to municipalities) with a high percentage of indigenous populations, even better

than CONAIE's party *Pachakutik*, which has a strong organizational presence in those territories. Of the 115 municipalities, Correa won in 27 (23.48%), while *Pachakutik* candidate Luis Macas won in just 21 (18.26%). The gap persists if we only look at those municipalities where more than 80% of the population self-identifies as indigenous in the 2001 census: there Correa won in 9 out of 30 (30%), while Macas got 7 (23.33%) (Baez and Bretón 2006).

This surprising result was a consequence of the loss of endorsement capacity on the part of CONAIE and progressive distancing between the leadership of the movement and its bases, which widened after its participation in the neoliberal government of Lucio Gutiérrez (2003-05) (Baez and Bretón 2006; Becker 2011). The electoral success among indigenous constituencies lends support to the idea that, even without organizational support, AP was able to tap into organized sectors to build its core constituency. The lack of organizational connection, however, created obstacles to disseminate information among these sectors.

### *OI-3: Perception of communication challenge*

AP cadres recognized the problem of organizational weakness and a dispersed core constituency, and its implications for communicating what the government was doing in terms of social, political, and economic reform (interviews with Galo Mora, Pabel Muñoz, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz). As former President of the Assembly and member of the AP politburo Doris Soliz puts it:

Since the beginning, we never had a party with a solid structure; we had an electoral party, not a permanent political party. We had 14 elections in 10 years, therefore we focused much more on winning elections than on building a political party with strong



territorial presence and capacity to stay close to the people. And to do that, finding a way to reach the voters through a rapid and direct communication was crucial (interview with Doris Soliz).

An influential group of party officials regretted the lack of political organization, which guarantees a physical proximity that facilitates the dissemination of ideas and, more generally, the politicization of the electorate (interviews with Galo Mora, Gabriela Rivadeneira, and Doris Soliz). The lack of a permanently active political organization would inhibit the government's ability to guide the process of socioeconomic reform and explain the role that the state, through governmental action, was playing in it:

We gave out Human Development Vouchers and people would go to the Bank of Guayaquil, owned by the opposition candidate Guillermo Lasso, to pick it up. They often would leave and thank the bank for it! That's because we didn't have the political presence to explain to people what we were doing in terms of policy (interview with Gabriela Rivadeneira).

Moreover, there was awareness within AP elites that political organization – whether the party's own or that of societal organizations – could have also mitigated the effect of media manipulation on constituents. Yet, the lack of such organization forced them to look for alternative channels to disseminate information:

As we didn't have the support of social organizations, the role of the [private] media could have been counteracted with a solid political structure, to do political education and ideologize the population, but we didn't have that either... [...] Correa did his part in the *sabatinas*,<sup>15</sup> that was a good exercise of political pedagogy, he would explain very complex topics like macroeconomic policies, but that was just one mechanism... (interview with Doris Soliz)

*OI-4: Main channel of communication: the media*

Given the scarcity of organizational backing, AP implemented a communication strategy heavily reliant on the media. Since the very beginning, party cadres were clear about the importance of the media factor for the feasibility of their political project (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Xavier Lasso, Galo Mora, Carol Murillo, and Orlando Pérez; interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008). Indeed, the embryonic organizational structure of AP prompted party cadres to resort to an advertising agency to produce creative and effective electoral propaganda with the limited financial resources available (interview with Galo Mora). In fact, although door-to-door canvassing was very important to make the figure of Correa known to the electorate, electoral advertising through the media did most of the heavy lifting in the 2006 campaign (interview with Ricardo Patiño, in Harnecker 2008).

Once Correa became president, his initial approach was to try to strike a balance between keeping his campaign promises and maintaining a peaceful relationship with the private media (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Xavier Flores, Xavier Lasso, Galo Mora, and Gabriela Rivadeneira). The accommodating public stance towards the media of the first two Secretaries of

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<sup>15</sup> *Enlace Ciudadano*, a TV show Correa himself hosted held every Saturday, which I talk about in more detail below.

Communication of the Correa administration – Monica Chuji (January - June 2007) and Julia Ortega (August 2007 - January 2008) – clearly signaled the initial will to go in that direction (El Universo 2007).

During the first year of his presidency though, Correa started to adjust his communication strategy, as the balance between delivering on campaign promises and maintaining the truce with the media appeared harder and harder to strike (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Xavier Lasso, and Orlando Pérez). In particular, the relationship with the media was growing sour as a result of their attempts to delegitimize the Constituent Assembly, whose convocation had been Correa's main campaign pledge (interview with Daniel Suárez, in Harnecker 2008). Amidst these difficulties, Correa sought counsel from Fernando Alvarado, a marketing communication specialist and brother of Vinicio Alvarado, who ran the advertising agency in charge of the 2006 campaign. Fernando Alvarado started working as communication advisor for about a year to then take over the Secretariat of Communication (SECOM) in 2009.

During his first meeting with the president, Alvarado gave him with two options:

You can negotiate with the press, give them their perks, and play tug of war, carrot and stick. But with this strategy you will never be able to make the changes that you want to make. The other option is to build your own structure, your own way to communicate that breaks the media fence, so you can bypass these people [the press], obviate them, and communicate directly with the citizens (interview with Fernando Alvarado).

Under Alvarado the communication strategy of the government changed gradually but radically. The more passive, accommodating approach adopted early on was replaced by a more active and confrontational one. The government was struggling to get its messages across and that required the creation of channels of communication alternative to mainstream media (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Patricio Barriga, Carol Murillo, and Orlando Pérez). This consideration pushed the government to invest important resources in its communicative branch and develop innovative ways to autonomously disseminate information on governmental activities and perspectives.

*OI-5: Investments to strengthen communication capacity*

In order to strengthen the communication capacity of the government, new structures were created. First, a public media sector was founded from scratch. Until then, there was no history of public broadcasting in Ecuador except for the Ecuadorean National Radio, which in 2006 lacked the proper equipment to function. In 2007 the new public television – Ecuador TV – was launched, with a live transmission of the opening of the Constituent Assembly as its inaugural broadcast. In 2008 public radio resumed broadcasting under the name Ecuador Public Radio and the traditional newspaper *El Telégrafo* – confiscated in 2002 from banker Fernando Aspiazu Seminario after his conviction for bankruptcy fraud – was resurrected as a public newspaper. In the same year, the Deposit Guarantee Agency seized two important media channels – *TC Televisión* and *Gamavisión* – along with other businesses from the Isaías Group, one of the major conglomerates in the country, whose owners were fugitives from justice after the fraudulent bankruptcy of the Filanbanco bank during the financial crisis of 1999. The two channels kept functioning following the logic of private business. Their programming remained untouched,

only the editorial line shifted (Ayala and Cavalcé 2009). This was a deliberate decision to maintain their audience share and ratings, in order to ensure their financial sustainability (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Carol Murillo, and Orlando Pérez). All these outlets were then brought together in 2010 under the umbrella of the newly founded Public Media state company.

Second, the SECOM was completely overhauled and expanded. While before Correa its staff was very small and its tasks very limited, under his administration the SECOM became a producer of media content and the main coordinating body of the government communicative policy. Staff increased by about threefold and the SECOM also grew in complexity with the creation of four sub-secretariates: institutional media, advertising, political communication, and information (interviews with Fernando Alvarado and Patricio Barriga).

SECOM's new communication strategy leaned on three components: nationwide broadcasting hook-ups (also known as *cadena nacionales*), a weekly broadcasting program with the president, and a system of production and diffusion of news and media content. The nationwide hook-ups interrupting radio and television programming were legally sanctioned by a 1975 law but were rarely used. SECOM started to use them regularly, sometimes to disseminate information but mostly to refute and reply to assertions made by private media actors on government conduct.

The second pillar of the new communication strategy was the creation of a weekly program called *Enlace Ciudadano* (Citizen Link, which informally came to be known as the *sabatina*, as it aired on Saturdays) where President Correa himself would give updates on the implementation of the government's plan and would discuss current domestic political events. The program started as a radio-broadcasted Q&A session from the presidential palace in the

presence of journalists from different media outlets. During the first session, aired in January 2007, the journalist who was hosting it introduced the program saying that its goal was to “allow people to learn about important topics directly through the president” and “to transmit in a dynamic, clear, and objective way information that would not be manipulated by actors who seek to tarnish government’s action.” Correa confirmed – “this is going to be our style, our duty is to be accountable to you, to inform you” (Enlace Ciudadano #1).

The program changed its format in 2008 after several instances where the back and forth between the president and journalists from the private media slid into open confrontation and the administration realized that the Q&A format was unsuccessful in conveying the governmental perspective (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Xavier Lasso, and Orlando Pérez). The new format was broadcast on television and it was filmed in different locations every week, as part of the “travelling cabinets” initiative, which consisted in the president and his ministries visiting various, often remote, areas throughout the national territory to listen to local demands and receive feedback on public policy issues. The program lasted for about 3 hours, with the president sitting on a stage in front of a large audience of mostly locals. It worked both as a sort of accountability mechanism and as a space for airing the government’s point of view on a variety of issues. The content of the program centered around explaining the government’s policy initiatives – from legislative reforms to infrastructural projects – and policy challenges from the government’s perspective – including macroeconomic dilemmas and the nature of opposition to policy reform (interview with Fernando Alvarado). From mid-2009 the program also had a section called “Freedom of speech now belongs to everyone,” where Correa would analyze and respond to media content published during the week.

The third pillar of the Correa administration's communication strategy was the development of a system of autonomous production and diffusion of news and media content more generally directed by the SECOM. This included various initiatives, such as the foundation of the news agency ANDES, the in-house recording of interviews with high government officials and their diffusion to interested local media, the creation of a multimedia platform which included freely accessible content, and *Habla Ecuador*, a weekly radio program developed at the provincial level in all 24 provinces simultaneously dealing with local issues.

The goal was to break the dependence of regional and provincial outlets on big national media for news by providing them with free original content, especially interviews with high profile officials, such as ministries and even the president himself, whom the local media would have never been able to reach otherwise (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Patricio Pacheco, and Juan Fernando López). This way, the government would expand its communicative reach while, on the one hand, bypassing big media and reducing its influence and, on the other hand, empowering smaller local outlets that reach a sizeable audience but have limited financial resources (interviews with Fernando Alvarado, Verónica Álvarez, Marco Antonio Bravo, and Patricio Pacheco).

This communication strategy was complemented by the extensive use of surveys to collect feedback on government's approval and the electorate's stances on policy issues. Cabinet meetings often had survey experts present to present data that was taken into consideration for policy decisions (interview with Paulina Recalde).

As mentioned before, the AP government was well aware of its organizational deficit. Despite all the media-building efforts, AP officials still saw the media strategy as suboptimal and were mindful of the communicative advantages of an organizational connection with

constituents. They thus prompted the government to take initiative in the organizational sphere as well. While these efforts ultimately failed in providing organizational texture to AP, they demonstrate that the political elites in the Correa government understood the limitations of a media-centered approach.

Organization-building efforts were oriented toward three main goals: the strengthening of local family committees, the creation of parallel societal organizations, and the formalization of party rules and procedures. The idea of investing resources in the organizational development of local committees appeared in the statute of the movement approved during the Convention outlined the functions of the CRC, which included promoting participation, and most interestingly, “become centers of information” and “foster communication and mobilization.” (Movimiento Alianza PAIS 2010).<sup>16</sup> This underlines how AP cadres saw organization and communication – particularly, in the sense of diffusion of information – as deeply intertwined.

To counteract the abovementioned opposition from societal organizations, the AP government started to create parallel organizations aligned with its policy orientations. Two stand out: the *Red de Maestros* (Teachers’ Network) and the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT, Workers’ Unitary Center). These organizations recruited from among the discontents of traditional sectoral unions – the abovementioned UNE and the *Frente Unitario de los Trabajadores* (FUT, Workers’ Unitary Front), respectively – who opposed governmental policy reforms. The *Red de Maestros* and the CUT were supposed to countervail the opposition of their traditional counterpart and provide socially organized support for the government (interview with Doris Soliz).

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<sup>16</sup> These functions were present also in the statute of 2014.



Finally, AP went through a process of formalization of party rules and procedures. Among the changes that this party-building effort included are the expansion of the party membership to about 1.5 million, the creation of the Institute of Political and Economic Thought ‘Eloy Alfaro’ for the development of public policy and of a permanent school for political training of future cadres, and the routinization of monthly meetings of the national committee with the participation of President Correa (Movimiento Alianza PAIS 2017).

### **3.6.2 Bolivia**

The process of constituency formation of the MAS can be divided into two phases – origins and expansion – which mark a clear difference with AP. First, while AP sought to provide representation to popular, marginalized sectors by appealing to them as individual citizens, the MAS was born as an instrument of self-representation of those organized sectors (García Linera et al. 2004) – particularly rural – in order to resist the policies of the Bolivian government and protect their livelihood. This bottom-up development, with organized popular sectors endowing themselves with an electoral vehicle, contrasts starkly with the top-down one of AP, whose political core was constituted mostly by urban, middle-class professionals.

#### *OI-1: Building support in organized constituencies*

In the MAS, members are affiliated to the party *through* societal organizations: belonging to a social movement associated with the MAS implies affiliation to the party and vice versa – at least in its embryonic phase (Zuazo 2010). This indirect structure of the party is made explicit in the article 9 of Organic Statute of the party: “militants and supporters participate in the organic life of the party through its natural organizations” (MAS-IPSP 2012). This overlap between party

and societal organizations – with the former sprouting from the latter – signals a striking difference with AP in terms of composition of its core constituency.

This strategy to maximize organized support electorally also marked the phase of expansion of the party into the cities. In view of the 2002 presidential elections – and even more so approaching the landslide victory of 2005 – the MAS started to include urban sectors within its constituencies (Zuazo 2010). It did so by forming coalitions with existing urban organizations – both societal and political – mostly through recruitment of their leaders. The MAS built alliances, on the one hand, with organized urban sectors as diverse as cooperative miners, street vendors, transportation workers, and neighborhood associations, and, on the other hand, with already established electoral movements, such as the Movement without Fear (*Movimiento Sin Miedo*, MSM), which enjoyed ample middle-class support in the capital La Paz during the period of urban expansion of the MAS. In exchange for support, the MAS offered leaders of these organizations inclusion in party lists for elective office at every level (national, departmental, and municipal) and later positions within the executive (Anria 2019). This led to the formation of “intensive linkages” (Anria and Cyr 2017), which allowed leaders to become involved in the MAS without losing connection with their societal organization. In fact, social leaders were allowed to maintain their original organizational allegiance and push their policy agenda.

These linkages turned the MAS into a hub for the articulation of different sectoral interests (Crabtree 2013; Mayorga 2009; Zuazo 2009), thus effectively expanding its organizational reach. As a result, the incorporation of social leaders within the MAS party ranks increased its organizational resources. This is the opposite of what happened within AP, where no space was given to what were considered corporatist interests and recruited leaders had to

sever ties with their societal organization of origin, thus destroying the connection between leaders and social bases.

*OI-2: Tapping into organized constituencies*

The MAS was able to win votes in organized constituencies not despite the lack of an alliance with societal organizations but precisely *because of* that alliance. Therefore, it was not merely tapping into organized constituencies but building its main basis of support there. Thusm this observable implication does not apply to the Bolivian case.

*OI-3: Perception of communication challenge*

Since the very beginning, MAS cadres were clear about the irrelevance of the media factor for the feasibility of their political project. As mentioned before, the popularity of the MAS and its leader Evo Morales grew amid a media campaign depicting them in a bad light (Gómez Vela 2006). Accustomed to being targeted and succeeding electorally nonetheless, the MAS often engaged in quarrels with the private media sector but took very limited steps to dispute their control of the airwaves.

The media activism of the MAS government was very limited. The ministry of communication was created only in February 2011, in the sixth year of the Morales presidency. Moreover, its functions were different and much more limited than those of the SECOM in Ecuador. In fact, no governmental body in Bolivia was in charge of the autonomous production of media content and the articulation of a media network akin to Correa's Ecuador. The Ministry of Communication in the Morales administration mainly fulfilled the task of managing the relationship with private media, particularly what concerns government advertising contracts

(interview with Cesar Navarro). In Ecuador a separate body – the Secretary of Public Administration – was entrusted with this task (interview with Fernando Alvarado).

*OI-4: Main channel of communication: mediating organizations*

How then did the government of the MAS disseminate information to its constituents in a political environment where the media was acting as a force of the opposition? The evidence points to its own organizational channels, developed autonomously through the articulation of societal organizations. Organizations are sources of information, socialization, and politicization for their members. In the words of a peasant union leader of an organization affiliated with the MAS:

The organizations are the ones that convey the messages, channel, guide, disseminate, and inform. For a peasant, what the press says might be listened to, but it must not be believed. Not even the official radio messages are heard. I believe that the presence of the official radio stations, [such as] Channel 7, are less credible for peasants than a leader. The word of a leader is more credible; it is very strong (interview with peasant union leader in Poertner 2020).

The MAS relied on two main channels to communicate with its constituents: collective meetings and personal communication between executive and social leaders. Collective meetings rooted in the syndicalist tradition – involving wide-ranging actors or a more restricted core of the social coalition depending on historical circumstances – have always been the most evident communication tool of the MAS. This is largely due to the fact that in the organizational

structure of the MAS party and societal organizations overlap to the point of becoming indistinguishable: they share leaders, bases, and – most importantly – procedures. As a result, union practices such as collective decision making, presentation of reports, deliberation and accountability meetings were incorporated into the operations of the party (Mayorga 2009: 53). This created spaces for direct communication between cadres and bases which saw the participation of President Morales as well, acting simultaneously as government representative, union leader and party official.

Such events were organized as trade union assemblies and were held to inform constituents of government's policy initiatives and allow them to evaluate governmental action. They were particularly frequent before and during the first mandate of Evo Morales (2006-2010). The first one of these meetings – defined by the press as a “test in front of social movements” (Mayorga 2009: 58) – was organized seven months into the first term with the participation of leaders of social movements who questioned the failure to make good on government promises. After one year of governing another public event was organized to deliver a “parallel report” to the one the president presented in congress. This ritual was not repeated in 2008. Yet on a few occasions the presidential cabinet and social leaders met to discuss government action (Mayorga 2009: 59).

The tool of collective meetings was complemented by a strategy of personal communication between the executive and social leaders to ensure uninterrupted connection between government and mediating organizations. The most visible instance of this strategy were the president's daily visits to municipalities around the country within the program “Bolivia cambia, Evo cumple” (Bolivia changes, Evo fulfills), which involved the inauguration of social construction projects. The aim was to develop a tight network of personal ties based on existing

organizational linkages, particularly in rural and semirural areas (interviews with Fernando Mayorga and Cesar Navarro). This strategy was not limited to the president, as relationships between elected officials and union leaders at the local level were also close and continuous:

There is a kind of overlap between social organizations and municipal authorities. We are constantly talking, either in person or by phone, and when we have acts of inauguration, sports events, and meetings, for example, they [the union leaders] are there first (interview with Feliciano Mamani in Anria 2019: 83).

Leaders of mediating organizations within the MAS coalition had direct access to the executive, particularly to President Morales, who personally called them and received phone calls from them (interview with Cesar Navarro). This type of personal communication was routine and it would intensify in moments of crisis within the coalition (interviews with Fernando Mayorga and Cesar Navarro). Even sectors that were not part of the core constituents – such as cooperativist miners – would resort to this direct channel of communication to make sure their views were incorporated into public policy (Toledo Orozco 2020).

This type of communication used by the MAS shut out private media, stripping them of their traditional role as mediators of the information flowing from state to society. A clear example of this dynamic is the development of the negotiations between the executive and the National Federation of Mining Cooperatives of Bolivia (FENCOMIN) over the new mining law. During the phase of policy formulation, a draft of the law redacted by the Ministry of Mining was leaked to the press, causing preoccupation among various stakeholders – including FENCOMIN – for its content. The leak of the policy draft, however, failed to derail the process

of negotiation because the executive and leaders of the mediating organization FENCOMIN were in constant contact and finally agreed on a later draft (Okada 2016). The organizational channel of communication repelled informational attacks coming from the media.

In the case of the MAS government, communication does not happen through the airwaves. This feature of the MAS communication strategy constitutes an additional challenge for the Bolivian media because it undercut the salience and legitimacy of the media system itself. As former minister of government Hugo Moldiz puts it:

Evo's legitimacy is based on direct communication with social bases and even society at large through nonconventional methods which outmaneuver media owners. This unsettles them because it puts into question the whole political system (of which the press is part together with political parties and social organizations). Evo deprives the media of their role in the reproduction of power; with him they have less weight and thus less power (interview with Hugo Moldiz in Molina 2014: 54-55).

*OI-5: Investments to strengthen communication capacity*

The MAS invested resources to strengthen these mechanisms of coordination and communication between government and mediating organizations. During the first year of the presidency, at the height of the confrontation with the opposition, the government created the Unity Pact, a space for collective deliberation coordinated by the executive which included the peasant and indigenous organizations that founded the MAS. The Unity Pact had the purpose of proposing, supporting, and guiding the process of constitutional change (Zuazo 2010; Anria 2019: 135), and it was discontinued after the new constitution was approved in 2009.

At the same time, in January 2007 the government promoted the formation of the National Coordinator for Change (CONALCAM) to improve coordination between mediating organizations, the party, and members of the MAS in the different representative offices – legislature, executive, and constituent assembly. The CONALCAM included the members of the Unity Pact plus other urban organizations – such as the Bolivian Workers’ Central (COB) – that progressively joined over the following years (Mayorga 2009; Zuazo 2010). The initial idea was to turn the CONALCAM into a politburo of the social coalition articulated around the MAS to guide governmental action. This was never fully achieved, especially due to the progressive broadening of its membership which diluted its capacity for decision making and action (interview with Cesar Navarro). However, the CONALCAM – in contrast to the Unity Pact – was active throughout the Morales presidency and remained a space where party cadres and government officials entertained a direct relationship with their social bases through communication with the leadership of mediating organizations. Moreover, the government incorporated these channels of communication in its ministerial structure with the creation of a Vice ministry of Coordination with Social Movements, which functioned as a conflict management unit to directly address demands from social movements in a more efficient way (interview with Cesar Navarro; Mayorga 2009: 58).

The Morales government also gave costly signals that it did consider communication important by making some investments in the media sector. The size of these investments was not comparable with the Ecuadorian case, but it works as evidence of the fact that the MAS leadership, despite the communication network it was organically endowed with, was not discounting the importance of communication. The government strengthened its media presence in 2009 with the renovation of the public TV channel *Bolivia TV* and the creation of the public



newspaper *Cambio* (Change) – whose circulation though never reached that of the major newspapers in the country.<sup>17</sup> It also buttressed community media and provided it with infrastructural help – for instance through the creation of the radio network *Red Patria Nueva* in 2006, which connected about 50 rural radio stations and the state-run station Radio Illimani (Gumucio Dagron 2012). The creation of *Radio Kawsachun Coca* and its expansion into the English-language news website *Kawsachun News* should be interpreted in a similar vein. These radio stations, however, were created and managed by the societal organizations that formed the MAS in the first place and still constitute the organizational core of the party; these media outlets were part of their organizational resources, developed from the bottom up, and not the result of a top-down attempt to penetrate society with alternative media channels, as was the case in Ecuador.

Table 5 below summarizes the evidence presented in this section in relations with the observable implications outlined in the theoretical section. The lack of organizational connections between AP and its constituents forced the government to pursue a suboptimal media-centered communication strategy, which could be developed thanks to access to state resources to build a public media infrastructure. The MAS on the contrary was founded by societal organizations. The government was able to reach its constituents through these

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<sup>17</sup> There have been allegations that the MAS government bought the Bolivia’s largest circulation newspaper *La Razón* using Paraguayan-Venezuelan businessman Carlos Gill Ramírez as a front. This theory was disseminated by journalist Raúl Peñaranda in his book *Control Remoto* (Remote Control), where he argues that the government secretly owns a vast conglomerate of Bolivian media, which he calls “parastatal” (Peñaranda 2014). The evidence he presents to support his argument, however, is very shaky. Although Carlos Gill Ramírez did actually buy the newspaper in 2009 from the Spanish PRISA Group and interviewees confirmed that the editorial line vis-à-vis the government changed from an oppositional to a more favorable one (interviews with Ricardo Aguilar, Ricardo Bajo, Mauricio Quiroz, Wilma Pérez, Juan José Cusicanqui, Mery Vaca, Grover Yapura, and Juan Cristobal Soruco), this does not seem to suggest that the government was steering the whole process. *La Razón* director Claudia Benavente, who was picked by Gill, confirmed that the entrepreneur explicitly told her that he was in Bolivia to make business and did not want to have any problem with the current government, whatever its political orientation may be (interview with Claudia Benavente). The coverage of political events in the aftermaths of the political crisis of October 2019 (e.g. no use of the word “coup” and generally lack of a strong stance against the de facto government of Jeanine Áñez) seem to lend support to the evidence collected during the interview with Benavente.

organizations which acted as mediators and made the MAS's organization-based communication strategy possible.

**Table 5. Summary of empirical evidence (chapter 3)**

Observable Implications		Ecuador	Bolivia
OI-1	<i>Building support in unorganized vs. organized constituencies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AP appealed to unorganized constituents and limited its reliance on societal organization</li> <li>• AP developed as an electoral machine with little territorial presence and weak communication capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAS was born as an instrument of self-representation of societal organizations</li> <li>• MAS reaches its constituents through societal organizations</li> </ul>
OI-2	<i>Tapping into organized constituencies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AP enjoyed great electoral success in indigenous constituencies even without a steady alliance with indigenous movements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAS did not merely tap into organized constituencies, it built its main basis of support there through societal organizations</li> </ul>
OI-3	<i>Perception of communication challenge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AP officials recognized the organizational deficit of the party and the need to find alternative channels of communication to reach constituents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAS never considered the media as a crucial component of its communication strategy</li> </ul>
OI-4	<i>Main channel of communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of state resources to connect with constituents through the mass media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of organizational resources to connect with constituents (collective meetings and personal communication between executive and social leaders)</li> </ul>

Observable Implications		Ecuador	Bolivia
OI-5	<i>Investments to strengthen communication capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of public media</li> <li>• Expansion of SECOM</li> <li>• Weekly program <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i></li> <li>• Autonomous production and diffusion of news and media content</li> </ul> But also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization-building efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unity Pact</li> <li>• CONALCAM</li> <li>• Viceminister of Coordination with Social Movements</li> </ul> But also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renovation of public TV and creation of public newspaper</li> <li>• Consolidation of community media</li> </ul>

Source: Author's elaboration.

**3.6.3 Alternative explanations**

There are at least two important alternative explanations for the difference in communication strategies in Ecuador and Bolivia. First, it is possible that the Correa administration faced fewer constraints than its Bolivian counterpart toward creating an alternative public media structure and that would explain the much more intense media activism in the Ecuadorian case. This account would see the media not as a suboptimal option but rather as an optimal one, at least short term, due to its wider scope of dissemination. Thus, given the possibility, governments would turn immediately to the media to resolve their communication challenges.

The media infrastructure that the two presidents inherited seems to contradict this hypotheses. When Morales won the presidency, Bolivia already had public media that could be exploited to carry out a media-centered communication strategy. However, the MAS government did not make much use of the public media it had access to, certainly not as much as Correa did. On the contrary, Ecuador did not have a public media system at all when Correa became president. Correa only inherited a public radio station that did not have the infrastructure to

function. His government had to create public media structures from scratch, incurring a higher cost than his Bolivian counterpart. Nonetheless, the Correa government made extensive use of public media to communicate with constituents. If anything, the government's decisiveness to overcome these initial barriers attests that communication was an urgent question for them. The fact that the MAS did not make extensive use of public media despite the availability and that AP officials recognized the limitations of the media strategy despite pursuing it lends support to the idea that left governments do not see the media as an optimal strategy, but only as necessary given the lack of alternatives.

Another possible explanation would point to reverse causation. According to this account, the AP government's decision to wager on the media to communicate with constituents logically preceded the decision to build their basis of support in unorganized sectors. Hence, the dominant communication strategy actually determined the composition of the core constituency. In other words, AP elites thought that exerting more control on the media would have guaranteed governability and, by focusing on the media as the main channel of communication with society, they ended up targeting people that are more dependent on the media to gain access to political information – i.e. unorganized citizens.

Two pieces of evidence seem to go against this hypothesis. First, as I showed in the empirical section, the Correa government did not initially seek to confront the private media in. In fact, Correa took actions – such as appointing media-friendly communication secretaries and inviting journalists from the main media outlets to his weekly program – that revealed an intention to avoid open confrontation with the private media. This initial decision lends support to the idea that the government did not have a fixed communication strategy, but was adjusting it in response to changing circumstances. Second, the electoral strategy of AP was conceived

before the party gained access to the state and devised its communication strategy. During its first electoral campaign AP sought to build an autonomous political force, specifically targeting constituencies that were disillusioned with and unrelated to the existing societal and political organizations. As I showed in the case study, this strategy was formulated before AP gained access to the state resources that allowed it to enact its media communication strategy.

### **3.7 Downstream consequences of communication strategies**

The communication strategies adopted by left parties had a crucial impact on their performance as opposition parties – and ultimately their survival once they lost power – but also on the democratization of the media environment.

In Ecuador, AP splintered when Correa's designated successor Lenín Moreno abandoned all his campaign promises and, in a spectacular about-face, allied with right-wing forces. The Electoral Court allowed Moreno to remain at the head of the party and the *correista* movement became an opposition party despite having won the 2017 elections. In this context, the communication strategy of the Correa administration showed all its weaknesses. The reliance on state resources (SECOM, public media, etc.) and the lack of mediating organizations or other societal channels of communication left the *correista* movement with very limited capacity to communicate with its constituents. The SECOM independent media apparatus was dismantled, while public media was defunded and journalists from the private sectors were put in charge of the new editorial line (interview with Orlando Pérez). Communication between cadres – including Correa – and constituents now happens mainly via social media. This constitutes a serious challenge for *correista* forces, who are struggling to disseminate information to the electorate and communicate their point of view on current political events. This was a problem

during the electoral campaign of 2021, which culminated with the defeat of *correista* candidate Andres Arauz to right-wing banker Guillermo Lasso.

On the other hand, reliance on societal channels of communication and the concomitant very limited recourse to state resources to disseminate information among its constituents have made the MAS a much more effective opposition party to the de facto government of Jeanine Áñez. After losing the presidency in November 2019, the MAS lost control of public TV and radio networks but was able to go through a process of restructuring, which entailed giving the initiative back to the organized core constituents of the MAS – those who formed the Unity Pact. This strategy necessarily required communication channels to be active (interviews with Fernando Mayorga and Cesar Navarro). In 2020, MAS candidate Luis Arce ended up winning in the first round by a landslide. The organizational model of communication, with a party that is informationally integrated with social movements, appears to be more effective than the media model – which just expands government-controlled public media – in tilting the longer-term balance of power in favor of progressive political forces.

Beyond its implications for party resilience, a comparison between the two communication strategies offers interesting insights into the question of citizen engagement and democratic control over the flow of information. The organizational strategy of the MAS certainly offers better prospects for informed citizen engagement and democratic accountability, as it entails bidirectional communication and immediate feedback from the social bases to the government. The channel itself forces the government to listen to the bases. The MAS strategy, however, did not seek to structurally transform the media environment. Its core constituents are mostly isolated from private media influence and those sectors who the private media is able to

reach – i.e. urban middle class – are peripheral in the MAS social coalition, and actually their mobilization played a crucial role in the overthrowing of Evo Morales in 2019.

On the other hand, the Ecuadorian alternative media strategy was based on unidirectional, top-down communication, which consolidated the detachment of party elites from the bases. At the same time though, this model had a greater potential to pluralize the media than the Bolivian one through the restructuring and diversification of the oligopolistic media environment and to foster a more vibrant public sphere through the inclusion of previously excluded voices. Unfortunately, high political polarization created strong incentives for the government to use the new media for its short-term political gains and this ended up impairing the autonomy of the new media (interview with Fernando Alvarado and Patricio Barriga), which was then again coopted by the new right-wing government, thus further strengthening the private media bloc.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have provided a theoretical explanation to the different degrees of media activism that we saw left-wing governments engage in throughout the region and tested it against the cases of Ecuador's Alianza PAIS and Bolivia's MAS. I have argued that different communication strategies underlie variation in media activism, and that these strategies are determined by the composition of the core constituency of the governing party. Parties that built their basis of support on unorganized constituencies lack societal channels of communication and thus resort to the construction of alternative state media to inform their constituents about governmental action. On the contrary, parties that lean on organized constituencies and are able to reach them through affiliated societal organizations do not necessitate resorting to a media-centered communication strategy.

Both strategies aimed to limit the power of private media by shutting them out, stripping them of their traditional role as the gatekeepers of the information flowing from state to society. In the case of Ecuador, this implied disputing the political power of private media on their same turf – the airwaves. As a result, although *unmediated*, the linkage between government and its constituents was a *mediatized* one. In the Bolivian case, communication does not happen through the airwaves and this constitutes an additional challenge for the Bolivian media, undercutting the salience and legitimacy of the media system itself. In contrast to AP, the MAS established a linkage between government and its constituents that is *mediated* by societal organizations, but it is *unmediatized*, as the media is not the main channel through which information flows.

Before concluding, it is worth briefly considering the implications for the argument of the Venezuelan case, which was not selected for the empirical analysis for reasons I explained above. Just like Correa, Chávez started his mandate without a proper political party nor an alliance with mediating organizations. As a result, his government had no meaningful societal channel of communication with constituents. He thus engaged, as the theory predicts, in zealous media activism and participated in a high-intensity conflict with the private media. However, contrary to Correa, the Chávez was also able to overcome the organizational deficit of his government by building a strongly organized political party – the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) – in 2006, along with governing institutions to connect with grassroots movements – like the communal councils. He did so without abandoning his media strategy.

What can we learn from the Venezuelan case? First, this case supports the hypothesis that left-wing presidents that start their mandate without an autonomous organizational structure to lean on are more likely to resort to media activism to overcome communication challenges. Second, the double strategy successfully pursued by the Chávez administration demonstrates that



adopting a media communication strategy does not foreclose the possibility of complementing it with an organizational one. The evolution of the Venezuelan cases suggests that the failure of the attempts of AP officials to give organizational texture to the party might not be the consequence of a path-dependent quality of the media communication strategy. An explanation to the different party-building outcomes in the two cases must be sought somewhere else.

## **4 The Party is Over: Policy Switch and Party Dismantling in Moreno's Ecuador**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Latin American polities are known for their exceptionally high levels of electoral volatility, with a great number of political parties swiftly moving in and out of the electoral arena. In this context of instability and fluctuating electoral results, governing parties usually constitute an exception because they manage enough resources to at least secure their survival in the face of declining popularity. In this sense, the case of *Alianza PAIS – Patria Altiva i Soberana* (AP) represents an “exception to the exception,” as it suffered what we might call a sudden party collapse, moving from roughly 40% of the vote to less than 2% over the span of just 4 years, while being the ruling party for its fourth consecutive term.

Yet, AP was not simply a ruling party; it has been without a doubt the most electorally successful party in the history of Ecuador since its return to democracy in 1979. It won four consecutive presidential elections (2006, 2009, 2013, 2017) when no other party managed to even win two. It is the only party that was able to obtain an absolute majority in the legislature (100 out of 137 seats in 2013) and the first party to win more than 50% of the votes in the first round of a presidential election – and it did that twice (2009, 2013). In addition, once in office AP was able to win a majority of seats (79 out of 130), lead the Constituent Assembly in 2007, and successfully campaign to approve two referenda. By 2017, AP had reached almost 1.5 million members (*Alianza PAIS 2017*). However, just 4 years after, in the 2021 elections, AP gathered an astonishing 1.5% of the popular vote and not even one seat in the National

Assembly. How could that happen? How could AP lose electoral relevance so quickly despite being in government, and thus having access to all the resources necessary to survive and even thrive?

The 2017-2021 term was particularly eventful for AP, but two developments stand out: the divorce between the President Lenín Moreno (2017-2021) and AP founding leader and former President of Ecuador Rafael Correa (2007-2017); and Moreno's dramatic shift to a neoliberal policy agenda, abandoning the AP policy platform of public investments and state intervention. The exit of the charismatic leader from the party and the turnaround from campaign promises to adopt unpopular austerity measures are credible suspects to explain the electoral failure of AP in 2021. However, if we look closer, neither factor appears to have been decisive. The high approval rates that Moreno was able to maintain during and after the separation from Correa – ranging from 60% to 80% (Associated Press 2017; El Universo 2018a) – and the election of former banker and advocate of neoliberal economic policy Guillermo Lasso in 2021 suggest that, on the one hand, AP could still enjoy popular support without (and even against) Correa and, on the other hand, voters were not necessarily opposed to a conservative economic policy platform. What else is left then? What can explain AP's abrupt and astounding fall?

I argue that, after his policy switch,<sup>18</sup> Moreno took deliberate actions to dismantle AP because it was not a vehicle to advance his policy objectives anymore but rather an obstacle to their realization and future consolidation. While standard accounts of party development tend to assume that presidents either build their parties or leave them to atrophy, I argue that the demise of AP is a direct consequence of Moreno's deliberate actions to undermine it. I show how

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<sup>18</sup> By "policy switch" scholars understand the act of campaigning on certain a policy platform and then enacting a different one once in office. For a complete discussion of what constitutes a policy switch, see Stokes 2001.

Moreno systematically depleted and starved his party of resources to render it politically inactive and prevent its future revival through a possible reunification with the *Correista* faction.

I define party dismantling as the deprivation of resources necessary for the party to thrive carried out by the leader with the objective of undermining the party. I argue that the policy switch was an important precondition for the dismantling of AP. Yet, policy switches have rarely led to party breakdown, let alone through the (quite uncommon) deliberate dismantling of the party at the hands of its leader. So, I identify three conditions that explain why Moreno dismantled his own party following the policy switch. First, the top-down structure of AP gave Moreno enough power to dismantle it. Second, Moreno could rely on the support of opposition parties and other social sectors to implement his policy plan. Third, AP represented an obstacle to Moreno's desired policy outcomes and a future threat to their longevity. While the first two conditions *enabled* the dismantling of AP, the third condition provides the  *motive* for Moreno's actions. Each of the three conditions was necessary for the dismantling of AP.

To substantiate my argument, I marshal qualitative evidence in two different ways: first, I provide a detailed account of the process of party dismantling under Moreno following the policy switch; second, I show that the three conditions outlined above were met and establish the causal importance of each condition for the outcome – i.e. the dismantling of AP. Evidence was gathered through nearly 50 interviews with high-ranking party officials, congress people, journalists, and academics, plus newspaper articles, party documents, roll call voting records, and documents of the Presidency of Ecuador.

My findings have important implications for the literature on party development. First, they show how party breakdown can be the *intended* consequence of party leadership's decisions and actions. The literature on party breakdown tends to assume – implicitly or explicitly – that

leaders prioritize the survival of their own party and that party breakdown therefore happens as an unintended consequence of the strategic decisions of the party leadership. But the case of AP under Moreno shows that leaders sometimes subordinate the life of their party to policy goals that they deem more important, and this might lead them to take deliberate action to weaken their own party and even cause its demise. Second, this article adds to the literature on the consequences of policy switch by establishing a set of conditions under which a government's change in economic policy might lead to party breakdown through deliberate dismantling of party structures and resources.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, I discuss the relevant literature on policy switch and party breakdown, pointing out some of its gaps and shortcomings. Second, I situate the case of *Alianza PAIS* in the context of other policy switches in the region and show how its poor electoral performance post-switch stands out even when compared to other cases of post-switch electoral crises. In that section, I also discuss two possible explanations to AP's electoral failure. Third, I posit three conditions under which a leader would dismantle their own party. Fourth, I recount the process of AP dismantling under President Lenín Moreno after this policy switch and use a resource framework (Cyr 2017) to track what resources AP lost over the period 2018-2021. Then, I bring to bear and discuss evidence of the three conditions that induced Moreno to take apart his own party. Finally, I address one important alternative explanation of the dismantling of *Alianza PAIS* and I do some reflections on the implications of the findings.

#### **4.2 What we know (and what we don't) about policy switch and party breakdown**

The most important work on policy switch is Stokes' 2001 seminal book. Stokes explores why presidents campaign on security-oriented policies of state intervention and then shift to

efficiency-oriented policies of market competition once in office (Elster 1995), and what are the implications of these switches for democracy and electoral politics. Parties are an important part of her account. She finds that there is a significant and negative association between a governing party's age and the likelihood of policy switch – i.e. the younger the party, the less its capacity to force the president to abide by the program announced during the campaign (Stokes 2001: 116). She only finds mixed evidence of the relationship between party institutionalization and policy switch, observing that policy switches happened both in countries with weakly institutionalized presidential parties (such as Ecuador and Peru) and relatively well institutionalized ones (such as Argentina and Venezuela).

However, Stokes does not delve much into the *consequences* of policy switch on party development, which is not one of the main foci of her book. She just briefly mentions how, following a policy switch, governing party members found themselves marginalized or had to accommodate to the government's about-face, and how mandate unresponsiveness weakened relatively well institutionalized parties, such as the Peronist party in Argentina and *Acción Democrática* in Venezuela (Stokes 2001: 114-115). We also know, however, that the Peronist party was able to adapt to the new conditions dictated by policy switch, and thanks to its flexible structure it transformed and survived (Levitsky 2003), while *Acción Democrática* succumbed partly due to its rigidity (Morgan 2011).

Lupu's work (2016) provides a more complete picture of the relationship between policy switch and party development. In his search for an explanation to party breakdown, Lupu finds that parties collapse when they perform poorly in government while adopting policy positions inconsistent with their traditional platform, causing a dilution of their party brand and

consequently an erosion of voters' attachment. His findings thus suggest that policy switch leads to party decay only when combined with poor incumbent performance by the same party.

Beyond the upset caused by policy switches, there are a variety of factors that lead to party breakdown, including the emergence of new challengers (Lawson and Merkl 1988) and decay of linkages between parties and society (Lawson 1988; Morgan 2011; Luna 2014). As a result, party failure is a rather common phenomenon, as the general instability of patterns of electoral competition around the world suggests (Mainwaring 2016). Latin America is particularly known for the volatility of its parties and the recurrent party-system crises (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Roberts 2014).

In her investigation into what happens to parties after a crisis, Cyr (2017) argues that a party's capacity to weather an electoral downturn depends on the availability of resources that it can fall back on to remain politically relevant. In particular, she finds that party revival is a result of the organizational and ideational resources at its disposal plus the opportunities provided by the competitive structure of the post-crisis party system. Ultimately, she suggests that what determines party breakdown is the lack of resources – particularly high-cost organizational and ideational resources – when confronting an electoral crisis.

This body of work provides insightful frameworks to understand why and how parties break down or survive and revive. Yet, it is worth pointing out that these accounts of party development are built on a crucial assumption – that a leaders' top priority is the survival of their own party. Theories of party breakdown tend to assume actors' preferences, which can be problematic given that we know that political actors pursue multiple objectives at the same time. In Cyr's words, "incentives for revival [...] are assumed in my theory. A party's *raison d'être* is to compete in and win (national) elections. A sudden loss of that capacity should immediately

provoke an existential crisis that induces party leaders to strategize about the possibility of revival” (Cyr 2017: 64).

This assumption is obviously a reasonable one to make, and it holds particularly well in cases of traditional parties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were stronger and more influential in regulating political and even social life compared with today. Parties were almost irreplaceable, and it was more difficult to imagine leaders not having the survival of their own party as their priority, as the party was their only channel of access to state decision making. However, currently parties have tended to become more temporary electoral machines rather than permanent political organizations (Levitsky et al. 2016; Luna et al. 2021) . Parties have proliferated and, given the availability of other avenues to connect with voters, have become more disposable (Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007). This development provides a good rationale to relax the assumption that a party leader’s priority is the survival of their own organization.

As a matter of fact, a party *raison d’être* is not simply to maximize votes but also to facilitate coordinated political action in support of a public policy agenda. So while there is reason to believe that if a party confronted an electoral crisis its leader would strive to revive it, what would happen if a party inhibited coordinated political action? What if it failed to fulfill this instrumental function and it became a dead weight or even an obstacle for the party leadership to reach its policy goals? This chapter seeks to answer these questions.

#### **4.3 Policy switch and electoral performance: the strange case of *Alianza PAIS***

In Stokes’ analysis of policy switch in Latin America, to be considered a policy switcher it is “sufficient for a politician to renege swiftly on a policy position that had been salient in the



campaign” (Stokes 2001: 43). Simply “pronouncing [oneself] in favor” (Stokes 2001: 25) of a policy or set of policies and then switch to their opposite once in office constitutes a case of policy switch.

Stokes includes cases of presidents that strategically shifted towards the center during the campaign but then once in power reverted to their *original* policy positions. That is the case, for instance, of Sixto Durán Ballén – elected president of Ecuador in 1992 – who ran on a conservative platform just like his contender Jaime Nebot and during the run-off made policy promises (then disattended) to attract low-income voters (Stokes 2001: 44). I argue, though, that strategically crafting campaign promises to cater to the demands of broader strata of the population is quite common. What is less common is winning on a party platform and ruling on its opposite – which is what Lenín Moreno did during his term in office.

Therefore, I use a more stringent definition of policy switch to be able to capture the most dramatic shifts – those that are comparable to the case of Ecuador in 2017. I consider policy switch not simply as strategically moving slightly away from the party platform to win votes and then renegeing on that move, i.e. reverting to the original party platform. *A policy switch consists of campaigning on an original and recognizable party platform and then adopting the opposite platform once in government.* By “adopting the *opposite* policy platform” I mean moving from security-oriented policies of state intervention to efficiency-oriented policies of market competition, or vice versa (Elster 1995; Stokes 2001). There are cases of presidents governing in a less radical fashion than promised (for instance, Ollanta Humala, president of Peru in 2011) but a government *moderating* its economic policy orientation due to external constraints (international economic variables, unfavorable balance of power vis-à-vis opposing political and

social sectors, etc.) without transitioning into its opposite does not constitute a case of policy switch for my purposes.

Following this definition and updating Stokes' analysis to include the years from 1995 to 2020, I identify five cases of complete policy switch in South America: Argentina in 1989 under Carlos Menem, Ecuador in 2002 under Lucio Gutiérrez and in 2017 under Lenín Moreno, Peru in 1990 under Alberto Fujimori, and Venezuela in 1988 under Carlos Andrés Pérez. All these cases moved from security-oriented campaign promises to efficiency-oriented government policies once in office. Menem's *Partido Justicialista* (PJ) and Pérez's *Acción Democrática* (AD) are cases of relatively well institutionalized parties, while Gutiérrez's *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* (PSP) and Fujimori's *Cambio 90* were recently formed personalist vehicles that did not undergo any process of institutionalization. Moreno's *Alianza PAIS* (AP) stands somewhere in the middle. While AP is not a well institutionalized party by any means, it certainly has a more complex organizational structure than PSP and *Cambio 90*: it had a formal apparatus with national, provincial, and cantonal directorates, it held annual conventions, had a statute outlining party rules, and party branches all over the country's territory.

Table 6 shows the electoral performance of switching parties when they won office (i.e. before the switch) and in the first presidential election following the switch. As we can see, in two cases policy switchers improved their performance and won re-election – Menem in Argentina and Fujimori in Peru in 1995 – while in the other three they did not, due to their poor performance as incumbents. However, in two of those three cases governing parties managed to remain electorally relevant – Gutiérrez's *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* in Ecuador with 17.42% and *Acción Democrática* in Venezuela with 23.6 % of the vote. There is only one case where the

governing party lost political relevance after switching policy platform, that of *Alianza PAIS* under Lenín Moreno with a surprising 1.54% of the vote.

**Table 6. Policy switches and electoral performance in South America (1982-2020)**

Country year	President ( <i>Party</i> )	Electoral result pre switch (%)	Electoral result post switch (%)	Difference (%)	Re-elected?
Argentina 1989	Carlos Menem ( <i>Partido Justicialista</i> )	47.51	49.94	+2.43	Yes
Ecuador 2003	Lucio Gutiérrez ( <i>Partido Sociedad Patriótica</i> )	20.64	17.42 <sup>a</sup>	-3.22	No
Ecuador 2017	Lenín Moreno ( <i>Alianza PAIS</i> )	39.36	1.54 <sup>a</sup>	-37.82	No
Peru 1990	Alberto Fujimori ( <i>Cambio 90</i> )	29.09	64.42	+35.33	Yes
Venezuela 1988	Carlos Andrés Pérez ( <i>Acción Democrática</i> )	52.89	23.60 <sup>a</sup>	-29.29	No

*Note:* Electoral results are first rounds of presidential elections.

<sup>a</sup> = party presented different candidate

What explains this striking downfall? One immediate explanation might point to the exceptional unpopularity of neoliberal economic policy in Ecuador, especially considering the banking crisis it generated in 1998-99 and its social consequences, a decade of neo-developmentalism under a very popular president – i.e. Rafael Correa – and perhaps even the fact that Moreno’s was the second policy switch after Gutiérrez’s in a little over one decade. But if that had been the case, we would have expected to see Ecuadorian voters punishing parties that ran on a neoliberal platform in 2021. As a matter of fact, what we witnessed was the exact opposite: they elected as president ex-banker Guillermo Lasso, loser of the run-off against Moreno in the 2017. Former CEO of Guayaquil Bank from 1994 to 2012 and one of its main shareholders, Lasso is not only an advocate of neoliberal policy but an implementer as well, as

he acted as super minister of finance in 1999 – a special position created by President Jamil Mahuad to confront the economic crisis. This seems to suggest that opposition to Moreno's policies does not provide a satisfactory explanation to the collapse of AP. Neither does opposition to the figure of Moreno, as he did not run for re-election.

If the fall of AP is not a consequence of change in voters' economic policy preferences, then we must look at internal party dynamics. The exit of AP's founding leader Rafael Correa and his faction in late 2017 represented a huge blow to the popularity of the party (Hurtado 2017). Correa was not only the founding leader of AP, but it was also the charismatic leader of the party, a key component of its party brand. However, during the first year in office, Moreno proved he could maintain and even increase his popularity without Correa. At the end of July 2017 – before the policy switch but after parting ways with Correa – Moreno's government had an approval of 70%, almost 20% more than when it took office in May (Associated Press 2017). By the end of August, when the rift with Correa had deepened, he reached around 80% (The New York Times 2017), and at the beginning of April 2018, just before switching economic policy platform, he was still at 60% (El Universo 2018a). Moreno also handily won the referendum in February 2018, which was strongly opposed by Correa, with a minimum of 60% in all 7 questions (Associated Press 2018). Moreover, after the exit of the *Correista* faction, AP still maintained popular figures, such as the most voted member of the Assembly, José Serrano. This evidence suggests that, while the importance of the figure of Correa for AP's success cannot be overstated, Moreno and his governing party AP were able to gather voters' approval without him, and thus that the exit of Correa did not inevitably set AP on the path to failure.

In the continuation of this chapter, I will show how the fall of AP was a consequence of Moreno's deliberate actions to undermine it – and possibly to destroy it – as it had become an

obstacle to the implementation and endurance of the new policy goals he adopted from April 2018.

#### **4.4 Why would leaders dismantle their own party?**

We can talk of *party dismantling* when a *party leader voluntarily deprives the party of the resources necessary for it to thrive with the intention of undermining it*. Cyr broadly defines resources as “those assets that a party wields to function successfully” (Cyr 2017: 30). She identifies four types of resources: material, organizational, elite, and ideational. When a leader takes away resources from their party or actively prevents that party from gaining access to those resources, they are engaging in party dismantling.

When would a leader engage in something like this? A leader deliberately destroying their own party is such a unique event that it is reasonable to imagine that the conditions that make it possible must be particularly stringent. To begin with, to engage in party dismantling, a leader must be *able* and *motivated* to do so. Therefore, a series of conditions must be in place that enable and motivate a leader to decide to undermine their own party.

First, given the above definition of party dismantling, it is reasonable to assume that the party must have a structure that gives the leader control over party resources to make dismantling possible. A top-down structure where decision-making power is concentrated at the top with little participation from below would give the leader enough power to starve the party of resources and destroy existing ones. The existence of a significant bottom-up component in internal party dynamics would tilt the balance of power against the leadership and make it more difficult for them to destroy the party from within.

*Condition 1: The party must have a top-down structure to enable to leader to engage in party dismantling.*

Second, if a leader decides to dismantle their own party, we imagine that they have an outside option, an alternative organization that supports them and allows them to pursue their policy goals. External support is particularly important in terms of legislative backing and personnel for cabinet appointments. The president's policy agenda must therefore find favour with other political and social sectors for them to make their resources available to the executive, and these sectors must have sufficient presence in the legislature and personnel to provide. If no other organization was supportive of the new policy agenda, then the president would not be able to draw on any other party for the resources and personnel necessary for governing – except their own, which would increase the cost of dismantling it. The lack of alternative political organizations to lean on would force the president to work within their own party to build support for their policy agenda or abandon it.

*Condition 2: The leader can rely on the support of other political parties to pursue their policy goals.*

Third, the leader must have a motivation to dismantle their own party. Presumably, this motivation would come from the party representing some threat to the leader's political goals. Given condition 1, it is unlikely that a top-down party would represent any significant immediate threat to its leadership. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the party must be a future threat to the leader's interests, and party dismantling should serve to prevent the party's future revival.

Obviously, to engage in party dismantling, a party leader must subordinate the survival of the party to their policy goals. Presidents strive to facilitate the actualization of their policy agenda but are also concerned about locking in policy outcomes after implementation – i.e. their policy legacy – particularly in the context of a policy switch or extensive policy reforms more generally. If the party simply worked as a vehicle to advance the president’s ambitions and did not show any sign of reviving as an opposition force or viable governing party under a different leadership, then the president would have no interest in dismantling it.

*Condition 3: The party must be a future threat to the leaders’ policy legacy to motivate them to engage in party dismantling.*

The three conditions must be simultaneously present for the leader to undertake actions to actively undermine their own party. The absence of either one of these conditions would either make party dismantling an insurmountable task (absence of condition 1), remove incentives for party dismantling (absence of condition 2) or increase the cost of doing it (absence of condition 3).

#### **4.5 Methodological strategy**

To provide an explanation to the puzzling collapse of AP, I mobilize qualitative evidence to accomplish three analytical tasks. First, to provide a detailed narrative of the process of party dismantling under Moreno – from the 2018 policy switch to the 2021 elections – and to establish that the outcome of interest occurred as I claim. Second, to show that the conditions I identified

as causally important for the dismantling of AP were met, and third, to establish the causal importance of each condition for the outcome.

For the evidence I draw on nearly 50 interviews with high-ranking party officials, former ministers of the Correa and Moreno administrations, congress people, journalists, and academics. Moreover, I extensively used newspaper articles, and a variety of documents from AP and the Presidency of Ecuador. Finally, I use roll call vote results on economic bills sent by Moreno to the Assembly to identify which parties provided Moreno with the support necessary to pass key neoliberal reforms that made the policy switch possible.

#### **4.6 Policy switch and party dismantling in Ecuador**

In this section, I will provide an account of the evolution of the formally governing party AP under President Moreno, shedding light on the relationship between the executive, AP legislators, and the party itself, mainly embodied by its national directorate. The goal of this section is to analyze evidence of the actions of the executive led by party president Lenín Moreno towards his own party. These actions, I argue, were deliberately aiming at the dismantling of AP and led to the electoral failure of AP both in the 2019 subnational elections and in the 2021 national ones.

The section is divided into four subsections. In the first subsection, I highlight how the beginning of the dismantling of AP coincided with Moreno's neoliberal turn; in the second, I show how AP was excluded from key decision-making venues and from the spoils of office, and how that negatively impacted party development; in the third, I show how the executive withdrew electoral support from its own party with detrimental consequences to the latter; and in



the fourth I use a resource framework to give a balance of AP's resources at the end of Moreno's mandate.

#### **4.6.1 The neoliberal turn and the first steps at dismantling**

Moreno became president of AP on May 1, 2017 and president of Ecuador on May 24. Although the *Correista* faction accused him of abandoning the campaign platform as early as the summer of 2017, the dramatic shift in Moreno's economic policy became undeniably apparent only in April 2018, when he presented the government's economic plan, which included austerity measures, tax exemptions, and financial market deregulation (El País 2018). One month later, he appointed Richard Martinez – at that time president of the *Comité Empresarial Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Business Committee) – as minister of finance to implement that plan.

Until then, Moreno had not shown any intention of dismantling his own party. To the contrary, when the *Correista* faction tried to expel him, he fought back to keep control of it (El Comercio 2017). His cabinet still included AP members in important ministries and AP non-ministers participated in the politburo (interview with Gustavo Baroja). However, after the policy switch Moreno purged the remaining AP members from the cabinet and surrounded himself with people connected with right-wing and business sectors (El Comercio 2018a, 2018b; interview with Miguel Carvajal). The few traditional AP elites that remained in the executive after the summer of 2018 had lost capacity to act in coordination and to ensure ideological consistency to the government (interview with Rosana Alvarado).

Moreno started to dissipate and divert resources from the party in concomitance with the implementation of the neoliberal economic program. The 7<sup>th</sup> convention of AP in August 2018 – which would be the last for the following 3 years – was an important moment of party re-

branding and organizational shake-up. Strikingly, the party abandoned what up to that point proved to be a very successful brand: it changed its official colors from the characteristic lima green to white and blue and moved away from the “Socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” and “Bolivarian” ideological rhetoric, key components of the party brand under Correa (El Comercio 2018c).

During the same convention, the executive committee guided by Moreno decided to dismantle the *Comités de la Revolución Ciudadana* (CRCs – Committees of the Citizens’ Revolution), the base committees of AP, and transform them into “centers for organization and political action” (El Comercio 2018c). These new institutions had not yet materialized neither by September 2019 (interview with Patricio Barriga) nor by December 2021 (interview with Gustavo Baroja, and Miguel Carvajal). The number of members of the national and provincial boards was also expanded. New provincial directors who were sitting on the party national board were close to Moreno (interview with Patricio Barriga and Gustavo Baroja). This move suggests that Moreno did not have any intention of foregoing control of AP. On the contrary, it locked in Moreno as president of AP, as it made more difficult for the faction within AP who sought to expel him to reach the quorum to do so (interviews with Patricio Barriga and Gustavo Baroja).

#### **4.6.2 The exclusion of AP from power (and its spoils)**

By the end of 2018, Moreno remained the only member of AP in the government. All other AP elites lost access to government and, despite formally being the governing party, it became increasingly difficult for AP to obtain access to decision making spaces. “We were the governing party but we were not governing,” that is how member of the AP national directorate Patricio Barriga described the situation. The executive secretary of AP, Gustavo Baroja, claims that

Moreno was insistently invited to participate in the meetings of the national directorate of the party which he was supposed to preside, but he showed up only 2 or 3 times in 4 years (interview with Gustavo Baroja).

AP elites asked for spaces to generate public policy in the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion, in the Ministry of Education or Health. Moreno said he would work on it but never followed through. No candidate proposed by AP cadres was accepted (interviews with Patricio Barriga, Gustavo Baroja, and Miguel Carvajal). What was given to AP was the management of bureaucratic bodies with little political responsibility, such as the Secretariat of Risk Management and the Ecuadorian Vocational Training Service (interviews with Patricio Barriga and Gustavo Baroja). AP was also excluded from governors' appointments,<sup>19</sup> which were awarded to other parties, such as right-wing CREO and center and center-left *Izquierda Democrática* and *Pachakutik*. "This is how we lost territorial presence", denounced Barriga (interview with Patricio Barriga). For an organization that developed as a ruling party in tight collaboration with the executive, this was an unprecedented situation.

As the executive starved its party of patronage<sup>20</sup> resources, it redirected them towards legislators that formally remained under the banner of AP after the exit of the *Correista* faction. The goal was to ensure support for bills that the executive sent to the Assembly as part of the policy switch. The executive – the Ministry of Government in particular – negotiated directly with AP legislators individually, not as a group, and distributed patronage in exchange for votes

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<sup>19</sup> In Ecuador governors are the representatives of the executive in the provinces. They are appointed by the president, which distinguishes them from prefects, who are popularly elected and function as executives of the provinces.

<sup>20</sup> I use the term "patronage" following Kopecký, Mair, and Spirova (2012): "We define patronage appointments as the power of political actors to appoint individuals by discretion to non-elective positions in the public sector, irrespective of the legality of the decision" This definition focuses not so much on the electoral function (i.e. the immediate electoral returns) of patronage but on the use of such appointments to reward the people who help the distributor win and maintain office.

(interviews with Elizabeth Cabezas, Miguel Carvajal, José Serrano, and Ximena Peña). President of the Assembly Elizabeth Cabezas described the dynamic this way:

There were direct conversations between [Minister of Government] Romo and legislators, there was no unified channel. Those conversations were not transparent, and the content was never revealed to the rest of legislators from the same party. Each legislator talked to Romo and took a position, which was usually to support the incoming bill. (interview with Elizabeth Cabezas)

Interviewees mentioned that various positions in the public sector were offered and distributed to AP legislators, which included provincial management of different Ministries (especially big-budget ones, such as Education, Healthcare, and Socioeconomic Inclusion), management of the electrical system, transit agencies, local secretaries of transport, and public hospitals (interviews with Gustavo Baroja, José Serrano, and Ximena Peña). The distribution of public hospitals in particular was at the center of a corruption scandal involving legislators and Minister of Government Maria Paula Romo (El Universo 2020; Plan V 2020; interviews with Elizabeth Cabezas, Gustavo Baroja, José Serrano, and Ximena Peña)

With this strategy, the executive lured legislators into abandoning the party platform to support a new policy orientation in exchange for power of appointment in the public administration at the local level, which facilitated reelection as legislators or to subnational offices. This patronage-for-votes tactic severed the relationship between party and legislators and prevented coordination even within the group of AP legislators itself (interviews with José Serrano and Ximena Peña). AP legislators have reported how sometimes they would learn from

the media about presidential bills coming to the Assembly, which made it very difficult to agree on decisions within the same AP legislative group (interviews with Elizabeth Cabezas and Ximena Peña). The party was even further removed from the negotiations, and the legislators did not consult with the AP national directorate when making decisions about voting bills in the Assembly. Under these conditions, any kind of coordination between the AP national directorate and AP legislators became impossible, and the party lost another point of access to decision making.

#### **4.6.3 The lack of electoral endorsement and its consequences**

In the electoral field, the situation was analogous. Moreno repeatedly abstained from endorsing AP electoral candidates. This move had a detrimental effect on the electoral competitiveness of AP, a party that historically benefitted from the endorsement of the executive to attain electoral success. Arguably, the dependence on presidential endorsement (and thus the damage caused by its withdrawal) even intensified after the dismantling of the base committees and the deprivation of patronage that could be used to build an electoral advantage vis-à-vis other parties.

One interviewee pointed out how, while Correa actively campaigned to endorse AP candidates in subnational elections (El País 2014), Moreno never showed up to a rally nor endorsed a single AP candidate to the local elections of 2019 (El Comercio 2019a; interview with Gustavo Baroja). Some interviewees even claimed Moreno actively boycotted AP candidacies in the local elections of 2019 (interviews with Patricio Barriga, Gustavo Baroja, Miguel Carvajal, and Elizabeth Cabezas). Some declared that the executive ordered AP governors and party provincial directors to not provide any support nor endorsement to AP candidates (interviews with Patricio Barriga and Gustavo Baroja). Baroja even argued that the

unpopular economic measures were purposely announced during the campaign to undermine AP's electoral chances (interview with Gustavo Baroja).

The harsh consequences of the lack of endorsement on the part of the party leader and president already became evident in the subnational elections of 2019. In the local elections of prefects – i.e. akin to province governors – and mayors, AP fared disastrously. They were not able to put any of their candidates for prefect into office and they participated in winning coalitions in only 2 provinces out of 23 in total. AP won mayoral races in 27 municipalities out of 221, but in only 10 of them they won without forming alliances (Consejo Nacional Electoral 2019). In major cities, the situation was even more ruinous. AP did not run any candidate in Quito and Cuenca and gathered only 2.71% of the votes in Guayaquil. As a term of comparison, in 2014 AP won in 10 provinces and 68 municipalities, in what was at the time considered an electoral setback (interview with Doris Soliz).

As a result, AP lost territorial presence and executive positions at the subnational level, and it was further pushed out of the state apparatus. Moreover, the poor electoral performance had a negative impact on the party's finances, as it translated into less public financial resources to cover day-to-day operating expenditures. Table 7 below shows how, while the decline of party public funds had been steady since 2015, it substantially steepens between 2018 and 2019.

**Table 7. Financial resources of *Alianza PAIS* (in USD)**

Year	Private funds	Public funds	Total
2015	2.537.260,08	1.828.349,97	4.365.609,45
2016	1.990.333,42	1.577.863,94	3.568.197.36
2017	1.014.849,81	1.378.133,08	2.392.982.89
2018	888.271,57	<b>1.342.652,38</b>	2.230.923.95
2019	-	<b>478.325,37</b>	-

Source: Primicias 2020a.

Note: shading added to indicate variation of funds under Moreno.

This blow was worsened by the fact that President Moreno was not demanding private financial contributions from donors to the party anymore (interviews with Patricio Barriga, Gustavo Baroja, and Ximena Peña). As campaigning can be financed only through private contributions from party supporters and donors, their fall was a major obstacle to AP's possibility of bouncing back after the electoral results of 2019. This vicious circle of financial bleeding forced the formal governing party to layoff party staff and sell its headquarters in Quito in July 2020 (Primicias 2020b).

Moreno's lack of endorsement or even active boycott of AP candidates happened again during the presidential elections of 2021. Moreno had no intention to run again (Gobierno de Ecuador 2018) and the party convention to nominate the presidential ticket was delayed several times (El Comercio 2020a). In their interviews, presidential and vice-presidential candidates for AP Ximena Peña and Patricio Barriga denounced that the government was set on stalling the nomination process to avoid designating any candidate and thus put an end to AP. The goal – they thought – was to “transfer” those votes by endorsing other political parties – most likely *Construye*, formerly *Ruptura 25*, a small but influential party to which the Minister of Government and the Interior and the Secretary of the Presidential Cabinet belonged.

Nonetheless, at the convention of August 2020, when all candidates were withdrawing, Peña and Barriga managed to gather enough support to get elected (El Comercio 2020b). On the next day, at the deadline for presenting the result of party primaries, *Construye* finally presented its presidential ticket (El Comercio 2020c).

It is clear that under these adverse conditions, with the party leader stalling and boycotting the internal designation of presidential nominees, the party was doomed to perform once again poorly in the upcoming electoral cycle. Moreno did not even endorse the candidacy of Peña. He was eventually expelled from AP in March 2021 (El Comercio 2021), after the party had gathered 1.5% of the vote during the first round of the presidential elections. Echoing the testimony of all other AP cadres I interviewed, AP Assembly candidate Diego Fuentes argued that the party “had to carry the weight of Moreno’s poor decisions but additionally we had to carry the weight of the whole organization surrounding the president which threatened to kill the movement” and that “the removal of Moreno [had] to do with the urgency of the political survival of our organization” (Primicias 2021).

#### **4.6.4 Loss of resources and the unlikely revival of AP**

Cyr (2017) offers a useful framework for assessing a party’s resources and say something about its likelihood of remaining relevant in national politics. When we look at the case of AP at the end of the Moreno presidency, we see a party whose resources have depleted as a consequence of Moreno’s actions or deliberate inactivity. Table 8 summarizes the loss of party resources under Moreno since his policy switch in 2018. Certain instances of loss of resources are a direct consequence of Moreno’s actions (e.g. patronage, professional staff/committees, ideology,



brand), while others are second-order effects of his decisions (e.g. the lack of electoral support for AP candidates led to a loss of elites resources but also to a loss of money and locales).

**Table 8. AP’s loss of party resources under Moreno (2018-2021)**

Resources		Loss	Cause
<i>Material Resources</i>	Money	✓	Stopped asking for private contributions; electoral failure led to drop in public funding
	Patronage	✓	Cut off party from patronage
<i>Organizational Resources</i>	Militants	✓	Dismantled base committees
	Professional Staff/Committees	✓	Dismantled base committees; layoff staff
	Locales	✓	Financial duress forced to sell headquarters
<i>Elite Resources</i>	Elites	✓	No electoral support/boycott of AP candidates
	Leaders		
<i>Ideational Resources</i>	Ideology	✓	Abandoned 2007-17 ideology
	Brand	✓	Changed traditional party colors
	Expertise		

Source: Author’s elaboration based on Cyr (2017: 32-33).

After four years under Moreno as a formally governing party, AP moved from being a dominant party to a marginal one. AP elites have now renamed the party MOVER, which stands for *Movimiento Verde Ético Revolucionario y Democrático* (Green Ethical Revolutionary and Democratic Movement), with an explicit focus on green politics to appeal to younger generations (interview with Patricio Barriga). This attempt at party rebranding to take distance from the

damaging years of the Moreno presidency hopes to produce positive results in the 2023 subnational elections to avoid party suppression.

#### **4.7 Why party dismantling in Ecuador**

In this section, I will examine what conditions made party dismantling possible under Moreno. I first consider the two conditions that enabled Moreno to engage in party dismantling – the top-down structure of AP and the support that Moreno received from actors external to the party. Then, I consider the condition that motivated Moreno to deliberately weaken his own party – i.e. the fact that AP and its members represented a hindrance for Moreno’s policy goals and a future threats to the longevity of his policy legacy. The goal of this section is to show (1) that each condition was met in the case study and (2) that each condition was causally important for the outcome of interest to occur.

##### **4.7.1 Condition 1: AP had a top-down structure**

AP has been characterized by a distinct top-down structure and enjoyed very little – if any – autonomy from the government (Conaghan 2021). It was founded during the 2006 electoral campaign to support the presidential candidacy of Rafael Correa, and after 8 months it was already a governing party, avoiding an initial phase at the opposition. As a result, the decision-making power was concentrated in the executive and the politburo – a collective body appointed by the president – which included party founders and a majority of people who joined the party only after being appointed (interview with Galo Mora and Doris Soliz). Overlap between government officials and party cadres was extensive. From 2007 to 2021, the president of AP has always been the president of Ecuador.

Participation from below by party rank-and-file and connection with social movements was also extremely limited. Even though party conventions were held every one or two years and resolutions were subject to membership vote, the executive decided the policy agenda with little to no external input (interviews with Gabriela Rivadeneira and Doris Soliz). The party mostly deferred to the executive, complying with the decisions that were passed down from the government. The party was thus unable to autonomously steer governmental action and always struggled to detach itself from the executive.

AP mainly served as a very effective electoral machine, and a tool to coordinate, facilitate, and monitor policy implementation throughout the territory (interviews with Gustavo Baroja and Doris Soliz). The more leftist faction of AP always tried to transform AP into a permanent political party that would mobilize outside formal institutional channels, but with little success (interviews with Gabriela Rivadeneira, Galo Mora, and Doris Soliz).

The structure of AP gave Moreno enormous power and room for maneuver, and played a central role in allowing him to starve the party of resources it needed to prosper. Before Moreno, AP had been able to maintain territorial presence thanks to a favorable distribution of patronage from the executive and the positive electoral results facilitated by the president's endorsement of candidates to legislative and subnational elections.

As shown in the previous section, this unmitigated dependence on the executive turned against AP after Moreno's policy switch. Moreno was able to turn the flow of patronage away from the party and towards political actors that provided support for his new policy agenda – i.e. opposition parties and AP legislators – without major resistance from AP officials. The same happened when Moreno withdrew electoral support from AP candidates. Just like under Correa, the executive had the party at its complete disposal. This concentration of power at the top of the

AP structure also frustrated attempts made by the *Correista* faction in 2017 to expel Moreno, who at that moment was the president of the party, and therefore extremely difficult to remove.

If AP had been more capable of autonomous mobilization – both electoral and non-electoral – and more ideologically disciplined and internally coordinated, regardless of the whims of the executive, it would have been able to (1) maintain territorial presence through organization and decrease dependence on patronage and (2) perform better electorally even without the presidential endorsement. A more organized and participatory party would have been much more difficult to dismantle from the top.

#### **4.7.2 Condition 2: Moreno could rely on the support of actors external to the party**

AP started the legislative period 2017-21 with 74 legislators out of 137 seats in total. After the split within AP, 29 legislators from the *Correista* faction left AP and formed a new legislative block *Revolución Ciudadana* (Citizen Revolution) in opposition to the government. As previously mentioned, Moreno engaged in patronage-for-votes exchange with legislators that remained in AP. This strategy granted him only 44 votes at best,<sup>21</sup> while 70 votes are required to pass bills in the Assembly. Initially, Moreno was 26 votes short of a majority, and he needed the support of other parties in the legislature to pass economic reforms that were a key component of his policy switch.

To show which parties provided support to Moreno to implement his new policy agenda, I looked at roll call votes on three key economic bills that were passed under Moreno: (1) the Organic Law for Productive Development, Investment Attraction, Employment Generation, and

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<sup>21</sup> The number of AP legislators declined during the term – from an initial 45 down to 33 in 2021.

Fiscal Stability and Balance (June 21, 2018),<sup>22</sup> which included liberalization of import, income tax exemptions for investments, debt remission (including big business), exoneration from and reduction of foreign currency exit tax, and prohibition to approve the government budget with primary deficit; (2) the Organic Law of Humanitarian Support to Fight the COVID-19 Health Crisis (May 15, 2020),<sup>23</sup> which included an important section on labor relations, facilitating layoffs, renegotiation of employment contracts between employers and employees, and reduction of the workday; and (3) the Organic Law Reforming the Monetary and Financial Code for the Defense of Dollarization (April 22, 2021),<sup>24</sup> which gave the Central Bank of Ecuador autonomy from the executive, created a Board of Directors of the Central Bank – consisting of 5 members elected by the Assembly with a 5-year tenure – and eliminated any regulation over interest rates and bank commissions, among other things.

These three bills were fundamental for Moreno’s policy switch. If these bills had not passed, Moreno would not have been able to pursue the neoliberal restructuring of Ecuador’s economy that was part of his policy agenda since mid-2018. Moreover, the second and particularly the third law mentioned above were necessary to live up to the commitments the Moreno government made to the International Monetary Fund when they agreed to a \$4.2 billion loan in March 2019. To ensure the passage of these bills, Moreno had to rely on the support from opposition parties.

Tables 9, 10, and 11 below show roll call votes by party for the three economic bills sent by the executive. The tables show the total number of seats and the number of favorable votes for

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<sup>22</sup> Proyecto de Ley Orgánica para el Fomento Productivo, Atracción de Inversiones, Generación de Empleo, y Estabilidad y Equilibrio Fiscal.

<sup>23</sup> Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Apoyo Humanitario para combatir la crisis sanitaria del COVID-19.

<sup>24</sup> Proyecto de Ley Orgánica Reformatoria al Código Orgánico Monetario y Financiero para la Defensa de la Dolarización.

each party, plus a tally of how many votes were left to reach the majority after considering each party's number of favorable votes, and a column indicating parties whose votes were ultimately decisive for the bill to pass. The numbers show how right-wing parties CREO (*Movimiento Politico Creando Oportunidades*) and the Social Christian Party (*Partido Social Cristiano*, PSC) provided support that was decisive for the passage of the three economic bills. CREO and PSC sometimes voted almost unanimously (Table 11), other times their support was more fragmented (Table 9 and 10), but none of the three bills would have been approved without the favorable votes from these parties.

The tables also show how the ideologically mixed legislative group *Integración Nacional* (IN) – which includes *Pachakutik* (center-left), *Izquierda Democrática* (center), and *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* (right) – had an important role in making economic policy reform possible. They were crucial in the passage of the Law for Productive Development and Law of Humanitarian Support bills, where CREO and the PSC did not vote united.<sup>25</sup> The only time when their vote was not decisive was with the Law Reforming the Monetary and Financial Code, where AP together with the right-wing sector had already reached 70 votes. The tables show that the neoliberal policy switch found support in all political forces except the *Correismo*.

It is also important to highlight how the number of seats held by AP had been decreasing from 2018 to 2021 (44 in 2018, 40 in 2020, 33 in 2021). So was the percentage of internal support for the bills in question (91% in the 2018 law, 90% in the 2020 law, and 69% in the 2021 law). This decline in the number of AP legislators and in their support for Moreno's agenda made Moreno more dependent on right-wing and other parties outside of the AP group to push

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<sup>25</sup> For example, 20 legislators from CREO abstained from voting the Law for Productive Development because they demanded stricter control on public spending (El Universo 2018b). The PSC voted against the Law of Humanitarian Support complaining about the tax increase on business (El Comercio 2020d).

forward reforms. Moreno could afford to lose AP legislators while he was dismantling the party because of the support he found in other political sectors in the Assembly.

**Table 9. Roll call votes on the law for productive development (June 21, 2018)**

Legislative group	Seats	Yes votes	Votes left to reach majority	Necessary to reach majority
			70	
AP	44	40	30	✓
Revolución Ciudadana (RC)	29	0	30	
Unidad por el Cambio (CREO)	32	10	20	✓
Cambio Positivo (PSC)	17	17	3	✓
Integración Nacional (PK, ID, PSP)	13	6	0	✓
Independent	2	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>73</b>	-	

Source: Author's compilation. Data from observatoriolegislativo.ec; asambleanacional.gob.ec.

Note: gray shading indicates right-wing parties

**Table 10. Roll call votes on the law of humanitarian support (May 15, 2020)**

Legislative group	Seats	Yes votes	Votes left to reach majority	Necessary to reach majority
			70	
AP	40	36	34	✓
Revolución Ciudadana (RC)	29	0	34	
Unidad por el Cambio (CREO)	33	28	6	✓
Cambio Positivo (PSC)	16	1	5	✓
Integración Nacional (PK, ID, PSP)	13	7	0	✓
Independent	6	2	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>74</b>	-	

Source: Author's compilation. Data from observatoriolegislativo.ec; asambleanacional.gob.ec.

Note: gray shading indicates right-wing parties.

**Table 11. Roll call votes on the law reforming the monetary and financial code (April 22, 2021)**

Legislative group	Seats	Yes votes	Votes left to reach majority	Necessary to reach majority
			70	
AP	33	23	47	✓
Revolución Ciudadana (RC)	29	0	47	
Unidad por el Cambio (CREO)	33	31	16	✓
Cambio Positivo (PSC)	16	16	0	✓
Integración Nacional (PK, ID, PSP)	13	7	0	
Independent	13	9	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>86</b>	-	

*Source:* Author's compilation. Data from observatoriolegislativo.ec; asambleanacional.gob.ec.

*Note:* gray shading indicates right-wing parties.

As we saw, one of the fundamental steps in the dismantling of AP was the removal of its officials from decision-making venues, in particular from the executive, in order to exclude them from control over patronage resources. The removal of AP members from the executive was crucial but equally crucial was replacing them with people who had the governing expertise and the ideological affinity to carry forward Moreno's policy agenda. As a result, Moreno drew on other political sectors to staff his cabinet. The availability of these sectors to join the Moreno cabinet was key to enable the dismantling of AP. If these sectors had not been willing and available to join the government, Moreno would have been forced to rely on AP officials. Their presence within the government would have made party dismantling more unlikely, given that AP would have maintained some control over the flow of patronage, which as we saw was crucial for the survival of the party.

Table 12 below shows Moreno's number of appointments in ministries and secretariates by party in the periods before and after the policy switch of April 2018. There is a clear decrease in the ratio of AP cabinet members (from 37% to 7%) and a simultaneous increase in the ratio of



cabinet appointments of politicians without a formal partisan affiliation (from 55% to 80%), revealing how Moreno started to draw more heavily on “independent” politicians after his shift to the right. Moreno’s post switch cabinet also sees the entry of people from Ruptura25 – a small, electorally marginal center-left party, who supported the Correa government during its first years. This party was surprisingly able to obtain high-profile appointments under Moreno: for instance, María Paula Romo was Minister of Government and Minister of the Interior, Juan Sebastián Roldán was Secretary of the Presidency, and Iván Granda was Minister of Social and Economic Inclusion. A trend of increasing presence of “independents” can also be observed in the designation of vice-presidents (Table 13): the two vice-presidents appointed after 2018 were both independent.

**Table 12. Number of cabinet appointments before and after the 2018 policy switch**

Party	Cabinet Appointments			
	Pre Policy Switch (May 2017 - Mar 2018)		Post Policy Switch (Apr 2018 - May 2021)	
Independent	24	55%	68	80%
Alianza PAIS	16	37%	6	7%
Centro Democratico	1	2%	2	3%
Fuerza Compromiso Social	1	2%	0	-
Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano	1	2%	0	-
Ruptura25	0	-	6	7%
Pachakutik	1	2%	1	1%
Juntos Podemos	0	-	1	1%
Military	0	-	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>		<b>85</b>	

Source: Author’s compilation. Data from *presidencia.gob.ec*.

**Table 13. Vice-presidents of Ecuador under Moreno (2017-2021)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Party</b>
Jorge Glas Espinel	May 24, 2017 – Jan 2, 2018	AP
María Alejandra Vicuña Muñoz	Jan 6, 2018 – Dec 6, 2018	AP
Otto Sonnenholzner Sper	Dec 11, 2018 – Jul 10, 2020	Ind.
María Alejandra Muñoz Seminario	Jul 22, 2020 – May 24, 2021	Ind.

Source: Author's compilation. Data from *presidencia.gob.ec*.

It is worth making a few clarifications about the numbers just presented. First, cabinet positions are not alike – some are more important than others. Before April 2018, AP cadres had been occupying important and high-budget ministries such as those of Defense, Economy and Finance, Urban Development and Housing, Education, Foreign Relations, Transport and Public Works, Justice, and Science Technology and Innovation, plus various secretaries and positions close to the president. In addition, the Minister of Public Health, who counts as an independent, was already in office during the last few years of the Correa government. After Moreno's shift, all those ministries went to independents. AP members (not cadres) were either appointed to marginal ministries or to important ones but for a short period of time, and usually at the end of the term.

Second, the term “independent” indicates the lack of a formal partisan affiliation during the tenure but it is mostly silent about sociopolitical background. As a matter of fact, a number of independent members of the executive came from the business sector or right-wing political parties. For instance, the Minister of Economy and Finance Richard Martínez was president of

the *Comité Empresarial Ecuatoriano* (Ecuadorian Business Committee) – the most important business organization in the country. The person who succeeded Martínez as Minister of Economy and Finance – Mauricio Pozo – was vice-president of *Produbanco* bank and vice-presidential candidate for the right-wing PSC (Mauricio Pozo 2021). Both Minister of Transport Gabriel Martínez and vice-president Otto Sonnenholzner came from the media business. The former is the son of the owner of *Expreso* newspaper (Pichincha Comunicaciones 2019), while the latter was general manager of Radio Tropicana and president of the *Asociación Ecuatoriana de Radiodifusión* (Ecuadorian Radiobroadcasting Association).

#### **4.7.3 Condition 3: AP presented a future threat to Moreno’s policy legacy**

After the exit of the *Correista* faction became official in January 2018, several cadres coming from left-wing sectors remained within AP. As explained in the previous section, they were being isolated by the executive – excluded from decision-making spaces and cut off from AP legislators. Nonetheless, after Moreno’s shift to the right the AP national directorate started to express disagreement with the policies of the executive through public statements, about Moreno’s economic and foreign policy in particular (Alianza PAIS 2019a, 2019b).

AP elites kept trying to regain control of the party but were not able to. During interviews, members of the AP national directorate recounted how they tried several times to vote Moreno out of the presidency of the party for non-fulfillment of function, but they never managed to reach the quorum (interviews Patricio Barriga, Gustavo Baroja, and Miguel Carvajal). One account is that several members of the national directorate were answering directly to the executive and were instructed to stall voting on Moreno’s removal (interview with Patricio Barriga). Another account is that members failed to see the benefit of dismissing

Moreno and were still hopeful that the privileged relationship with the executive would pick up again (interview with Gustavo Baroja). Nonetheless, there was agitation and discussion within AP main decision-making body about the possibility of expelling Moreno and retaking control of the party.

While the party was immobilized and marginalized – at least temporarily – the ambiguous relationship between AP cadres and former-AP *Correistas* made the party a future threat for Moreno’s policy legacy. The lack of a clean breakup between former co-partisans foreshadowed the possibility of a reunion, with Correa rejoining AP, winning elections, and reversing Moreno’s policies. This risk was accentuated by the fact that Moreno made clear since the beginning of his term that he would not run for reelection (Gobierno de Ecuador 2018), and thus he would not be able to maintain control over the party in the long run. Moreno’s absence would have allowed the next party leader to reopen the doors to Correa.

The relationship between AP officials and *Correistas* was ambiguous because, despite the accusation of betrayal coming from *Correismo*, a significant number of AP officials still maintained connection with their former co-partisans and refused to turn against the policies of the Correa government. As Gustavo Baroja put it, “Correa called us traitors, but Moreno called us *Correistas*”. Miguel Carvajal – minister on both the Correa and the Moreno governments and member of the national directorate of AP – said that he was fired over this:

One or two weeks before I was fired [from the government], President Moreno declared that in Esmeraldas there is a bridge going to Colombia which is unfinished and that was built by the Correa government to favor drug trafficking. They called me to the presidency and asked me to publicly declare as Minister of

Defense that I confirmed what the president said and added that the Correa government did nothing at the border with Colombia and collaborated with drug traffickers. I said ‘look gentlemen, what the Correa government did was strengthen state presence all over the territory [...] I will not take part in this, if you want these statements you have to come out and make them yourselves [...] and the same week I was dismissed I had informed the president that I just had a meeting with a few *Correista* leaders to promote agreements and foster dialogue. After two days, they fired me. (interview with Miguel Carvajal)

Another minister of the Moreno government and longstanding AP cadre, Rosana Alvarado mentioned the unwillingness to turn against the previous government as something Moreno and his collaborators saw with suspicion: “Correa has attacked us [those who remained in AP] verbally many times and Moreno wanted us to come out and attack Correa ourselves, but we refused, we always refused to attack Correa. And Moreno looked at that with suspicion.” Presidential candidate for AP Ximena Peña argued in the interview that it was more than a suspicion: “[Minister of Government] Romo wanted AP dead because it was still close to *Correismo*. I am sure about that.” (interview with Ximena Peña).

AP officials’ words and actions support the idea that the threat of a reunion with Correa was real. Members of AP national directorate pointed out how they were never opposed to the idea of rejoining forces with Correa, it was more the other way round (interviews with Patricio Barriga and Gustavo Baroja). Elizabeth Cabezas – President of the Assembly in 2018 – from the faction of AP that more unambiguously took distance from *Correismo*, said that that was the reason behind her disaffiliation from AP: “At times I thought that we did not have a real

renovation [within AP] because they [AP cadres] didn't want to do it, they didn't want to break with Rafael [Correa] because they bet on uniting with him once again in the future" (interview with Elizabeth Cabezas). To lend support further support to this theory, AP endorsed *Correista* candidate Andres Arauz in the run-off of the presidential elections 2021 (El Universo 2021).

In response to this imminent threat, Moreno never abandoned control over AP until after the first round of the 2021 general elections. A few interviewees thought that Moreno's permanence was also serving a double goal: preventing it from getting closer to Correa and using it as a scapegoat to deflect blame to for implementing the neoliberal policy platform that was defeated at the polls in 2017 (interviews Patricio Barriga and José Serrano). The extremely low popularity of the Moreno government was used as a weapon against AP: "Moreno didn't leave the party because he knew he was going to sink AP, which without him would have reunited with *Correismo*" (interview with Ximena Peña).

#### **4.7.4 Alternative explanation: democratic backsliding in Ecuador**

A standard alternative explanation of the motivations that encouraged President Moreno to dismantle AP focuses on the preservation of democratic stability. This account considers the Correa's decade in power as a period of democratic backsliding and interprets Moreno's actions as President of Ecuador as an attempt to restore conditions necessary for the proper functioning of Ecuadorian democracy (De la Torre 2018; Jaramillo Forthcoming). Under this view, the dismantling of AP should be read primarily as an attempt to prevent the return of electoral authoritarian rule under Correa, with the preservation of Moreno's policy legacy and of the restoration of neoliberalism in Ecuador taking a secondary role.

While this explanation has its merits and considerations of regime stability have informed the perception of the actors involved in the Moreno administration, the questionable democratic record of the Moreno government casts doubts on his pro-democratic motives. In particular, the government came under the spotlight during the indigenous protests against its neoliberal reforms in October 2019, when it let loose a wave of brutal repression, which led to the killing of 11 people, the injury of at least 1500, and the detention of at least 1200 (Human Rights Watch 2020). Arrests of opposition figures, including elected officials, followed the protests. The most egregious case was that of prefect of Pichincha Paola Pabón, whose house was raided at night to take her into custody for allegedly supporting armed rebellion (El Comercio 2019b; El Universo 2019). Several legislators sought refuge in the Mexican embassy and were granted political asylum in Mexico three months later (CNN 2020).

In addition, during Moreno's mandate, violations of political rights were allegedly committed against opposition forces. After leaving AP, *Correistas* sought to create a new party but their attempts were thwarted by the electoral authorities (El Comercio 2018d). They were eventually forced to join a preexisting political organization to participate in the 2019 subnational election (El Comercio 2018e) but in 2020 the electoral authorities suspended it for alleged irregularity in the collection of signatures (El País 2020), leaving the main opposition force without an electoral vehicle.

The Moreno government also showed little regard for institutions, as his executive engaged in multiple violations of the constitution. The referendum held in February 2018 without the approval of the Constitutional Court led to the purge and *ad hoc* designation of state authorities, including the Attorney General and the Constitutional Court itself (El Comercio 2018f). The agreement with the International Monetary Fund also violated articles 419 and 439

of the 2008 constitution, which establish that all international treaties which subject the country's economic policy to conditions established by international financial institutions need the approval of the Assembly and the Constitutional Court (Ecuador Ombudsman 2019).

The evidence here suggests that the Moreno administration was indeed trying to weaken *Correísmo* to prevent its comeback. The political means that it used to do so, however, seem to contradict the idea that stopping the democratic backsliding was its main goal. In fact, under Moreno we saw a deterioration of social rights and even political rights and a recurrent violation of the institutions of the country, particularly of its constitution, which was not the result of an authoritarian project but of broad societal demand and participation.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I showed how, after the policy switch towards a neoliberal agenda, President Lenín Moreno engaged in the dismantling of the formally governing party *Alianza PAIS*, which dominated Ecuadorian politics for a decade. I marshaled qualitative evidence, first, to demonstrate how Moreno deliberately deprived the party of resources and then to prove what conditions made such an exceptional outcome possible. I found evidence that (1) AP's structure acted as a permissive condition for party dismantling (2) other parties and business organizations provided support to Moreno and his economic policy plan and (3) the possibility of AP rejoining forces with Correa constituted a threat to the longevity of Moreno's policy and motivated the executive to dismantle the party.

Although party dismantling is an extremely rare phenomenon, the findings of this chapter have important implications for the study of political parties. First, they showed that party leaders sometimes prioritize other goals (policy, career advancement, accumulation of wealth,



etc.) over the survival of their own organization. In particular, the case study of AP also suggested that an executive might decide to sacrifice its own governing party if it becomes a threat to its policy legacy – particularly in high-stakes policy areas like the economy.

Second, this chapter showed that the conditions for Moreno to dismantle AP were very stringent. In Appendix B, I conduct an analysis of the same three conditions in four shadow cases that respond to the definition of policy switch I provided above. Table 14 below summarizes the shadow cases analyzed. The cases present variation in party structure – top-down in the cases of Ecuador and Peru, and a more dispersed power structure in the cases of Argentina and Venezuela – and how much the governing party represented a threat to the president’s policy switch – with Venezuela standing out as the only case of real internal opposition.

There is, on the other hand, no variation in opposition’s support for the policy switch. This is not surprising considering that the government is implementing their policy platform, but it is far from predetermined. Apart from backing the policies of the government, right-wing parties could have shifted their positions further to the right or occupied the ideological space left by the governing party and oppose it from the left. As Lupu points out, this constituted a dilemma for them, as any of these options would have diluted their party brand and weakened their electoral appeal (Lupu 2016: 37).

The lack of our outcome of interest – i.e. party dismantling – across the board coincides with the absence of at least one condition in all cases – two in the case of Argentina. This finding explains how rare party dismantling is and suggests that the star aligned in a very unusual way in the case of AP. In all the other cases of dramatic policy switch considered we see parties surviving, except in the Peruvian case where the governing party had no formal structure. The general lesson we should draw is that parties tend to survive mandate unresponsiveness.

**Table 14. Policy switch and conditions for party dismantling in South America**

Country Case	President (Party)	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Party dismantling
Argentina 1989	Carlos Menem (Partido Justicialista)	x	x	✓	NO
Ecuador 2002	Lucio Gutiérrez (Partido Sociedad Patriótica)	✓	x	✓	NO
Ecuador 2017	Lenín Moreno (Alianza PAIS)	✓	✓	✓	YES
Peru 1990	Alberto Fujimori (Cambio 90)	✓	x	✓	NO
Venezuela 1988	Carlos Andrés Pérez (Acción Democrática)	x	✓	✓	NO

Source: Author's elaboration.

With respect to Ecuadorian politics, the article has provided convincing evidence that the political struggle that has been polarizing the country between *Correismo* and *Anti-Correismo* is mostly about the macroeconomic model that the two formations defend. In the minds of the contenders, concerns with procedural democracy and institutional stability remain in the background. As a matter of fact, the story of the dismantling of AP shows that Ecuador is still characterized by deep economic and political instability and fragile institutions (Olivares and Medina 2020). The high level of polarization that the emergence of *Correismo* unleashed only

contributed to strengthening the incentive for actors to treat state institutions as up-for-grabs resources that can be used strategically against political enemies.

After the difficult decade that saw the alternation of seven presidents and the collapse of its financial system in 1999, the new constitution in 2008 and the 10 years of polarized stability with redistribution under Correa seemed to suggest that Ecuador was entering a new phase in its history. However, the inability and unwillingness of *Correismo* to develop significant linkages with social movements and to build a permanent party organization detached from the government left the *Correista* political project at the mercy of *caudillismo* and its social bases incapable of reacting to defend its policy achievements.

## 5 Conclusion

The dissertation has examined the relationship between incumbents and governing political parties across three separate chapters. Chapter 2 has addressed the question of why some personalist vehicles turn into organized parties while others remain ephemeral and weakly organized, emphasizing the role that party elites' formative political experiences play in the decision to invest in party building. Chapter 3 has explained variation in left governments' communication policy with reference to the role of political and societal organizations in disseminating information. Chapter 4 has investigated the causes behind the collapse of Ecuador's governing party *Alianza PAIS*, highlighting the important but overlooked role played by President Moreno's deliberate attempts to dismantle the party.

This final section provides a chance to take stock of the findings presented in the three chapters and discuss some of their implications for the relations between left governments, organization, and sociopolitical change in Latin America. This conclusion is organized in four parts. First, I will provide answers to the questions I posed in the introduction about when incumbents need political parties. Second, I will discuss variation in regime outcomes in the three cases analyzed in this dissertation, situating the case of Ecuador in relation to Bolivia and Venezuela. Third, I will provide some reflections on the importance of organization for sociopolitical change. Finally, I will discuss the relationship between organization and interest intermediation regimes.

## 5.1 Incumbents and political parties

The literature on political parties has generally shied away from studying the *instrumental* use that incumbents make of parties in democratic polities. This dissertation has approached the study of left-wing incumbent parties in Latin America from this perspective. In the introduction, I outlined some questions on the instrumental use of parties that this dissertation sought to answer. After the analysis conducted in the three chapters, it is now time to provide answers to those question.

*When and why do incumbents invest resources in party building?*

The findings from chapter 2 suggest that incumbents are more likely to invest resources in party building when two structural conditions are in place: (1) they do not have significant organizational support from societal groups and (2) their survival is under threat. Chapter 2 analyzed two cases of personalist electoral vehicles – Ecuador’s *Alianza PAIS* (AP) and Venezuela’s *Movimiento V República* (MVR) – which were built from scratch without any organizational inheritance from pre-existing organizations and lacked organic linkages with social movements. Their leaders’ popularity, state patronage, and mediatized communication were sufficient to mobilize electoral support and allowed them to win elections. Yet, their excessive reliance on these resources limited their capacity for extra-electoral mobilization and left them vulnerable to opposition attacks in-between elections. The comparative analysis of AP and MVR/PSUV has provided evidence that incumbents start to consider investing in party organization when polarization increases – due to the onset of intense distributional conflict – and they face opposition from powerful actors who signal that they are willing to resort to extralegal means to overthrow them.

The findings suggest that incumbents build parties when sociopolitical conflict lays bare the organizational weakness of their government. At that point, party building becomes a way to increase the government's capacity to mobilize support to defend the government and its policies from opposition within and outside the state. An analysis of case of the party-building efforts of the MAS, which lied outside of the scope of chapter 2, provides further support to the idea that party building is used to remedy organizational deficiencies. Indeed, even the MAS, which can hardly be considered an organizationally deficient party, engaged in party building in territories where the organizational density of its affiliated social movements was lower – e.g. in the region of Santa Cruz (Anria 2019).

What this finding implies is that robust party organization is a consequence of intense political strife. Once again, the case of the MAS is instructive, as core social movements that constituted the MAS – *cocaleros* (coca leaf growers) – developed a high degree of organizational density fighting repressive policies for coca leaf eradication promoted by the Bolivian government with the support of the U.S. government in the 1980s and 1990s (Farthing and Kohl 2014).

As the findings of chapter 2 show, however, the presence of structural conditions conducive to party building does not guarantee that incumbents will in fact invest in party organization. Incumbents are more likely to invest resources in party building if they are surrounded by officials that firmly believe in the long-term advantages that political organization brings. These officials, I find, have been politically socialized in radical left-wing parties. Once the need for more political organization becomes apparent, party leadership start to see investment in party building as a concrete possibility to close the organizational gap. Yet, the opening of an internal party debate about the opportunity to invest in party building does not

guarantee that these investments will be undertaken. Findings from chapter 2 suggest that party leadership will invest in party building only if it believes that long-term benefits exceed short-term costs. Considering that in contemporary politics incentives against party building are manifold, beliefs in the advantages of party building must be particularly deep-seated to counter the existing structure of incentives. We find that these deep-seated beliefs stem from intensive processes of political socialization, which are rooted in early partisan political activity in radical left parties.

*What functions can parties fulfill for incumbents?*

Chapter 2 suggests that incumbents turn to parties to increase their organizational capacity vis-à-vis their opponents. In this sense, the functions that political organization can fulfill are manifold. Parties can facilitate mobilization both for electoral purposes and in defense of the government and its policy initiatives; they can train future party cadres to ensure ideological commitment and consistency; and they can coordinate political action within formal institutions (e.g. between executive and legislative branches).

Chapter 3 shows how parties can also work as channels of communication between governments and their constituents. This communicative function that parties fulfill provides a solution to one of the problems of governability that left governments face, namely the relationship with an adversarial mass media sector. Private media outlets control the flow of political information between state and society, and this near monopoly is often used by media owners and their political associates as an instrument to attain policy goals. This instrumental use of the media by business and right-wing sectors often involves biased coverage of governments' behavior and policy initiatives. Left-wing governments, thus, struggle to get information across

to their constituents. Organizational connections between government and its social bases help to obviate this problem because they allow governments to bypass the mass media and engage with their constituents in a two-way form of communication. On the contrary, the lack of organizational channels of communication with society make governments much more vulnerable to media manipulation. To reduce this vulnerability, some Pink Tide governments counteracted private media head-on by engaging in what I referred to as media activism, the intensive use of state-controlled media. This strategy is much more costly and much more dependent on access to state resources than organization-based communication.

*When do parties become redundant or even counterproductive for incumbents?*

Chapter 4 has showed that incumbents do not need parties when, instead of facing opposition from powerful socioeconomic and political actors, they have their backing. In these cases, parties can even become an obstacle, as they can constrain the incumbents' political action and even pose a threat to their policy legacy. The case of AP under Lenín Moreno provides an illustrative example of this dynamic. With his policy switch to a neoliberal agenda, Moreno gained the favor of the powerful left-outs of Correa's government. The appeasement and subsequent alliance with business and right-wing sectors turned the governing party AP into a superfluous organization for Moreno – even a dangerous one, considering its connections with *Correísmo*. AP was born, lived, and died as an instrument of the executive.

Examples of incumbents who have the backing of oligarchic sectors and dispense with parties abound. One of the most prominent examples (if not *the* most iconic) was Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, who created a new party for every electoral cycle – *Cambio 90, Peru*



2000, *Sí Cumple* – and committed to none, scrapping them one after the other (Levitsky and Cameron 2003).

## 5.2 Party and regime consolidation in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela

The three cases analyzed in this dissertation present radically different regime outcomes. In the case of Bolivia, the political project led by the MAS consolidated into a democracy with ample participation of societal interests into policymaking. In the case of Venezuela, the *Chavista* project consolidated while decaying into authoritarianism. In contrast with the other two cases, the political project led by Rafael Correa in Ecuador neither consolidated nor turned authoritarian. Can we trace these divergent outcomes back to the three governments' organizational capacity?

The answer is partly, but not solely. Organizational variables certainly mark the difference between the cases of Bolivia and Venezuela, on the one hand, and the case of Ecuador on the other hand. The unwillingness and incapacity of AP cadres to build a permanently active political organization left the window open for Correa's successor Lenín Moreno to launch an attack on the policy and institutional legacy of *Correísmo* while facing little resistance from AP's party bases and core constituencies. Organizational strength, on the other hand, prevented switch-and-bait moves from successor leaders in Bolivia and Venezuela and helped to consolidate the rule of the MAS and the PSUV as dominant parties.

Organizational variables, however, cannot tell the full story, especially with regards to Venezuela's authoritarian turn. If it is true that the construction of the PSUV and of its linkages with societal organizations increased the resilience to the *Chavista* government, it is worth noting that the military played a key role in the consolidation and concomitant turn to authoritarianism

of the Maduro administration. By shielding the government from the threat of a military coup, the civic-military alliance that lies at the heart of the *Chavista* regime permitted Maduro to break vertical accountability by factually disallowing the results of the 2015 legislative elections. It is worth bearing in mind that military support for left-wing governments is quite unique. Indeed, the absence of an alliance between left governments and militaries in the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador (and actually the existence of a rather conflicting relationship between them) provides a convincing explanation of why they did not break the electoral regime as it happened in the case of Venezuela.

The Correa government lacked the support of both strong societal organizations and the military, which put *Correismo* in a much more vulnerable position compared to its counterparts in Bolivia and Ecuador. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that, without the support of the military but with a higher degree of organizational capacity – either by building a stronger party or by striking alliance with popular sector organizations – *Correismo* would have been able to exert significant resistance to defend its policies but without breaking the electoral regime as Maduro did.

Despite its organizational limitations, the impressive electoral performances of *Correismo* still make it a strong opposition force to be reckoned with. The enormous political capital accumulated during the decade in government and the strong electoral linkages with its core constituents grant *Correismo* a strong presence within representative state institutions. It is thus possible that we will see another *Correista* government in the future. It is unclear, however, what a *Correismo 2.0* will look like, both in terms of policy content and of organizational strategy.

### 5.3 Organization and sociopolitical change in Latin America

The analysis conducted in the three chapters shows that attempts to promote sociopolitical change that were not accompanied by political organizing ended up barely scratching the surface of the dominant neoliberal order. Societal organization and radical left parties are loci for the development of post-neoliberal forces, both materially – because they provide organizational resources to subordinate classes – and ideationally – because they develop and spread ideas that counter the dominant ideology.

Governments that lack of organizational support run the risk of implementing changes that can be as radical as they are ephemeral. There are two reasons for this. First, organization is a resource that subordinate classes can use to defend policy achievements that positively affect their lives. Unorganized subordinate classes face higher barriers to collective action and have a harder time mobilizing to defend policy gains. Second, sociopolitical organization is a crucial resource for subordinate sectors to educate themselves politically and have access to a source of political content different from the mass media. Collective organization also gives popular sectors a chance to understand the role that organization itself plays in promoting sociopolitical change.

Once again, the case of *Alianza PAIS* is particularly instructive in this sense. Like the cases of Bolivia and Venezuela, Correa confronted powerful social and political adversaries and a mass media sector that strived to defend the neoliberal model and the actors that dominate it. The strategy undertaken by the Correa administration to do without organization and wager everything on a media-centered communication strategy and a top-down technocratic policymaking gave him some governability and produced results in the short term. However, it proved shortsighted in the longer term. The lack of organization paralyzed the social bases of

*Correismo* when it was time to defend the policy gains obtained. At the same time, the media strategy that the government devised was mainly concerned with winning the information war against the private media while engaging constituents in communication of a quasi-pedagogical nature. Any genuine attempt to displace the traditional media and construct a real alternative source of political content – for instance through popular organization, like in the case of the MAS – was put aside.

These reflections provide some lessons on the relationship between political organization and sociopolitical change that emerges from this dissertation. The trajectories of the three cases analyzed in this dissertation suggest that party organization combined with robust mechanisms (either formal or informal) of bottom-up participation offer a number of desirable outcomes for progressive sociopolitical change. First, organization with participation is the most effective way not only to ensure governability but also to obviate the political and ideological influence of anti-democratic unelected powers, like the military and the highly concentrated media. Second, organization with participation implies a decentralization of power that makes parties less dependent on a leader, which can become a source of vulnerability. Third, organization with participation entails internal mechanisms of accountability that are often more compelling than the accountability mechanisms of the state to keep presidents in check, particularly in Latin America's weakly institutionalized polities. Fourth, bottom-up participation channeled through party organization guarantees policymaking input to otherwise excluded groups. Fifth, organized participation is more likely to mobilize to defend policy gains from conservative backlash. Considering these points, it is no understatement to say that any future attempt to permanently change the exclusionary sociopolitical structures of Latin American countries will have to take organization seriously.

Future research could look at the relationship between organization and sociopolitical change under the light of the concept of hegemony and counter-hegemony. Every genuine attempt to modify the dominant sociopolitical order has to engage with both the material and the ideological structures that sustain that order. In this sense, the struggle to move away from neoliberalism does not constitute an exception. In their attempt to challenge the dominant neoliberal developmental model, left-wing political forces have sought to change both the material conditions – e.g. distribution of resources and access to decision-making – and the ideological conditions – e.g. the dominant normative definitions of “democracy,” “state,” “fairness,” etc. – that constitute the pillars of the neoliberal order and allow for its reproduction. A future line of research could draw a balance of the successes and failures of left-wing governments in changing these hegemonic structures.

#### **5.4 Organization and interest intermediation regimes in Latin America**

In the introductory chapter, I explained how this work lies at the intersection between the literature on political and interest regimes and how it starts from the assumption that the weak formal institutional constraints of Latin American polities turn politics into a bare power struggle (O’Donnell 1994). This unbridled conflict generates uncertainty and instability. Political and especially interest regimes are the result of unstable equilibria that depend on the existing balance of power between contending sociopolitical sectors: given favorable conditions, actors can carry out profound changes but their contenders can reverse these changes just as easily.

The findings of this dissertation have important implications for how we think about the stability of interest intermediation regimes, defined as the rules and procedures governing interaction between state and society in the policy process. The three chapters presented in this

dissertation suggest that political organization and linkages with societal organizations play a role in determining not only the type of interest intermediation regimes that are implemented but also how resilient and enduring these regimes can be.

Over the last quarter-century, Pink Tide governments have implemented new interest intermediation regimes, which came under attack with the return of the right to power, either through electoral or extra electoral means. This historical development provides an opportunity to investigate which channels of interest intermediation proved to be more resilient to rollback and why. This research could also include cases of “late” left turns – such as Chile (and perhaps Colombia) – or “second-wave” ones – such as Argentina and Bolivia – to compare how these governments approached the challenges of including popular sector organizations in the policy process compared with their first-wave counterparts.

The role of organizational capacity and linkages between governments, political parties, and societal organizations might provide a compelling argument to explain why some channels of interest intermediation survived right-wing incumbents while others were suppressed. Following this line of reasoning, we should expect more resilient interest intermediation regimes to be associated with higher popular sector’s mobilization capacity and stronger linkages between left-wing parties and popular sector organizations. Highly organized popular sectors can mobilize to stall right-wing governments’ attempts at rollback and, if linkages with left-wing parties are strong, they can also turn mobilization into electoral success and regain control of the state.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Supplemental Material Chapter 2

**Table 15. Summary statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
local_office	360	0.471	1.288	-2.566	-0.582	1.524	3.186
local_org_strength	360	0.098	1.362	-2.63	-0.974	1.208	3.049
local_aggregate	360	0.568	2.477	-5.062	-1.274	2.752	6.235
soc_orgties	360	0.067	1.355	-2.522	-0.936	0.927	3.25
personalism	360	-0.095	1.467	-2.757	-1.217	1.014	3.157
personalism_yearone	319	0.099	1.451	-2.76	-1.083	1.158	3.316
conservative	360	5.043	1.569	1	4.058	6.192	8.897
female	356	0.184	0.163	0	0.068	0.251	1
education_num	356	2.266	0.313	0	2.049	2.5	3
age_standard	360	0	1	-3.044	-0.61	0.568	4.281
radical_current_party	360	0.182	0.385	0	0	0	1
firstorg_radicalleftparty	360	0.07	0.152	0	0	0.053	0.833
firstorg_radicalleftparty_binary	360	0.308	0.462	0	0	1	1
personalistparties_20_trimmed	297	0.185	0.389	0	0	0	1
personalistparties_10_trimmed	297	0.088	0.283	0	0	0	1

**Table 16. Personalist parties included in regression analysis**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Country</b>
<i>Alianza por el Futuro</i>	AF	Perú
<i>Centro Democrático</i>	CD	Colombia
<i>Frente Republicano Guatemalteco</i>	FRG	Guatemala
<i>Fuerza Popular</i>	FP	Perú
<i>Gran Alianza por la Unidad Nacional</i>	GANA	El Salvador
<i>Libertad Democrática Renovada</i>	LIDER	Guatemala
<i>Movimiento Libertario</i>	ML	Costa Rica
<i>Movimiento Regeneración Nacional</i>	MORENA	México
<i>Movimiento Patria Querida</i>	MPQ	Paraguay
<i>Movimiento V República</i>	MVR	Venezuela
<i>Movimiento Alianza PAIS</i>	AP	Ecuador
<i>Partido Nacionalista Peruano</i>	PNP	Perú
<i>Partido Patriota</i>	PP	Guatemala
<i>Podemos Perú</i>	PP	Perú
<i>Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano</i>	PRE	Ecuador
<i>Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional</i>	PRIAN	Ecuador
<i>Proyecto Venezuela</i>	PRVZL	Venezuela
<i>Partido Sociedad Patriótica</i>	PSP	Ecuador
<i>Partido Unidad Social Cristiana</i>	PUSC	Costa Rica
<i>Restauración Nacional</i>	RN	Costa Rica
<i>Unión del Cambio Nacional</i>	UCN	Guatemala
<i>Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos</i>	UNACE	Paraguay
<i>Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza</i>	UNE	Guatemala

Source: V-Dem Party Dataset



**Table 17. Full results for figure 8**

	Local Office	Local Org. Strength	Ties to Social Orgs.	Local Strength Aggregate
(Intercept)	3.090** (1.049)	2.125* (1.015)	3.612*** (0.897)	5.216* (1.988)
Personalist Parties	-1.181*** (0.324)	-1.003** (0.320)	-1.093*** (0.295)	-2.184*** (0.618)
Age	0.120 (0.104)	-0.224 (0.136)	-0.186 (0.118)	-0.104 (0.221)
Gender	0.353 (0.776)	1.067 (0.787)	1.921** (0.650)	1.420 (1.514)
Ideology	0.057 (0.108)	-0.029 (0.108)	-0.123 (0.133)	0.027 (0.206)
Education	-1.275*** (0.363)	-0.862* (0.377)	-1.361*** (0.311)	-2.137** (0.684)
Radical Left Party (current)	0.471 (0.458)	0.409 (0.483)	0.173 (0.481)	0.880 (0.915)
Num.Obs.	294	294	294	294
R2	0.222	0.166	0.261	0.194
R2 Adj.	0.206	0.149	0.245	0.177
Std.Errors	by: party	by: party	by: party	by: party

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 18. Full results for figure 8 with strict operationalization of personalist parties (the top 10% of V-Dem's party personalism score when the party was founded)**

	Local Office	Local Org. Strength	Ties to Social Orgs.	Local Strength Aggregate
(Intercept)	2.740*	1.826+	3.307***	4.566*
	(1.103)	(1.035)	(0.966)	(2.066)
Personalist Parties	-1.113***	-0.918*	-1.280***	-2.031**
	(0.272)	(0.382)	(0.301)	(0.630)
Age	0.161	-0.187	-0.158	-0.026
	(0.110)	(0.139)	(0.116)	(0.230)
Gender	0.199	0.937	1.768**	1.136
	(0.750)	(0.775)	(0.630)	(1.474)
Ideology	0.079	-0.011	-0.099	0.069
	(0.113)	(0.113)	(0.139)	(0.215)
Education	-1.221**	-0.816*	-1.316***	-2.037**
	(0.375)	(0.381)	(0.329)	(0.701)
Radical Left Party (current)	0.649	0.563	0.317	1.212
	(0.459)	(0.482)	(0.477)	(0.915)
Num.Obs.	294	294	294	294
R2	0.167	0.124	0.239	0.140
R2 Adj.	0.150	0.106	0.223	0.122
Std.Errors	by: party	by: party	by: party	by: party

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 19. Full results for figures 9 and 10**

	Local Office	Local Org. Strength	Ties to Social Orgs.	Local Strength Aggregate
(Intercept)	3.172** (1.030)	2.233* (0.974)	3.655*** (0.903)	5.405** (1.926)
Radical Left Socialization	0.908 (0.670)	1.263+ (0.662)	0.443 (0.711)	2.170+ (1.298)
Personalist Parties	-1.340*** (0.316)	-1.179*** (0.328)	-1.194*** (0.312)	-2.519*** (0.613)
Age	0.116 (0.103)	-0.231+ (0.137)	-0.188 (0.120)	-0.115 (0.221)
Gender	0.304 (0.753)	0.999 (0.770)	1.897** (0.640)	1.303 (1.471)
Ideology	0.083 (0.109)	0.000 (0.109)	-0.107 (0.137)	0.083 (0.206)
Education	-1.375*** (0.354)	-0.985** (0.367)	-1.419*** (0.317)	-2.360*** (0.659)
Radical Left Party (current)	0.282 (0.431)	0.139 (0.392)	0.085 (0.438)	0.421 (0.781)
Radical Left Socialization × Personalist Parties	4.563* (1.814)	4.984* (2.206)	2.973+ (1.731)	9.547* (3.855)
Num.Obs.	294	294	294	294
R2	0.245	0.200	0.269	0.225
R2 Adj.	0.223	0.177	0.248	0.203
Std.Errors	by: party	by: party	by: party	by: party

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 20. Full results for figures 9 and 10 with strict operationalization of personalist parties (the top 10% of V-Dem's party personalism score when the party was founded)**

	Local Office	Local Org. Strength	Ties to Social Orgs.	Local Strength Aggregate
(Intercept)	2.768*	1.848+	3.293**	4.616*
	(1.084)	(0.993)	(0.975)	(2.003)
Radical Left Socialization	0.994	1.315*	0.414	2.308+
	(0.631)	(0.628)	(0.656)	(1.226)
Personalist Parties	-1.216***	-1.091**	-1.389***	-2.308***
	(0.269)	(0.378)	(0.304)	(0.622)
Age	0.150	-0.202	-0.164	-0.052
	(0.110)	(0.140)	(0.117)	(0.231)
Gender	0.160	0.891	1.761**	1.052
	(0.732)	(0.763)	(0.624)	(1.442)
Ideology	0.092	0.007	-0.090	0.099
	(0.113)	(0.113)	(0.141)	(0.215)
Education	-1.269***	-0.879*	-1.334***	-2.148**
	(0.369)	(0.367)	(0.334)	(0.677)
Radical Left Party (Current)	0.427	0.272	0.229	0.699
	(0.419)	(0.384)	(0.423)	(0.762)
Radical Left Socialization × Personalist Parties	4.881**	8.225***	5.207**	13.106***
	(1.812)	(1.737)	(1.535)	(3.340)
	294	294	294	294
R2	0.180	0.153	0.246	0.163
R2 Adj.	0.157	0.130	0.225	0.139
Std.Errors	by: party	by: party	by: party	by: party

+ p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

## Appendix B: Policy Switch and Party Dismantling Beyond *Alianza PAIS*

How does the theory of party dismantling presented in this article apply to other cases of policy switch across the region? In this section, I briefly analyze the other cases of policy switch previously identified (Argentina 1989, Ecuador 2002, Peru 1990, and Venezuela 1988) according to the three conditions outlined in the theory above.

### *Argentina 1989*

Carlos Menem won the elections of 1989 with the Peronist party (PJ, *Partido Justicialista*) against the candidate from the incumbent party *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) campaigning on an anti-neoliberal platform, promising to revert the policies of President Alfonsín. Upon winning, he appointed two consecutive finance ministers coming from the business sector and a conservative labor minister, among others, and started implementing the policies that his opponent had advocated for.

- *Condition 1 – top-down party*: the PJ was not a top-down party, certainly not in the way AP was. It was characterized by broad base-level organization with deep social roots, due to its long history. The party did not have an overarching structure strong enough to coordinate these subunits, which organized themselves autonomously of party bureaucracy (Levitsky 2003). This organizational structure clearly did not lend itself to dismantling.
- *Condition 2 – internal opposition*: many PJ leaders opposed Menem's neoliberal turn but the weakly routinized party structure created incentives for them to bandwagon for

career-advancement purposes and allowed Menem to put government officials in party leadership positions (Levitsky 2003). In the meantime, party local branches and activists opposed the new policy decision but remained disconnected from party leadership. As a result, Menem faced little intraparty opposition (Levitsky 2003).

- *Condition 3 – support from opposition:* throughout Menem’s tenure from 1989 to 1999, the PJ remained the largest party in Argentina. After the 1993 legislative elections, where the PJ defeated its main opposition UCR by a wide margin, the UCR provided Menem support for a constitutional reform to allowing him to run for reelection (Stokes 2001). This agreement is evidence of the fact that Menem’s policy agenda gathered support from other political force as well.

Menem could not take advantage of a top-down structure and was not facing enough internal opposition to motivate him to engage in party dismantling. However, his actions transformed the PJ forever. Currently, the party is still at the center of Argentinian political life.

### *Ecuador 2002*

Lucio Gutiérrez came to the fore politically in 2000 when he participated in a rebellion of low-rank militaries and indigenous movements that overthrew the constitutional president Jamil Mahuad. He then received amnesty for his participation in the coup and ran for president in 2002 on a left-wing platform, with his newly formed party *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* (PSP) in coalition with indigenous party *Pachakutik*. Once in office, he appointed a mixed cabinet with representatives from *Pachakutik* and from the traditional right. During the first year in

government, he undertakes a dramatic shift to the right, which caused the exit of the majority of the left-wing faction from his government.

- *Condition 1 – top-down party*: the PSP was founded by Gutierrez as a vehicle for his candidacy in the 2002 elections, which granted it a clear top-down structure. The vertical structure of PSP suggests that it would have been easy for Gutiérrez to dismantle the party.
- *Condition 2 – internal opposition*: Gutiérrez faced little to no opposition to his policy switch within PSP. The opposition came from coalition partner *Pachakutik*, on which, however, Gutiérrez had no control. PSP did not represent an obstacle for Gutiérrez's policy switch.
- *Condition 3 – support from opposition*: PSP was able to get elected only 6 congresspeople out of 100 seats available. The number went up to 15 if we also count co-governing party *Pachakutik*. After the policy switch, Gutiérrez found support in the opposition, establishing pacts first with right-wing PSC (El Universo 2003a) and then with populist PRE and right-wing PRIAN, whose leader Álvaro Noboa he defeated in the run-off. Gutiérrez gave these parties cabinet appointments in exchange for legislative support (El Universo 2003b).

Gutiérrez could have dismantled PSP – given its vertical structure – but he did not do it because it did not represent an obstacle to his policy goals. He overcame the electoral weakness of his party by seeking support from right-wing parties, who were endorsing his neoliberal agenda.

## *Peru 1990*

Alberto Fujimori was a little-known outsider when he reached the run-off with widely known writer Mario Vargas Llosa in the 1990 presidential elections. While Vargas Llosa promised deep structural adjustments, de-regulation, and privatizations to fix the difficult economic situation, Fujimori and his brand-new party *Cambio 90* promised to implement gradual reforms informed by a neo-Keynesian approach. But once in office, Fujimori quickly adopted the economic positions of the defeated candidate and neoliberalized the Peruvian economy through what has been called the *fujishock*.

- *Condition 1 – top-down party*: as a personalist vehicle stitched together a few months before the elections, Fujimori's party *Cambio 90* had a clear top-down structure, which would have made it easy for its leader to dismantle it.
- *Condition 2 – internal opposition*: given that *Cambio 90* was a recently formed fragmented coalition of different actors, Fujimori faced little internal opposition to his policies. The governing party did not represent an obstacle to Fujimori's new policy plan.
- *Condition 3 – support from opposition*: *Cambio 90* had won only 32 seats out of 180 in the Chamber of Deputies and 14 out of 60 in the Senate. Fujimori received support from the coalition he had defeated in the run-off – the *Frente Democrático* (Democratic Front, FREDEMO) – which provided staff, expertise to implement the economic plan, and support in Congress – at least until Fujimori dissolved it in April 1992 with the support of the military (Cameron 1998).



In the 1995 elections, *Cambio 90* formed a coalition with a new party also created by the executive for the constitutional assembly, *Nueva Mayoría*, which was then replaced by the party *Perú 2000* for the 2000 elections. However, in the case of *Cambio 90* we cannot properly talk about party dismantling because it was newly created and had little to no formal structure. It was an empty shell – an electoral label with very low resources. *Cambio 90* was the first of a series of “disposable parties” (Levitsky and Cameron 2003) that Fujimori used as electoral labels during his rule: the following *Nueva Mayoría*, *Sí Cumple*, and *Perú 2000* all operated as vehicles that Fujimori used for electoral purposes. In this sense, *Cambio 90* was more scrapped than dismantled.

#### *Venezuela 1988*

Carlos Andrés Pérez won the primary of the party *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action, AD) in 1988 thanks to the support of AD labor leaders (Stokes 2001). He advocated for a prudent approach to solve the country’s economic problems, promising wage increases across the board. On the contrary, his opponent – Eduardo Fernández from the other major party COPEI – proposed a plan of de-regulation and privatization of state industries. Pérez won the election and as president-elect he started to send signals that wages would not increase and that he was going to implement the economic recipe promoted by the IMF, in what came to be known as the Great Turnaround (*El Gran Virage*).

- *Condition 1 – top-down party*: AD was a party with a strong organizational structure and labor, peasant, and – to a lesser extent – professional interests were incorporated into the party decision making (Morgan 2011). Interest incorporation gave the party an important

bottom-up component that, although weakened, was still present at the end of the 1980s.

This type of party structure substantially increased the costs of party dismantling.

- *Condition 2 – internal opposition:* at first, AD did not approve but neither interfered to stop Pérez's new economic agenda. However, the harsh defeat in the 1989 regional elections strengthened the faction that opposed Pérez, and AD started to oppose the president in Congress (Morgan 2011).
- *Condition 3 – support from opposition:* with AD increasingly adopting an oppositional stance vis-à-vis the president, Pérez increasingly relied on the support of COPEI to push forward with his economic plan (Morgan 2011). Opposition parties were thus providing support to the president's policy switch.

Contrary to other cases, in Venezuela the policy switch did generate substantial opposition within the governing party. Pérez thus turned to the opposition for support, but a certain degree of power dispersion within AD prevented him from dismantling the party to facilitate the pursuit of his policy objectives.

## **Appendix C: Interview Guides**

I divided interviewees into three categories – (1) government and party officials, (2) media actors, and (3) experts and civil society actors. I generally used semi-structured interviews because I needed to address some specific themes but at the same time I also wanted to allow some space for the interviewees to highlight their own concerns. I used open interviews in a few cases with “experts and civil society actors” that I interviewed for exploratory purpose. For full details on the interviews, see Appendix B. Here below are the guides for the interview of the three groups.

### **(1) Government and party officials**

#### *Icebreaker*

How did you start your political career?

#### *Communication*

- What were the main communication challenges for the government?
- Was media coverage ever a problem for the government?
- What did the government do in terms of communication with its constituents?
- Was your communication strategy effective? Why/why not?
- If you had the chance to go back in time, what would you have done differently in terms of communication strategy?

### *Party building*

- Was the party important for the government? Why/why not?
- How were decisions about the party taken?
- Do you think that parties are important? Why/why not?
- Who wanted to invest resources in building an organized party?
- Why did you want/did you not want to invest resources in party building?
- If you had the chance to go back in time, what would you have done differently in terms of party organization?

### *Party collapse [only Ecuador]*

- What happened to *Alianza PAIS*?
- Why do you think *Alianza PAIS* collapsed?
- What type of relationship did Moreno entertain with *Alianza PAIS*?
- How did Moreno treat *Alianza PAIS*?
- How did the Moreno government ensure the discipline of the group of legislators from *Alianza PAIS*?
- Why do you think Moreno acted the way he did?

## **(2) Media actors**

### *Icebreaker*

- How did you start your career as a journalist?

### *Media outlet characteristics*

- What is your role in the media outlet/organization?
- How would you define the political line of the media outlet you work for?
- Can you tell me a bit about how the news-making process works at this media outlet?
- Does the owner intervene in the news-making process?

### *Context*

- How would you define the relationship between media and government/opposition?
- How would you define the attitude of the government towards the media and vice versa?

### *Media reform*

- What triggered the most recent media reform?
- Why do you think the government acted like it did?
- Why do you think such reform was carried out in this particular historical period and not in the past?
- Who supported the reform? What do you think were their motives?
- Who opposed the reform? What do you think were their motives?
- How has the reform impacted your work as a journalist or the work of the media outlet you work for?

## **(3) Experts and civil society actors**

### *Icebreaker*

- How did you become interested in [topic of expertise]?

### *Communication*

- Can you tell me a bit about the conflict between the government and the media?
- Why do you think the government was acting the way it did?
- Why do you think the private media were acting the way they did?
- Do you think the communication strategy of the government was effective? Why/why not?

### *Party building*

- Was the party important for the government? Why/why not?
- Who wanted to invest resources in building an organized party?

### *Party collapse [only Ecuador]*

- What happened to *Alianza PAIS*?
- What type of relationship did Moreno entertain with *Alianza PAIS*?
- How did Moreno treat *Alianza PAIS*?
- Why do you think Moreno acted the way he did?

## Appendix D: List of Interviews

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Bolivia	Aguilar, Ricardo	Journalist at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	April 25, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	1 h 10 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Alvarado, Fernando	Secretary of Communication of the Presidency	May 17, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 55 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Alvarado, Rosana	Minister of Justice; Congressperson <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	December 13, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 30 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Álvarez, Veronica	Subsecretary of Information of the Presidency	May 19, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	45 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Anonymous	Congressperson adviser <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	September 27, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 40 min	Government and party officials
Bolivia	Arequipa, Marcelo	Academic	November 4, 2019	Phone	Open	40 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Bajo, Ricardo	Journalist at public radio <i>Red Patria Nueva</i>	October 24, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	1 h 45 min	Media actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Baroja, Gustavo	Executive secretary <i>Alianza PAIS</i> ; Prefect of Pichincha	December 10, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Barriga, Patricio	Secretary of Communication of the Presidency; President of Council of Communication	October 1, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	2 h 5 mins	Government and party officials
			December 3, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	2 h 15 min	Government and party officials
Bolivia	Benavente, Claudia	Director of private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	November 6, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	2 h 15 mins	Media actors
Ecuador	Bravo, Marco Antonio	Subsecretary of New Media of the Presidency	May 21, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	50 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Cabezas, Elizabeth	President of the Assembly; Congressperson <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	December 13, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	40 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Carvajal, Miguel	Minister of Defense; National Secretary of Political Management	December 7, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 50 min	Government and party officials
			December 9, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	2 h 10 min	Government and party officials



Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Casado, Fernando	Academic	May 8, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	50 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Cusicanqui, Juan José	Journalist at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	November 1, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	45 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Espinosa de los Monteros, Alfonso	Vice-president of news at private TV <i>Ecuavisa</i>	September 25, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 15 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Estupiñán, Patricia	Director of private magazine <i>Vistazo</i>	September 18, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Semi-structured	1 h	Media actors
Bolivia	Farthing, Linda	Journalist at <i>The Guardian</i>	May 7, 2019	Phone	Open	1 h 15 min	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Flores, Xavier	Independent journalist; Legal adviser for the Constituent Assembly	April 26, 2019	Phone	Open	1 h	Expert and civil society actors
			September 17, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Semi-structured	1 h 30 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Garafulic, Raul	Owner of private newspaper <i>Página Siete</i>	November 6, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	50 min	Media actors
Bolivia	Giavedoni, Darío	Academic	June 26, 2019	Phone	Open	55 min	Expert and civil society actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Herrera Aráuz, Francisco	Director private news outlet <i>Ecuadorinmediato</i>	November 1, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	45 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Huerta, Francisco	Vice-director of private newspaper <i>Expreso</i>	September 20, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Semi-structured	50 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Jurado, Romel	Legal adviser for the Organic Law of Communication	September 25, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	2 h	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Lasso, Xavier	Journalist at public TV <i>Ecuador TV</i>	September 30, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	2 h 15 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Levoyer, Saudia	Journalist at private newspapers <i>Hoy</i> and <i>El Comercio</i> ; Academic	May 2, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	1 h 10 min	Media actors
			September 26, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 30 min	Media actors
Ecuador	López, Juan Fernando	Communication adviser at Secretary of Communication of the Presidency	May 26, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	35 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Mantilla, Jaime	Owner and director of private newspaper <i>Hoy</i>	October 2, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h	Media actors
Bolivia	Mayorga, Fernando	Academic	May 27, 2020	Phone	Semi-structured	50 min	Expert and civil society actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Bolivia	Mercado, Isabel	Director of private newspapers <i>Página Siete</i> and <i>La Razón</i>	October 28, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	45 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Mora, Galo	Executive secretary <i>Alianza PAIS</i> ; Minister of Culture; Personal secretary of the President	June 8, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 45 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Muñoz, Pabel	Minister of Planning and Development; Congressperson <i>Revolución Ciudadana</i>	September 24, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Murillo, Carol	Vice-director at public newspaper <i>El Telégrafo</i>	September 27, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	2 h	Media actors
Ecuador	Navarrete, Billy	Director of ONG “Human Rights Committee”	September 19, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Open	1 h 15 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Navarro, Cesar	Vice-minister of Coordination with Social Movements; Minister of Mining	May 12, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 50 min	Government and party officials

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Navas, Marco	Academic	April 29, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	50 min	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Ochoa, Carlos	President of Superintendency of Communication	September 27, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	30 min	Government and party officials
Bolivia	Ortuño, Armando	General manager at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	November 6, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	2 h	Media actors
Ecuador	Pacheco, Patricio	Subsecretary of New Media of the Presidency	May 29, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	55 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Peña, Ximena	Congressperson and presidential candidate <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	December 7, 2021	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Pérez, Orlando	Director at public newspaper <i>El Telégrafo</i>	September 23, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Media actors
Bolivia	Pérez, Wilma	Journalist at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	October 31, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	1 h	Media actors
Ecuador	Pulido, Juan Carlos	Activist	September 17, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Open	1 h 45 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Quintanilla, Víctor	Journalist at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	May 3, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	45 min	Media actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Bolivia	Quiroz, Mauricio	Journalist at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	October 25, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	1 h 25 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Ramírez, Franklin	Academic	May 14, 2020	Zoom	Open	2 h 30 min	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Ramos, Isabel	Academic	September 30, 2019	In person (Quito)	Open	1 h 45 min	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Recalde, Paulina	Founder of survey firm <i>Perfiles de Opinión</i>	June 9, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h	Expert and civil society actors
Ecuador	Reyes, Hernan	Member of Council of Communication; Academic	May 7, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 25 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Rivadeneira, Gabriela	President of the Assembly; Congressperson <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	September 26, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Government and party officials
			May 6, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 20 min	Government and party officials
Bolivia	Saravia, Carlos	Vice-president at private media newspaper <i>Página Siete</i>	November 4, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	40 min	Media actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Serrano, José	Congressperson <i>Alianza PAIS</i> ; President of the Assembly; Minister of the Interior	February 3, 2022	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 10 min	Government and party officials
Ecuador	Soliz, Doris	Executive secretary of <i>Alianza PAIS</i> ; Minister of Social and Economic Inclusion; Congressperson <i>Alianza PAIS</i>	October 3, 2019	In person (Quito)	Semi-structured	55 min	Government and party officials
			May 30, 2020	Zoom	Semi-structured	1 h 40 min	Government and party officials
Bolivia	Soruco, Juan Cristobal	Director at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	November 8, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	55 min	Media actors
Bolivia	Torrigo, Erick	Academic	April 30, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	1 h 20 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Vaca, Mery	Vice-director at private newspapers <i>Página Siete</i> and <i>La Razón</i>	November 6, 2019	In person (La Paz)	Semi-structured	40 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Velázquez, Nila	Director at private newspaper <i>El Universo</i>	September 20, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Semi-structured	30 min	Media actors
Ecuador	Verduga, Abraham	Journalist at public TV <i>Ecuador TV</i>	April 16, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	1 h 5 min	Media actors

Country	Interviewee	Occupation	Date of Interview	Medium	Format	Duration	Interview Script
Ecuador	Verduga, Augusto	Activist	September 17, 2019	In person (Guayaquil)	Open	1 h 45 min	Expert and civil society actors
Bolivia	Yapura, Grover	Director at private newspaper <i>La Razón</i>	November 8, 2019	Phone	Semi-structured	50 min	Media actors