Political Party Survival After Collapse: The Argentine Radical Party in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

This dissertation adopts an elite-based approach to build a portable theory of party survival and national revival. The basic argument is that each stem from a *process*, by which elites arrive at certain pivotal decisions in the aftermath of a massive electoral defeat. To avoid breaking down due to mass defections, a party must continue to provide its ambitious politicians with adequate reasons to stay – namely, in the form of crucial electoral advantages. However, this dissertation also breaks new ground by asking *how* these very same elites can leverage their continued access to such advantages and channel them toward a revival in national politics. To do this, it attempts to open the "black box" of party organization to uncover the characteristics of a party that help resolve an additional and central problem of survival: party reform under conditions of voter rejection. I argue that for a revival to occur, politicians require more than a safe resource perch to ride out the storm. They need both autonomy from the central leadership to devise new electoral strategies, as well as an organizational framework that protects their reform efforts and keeps members bound to any deliberative decisions that may stem out of the internal reform process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In April 2003, the Argentine Radical Party (UCR) suffered the worst defeat in its 112-year history. In just four years, the party's national vote share nosedived from 48 percent to a humiliating 2 percent. This remarkable and swift fall from grace caused analysts to speculate that *Radicalismo* would continue its decline into irrelevancy and eventually die-off.[1] However, the UCR defied these expectations. In the years following its electoral *collapse*, the party quite impressively cheated its own death. By 2015, the Radical Party had reclaimed much of its legislative representation, positioned itself as a critical actor within the opposition, and even managed to rekindle its status as a co-governing party via its role in the *Cambiemos* (Let's Change) coalition – a convergence of Argentina's major non-Peronist forces.

A similar story emerges in the case of Democratic Action (AD) in Venezuela. By 1998, the party's vote share had become so decimated that it did not even field its own presidential candidate.[2] Like the Radicals, observers predicted that AD would not survive – an assertion that many had good reason to believe. For a decade, the party subsisted in subnational elections and failed to break its way back into national politics. However (also like the Radicals), AD managed to surprisingly escape fate. In 2008, the party began coordinating with the broader (and rapidly growing) opposition to form the *Mesa de la Unidad Democrática* (Democratic Unity Roundtable, MUD) coalition. This decision paid off. As a key member of the alliance, AD was able to build on its legislative representation in 2010 and 2015. Despite the party's recent troubles under the Maduro regime, the result was quite significant in terms of its effect on

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[1] *La Nación*, 3 September 2003.
[2] In fact, AD's combined vote share with COPEI, its historical counterpart, made up a mere 3 percent (Lupu, 2014, p. 561).

Venezuelan politics. AD's success contributed to a wider opposition victory that endowed the MUD with a super majority over the incumbent PSUV and its affiliates.[3]

Cases like the Radicals and Democratic Action stand out in Latin America, where in recent years, parties have dealt with what seems like a hurricane of existential threats. And like many storms of epic proportion, this one has claimed casualties. Since the Third Wave of Democratization, a quarter of the region's established parties similarly collapsed in "dramatic and sudden" fashion.[4] Of the dozen or so parties this amounts to (tabulated below), a shockingly large proportion have never recovered. Today, most have all but evaporated from politics. Those that remain usually do so marginally, with very weak support and only a handful of offices scattered throughout localities. Many continue to exist in name only, often for a small group of career politicians. This begs the question: *why were some parties able to weather the storm and revive nationally while others continued to die-off?*

In seeking an answer to this question, this dissertation pushes back against the notion that "defeated parties are at the mercy of forces beyond their control."[5] It follows and strives to build upon a recent stream of important scholarship that asks, above all, what happens to a political party after it becomes summarily rejected by voters at the national level? However, it also attempts to push this debate a step further by asking how those with the strongest reasons to join a party in the first place – officeseeking/holding politicians – can take steps to make or break the long-term viability of their organization. On this basis, it deviates from existing accounts that

[3] Manuel Hidalgo and Ángel E. Álvarez, "The 2015 Parliamentary Elections in Venezuela," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 43, May 2016, pp. 187-190.
[4] Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 1.
[5] Alan Ware, *The Dynamics of Two-Party Politics: Party Structures and the Management of Competition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 24.

Table 1: Party Collapse and Survival in Latin America			
Country	Party(ies)	Year of Defeat	Outcome
Argentina	UCR	2003	Survival
Bolivia	ADN*, MIR, MNR	2002, 2005	Defunct[6]
Costa Rica	PUSC	2006	Defunct
Dominican Rep.	PR-PSC	1996	Defunct
Guatemala	PAN	2003	Defunct
Peru	AP*, APRA	1985, 1995	Defunct
Uruguay	PC	2004	Cont. Decay[7]
Venezuela	AD, COPEI	1998	Survival/ Defunct

Source: Lupu (2016) and Author's own calculations.

tend to view a party's lifespan as finite and "both shaped and constrained"[8] by its external environment.[9] By this view, party decline in general is typically a deterministic process and one that observers should even come to expect for a party that finds itself grappling with tumultuous and large-scale political change. This perspective has generated few answers to questions of

* The ADN suffered its collapse in 2002 while the remaining MNR and MIR collapsed together in 2005.
* I chose to add *Acción Popular* (AP) to the list of cases, despite Lupu's omission. AP is inarguably one of Peru's established parties, winning high vote pluralities for the presidency in 1962, 1963, and 1980 (winning in the two latter instances). It is puzzling why AP is excluded from Lupu's study, as the party's national vote share plummeted by 38 percent from 1980 to 1985.
[6] I define a defunct party as one that is no longer (or only marginally) politically active. I operationalize this via two (admittedly broad) indicators: the party must have fewer than 10 percent of seats in the lower house (or legislature if unicameral). This allows me to weed out parties that may still exist in name only, but in reality, work to insulate the careers of a few lingering elites (e.g., COPEI, APRA, AP; Van Dyck 2014). Secondly, a defunct party cannot be a "main contender" for the presidency. That is, it has not come within 10 percent of the winning party/candidate in a presidential election since its collapse. The PUSC (Costa Rica) and PC (Uruguay; see next footnote) are slight exceptions in that they both currently have just over 10 percent of seats. However, Rosenblatt (2018, p. 126) paints a fairly grim picture of the PUSC, as lacking "a defined headquarters and [occupying] just one apartment."
[7] The PC in Uruguay is puzzling case. Lupu (2016) identifies it as a case of party breakdown. Though, Rosenblatt (2018) disputes this classification. The party is still organizationally active and maintains certain *vibrant* characteristics. However, there are clear signs that the PC's future is very much in doubt. Rosenblatt (2018, p. 183) acknowledges the party's "limited ability to keep activists," and cites interview data noting its "organizational decay." Its weak condition combined with the lack of any legislative rebound compels me to make an exception and rule the PC a case of *continued decay*.
[8] Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 35.
[9] See Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," in *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 177-200; John Clayton Thomas, "The Decline of Ideology in Western Political Parties: A Study of Changing Policy Orientations," *Sage Professional Papers in Contemporary Political Sociology*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications), pp. 6-12; Howard L. Reiter, "Party Decline in the West: A Skeptic's View," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 1, 1989, pp. 251-348.

party change and party endurance. Recent comparative literature[10] tends to explain party collapse via shifting external conditions that corner actors into making decisions that hurt their parties. These circumstances then lead to their unanticipated rejection during elections. The problem with this is that if collapse is simply a matter of elites *being forced into certain choices*, then there is very little they can theoretically do to dig their parties (and themselves) out of crisis. Thus, the prevailing knowledge cannot adequately explain cases like the Argentine Radicals or AD in Venezuela – parties that these accounts assume should now be dead.

This has prompted Jennifer Cyr to argue that survival is a matter of "fate,"[11] where a party either has the resource wealth necessary to persist in politics as a marginal actor or simply does not. The problem here is that many collapsed parties retain many different types of resources in the aftermath of collapse, making it difficult to identify which one does the trick. Ergo, there is no guarantee a party will have the "right tools" to endure in its environment, which may be totally different as a result of crisis. What is more worrisome is that all but one of the parties included in Cyr's study are still defunct today, suggesting that resilience afforded by those resources can be rather fleeting in the absence of other conditions. While the resource-based argument may elaborate on short-term and volatile electoral results that a party may experience after crisis, it cannot explain why and (more importantly) *how* some collapsed parties are still standing in stark contrast to the norm.

However, party survival – like most instances of party change and adaptation – ultimately boils down to how elites *perceive* and *respond* to the challenges that they face.[12] Just as

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[10] E.g., Lupu, "Party Brands in Crisis," 2016; Jason Seawright, *Party-System Collapse: The Roots of Crisis in Peru and Venezuela*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Jana Morgan, *Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse*, (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2011).
[11] Jennifer Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[12] E.g., Frank L. Wilson, "When Parties Refuse to Fail: The Case of France," in Kay Lawson, ed., *When Parties Fail* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 503-532; "The Sources of Party Change: The Social Democratic

politicians require meaningful reasons to form a party, they must have equally compelling reasons to remain loyal during a profound crisis of legitimacy. For a party to survive something as damaging as collapse, its "vote-winning"[13] politicians must first maintain confidence that the organization can still provide for their immediate career needs. When party actors lose this confidence, it is likely that a collapse will be permanent. This is why we often see mass defections take root and (at times) vanquish a party in the immediate wake of collapse. In many instances, defections result in direct opposition in the form of new parties or independent candidacies and formerly established parties fail to make it to the next election cycle.[14] Additionally, leaders that stick around must come up with appropriate ways to rectify their situation through adaptation and the implementation of new strategy. Here, they may face strong resistance from others in the rank-and -file as well as voters "who have a stake in the party's traditional project."[15] This all suggests that a lot can go wrong during these critical moments, and that party survival is much more contingent than extant literature lets on.

Thus, this dissertation adopts an elite-based approach to enhance extant knowledge of party survival and national revival and generate some novel explanations. The basic argument is that each result from a *process*, by which elites arrive at certain pivotal decisions in the aftermath

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Parties of Britain, France, Germany, and Spain," in Kay Lawson, ed., *How Political Parties Work* (Westport, CT: Praeger), 1994, pp. 263-283; Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 6, no. 3, July 1994, pp. 259-287; Kris Deschouwer, "The Survival of the Fittest: Measuring and Explaining Adaptation and Change of Political Parties," paper prepared for presentation at the Workshop on "democracy and the organization of political parties," European Consortium for Political Research, Limerick, Ireland, Spring 1992; Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[13] Joy K. Langston, *Democratization and Authoritarian Party Survival: Mexico's PRI*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 15.

[14] E.g., Denise Laroze, "Party Collapse and New Party Entry," *Party Politics*, vol. 25, no. 4, July 2019, pp. 559-568; Steven Levitsky, "Democratic Survival and Weakness," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29, no. 4, October 2018, pp. 102-113; Laura Wills-Otero, "The Electoral Performance of Latin American Traditional Parties, 1978-2006: Does the Internal Structure Matter?" *Party Politics*, vol. 22, no. 6, November 2016, pp. 758-772; For instance, this occurred for the ADN, MIR, and MNR (all in Bolivia), AP and PPC (Peru), and COPEI (Venezuela).

[15] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 9.

of a massive electoral defeat. I argue that to avoid breaking down due to mass defections, a party must continue to provide its ambitious politicians with adequate reasons to stay – namely, in the form of crucial electoral advantages. The idea is that when a politician chooses to defect, she/he/they risks losing access to party resources that help mobilize and retain voters at the ground level. These activities become all the more important in a context of electoral rejection because they help a party (and thus, a politician) stay active and visible in local districts where it (she/he/they) may still be competitive. In this way, survival must be a mutual endeavor – for a party organization, but primarily for its ambitious politicians.

However, this dissertation also breaks new ground by asking *how* these very same elites can leverage their continued access to such advantages and channel them toward a revival in national politics. To do this, it attempts to open the "black box"[16] of party organization to uncover the characteristics of a party that help resolve an additional and central problem of survival: party reform under conditions of voter rejection. I argue that for a revival to occur, politicians require more than a safe resource perch to ride out the storm. They need both autonomy from the central leadership to devise new electoral strategies, as well as an organizational framework that protects their reform efforts and keeps members bound to any deliberative decisions that may stem out of the internal reform process. We must recall that party adaptation, even when it occurs in non-crisis conditions, tends to be a chaotic event. The difficult task of choosing a strategy to mobilize at the national level and convincing other (perhaps rival) elements in the party to support it can very quickly descend into anarchy in the absence of a strong decision-making apparatus. Under the pressures of voter rejection, the risks of failed adaptation are much higher. Thus, in the context of collapse, a party requires stable channels of

[16] Steven Levitsky, "Inside the Black Box: Recent Studies of Latin American Party Organizations," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 36, no. 2, Summer 2001, pp. 92-110.

conflict resolution, such as conventions, summits, regular meetings, and other deliberative institutions that impose high costs for breaking the internal rules of the game. Without these, it is much more likely that party factions will reach an impasse and its ambitious politicians – those most likely to spearhead internal reform – will resort to praetorian tactics to salvage their own careers. When this occurs, neither survival nor revival are likely. Overall, my view holds that party survival and revival ultimately stem from a rational calculation on the part of ambitious politicians, who we can expect to be utmost concerned with their own self-preservation. However, it acknowledges that these members' actions "cannot be understood apart from the organizational context in which they occur."[17] Thus, these members do not only need good reasons to stay loyal in the face of adversity, but they also need available pathways to reform by virtue of their party organization.

Why Study Party Survival?

There are good reasons that scholars should be more concerned with questions of party survival. Where established parties collapse and are unable to contest national elections, we see democracy and party systems quickly become "disjointed."[18] Voters that have grown disaffected with traditional party options run the risk of being displaced from politics indefinitely – as "political orphans"[19] – because new emergent parties will likely not have the capacity or see the

[17] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 11.
[18] Hector Schamis, "Populism, Socialism, and Democratic Institutions," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 4, October 2006, p. 26.
[19] Juan Carlos Torre, "Los huérfanos de la politica de partidos sobre los alcances y la naturaleza de la crisis de representación partidaria," *Desarollo Económico*, vol. 42, no. 168, pp. 647-665.

incentives to invest in party-building activities.[20] We see examples of this in the "decaying" party systems of Argentina and Colombia, where multiparty coalitions form the most consistent basis of representation.[21] Additionally, parties that struggle to win office often fail to perform the normative in-government functions that promote governability and accountability from leaders.[22] In the most extreme cases, we see this manifest in antisystem "outsiders" that, when elected, transform democracy into a playground for power consolidation – as seen in the competitive authoritarian governments of Alberto Fujimori (Peru) and the more current Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela).[23]

Another reason we should be more concerned is that in recent years, the litany of challenges facing Latin America's established parties have become more erratic in nature and consequently more difficult to anticipate. This is evidenced by the fact that parties and party systems that we once pegged as "institutionalized" now look strikingly "inchoate" by comparison.[24] In Costa Rica – a long-cited case of democratic stability – allegations of embezzlement sent shockwaves through the country's party system and culminated in the near-

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[20] E.g., Brandon Van Dyck, "The Paradox of Adversity: The Contrasting Fates of Latin America's New Left Parties," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2, January 2017, pp. 169-189; Steven Levitsky, et. al., *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[21] E.g., Carlos Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System: Fragmentation, Denationalization, Factionalization, and Increasing Fluidity," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 255-290; Juan Albarracín, Laura Gamboa, and Scott Mainwaring, "Deinstitutionalization without Collapse: Colombia's Party System," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 227-254.

[22] E.g., Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 1, January 1994, pp. 55-69; Steven Levitsky and Maxwell A. Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties? Political Parties and Regime Change in Fujimori's Peru," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 45, no. 3, October 2003, pp. 3-4; Van Dyck, "The Paradox of Adversity," p. 1.

[23] However, less extreme examples of this also exist in the spanning presidencies of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. While not outright "competitive autocrats," both fronted comparatively "hegemonic" political projects.

[24] E.g., Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Omar Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay: The De-Institutionalization of Party Systems in South America," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, February 2008, pp. 315-337; Mainwaring, "Party Systems in Latin America," 2018.

overnight collapse of the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC) in 2006.[25] More recently in Mexico, the behemoth Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) all but collapsed under the same weight of public disdain during the 2018 general election.[26] In just one election cycle, the PRI's vote share shrunk from 38 percent (in 2012) to just 16 percent – an earthquaking defeat that many scholars did not see coming, and one that prepared the way for the leftwing populist victory of Andres Manuel Lopez-Obrador and his nascent MORENA party.[27]

What is notable about these two cases (one of collapse and the other of near collapse) is that exogenous factors alone (to which scholars often point) are insufficient to explain each party's struggles. Much of the recent literature identifies economic turmoil as a strong driver for party decline and collapse. However, Costa Rica had relatively stable growth and low inequality in the years surrounding the PUSC's downfall.[28] Mexico presents the opposite problem, whereby exogenous shocks have been overly abundant. In recent years, public dissatisfaction has been directed toward "chronic poverty and inequality, slow economic growth, rapidly escalating violent crime, and a parade of corruption scandals,"[29] making it difficult to isolate these external stimuli and their effects on parties. Moreover, neither Costa Rica nor Mexico fell victim to the structural weakening of voter attachments[30] to the extent suffered by neighboring democracies – large portions of voters in each country still broadly identified with traditional parties up until

[25] See Fernando Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[26] Kenneth F. Greene and Mariano Sánchez-Talanquer, "Mexico's Party System Under Stress," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 31-42.
[27] The recent defeat of the PRI is all the more puzzling (and shocking) when we consider that "Mexico began 2018 with one of Latin America's most stable party systems" (Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, 2018: 31).
[28] Fabrice Edouard Lehoucq, "Costa Rica: Paradise in Doubt," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 16, no. 3, July 2005, p. 143.
[29] Greene and Sánchez-Talanquer, "Mexico's Party System Under Stress," p. 31.
[30] This is puzzling given that Lupu (2016) identifies the erosion of partisan attachments as a major red flag hinting toward party collapse.

defeat.[31] Scholars have paid much less attention to how parties themselves choose to respond to such shocks, as well as how different responses have helped or hindered their long-term survival.

In a context where Latin American politics is increasingly characterized by capricious personalities, drastic environmental shocks, and sharp turns in public support, we know profoundly little about the ways in which established parties can fight to stay relevant, particularly during critical moments. In other words, we need to better understand exceptional cases of *party survival*.

Defining the Scope of Analysis: Party Collapse

This dissertation defines a *political party* minimally, as a group of actors who contest elected office under a joint label.[32] It is this study's primary unit of analysis. Its scope of analysis extends to parties that *collapse* from national politics. I abide by Noam Lupu's[33] definition of party collapse, as "a massive electoral defeat for a nationally competitive party in a single election cycle." This definition has three components. The first refers to the magnitude of the vote loss suffered by the party. In cases of collapse, it is typical that a party's national vote share plummets into the single digits.[34] For example, when Venezuela's two main parties, AD and COPEI, collapsed in 1998 they came away with a collective vote share of 3.5 percent. In 1993,

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[31] Lehoucq, "Costa Rica," p. 142; D. Xavier Medina Vidal, et. al., "Partisan Attachment and Democracy in Mexico: Some Cautionary Observations," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 52, no. 1, Spring 2010, p. 68; also see Pew (2017): https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/08/negative-views-of-democracy-more-widespread-in-countries-with-low-political-affiliation/.
[32] See Van Dyck (2014:4).
[33] Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis*, p. 5; He refers to collapse as "breakdown." However, the two terms are frequently used interchangeably.
[34] Mainwaring, Bizzarro, and Petrova (2018) actually define collapse as when a party receives less than 10 percent of votes in a national election (presidential or legislative).

just one election cycle prior, both parties' combined votes comprised about half of the Venezuelan electorate.

Crucially, a party tends to experience this type of vote loss in conjunction with some broader political, social, or economic crisis for which its leaders are primarily blamed.[35] Consequently, it will be targeted and punished by hostile electorates, the press, and civil society actors who demand accountability from officeholding politicians. These two unique factors – extreme vote loss and a climate of intense party animosity – combine to create an existential crisis for a party organization that is more severe than other motivators for adaptation. Critically, this atmosphere will create an *inflection point* for vulnerable party elites that will motivate them to question their future in the organization or, at worst, defect entirely.

The catastrophic and unexpected nature of collapse also makes it distinct in terms of which parties it can affect. This brings us to the second component of the definition, which refers to eligible cases. Collapse can only occur to a party that is *nationally competitive*. A nationally competitive party is one with a "historically-based expectation of winning executive office."[36] In other words, these are a country's *established political parties*. These parties are exceptional in that they tend to have track records of electoral success, tend to be organizationally well-developed, and in many cases have served notable tenures in government. In addition, their members may have shared experiences of trauma or political struggle that help to create strong bonds of association and a party subculture among its elites and its supporters in the electorate – or what Wellhofer calls "communities of fate."[37]

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[35] Relevant literature points to poor incumbent performance and corruption as two main motivators of crisis (Lupu 2014).

[36] Noam Lupu, "Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America," Ph.D. diss., (Princeton University, 2011), p. 4.

[37] Spencer E. Wellhofer, "Political Parties as 'Communities of Fate': Tests with Argentine Party Elites," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 18, no. 2, May 1974, pp. 347-363.

This is critical to understand because it helps us to further separate party collapse from other events that it may resemble. For instance, the term collapse is sometimes used to refer to unsuccessful new parties that fail to overcome the initial strains of development.[38] However, the failure of new parties to become established competitors tends to happen for very different reasons – often as a function of democratic growing pains, for example.[39]

The last part of the definition refers to the speed at which collapse unfolds. In addition to being an acutely damaging event that exclusively affects established parties, collapse occurs rapidly – over the course of a single election cycle. Again, this is important to consider when viewing party collapse in comparative perspective. Classic theories on party formation, for example, often assume party decline to be the result of underlying structural change that occurs over extended periods of time.[40] Under these circumstances, party leaders often have adequate time to correct course. In contrast, the abrupt nature of collapse makes it very difficult for leaders to anticipate it before it occurs. While they may sense that their party is headed for a loss, how big a loss it will be remains unclear until the electoral results are in (and the damage, in a sense, is done). Likewise, there will be very little time to respond to the immediate damages associated with a massive defeat. In the immediate wake of collapse, a party's public image will be tarnished, its leaders unelectable, and its program delegitimized on the national stage. In these situations, uncertainty reigns; and leaders will naturally find it hard to gauge which adaptive measures will be the most appropriate in the short-term.

Party Change as a Contingent Matter

[38] For instance, Panebianco (1988) introduces this idea. However, Van Dyck (2017) has elaborated on it more recently.
[39] For example, see Hale's (2006) study on failed party-building in Russia.
[40] E.g., Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 1991; Dietz and Myer, 2007.

To understand how a party organization can rectify the scenario described above, we must first explore the more general factors that contribute to *party change*. Since the 1980s, scholars concerned with this question have predominantly focused on changes in entire party systems. Typically, these accounts[41] trace long-term "fluctuations or trends in the support for parties within a system over time."[42] With certain exceptions, these studies pay large attention to linear increases in electoral volatility – a phenomenon that has taken root in party systems across the globe since the 1960s. This literature's initial objective was two-fold. First, it aimed to address the "real or perceived decline" of parties in Western post-war democracies.[43] Second, it sought to understand how "party weakness" contributed to tertiary, or "alternative" forms of representation, such as minor parties, social movements, and/or interest groups.[44] Generally, these findings supported the structural underpinnings of party change, as a process induced by coalitional shifts in the electorate and made evident (years later) by the growing hegemony of new representative actors. Collectively, they suggest that party change happens gradually, uniformly affects "old" parties, and is virtually impossible to reverse once political cleavages begin to "thaw" and reset.

Despite its broad scope, the system-level approach ultimately fails to account for why "party decline" *looks so different* around the world. The inability to explain variation prompted scholars to shift their focus from volatile electoral support to distinct changes that occur within party organizations. The idea is that although parties are subject to environmental changes, they may take steps to *adapt* to these changes – usually by "adjusting their appeals to the audiences

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[41] E.g., Maguire 1983; Pedersen 1983; Sundberg 1983; Wolinetz 1988; Mair 1989
[42] Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," p. 260.
[43] Reiter, "Party Decline in the West," p. 325.
[44] For example, see Lawson and Merkl, 1988.

whose votes they seek."[45] This reorientation of the literature generated two novel ways to view party adaptation. The first treats it as a *continuous* phenomenon that, like party system change, occurs gradually. This view holds that a party's external environment is, more or less, changing constantly. Thus, a party will naturally undergo a series of changes over time to better suit this environment. The culmination of these changes results in the broader re-characterization of the party, its organizational composition, as well as its reasons for competing for office.

The continuous approach to party change has been particularly useful in characterizing very broad changes to party organizations that scholars have observed over the last several decades. This has generated studies that trace the ways parties have transformed on the basis programmatic identity or *type* over the course of the twentieth century.[46] For example, Katz and Mair argue that continuous change has contributed to a general shift from parties as predominantly membership organizations to ones primarily focused on bureaucratic or governmental functions – a process they identify as "party cartelization."[47] Importantly, this view (like the system-level approach) assumes that adaptation is naturally occurring, applies to parties uniformly, and is predominantly explained by stimuli that arise within the external environment. Moreover, this all implies that party adaptation is, on some level, predictable, and that actors (as well as scholars) will often be able to anticipate it before it occurs.

However, Panebianco, in stark contrast, notes that party change can often be an abrupt event, whereby actors respond to immediate challenges that threaten their party's short-term goals. In this view, party change is *discontinuous*, meaning it can occur non-linearly, at any point in time, to one or many parties at once, and for reasons that span beyond structural voter

[45] Steven B. Wolinetz, *Parties and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 304.
[46] E.g., Kirchheimer, 1966; Thomas, 1975; Mair, 1989; Gunther and Diamond, 2003.
[47] Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 5, January 1995, pp. 5-28.

realignments. To explain this, Panebianco acknowledges that party organizations often develop multiple (at times, competing) sets of goals,[48] all of which may have separate time horizons. If a party's environment changes in a way that obstructs its ability to secure the short-term goal of winning elections, leaders may take bold steps to mend the situation. Importantly, this typically occurs in the context of "acute organizational crisis."[49] At times, this can result in a total programmatic "makeover," a scenario Panebianco[50] illustrates through the case of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its surprising veer to the right in 1959. This alternative view offers a distinct advantage, in that it allows us to uncover and analyze the "specific actions taken by the party and particularly by party leaders in reacting to environmental changes,"[51] especially those that trigger crisis. By shifting the focus from the party system onto the individual party and its members during crisis, we can test the unique ways in which leaders respond as well as how distinct organizational characteristics help or hinder these responses – and thus, account for a much greater level of variation.

Despite addressing party change at different levels of abstraction, the continuous and discontinuous views are not mutually exclusive. Parties can adapt to shorter-term challenges without necessarily having to sacrifice the ability to endure over the long-term. The most important detail is that both approaches view change as fundamentally directed by a party's external environment, which exists beyond its immediate control.[52] As Deschouwer[53] points out, this leads us into a paradox of determinism: party adaptation is either a process of natural

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[48] For example, a robust literature exists on parties' vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking goals (e.g., Strøm 1990; Laver and Schofield 1990; Schlesinger 1991).
[49] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 240.
[50] Ibid., pp. 253-57.
[51] Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," p. 261; Wilson's (1980) study of French parties also bears noting here.
[52] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, p. 242.
[53] Kris Deschouwer, "Survival of the Fittest: Measuring Adaptation and Change of Political Parties," Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Limerick, March 1992, p. 12.

selection, whereby the environment will always select the fittest parties; or it is an assumed process of evolution, where all parties develop "from one stage to another, with the stages common to all political organizations."[54] In either case, leadership decisions matter very little in theory, and particularly only when they are successful. In the end, this success depends on whether external conditions *permit a party to survive.*

In practice, however, political parties are unique and complex organizations that tend to reflect the "personal and fundamental goals"[55] of their founding members. While they may undergo similar formative stages of development, different membership coalitions give way to distinctive organizational characteristics that can either help or hinder a party's ability to mediate crisis. This has led other scholars to emphasize the elite-based foundations of party adaptation and survival. Deschouwer[56] raises the key issue that party members with the highest level of internal authority – the party leaders – wield considerable influence to alter their organization, particularly during tense moments of crisis. Accordingly, the range of options these actors have at their disposal makes adaptation a highly contingent prospect, even when there are clear reasons to reform. Ultimately, party leaders can decline to respond in the face of crisis and risk the destruction of their party. Alternatively, they may simply respond in ways that prioritize their individual survival above the party itself. In this case, elites calculate that party membership can no longer adequately serve their career ambitions and will likely see stronger reasons to exit altogether rather than to stay and engage in the risky and uncertain process of internal reform.

[54] Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," p. 262.
[55] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5.
[56] Deschouwer, "The Survival of the Fittest," p. 17.

For Deschouwer and others,[57] elites themselves are "the key intervening variable," which determines whether a party will respond to a crisis *at all* as well as *how* it is likely to do so.

When we hark back to these elite-based accounts, cases of "failed adaptation but continued survival"[58] appear much less puzzling. These theories are useful because they provide a basis for understanding how politicians perceive their available options when facing crisis – a key implication that other areas of party literature leave unexamined. Most spatial or rational choice accounts, for example, assume that ambitious politicians should ultimately look elsewhere to secure a path to higher office if their party suddenly becomes unable to contest national elections.[59] However, as Cyr[60] points out, these actors stay committed to their parties after collapse often enough to compel us to look for alternative explanations. Similarly, demand-side accounts[61] assume that as voter support wanes, particularly on a national level, parties become increasingly vulnerable to extinction. Yet, this fails to acknowledge that party organizations may continue to serve the interests of territorial and local politicians after collapse, and thus continue to rely on this membership to persist in non-national elections. This all suggests that party survival ultimately stems from how politicians perceive their party's "competitive situation"[62] relative to their own individual career circumstances. In this sense, party survival and revival both begin with the rational calculation to remain a party member.

In Favor of an Elite-Based Approach[63]

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[57] E.g., Richard Rose and Thomas Mackie, "Do Parties Persist or Fail? The Big Trade-Off Facing Organizations," in Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkl, eds., *When Parties Fail*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 533-558; Wilson, "The Sources of Party Change," p. 264.
[58] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 2.
[59] E.g., Downs, 1957; Aldrich, 1995; Snyder Jr. and Ting, 2002.
[60] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 10.
[61] E.g., Mainwaring, 2018; Lupu, 2016; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006; Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012.
[62] Wilson, "The Sources of Party Change," p. 264.
[63] A much more detailed overview of the argument appears at the start of Chapter Two.

There are distinct advantages to approaching party survival from an elite-based perspective. A major one is that it helps us strengthen and clarify accounts that emphasize the role of holdover resources in fostering electoral survival. The main problem with the resource-based argument, as it currently stands, is that it simply attributes the timing of survival and/or revival with whichever resources were readily available to deploy in that moment in time. This dissertation does not contest the importance of resources (broadly conceived). However, it stresses that there is more to party survival than being left with a handful of "organizational" or even "ideational" advantages.[64] These ultimately need to be put to good use by those with the access, the purview, and even (at times) the good fortune to employ them. In this sense, the question of survival becomes how to leverage any existing power that remains in the party's hand while it simultaneously processes the need to adapt to the condition of voter rejection.

A second advantage to this approach is that it allows us to unpack the considerable variation we observe among cases in terms of organizational structure and elite behavior – both of which are critical intervening variables when accounting for party change.[65] Collapse has indiscriminately affected parties of all stripes. Of the twelve cases,[66] eight are *weakly institutionalized* parties – meaning they tend to rely on a figurehead for electoral support and their organizations are subject to non-binding or unpredictable decision-making protocols.[67] The remaining four are parties that scholars have widely considered to be well-institutionalized by comparison. That is, these parties are *infused with value* beyond the immediate task of winning elections[68] and/or their organizations operate by routinized norms and formal procedures.[69]

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[64] See Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*.
[65] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Burgess and Levitsky, 2003; Van Dyck, 2018.
[66] COPEI (Venezuela); APRA (Peru), AP (Peru), PR-PSC (D.R.), ADN (Bolivia), MNR (Bolivia), MIR (Bolivia), PAN (Guatemala).
[67] E.g., Levitsky, 1998, 2001; Mainwaring, 1999; Levitt and Kostadinova, 2014.
[68] E.g., Selznick, 1957; Huntington, 1968; Panebianco, 1988.
[69] E.g., North, 1990; O'Donnell, 1994; Levitsky, 1998.

Moreover, all the cases differ dramatically in terms of their ideological stance and typology. A small handful can be considered mass populist parties[70] and have historically built their support around organized labor, while the remaining parties have occupied wide-ranging policy stances throughout their histories and have relied on more diffuse social bases for electoral support.

These different characteristics all undoubtedly hold implications for party survival and revival. When viewed panoramically, there is a clear connection between greater levels of institutionalization and survival after collapse – a key argument of this dissertation. However, even among successful cases we still see variation that needs to be explained. For example, why do different strategies develop and permeate at different organizational levels of a party? How do distinct internal rules and procedures shape leaders' goals and structure their agency when making decisions? These are questions that are integral if we want to shed light on party survival and its causal foundations. For the first time, this dissertation poses possible answers in the context of party survival.

Finally, this approach also helps to recalibrate the case universe by taking on the hitherto unexplored case of the Argentine UCR and its post-collapse experience (2003-2015). By virtually any measure, the Radical Party has experienced the highest level of success after collapse. This is evident by the fact that it is the only party that has collapsed and stands as a national competitor today. Despite this, the only cases that have been treated in literature thus far are no longer fully functioning parties. In this sense, to say a party is surviving is not saying particularly much. At best, current literature[71] provides a snapshot of a party's lowest point of crisis. Though, the crisis scenario for each party is quite different, as are the implied stakes of success or failure. This lack of clarity leads to poor operational indicators and makes it difficult

[70] E.g., APRA, AD, and arguably AP (Peru).
[71] E.g., Cyr 2017, 2016.

to construct theories with broader explanatory power. In addition to its comparative success on the dependent variable, the UCR case stands out for its rich internal variation. The party's turnaround occurred over the course of twelve years. This is an abundant amount of time to trace its trajectory throughout each stage of recovery. Over this time, the UCR engaged in numerous alliances at the national and subnational levels designed to compete in presidential, legislative, and local elections. Unsurprisingly, each often differed in terms of the parties involved as well as the electoral result obtained. I show that party leadership decisions can be profoundly important when it comes to forming and maintaining the "right" coalition. Analyzing and comparing each of these choices in the context of party revival allows me to test the claims of my theory more rigorously than would be possible via existing cases.

Overview of the Research

This dissertation's research plan is designed to answer a series of theoretical questions: *When do politicians forego defection after collapse? How can they work through their party organization to achieve reform after collapse? And how can they leverage any remaining power to revive their party at the national level?* To do this, I conducted both formal and informal interviews in Buenos Aires, Argentina between 2017 and 2019. These interviews included a variety of Radical Party members, including current and former officeholding politicians, mid-level bureaucrats, territorial *referentes* (local party bosses), as well as a handful of militants and party historians. The purpose for this sampling is two-fold. On the one hand, it allows me to gain a nuanced and multi-faceted account of the UCR's collapse in 2003 by offering insight into how each level of the party perceived the dynamics of crisis. This is important given that the UCR, at

its core, is a fragmented organization. After 2003, this fragmentation created an issue of competing goals within the party. Thus, it seeks to understand how these different perceptions informed the survival and reform process. However, this sampling is also strategic in the sense that it centers around those that helmed the party through its survival years (or continue to do so). In gathering evidence, I spoke to both "winners and losers" of the UCR's internal reform battle to give form to the various strategies the party was considering during its years out in the cold. This is crucial because it allows me to characterize party survival and revival as a contingent process.

I also spoke with former or non-Radical politicians, strategists, or government officials that engaged in alliances with the party between 2003 and 2015 or had direct knowledge of the nature of these alliances. This is particularly useful for establishing an empirical basis for coalitional party revival. These individuals were primarily members of the Republican Proposal (PRO) party, the Radicals' main political ally from 2015 to the present. However, I also included Radical defectors that officially abandoned the UCR but maintained close (and at times informal) links to the organization or its leaders.

These interviews allow me to establish an empirical basis for three novel claims. The first is that the UCR, despite collapsing at the national level, still provided career advantages to its territorial elites. The second is that these elites, although largely confined to legislative and subnational elections, managed to carve out options that eventually led to a workable national-electoral strategy. Third, this data helps to confirm that these strategies ultimately *became workable* due to the Radical Party's internal channels of conflict-resolution. These structures became essential to settle disputes that would have otherwise threatened the total disbandment of the party.

Lastly, to compensate for lack of access, I turn to a wide selection of archival and press materials. On the one hand, these materials help to establish a firm timeline of events as well as triangulate any new claims made by primary sources. This is necessary, given the length and complex nature of the UCR's post-collapse trajectory. On the other hand, they (archival sources in particular) provide rich and detailed information regarding the UCR's organizational history. From this, we can contextualize actors' decisions through the framework of party organization.

The remainder of this dissertation progresses as follows. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive theoretical argument for an elite-based theory of party survival. It attempts to not only theorize party survival and revival down to the agential level but also offers new and compelling theoretical reasons for why party elites become central to their party's persistence during crisis. Chapter 3 offers an historical analysis of the UCR. This includes its origins as an elite-based party and postulates that the party's organizational basis for existing has crucially shaped its ability to endure. Chapters 4 and 5 analyze the Radical Party's post-collapse trajectory (2003-2015). Chapter 4 traces the UCR's survival as a subnational competitor from 2003 to roughly 2009. It argues that the party's expansive territorial organization provided a strong basis for its members to remain loyal during crisis. Chapter 5 explains how, after the UCR was able to avoid defections, the party leveraged its lingering organization to build inroads within the opposition. Chapter 6 extends some of my theory's implications to other cases of party collapse throughout Latin America. It analyzes AD in Venezuela, APRA in Peru, and the PUSC in Costa Rica and tests these cases against my theoretical claims. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes by elaborating on the implications of my theory and highlights its contributions in conjunction with existing theory.

Chapter 2 – Theorizing Party Survival: An Elite-Based Approach

This chapter presents a theoretical discussion on why some parties collapse and endure while others fail to do so. It departs from extant literature by placing party elites at the heart of the analysis. An elite-based approach contributes to the body of scholarship on party survival – and party change more broadly – by addressing three critical (and underexplored) problems concerning survival after collapse. First, virtually all collapsed parties suffer mass defections when thrown into a supremely hostile electoral environment. Membership defections of this magnitude present a serious dilemma for a party in the aftermath of defeat, whether they occur right away or over time. If a critical mass of politicians immediately jumps ship, it will likely cause a party to disband before the next election cycle.[1] However, even when defections are more drawn out, they can incrementally deprive a party of reform-minded members who are committed to correcting the course of their organization. By asking what motivates these members to stay in spite of compelling reasons to leave, this work addresses one of the highest obstacles blocking party survival.

The present work argues that the decision to stay committed to a party during crisis – much like the decision to join one in the first place – boils down to a rational calculation on the part of elites.[2] Ultimately, we can expect political aspirants (that is, candidates and officeholders) to choose *loyalty* over *exit* if they have tangible reasons to believe that the party can still aid their career ambitions despite being "thrown out" by voters. In other words, survival must be mutual – for party and for politician – if it is to happen at all. The choice to defect is often a gamble,

[1] For example, see the case of ADN (Bolivia).
[2] John H. Aldrich and William T. Bianco, "A Game-Theoretic Model of Party Affiliation of Candidates and Office Holders," *Mathematical and Computer Modeling*, vol. 16, no. 8, 1992, pp. 103-116.

especially for vote-winning elites of a party in crisis. When one chooses to go it alone, they risk losing access to critical resources for electioneering and mobilizing the vote. These activities become all the more important in a context of electoral rejection because they help a party (and thus, a politician) stay active and visible in local districts where it (she/he/they) may still be competitive. Recent and important contributions[3] have studied the vast influence of party resources in promoting various routes to survival. However, this chapter pushes the resource-based argument a step further by acknowledging the unparalleled advantage of a *territorial organization*. As James Loxton reminds us: "parties rarely survive in voters' minds alone."[4] They require an organized presence at the ground level – preferably in the form of formal branches or district level committees. A formal and wide-spanning organization can be considered a "mother resource" for a political party for three reasons. First, it is among the most difficult resources to cultivate – much like a strong, incisive party brand. Second, as such, a formal organization tends to be more enduring and less vulnerable to crisis shocks (as opposed to a clientelist- or patronage-based party machine).[5] Finally, it provides the infrastructure that allows for the activation of other material (or day-to-day) resources come election season. In the end, access to a formal territorial organization provides ambitious elites with a secure domain to fall back on and "ride out the storm."

The second issue this chapter addresses is *how* elites can leverage their access to a territorial organization into a concerted effort to reform the party. Resources play an undeniably crucial role in survival; but only when they are put to good use by those who have a material

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[3] Jennifer Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown: Conceptualizing Party Survival," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 1, October 2016, pp. 125-45; *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[4] James Loxton, "Authoritarian Successor Parties," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 3, July 2015, p. 161.
[5] See Morgan (2011) as well as the cases of both Peru and Venezuela, where clientelist linkages eroded after collapse.

incentive to reform the party. To recover at the national level, a collapsed party needs to communicate some type of change to the electorate that justifies its continued relevance in a democracy. Accomplishing this, however, is far from given and ultimately a question of whether reformers have unfettered access to their territorial domains and can use this access to renovate a discredited leadership. This question naturally lends itself to the influential role of party organization in providing the structure and autonomy that makes internal reform possible.[6] Thus, this chapter addresses another crucial limitation of the resource-based argument by theorizing the composite characteristics of a party that help resolve an additional and central problem of survival: party renovation amid broad public rejection.

This work claims that those with the strongest reasons to remain (career-motivated members with a territorial base) must also have the leeway to employ their territorial resources in a way that deviates from the central party leadership. This is because leaders of a collapsed party will be discredited by the broader public and pose an obstacle to reform, and therefore survival. Parties that afford this kind of flexibility to its rank-and-file politicians tend to have *decentralized* channels of internal authority, whereby subnational executives in particular have significant discretion in how resources are directed and leveraged to pursue workable electoral strategies in local elections. This type of organizational flexibility has two distinct advantages. First, it reinforces the survival of individual politicians because in addition to simply having resources, they will be able to use them freely and in ways that speak to local issues that the central party may be ill-equipped to address. Second, decentralization provides the latent advantage of allowing (and incentivizing) subnational elites to experiment with new electoral strategies with the hope that one may be workable at the national level. This can be understood

[6] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Kitschelt, 1994; Koelble, 1994; Levitsky, 2003.

as a necessary step for internal reform if we look to previous (and seminal) studies on party organization and adaptation.

At the same time, internal reform is often a messy process; and one that can exacerbate tensions in an already crisis-ridden organization. The difficult task of choosing a strategy to weaponize at the national level and convincing other (perhaps rival) elements in the party to support it can very quickly break down and become discordant in the absence of a strong decision-making apparatus. While organizational flexibility is necessary to favor the efforts of reformers, survival also requires that a party has internal institutions that raise "the social, psychic, or material costs of breaking [the] rules."[7] In this way, we can see a clear connection between party survival and party institutionalization, or the process by which party members' behavior becomes regularized around standard rules and practices. This is important particularly in the context of conflict resolution, where all groups within the party – winners or losers of the reform battle – are bound to a consensus reached by a deliberative decision-making process. This process is made manifest by intraparty mechanisms that bring all interests to the table and provide a venue to debate potential ways to revive at the national level, such as conventions, summits, and procedural votes in lieu of unilateral leadership decisions. Importantly, this understanding of institutionalization should not be considered at odds with the flexibility described above, as the work of Kitschelt[8] and Levitsky[9] suggests, because it complicates the ability of leaders – those who tend to be the ones preventing reform after collapse – to engage in unilateral tactics that work to stifle change. This is a key difference applying to collapsed parties.

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[7] Steven Levitsky, "Institutionalization and Peronism: The Concept, the Case, and the Case for Unpacking the Concept," *Party Politics*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1998, p. 80.
[8] Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[9] Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The third and final issue that this chapter examines is the vital and hitherto unexplored role of coalition-formation in promoting a national electoral recovery. In the context of post-collapse survival, this refers to a party's choice to pursue collective action with other parties during elections and campaign on multiparty tickets. Coalition-formation becomes somewhat of a natural tendency for a collapsed party and stems from two environmental constraints that emerge in the wake of collapse and dramatically alter a party's immediate "competitive situation."[10] The first is that the collapsed party will suffer from a lack of marketable candidates to field for national office. The second is that new parties and electoral movements will emerge in the vacuum created by collapse and vie for hegemony in the new party system, thereby contributing to heightened competition. This is a potentially fatal combination for a collapsed party. Indeed, in the few observed cases where parties have survived and reemerged nationally,[11] it happens as the result of a broad effort to coordinate within the opposition during national elections.

Although it may seem counterintuitive and potentially costly to join forces with a collapsed party, there is a reasonable basis for collective action on the part of nascent parties in the opposition. To understand why, we can recall that most new parties in Latin America are now more likely to divest in activities that result in strong, durable organizations, which a long-standing party – even a collapsed one – is likelier to cultivate.[12] At the same time, collapsed parties require marketable candidates to field for office at the national level, similarly due to pressures stemming from electoral rejection. New parties, often *because* of lax organization-building, wield such candidates and place them at the center of campaigns.

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[10] E.g., Wilson, 1994.
[11] UCR in Argentina; AD in Venezuela.
[12] E.g., Van Dyck, 2014, 2017; Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck, 2016.

Table 2.1 – Party Survival and Revival in Three Inflection Points		
Inflection Point	**Condition(s) for Success**	**Explanation for Success**
Avoiding Defections	• Territorial Party Organization	• Provides a *basis* for loyalty among rank-and-file politicians who do not feel they can *successfully* compete as independents or party dissidents.
Party Renovation	• *Decentralized* channels of internal authority • *Routinized* internal procedures	• Decentralization lends renovators the ability to deviate from old guard leadership and develop new strategies for electoral success. • Routinization keeps the internal reform process from breaking down due to factional tensions that emerge during crisis.
National Revival	• Party must have either a marketable candidate or engage in collective action with other opposition parties.	• Given that most parties will lack a marketable candidate and face an influx of new opponents, coalition-formation arises as a workable strategy for national revival.

Additionally, and importantly, the success of an incumbent in the context of opposition fragmentation, may also contribute to a greater push for opposition coordination, even in situations where universal antipathy toward parties is quite high in comparative perspective.[13] Ultimately, coalition-formation is a contingent process; and whether a particular alliance configuration gains national success is always difficult to anticipate. However, this dissertation argues that it is an important mechanism, which folds into the repertoire that elites have at their disposal. I thus move beyond previous theories that view survival as an idiosyncratic matter –

[13] Even in "party-less" Peru, major parties have pursued collective action when it has offered even a marginal chance at national success. In 2011, for example, APRA was left without a viable candidate to field for the presidency due to Alan Garcia's ineligibility to run for a second consecutive term. To remedy this problem, the party chose to build a ticket with the PPC – an alliance that made little programmatic sense and ultimately failed.

where opportunity aligns with capacity. Instead, rank-and-file politicians *make their own luck* and are thus responsible for their own success.

Party Collapse and the Pressure to Defect

Surviving electoral collapse is a unique challenge for a party. One thing that distinguishes it from other crises is that it takes place *after* the party has suffered the brunt of voter rejection. This is a critical detail if we consider that scholarship on party adaptation all too often defines success as avoiding a crisis before it begins.[14] For example, when labor-based parties around the globe saw their electoral viability threatened at the end of the Cold War, those that successfully adapted did so largely by shedding the structural impediments that prevented them from attracting new, independent voters – not necessarily because they had already lost existing ones. In this sense, adaptation happens *laterally* and only when a party confronts the uncertain possibility of a crisis. Survival from collapse can conversely be understood as an example of *vertical* adaptation because it mandates the difficult task of re-accumulating voter support from the ground up, particularly in national elections.

This distinction is important because, as Burgess and Levitsky argue, parties (and by extension, their members) often have strong incentives to adapt – and with specific programmatic aims – when confronting the *possibility* of a crisis. Labor-based parties, again as an example, had clear "incentives to adapt in a market-oriented direction" [15] if their country experienced a deep hyperinflationary crisis and lacked a strong challenge from the left. In these

[14] E.g., Cyr, 2016.
[15] Katrina Burgess and Steven Levitsky, "Explaining Populist Party Adaptation in Latin America: Environmental and Organizational Determinants of Party Change in Argentina, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 36, no. 8, October 2003, p. 882.

kinds of situations, party actors can discern that the costs associated with adaptation are lower than those associated with not acting (or abandoning the party altogether), given that the challenges being faced are largely indirect. More importantly and fundamentally, however, is that whatever adaptive strategy the party deems appropriate and chooses to employ has yet to fail, and thus, core voters lack a reason to withdraw their support.

The condition of voter rejection matters in terms of how scholarship treats the theoretical question of survival. Without it, we can expect a party label to maintain its value within the electorate because the party itself has yet to experience defeat. Once defeat happens and there is evidence of rejection, a party label, by definition, loses its value in the electoral arena and the party will struggle to perform the fundamental task of competing in elections. This devaluation on the part of voters changes the incentive structure facing party members, particularly those who need the organization to secure higher office. When a party label retains its electoral value, members will see incentives to adapt. However, when it loses this value, incentives to adapt transform into *incentives to defect*.

The fact that so many elites choose to jump ship after collapse is not necessarily puzzling when we consider that politicians often join a party primarily *because* it is valuable to a sufficiently large portion of the electorate. As Aldrich and Griffin argue:

> …the central components of the political party are the activists and the candidates and officeholders who adopt the name of the party, and it is the name of the party – and what meaning that label carries – that makes the party valuable to the voter. That electoral value is always one of the reasons, and is perhaps the only reason, that a political aspirant, that is, the activist and office seeker/holder, finds affiliation with the party valuable. It is necessary for the party label to be meaningful to the public, and it is necessary for it to have a meaning that is sufficiently positively evaluated by sufficiently

large numbers of voters for a political aspirant to imagine winning election under that label.[16]

Thus, to seek membership in the first place, aspiring militants and politicians must first believe that membership can credibly provide an optimal route to elected office. In turn, this is only possible if a party maintains an ample level of public support. If it is not sufficiently valued by the public, then we can expect there to be fewer (or no) incentives for elites to join.

However, the pressure to defect becomes particularly urgent in the context of collapse because it will apply strongest to those members whose ambitions extend only to gaining elected office. These are, in other words, *pure office seekers*[17] who have only material incentives to remain committed to a party during crisis. For these members, a "party label that is meaningful to the public"[18] is both a necessary and sufficient condition for membership. Losing such members poses an acute risk for a party, especially during a crisis. Unlike militants or organizational personnel, vote-winning politicians perform several high-profile functions in a party. Above all, they win votes. This is fundamentally important because it means that these members will be the direct representation of the party in voters' minds. As such, they become the "face" of the organization and can significantly influence how the electorate perceives the party label. [19] In the context of collapse, this role becomes even more vital due to the party's need to stay visible and active in locales where support still lingers.[20] Politicians competing for office under the party label is the most effective way to maintain a foothold (even a small one) in its most precious locales, in lieu of national competition.

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[16] John H. Aldrich and John D. Griffin, *Why Parties Matter: Political Competition and Democracy in the American South*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp. 29-30.
[17] E.g., Downs, 1957.
[18] Aldrich and Griffin, *Why Parties Matter*, p. 30.
[19] See Cyr (2017: 37-38); as well as Stewart and Clarke (1992), for an example of how elites may sour voters' opinions of a party.
[20] E.g., Cyr 2017.

Vote-winning politicians are also important because they tend to be the most reform-minded party members – if for no other reason that their electoral ambitions rely on a party label that voters sufficiently value.[21] This is significant, given that party reform is often a fraught process that is time-intensive and quite risky. This becomes evident when we consider prominent cases of party adaptation from Latin America. For instance, the Argentine Justicialist Party's (PJ) intraparty reform effort that took root in the 1980s was primarily led by (at the time) rank-and-file officeholders, who "were forced to battle their way to power at the local and provincial levels."[22] The brain trust of the Peronist renovation was largely situated amongst provincial level governors that had the sufficient resources to innovate changes to the party at the base level, primarily through constructing patronage-based networks. David Samuels[23] also illustrates a similar process in the case of the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT). By the early 1990s, the PT – like the PJ – was pressured to moderate its policy program in light of exogenous changes at the international level. However, unlike the Peronists, "pragmatist" politicians in the PT faced higher and more organized resistance from party activists, who were vehemently opposed to moderation. The PT's transformation relied on the strategic efforts of vote-winning reformers – a group led by future president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva – to dislodge radical factions via the party's system of internal elections.[24] Although both parties successfully transformed and went on to win elections, these efforts were extremely hard fought, took many years to achieve, and were by no means guaranteed to work.[25]

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[21] E.g., Kitschelt, 1989; Panebianco, 1988; Harmel and Janda, 1994.
[22] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America*, p. 109.
[23] David J. Samuels, "From Socialism to Social Democracy: Party Organization and the Transformation of the Workers' Party in Brazil," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 9, November 2004, pp. 999-1024.
[24] Ibid., p. 1011.
[25] The Peronist renovation occurred between the 1983 and 1989 general elections in Argentina. The PT's transformation took much longer – taking place from 1988 to the party's first presidential victory in 2002.

To survive electoral collapse, a party cannot afford to lose its rank-and-file politicians. They perform both defensive and offensive functions in the context of voter rejection. On the one hand, a collapsed party needs immediate vote-winners to defend whatever ground remains in play at the subnational and local political levels. Politicians fulfill this need when they continue to stand for election. Over the long-term, however, an eventual recovery at the national level requires that a party adapt itself and redirect from previous outdated strategies that no longer serve its electoral goals. This task requires internal reformers to go on the offensive and fight to gain influence over old-guard elements that may be resistant to change, or base-level militants who will likely wish to limit the "strategic flexibility"[26] of party elites in general.

When elites defect and are unavailable to perform these functions, the consequences are severe. Post-collapse experiences of parties in Bolivia and Peru give us a sense of just how high the stakes can be. After Bolivia's ADN collapsed in 2002, the atmosphere of rejection was so pronounced that the party's label became "tainted"[27] not only among its former supporters, but also for its most seasoned politicians. As a result, defections rapidly ensued among the party's leaders and elite-level politicians who sought to rebrand under a makeshift coalition dubbed *PODEMOS*. By the next election cycle in 2005, the ADN was a defunct former party. Peru's APRA, however, remains a particularly suggestive case in respect to post-collapse defections. Unlike ADN, APRA's collapse occurred over the course of several years.[28] Although the party's defeat in 1990 was upsetting, it was initially persistent in the opposition.[29] This changed, however, as its rank-and-file politicians increasingly saw incentives to jump ship – mainly due to

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[26] E.g., Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*.
[27] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 193.
[28] Martin Tanaka, "From Crisis to Collapse of the Party Systems and Dilemmas of Democratic Representation: Peru and Venezuela," in Scott Mainwaring, Ana Maria Bejarano, and Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez, eds., *The Crisis of Democratic Representation in the Andes*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 47-77.
[29] In 1990, APRA managed to capture 22 percent of the national vote – not a result one would expect to trigger a collapse. In 1995 it also fielded a candidate for the presidency – though it only won 4 percent of the vote.

the level of hostility directed at Peru's traditional parties. This led "scores of politicians" to desert their parties "in favor of an 'independent' strategy centered on individualized and short-term electoral goals."[30] As the 1990s progressed, the situation only got worse for APRA, with notable exceptions in the 2000s. The party lost considerable ground in subnational and local elections from 1993 to 1998, during which it often declined to field candidates.[31] In fact, APRA's electoral fortunes only turned around when Alan Garcia – the party's undisputed leader – returned to Peru from exile to dramatically assume the party's candidacy for president in 2001 and again in 2006.[32] By the end of Garcia's second presidential term (2006-2011), APRA was once again in shambles and unable to pick a viable successor.

The failure of both ADN and APRA can be attributed in large part to the fact that each party lost members that could have promoted survival. Instead, ambitious politicians fled from the ranks on the gamble that remaining in the party was costlier than seeking alternative pathways to higher office. In the end, the exit of these members made it difficult for each party to perform the critical defensive and offensive tasks that foster survival. Today, both parties are absent from national politics.

Avoiding Defections: The Importance of a Territorial Organization

If we are to assume, as does Aldrich and many others, that "politicians are self-centered and shortsighted animals"[33] who have little reason to think beyond election cycles, then it is not

[30] Steven Levitsky and Maxwell A. Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties? Political Parties and Regime Change in Fujimori's Peru," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 45, no. 3, Fall 2003, p. 2; Importantly, defections in Peru occurred over the course of a few years and were "exacerbated" by the Fujimori government's (1990-2000) anti-democratic maneuvers.
[31] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 120.
[32] The latter of which he won.
[33] Levitsky and Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties," p. 3.

intuitive why one would stay committed to a party that has been summarily rejected by a large portion of voters. Indeed, most spatial accounts hold that when a party enters a crisis of legitimacy, it simultaneously loses the ability to solve the coordination problems that make membership worthwhile in the first place. This is because these theories assume that when this happens, politicians have the virtually unlimited choice of joining a different party that can better solve these problems or may even look for better horizons outside politics.[34] However, the crisis induced by collapse is no ordinary situation for a political party. Politicians that seek to distance themselves from a devalued label by joining the ranks of another party assume serious risks in doing so – primarily because it may look overly-opportunistic in a context of voter rejection. At the same time, when a defection is successful and helps a politician escape the hostility directed at their former party, it requires them to have a personal "brand" that transcends that of the party. In Argentina, for example, successful defectors[35] from the Radical Party largely benefited from their individual voter appeal that predated collapse, which they used strategically to mount early criticisms of the UCR establishment. This was a crucial advantage that many other defectors did not have.

Still, even when politicians do have a strong individual connection with voters, there are additional and more tangible risks in going it alone. One significant advantage of being an elite party member is that one may wield strong influence in the matter of candidate selection, provided that these decisions are made via appointment. This is particularly important for Latin American party organizations, which tend to afford wide discretion to party elites (such as subnational governors and national officeholders) in building and maintaining down-ballot

[34] E.g., Downs, 1957; Riker, 1973; Aldrich, 1995; Crysler, 2007.
[35] For examples, Elisa Carrío and Ricardo Lopez-Murphy.

electoral tickets.[36] This is an important advantage because it endows politicians with the ancillary power to build self-serving party lists and insulate their power in office. However, an even more daunting risk of defection is that it requires an ambitious politician to cultivate their own independent resources to contest office and wage a successful campaign. This is often a profoundly difficult task, especially when political "free agents" come to characterize all party competition. Again, Peru stands out in this respect. The influx of independent candidates during the 1990s led to the fractionalization of electoral resources and, in turn, contributed to a system of competition between weak and ephemeral candidates. When "politicians are forced either to go down with their sinking partisan ships or jump opportunistically from party to party" (or from candidacy to candidacy), it becomes inherently difficult "to sustain a political career."[37] As a result, politicians often can only serve for a single term and cannot invest adequate resources into building a sustainable organization that can survive beyond a single election.[38]

For political parties in general, cultivating stable resources and building an organization with longevity is a monumentally difficult task, as Van Dyck explains:

> [Building a party organization] requires significant time and work, as the party must recruit members, establish local offices, and train local organizers to do this work; develop institutions for internal decision making and conflict resolution; and procure financing for basic party infrastructure, transportation, and salaries, often through small dues and donations.[39]

[36] E.g., Gibson, 1996; Leiras, 2007; Eaton, 2005.
[37] Steven Levitsky, "Democratic Survival and Weakness," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29, no. 4, October 2018, p. 106.
[38] E.g., Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck, 2016; Levitsky and Zavaleta, 2016.
[39] Brandon Van Dyck, "The Paradox of Adversity: The Contrasting Fates of Latin America's New Left Parties," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2, January 2017, p. 171.

Undertaking this work is even more difficult for political independents, who tend to opt for speedier alternatives that circumvent many of these party-building activities. For example, candidates may rely more heavily on broadcast media to raise awareness of a campaign, in place of traditional party structures. Although these quick fixes may provide short-term advantages and reduce the constraints on "elite nimbleness,"[40] they tend to be less reliable and subject to change over the longer-term. Moreover, this strategy for contesting office demands that a politician be able to command an adequate level of voter support *on their own* and without the cover of a meaningful party label.

"Party-less" politicians with long-term success, even in Latin America with its complicated relationship with populism, are more exceptions to the rule. Levitsky reminds us that, for the average ambitious elite, a career in politics resembles "a Hobbesian state of nature: [it is] nasty, brutish, and short."[41] When we view defection in these terms – by analyzing what politicians have to lose in the wake of collapse – it appears safer to remain inside of a party than to pursue the difficult and uncertain task of forging an independent career (let alone establishing a new party entirely). Cyr's work supports this assertion by acknowledging that a party often retains critical resources in the wake of collapse; and postulates that this lingering resource wealth will likely determine how a party survives as well as whether it will survive at all. Her theory provides that "organizational resources," such as "local headquarters, local committees, and especially party militants" can help a party remain competitive throughout a country at the subnational level.[42] The retention of such resources after collapse can be a strong motivator for pure office-seekers to stay when they are dispersed nationally via a territorial organization.

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Levitsky, "Democratic Survival and Weakness," p. 106.
[42] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, pp. 15-16.

A territorial organization is a uniquely vital resource for the ambitious politician. One reason we should expect it to dissuade membership defections is that it is not something that is widely or readily available to independents and nascent parties. Like most party-building activities, constructing a nationalized organization is time- and labor-intensive and requires actors within a party to invest heavily in grass-roots mobilization. This limitation becomes more crucial when we consider that incentives which lead political aspirants to build strong and durable parties have been marginalized by the rise of new technologies.[43] This, along with other institutional factors, has contributed to the localization of support for many competitive parties throughout the region.[44]

Another reason a territorial organization stems the pressure to defect is that it tends to be a safe and durable resource when it comes time to mobilize the vote – particularly if a party's organizational presence on the ground comes in the form of *formal* branch structures. Formal party structures are important for many reasons. More generally, they tend to facilitate conflict resolution between intraparty groups, and by doing so, promote endurance through crisis.[45] Formality is also important in that it tends to cultivate more stable linkages to the electorate. This is especially useful in the context of collapse, where client-patron networks often become disrupted because of crisis.[46] In Venezuela, for example, COPEI's large reliance on clientelistic (and localized) linkages made it acutely vulnerable in the aftermath of collapse. From 1998 to 2008, the party's subnational vote share contracted significantly due to lost support in key

[43] E.g., Katz and Mair, 1995; Van Dyck, 2014, 2016; Bruhn, 2016.
[44] E.g., Mark P. Jones and Scott Mainwaring, "The Nationalization of Parties and Party Systems: An Empirical Measure and an Application to the Americas," *Party Politics*, vol. 9, no. 2, March 2003, pp. 139-166.
[45] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Wolinetz, 1988; Mair, 1984; Ware, 1992.
[46] E.g., Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012; Mainwaring, 2012.

locales.[47] Ultimately, a formal territorial organization can save politicians work down the line, provided that it still remains intact and accessible to a party's vote-winning members.[48]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, an expansive territorial organization provides the necessary infrastructure to expend other, auxiliary resources in the effort to wage successful campaigns. In other words, a territorial presence allows a party to remain visible during elections by increasing mobilization efforts and more generally enabling politicians to continue "doing their jobs." During collapse, remaining active at the ground level is of utmost importance and represents distinct advantages for officeholders/seekers. With a well-built territorial structure come the "party professionals"[49] – base-level leaders and militants – who can partake in "the business of politics" solely for the promotion of their local candidate (and by extension, their party). Crucially, these members often become responsible for executing a party's electoral strategy on the ground.[50] This is an unparalleled advantage for an ambitious politician and a clear reason to stay wedded to an ailing party.

By viewing post-collapse defections from a rational standpoint, we can gain a clearer understanding of why some parties are able to withstand the initial (and most severe) pressures of electoral collapse and why others suffer fatal membership losses that doom any prospects for recovery. Simply put, we should expect elites to remain when they have a sufficiently large resource advantage, which a territorial organization can best provide. However, "having the right tools" does not guarantee that these self-interested elites will use them beyond promoting their

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[47] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 161.
[48] For example, we can think back to the case of Peronism. In the absence of voter rejection, Peronist renovators were left with the difficult task of building their own informal machines to rival internal factions that refused to cede control of the party. After collapse, this may not be a feasible option for politicians, given that the weight of public disdain will loom heavily over the reform efforts. A formal organization, instead, is more likely to remain accessible in the context of collapse.
[49] V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co.), p. 314.
[50] Jennifer Cyr, "From Collapse to Comeback? The Fates of Political Parties in Latin America," Ph.D. diss., (Northwestern University, 2012), p. 97.

own individual survival. With lingering resources alone, a collapsed party has just as good a chance at remaining a loose alliance of regional party bosses who can subsist on local competition – and may have better reasons to do so over the long-term. To regain a foothold at the national level, however, requires these ambitious politicians to solve any outstanding collective action problems and develop a new national strategy for winning elections. If they opt not to do this, then they run the risk of being co-opted by rival parties or new representative actors that may see an opportunity to encroach on local territory. Thus, by asking *how* party elites can solve their collective action problems and unite under a national platform, we can begin to understand how a party can turn its survival into a national *comeback*.

Party Survival and Party Organization: Combining Flexibility with Fortification

Having access to stable resources is, no doubt, central to party survival. However, a major limitation of the resource-based argument is that it assumes that simply having them makes a national recovery "actionable."[51] It does not explain how certain resources are channeled into the hands of reformers at the territorial level and ultimately leveraged to transform a party's national-electoral strategy. To provide an answer to this question, we need to inquire about the role of party organization. Having detailed knowledge of a party's structure and composition is essential, as these factors shape *which* strategies party elites choose to pursue as well as "their capacity to pursue them."[52] Indeed, these actors seldom (if ever) have unmitigated agency when making strategic decisions. Political parties are ultimately complex and unique institutions with internal structures that guide the behavior of rank-and-file members. Thus, even

[51] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 15.
[52] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 12.

when actors identify an appropriate strategy to respond to a crisis, intraparty constraints can limit their ability to put it into action.[53]

In the context of party survival, we can think about party organization as helping or hindering ambitious politicians accomplish two goals. First, these members need to distance themselves from the national party leadership in the electoral arena. On the one hand, this distance is necessary due to the condition of voter rejection. By eschewing from the central party, territorial elites may save face and communicate a distinction between the party's (failed) national program and the candidate's local platform. Ideally, this will promote the party's competitiveness at the subnational level. On the other hand, however, this break also lays a basis for reform down the line, given that party leaders – those who presided over the collapse – will likely stand in the way of renovation. This coincides with the second goal: promoting change from within the party. Maintaining distance from discredited leaders is only half the battle. Reformers also need to conceive, pursue, and implement strategies that can revitalize the party's label among voters. Of course, this is often easier said than done, as any intraparty reform process is liable to produce bitter divisions in a party organization. After collapse, a party will be even more vulnerable in this respect, as factional disputes will have the potential to result in outright defections and sink any chance at recovery. Thus, to "bend a party without breaking it"[54] in this situation, reformers need intraparty institutions that establish some ground rules for the "reform battle." Specifically, these institutions should punish intransigence but should also represent the only legitimate form of conflict resolution within the organization. Ideally, this will provide reformers with both a formal avenue to challenge old leaders as well as mechanisms that

[53] As many point out, this is often the case (Koelble 1991, 1992; Kitschelt 1994; Levitsky 2003).
[54] I borrow this phrase from Leandro Alem, founder of the Radical Party in Argentina.

force these old leaders to comply with the result or face consequences (especially if they lose the reform battle).

I argue that the two above goals become achievable when a party organization exhibits two composite characteristics. The first is that it must have *decentralized* channels of authority. This refers to an internal decision-making apparatus that provides territorial elites with autonomy over their own resources as well as the flexibility to implement their own electoral strategies. Scholars have long-considered a flexible party organization better-able to survive and adapt out of crisis.[55] This is because it is largely understood to enhance leaders' abilities to "respond quickly and decisively to external challenges."[56] In the context of collapse, however, a flexible and responsive leadership can pose a serious problem in that it may very well lead to the early disbandment of a collapsed party.[57] To promote survival, flexibility instead must channel the ambition of territorial politicians by providing them the freedom to build and implement their own electoral strategies. Tangibly speaking, a decentralized structure often comes in the form of a national party organization that presides over various autonomous party committees at the subnational and district levels. However, it is important that these committees maintain complete (or virtually complete) control over how the party campaigns locally. In this configuration, subnational executives (governors and mayors) play a crucial role, since they are the actors that will ultimately dictate how this flexibility plays out.[58]

This kind of organizational flexibility leads to two residual effects – both of which foster leadership renovation.[59] First, politicians will be able to employ their own resources to put

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[55] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Koelble, 1994; Kitschelt, 1994.
[56] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 13.
[57] Given the "incentives to defect" examined above (also see the discussion of the ADN in Bolivia).
[58] E.g., Gibson, 1996; Leiras, 2007; Eaton, 2005.
[59] Laura Wills-Otero, "The Electoral Performance of Latin American Traditional Parties, 1978-2006: Does the Internal Structure Matter?," *Party Politics*, vol. 22, no. 6, November 2016, p. 758.

toward campaigns that communicate distance from the national party's message. Typically, this entails a focus on "local" campaign issues and often an ad-hoc policy platform that conforms to the preferences of these voters. By doing this, they preserve their own electability and thus their own individual survival. This responsiveness is important because it can prevent long-term electoral "harm"[60] to a party organization. Decentralization performs a second and more latent function, however, that can be considered the "secret ingredient" to party survival. When subnational elites are free to conduct electoral politics separate from the central party, they ultimately engage in a process of *strategy experimentation*. This stems naturally from the need to innovate at the local level and devise new plans for winning office. Subnational politicians are dynamic but ultimately self-serving party actors. For party survival, this is a good thing. As Schlesinger's classic work provides: "Ambition lies at the heart of politics. Politicians thrive on the preferments that office brings." Under the condition of voter rejection, we can expect these actors to have strong reasons to programmatically distance themselves from the central party. These reasons may grow as voters continue to juxtapose their leadership with that of the national party. Along the same lines, subnational politicians can also display competence in office that strengthens their popularity with the national electorate. Most importantly, however, these actors often represent a party's brain trust when it comes to implementing strategies on the ground.[61] As such, they are best-positioned to challenge a stagnant leadership – particularly if a subnational electoral strategy gains traction at the national level. Ultimately, subnational executives are party leaders in the making, and their drive to excel in office naturally coincides with their need to survive and renovate the party. When they have access to their own autonomous territories and

[60] Ibid., p. 760.
[61] As we see with the Peronist case as well as the PT case (McGuire 1997; Levitsky 2003; Samuels 2004).

the leeway to stray from the leadership on matters of strategy, they are much better positioned to engage in reform.

At the same time, intraparty reform is a volatile process. When a reform effort takes root inside a party organization, it is likely due to some external shock or profound crisis which it must confront.[62] In turn, these events are liable to produce dramatic internal rifts due to disputes that arise over potential courses of action as well as where to lay blame for failure. More simply put, electoral collapse creates a dramatic coordination problem for a party organization – particularly when it endures as a collection of regional politicians, each with unique preferences and motivations at the local level. Thus, although decentralized authority provides rank-and-file politicians with the flexibility and the leverage to challenge non-reformist factions (primarily the leadership), this means little if the reform effort itself leads to a party split.

For this reason, party organizations require a second characteristic if they are to survive long enough to stage a comeback: *routinized decision-making structures*. These can be understood in the context of party institutionalization, whereby party members become socialized to accept deliberative decisions reached via consensus. To put this notion into form, we can think of these structures in terms of party conventions, internal referenda, and primaries among members, as well as informal summits or meetings that occur on an ad-hoc basis. On the basis of conflict resolution, any of these can be a powerful commitment device for a party. Where they are absent, and a party is subject to erratic patterns of behavior, elites may be forced to engage in unsanctioned (or just basely unpredictable) tactics to initiate reform. The Argentine PJ, for example, was forced to build entirely new voter linkages when it faced the need to adapt – in the form *agrupaciones* that effectively "became alternative party organizations."[63] In the

[62] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Wilson, 1980; Wilson, 1994; Harmel and Janda, 1994.
[63] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 109.

context of collapse, this type of action – although it may yield speedy results – will likely not yield the desired one for survival. Rather, it poses what is more likely to be a riskier and more difficult course of action, and ultimately signals that elites probably have stronger reasons to pursue strategies outside the party than in it.

Routinized decision-making channels can also help resolve another major pitfall of post-collapse reform by limiting the unilateral behavior of old guard leaders who have the power to stifle adaptation.[64] To borrow Kitschelt's terminology, these structures prevent "innovation from above,"[65] which can only exacerbate tensions under the constraint of voter rejection. Limiting the unilateral tendencies of leaders is important, particularly to prevent a rupture. When a party builds internal mechanisms to limit this type of behavior, it provides a basis for conflict resolution and promotes "organizational trust" among members.[66] Most importantly, however, is that these structures raise the costs of behavior that deviates from institutionalized, predictable patterns.[67] In effect, embattled party leaders should be more likely to act via a narrower range of options and refrain from any drastic displays of power – if for no other reason that they believe deviating from these options will ultimately be counter-productive or more costly.

In critical moments of crisis, deliberation is often seen at odds with quick adaptability. This is because it may "slow-down" internal decision-making and limit the ability of party actors to maneuver around a crisis. However, there are good theoretical reasons to assume that institutionalized rules and procedures have the power to compel the behavior of party actors – even those with primarily material incentives – in a way that promotes survival. On the one hand, if these rules and structures already exist, we can anticipate that those who remain committed

[64] E.g., Wills-Otero, 2015, 2016; Rosenblatt, 2018.
[65] Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, p. 213.
[66] E.g., Kestler, Lucca, and Krause, 2019; Randall and Svåsand, 2002; Harmel and Svåsand, 1993.
[67] Levitsky, "Institutionalization and Peronism," p. 80.

after collapse will do so, at least in part, because they value the party qua institution and continue to take pride in its organizational traditions.[68]. However, at minimum, these actors are also likely to already be "socialized" to take these norms and procedures for granted, and thus abide by them (almost) automatically.[69] Importantly, politicians that remain committed to a collapsed party – while they may be self-interested – are not necessarily rash opportunists.[70] While they ultimately follow their material incentives, they are also more likely to already display a high baseline commitment to their party's inner workings (provided that these workings are firmly institutionalized), and thus will be susceptible to the "rules of the game." Crucially, this type of routinization is not something a party can cultivate in the wake of collapse. Strong and decisive decision-making channels must already exist for them to influence party elites and how they view survival.

Party survival, just as it relies on the presence of resources, relies on an organization that helps reformers to maximize them and use them strategically. Party scholars often consider flexibility and endurance to be mutually exclusive when examined on their own. This is because party adaptation literature tends to emphasize responsiveness during crisis rather than conflict resolution. However, post-collapse situations require finesse and careful deliberation over speed and blunt force innovation. Thus, when combined, decentralization and routinization form a unique composite that facilitates *long-term recovery* – a necessary advantage when engaging in reform amidst voter rejection.

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[68] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 11; also see Haslam, Reicher, and Platow, 2010; Panebianco, 1988.
[69] Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1994, pp. 55-69.
[70] An opportunist would more likely jump ship at the first sign of trouble.

From Survival to Revival: National Competition and the Leadership Deficit

Finally, this chapter must address what all the above work is intended to produce: a national-electoral recovery. To start this discussion, we must acknowledge that elsewhere, a "party revival"[71] has been defined quite broadly. Perhaps because it is such a rare event to begin with, the few scholars who directly address this issue generally agree that it (minimally) requires a party to *win a national election*: presidential or legislative.[72] However, this low theoretical bar appears monumentally difficult to clear, considering that only a handful of parties worldwide have collapsed and come back at the national level – even as peripheral competitors. In this respect, Latin America is no exception. Across the region only three parties have gone on to win a national contest after collapse: UCR (Argentina), AD (Venezuela), and (more controversially) APRA (Peru). Moreover, when a national revival does happen, it usually takes a party years to achieve. The three above parties all spent long periods in the political wilderness before reemerging as national competitors.[73]

The challenge of revival ultimately stems from a collapsed party's inability to market itself to the national electorate. In general, the post-collapse climate of voter rejection will make this an inherently difficult task, given that high levels of public hostility directed at established parties will lead to an influx of new electoral competition and potential adversaries. Party

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[71] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*.

[72] For example, Cyr (2017: 9) holds that a "revival" occurs "when a party recovers its national-electoral relevance, such that it shapes and informs the national party system once again." Although she theorizes that this could occur via multiple pathways, her cases all demonstrate that recovery is most viable when it is, in turn, "a function of the recovery of a party's independent vote share in a presidential or legislative election." Alan Ware (2009), on the other hand, is a bit stricter in his view. His argument mandates that a party must reclaim its central *competitive* role in national elections rather than its auxiliary influence on other parties (what Sartori referred to as "blackmail potential").

[73] For APRA, it took approximately 6-7 years (roughly 1995 to 2001); for AD and UCR, recovery took well over a decade (18 and 12 years, respectively).

scholars have long studied the fundamental connection between major party decline and new party entry.[74] Foundational studies tracing party change in post-war Europe, for example, note the rise of various electoral movements and "clubs,"[75] as well as minor parties that contributed to fragmentation and a profound reshaping of the political space.[76] In a much more recent account, Laroze[77] convincingly lends weight to this idea by exploring the isolated effect of party collapse on the entry and success of new parties. In this view, new parties form to take advantage of the programmatic vacuum left by the rejection of a long-standing competitor; they are successful when that policy space is relatively uncontested.

Once again, Latin America serves as no exception to the prevailing wisdom. From Argentina to Ecuador, post-collapse party systems have deteriorated to a startling degree.[78] If life in Latin American politics is indeed a Hobbesian endeavor, then the post-collapse party system – in which revival must take place – resembles a burgeoning jungle of competition. At the height of crisis, *piqueteros* and informal electoral movements litter the competitive landscape and seize upon the public's calls for new representation.[79] After this initial shock subsides, these calls mount into more coherent demands, which provide momentum to political "outsiders,"[80] "electoral professionals,"[81] and run of the mill "amateurs-turned-politicians"[82] that can position themselves as options for change – in large part simply by campaigning against traditional

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[74] E.g., Wolinetz, 1979; Harmel and Robertson, 1985; Hug, 2000, 2001; Tavits, 2006; Lago and Martínez, 2010; These studies (particularly the more recent ones) also speak to the conditions that explain new party success in addition to their reasons for formation.
[75] E.g., Wilson, 1988; Wolinetz, 1979.
[76] E.g., Kirchheimer 1966.
[77] Denise Laroze, "Party Collapse and New Party Entry," *Party Politics*, vol. 25, no. 4, July 2019, pp. 559-568.
[78] See the contributions in Scott Mainwaring, *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[79] Miguel Carreras, "The Rise of Outsiders in Latin America, 1980-2010: An Institutionalist Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 45, no. 12, December 2012, pp. 1451-1482.
[80] E.g., Carreras, 2012; Mainwaring, 2018, Chapter 3.
[81] E.g., Panebianco, 1988; Espíndola, 2006; Lanzaro, 2011.
[82] Steven Levitsky and Mauricio Zavaleta, "Why No Party-Building in Peru?," in Steven Levitsky, et. al., eds., *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 412-439.

parties that have longer histories, and therefore more "baggage" to weigh them down.[83] In a majority of cases, the decline and collapse of major competitors has contributed to what can most accurately be described as *intermittent* party competition.[84] In the most extreme instances (as seen in the Andes), once-stable competitive norms between parties have broken down completely, and party systems are, more or less, "created anew at each election cycle."[85]

To make matters worse, a collapsed party is much likelier to lack an invaluable resource that can help "cut through" both negative voter perceptions and new competition: marketable candidates to field for "high value"[86] political offices. In most cases, this primarily concerns presidential or vice-presidential candidates who wield broad "external appeal."[87] Though, given that recovery also includes legislative victories, we can expand this understanding (as do existing accounts) to high-ranking positions in the legislature, provided that they are a visible representation of the "party-in-office."[88] This problem is particularly dire in instances where

[83] Allyson Lucinda Benton, "Dissatisfied Democrats or Retrospective Voters? Economic Hardship, Political Institutions, and Voting Behavior in Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 38, no. 4, May 2005, pp. 417-442; Loxton, "Authoritarian Successor Parties," p. 164.

[84] Cyr (2017: 65-70) conceptualizes three types of post-collapse party system: *atomized*, *regionalized*, and *hyper-fluid*. However, I choose to consolidate these under the more general label of intermittent for two reasons: First, there is significant empirical overlap among these categories. For example, Cyr distinguishes between atomized (Peru) and regionalized (Venezuela) party systems due to the former being "highly individualized" and the latter being characterized by a "flurry of party-building" (66). However, there is little evidence to suggest that new "parties" in Venezuela were significantly more institutionalized (or successful) than those that emerged in Peru or in Bolivia (apart from the MAS and perhaps PSUV). This overlap creates a second issue – especially considering the hyper-fluid category – which is that it is difficult to substantiate any firm patterns that would require us to separate these into three distinguishable types. All of Cyr's cases (Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia) contain some aspects of "hyper-fluidity," or the absence of any "discernable patterns of competition" (67).

[85] Levitsky and Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties," p. 12; this quote references Peru specifically. However, the same can be said of Bolivia and Ecuador during each's party system crisis during the early 2000s. All traditional parties failed to revive after collapse and were replaced by ill-defined multiparty coalitions and ephemeral candidate-centered movements. Venezuela can also be analyzed alongside these cases, particularly during the early years of the Chavez government. However, as the government consolidated its power and institutionalized the PSUV, party competition became much more organized along a regime/opposition cleavage.

[86] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 50.

[87] Brandon Van Dyck, "External Appeal, Internal Dominance: How Party Leaders Contribute to Successful Party Building," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2018, pp. 1-26.

[88] For example, legislative "bloc leaders" in the senate or lower chamber(s). While these positions are not necessarily considered to be the "most influential," Cyr (2017, 2016) finds that they often help a party stay relevant in national politics, particularly when they receive substantial press coverage (as these politicians often do).

leadership renovation becomes complicated or is unsuccessful, as old guard members will likely continue to dominate national party strategy and prevent the necessary reforms for success. Alternatively, persistent divisions may prevent a necessary renovation of the leadership.[89] In these cases, a national recovery is extremely unlikely.

Still, a leadership deficit can also arise because of internal reform itself. On the one hand, even where old leaders are dislodged from power, a new leadership cadre will likely rise from subnational prominence and therefore struggle to gain national support from an openly hostile electorate. On the other hand, and even more problematically, is that these *new* leaders may be prone to errors that damage their appeal among voters. Indeed, in such a fierce climate of voter rejection, scholars should expect mistakes to be made. Tanaka, for instance, explains how grave missteps on the part of elites sullied recovery prospects for Peruvian parties during elections in 1989 and 1990. In Peru, leadership squabbles contributed to "sharp internal conflicts"[90] that resulted in poor messaging and unclear electoral alliances (for AP, but also for the United Left coalition). In these situations, a party will almost certainly fail to communicate an effective change to voters and thus will be unable to alleviate some of the pressure of rejection.[91]

To lack candidates with sufficiently broad popularity is an obvious problem for any party with national aspirations. This is because a candidate's individual popularity can be "electorally

[89] For instance, as occurred for the PC in Uruguay. The party exists as a small territorial organization due to its internal divisions, which prevent reform (e.g., Rosenblatt, 2018: Chapter 6).
[90] Tanaka, "From Crisis to Collapse," p. 55.
[91] In fact, Tanaka explains that this is exactly what happened to AP in Peru. Internal divisions regarding electoral strategy ultimately weakened the party and its position in the FREDEMO alliance. In the end, Vargas Llosa was able to establish his campaign on a neoliberal reform agenda against the preferences of AP. This was a problem because "this campaign did not inspire enthusiasm in the electorate, especially after the popular mobilization against neoliberal reforms" that were transpiring across the region (Tanaka, 2006: 55). Interestingly, Cameron (1992) elaborates on this case with a rational choice framework. His account verifies that "the obstacle to unity [for FREDEMO] was a faction within AP" (239). This intransigence can, in turn, be seen as a main obstacle to AP's national revival.

crucial,"[92] particularly in presidential systems where campaigns are often mounted around specific personalities.[93] For new parties, as Van Dyck shows, externally appealing leadership can make the difference between failed or successful party-building. I argue that it can also make the difference between failed or successful party revival. The case of APRA allows us to briefly demonstrate this point, but also provides an opportunity to qualify its exceptional place in Cyr's study. Throughout Latin America, APRA is the only party to have kept a viable figurehead after collapse – in the grandiose persona of Alan Garcia. Garcia's resurgent popularity and eventual reelection can primarily be explained by his targeted victimization under the Fujimori regime. From 1992 to 2001, the former president was exiled from Peru under pending arrest charges and unable to contest the presidency. Once the regime fell and Peru began its transition back to democracy, Garcia was among the few politicians with national recognition, and thus in a favorable position to run on the APRA ticket and possibly re-establish the party as the standard bearer of Peruvian democracy. This advantage eventually paid off for APRA (but mostly for Garcia) in spades. Despite finishing in a narrow second place in 2001, the party won decisively in 2006 and Garcia assumed the presidency for a second time in Peru's history. Without Garcia, however, it is much harder to say whether APRA would have experienced the same level of success.[94] The context of redemocratization likely had a critical influence on voters' perceptions of his candidacy. Garcia's first presidency was not particularly successful. His government from

[92] Van Dyck, "External Appeal, Internal Dominance," p. 3.
[93] See both David J. Samuels, "Presidentialized Parties: The Separation of Powers and Party Organization and Behavior," *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, May 2002, pp. 461-483; David J. Samuels and Matthew S. Shugart, *Presidents, Parties, and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[94] Sanchez (2008) offers circumstantial evidence that things may not have gone as well without Garcia. APRA's electoral success only turned around when the party switched its candidate for the 2001 general election from Abel Salinas to Garcia. In national elections the year prior, APRA suffered its worst result ever – only capturing 1 percent of the national vote. When Garcia returned from exile and announced his candidacy, APRA's national polling numbers jumped 25 percent almost immediately.

1985 to 1990 was largely blamed for sending Peru's economy into a deep recession that would ironically lay the groundwork for Fujimori's rise to power.[95] The demise of Fujimori's regime was the ideal cover to rebrand Garcia as a symbol of "pre-Fujimorismo democracy," and the time elapsed helped voters forget about APRA's less-than-stellar track record in office. Ultimately, Garcia's lingering presence provided APRA with the good fortune it needed to experience its (short-lived) revival.[96]

The APRA case illuminates the connection between party revival and marketable leadership. My theory agrees with Cyr that electable leaders are a valuable resource for a collapsed party. However, it stresses that their presence spans beyond the "relational"[97] and actually provides a strategic edge during elections compared to other "leaderless" collapsed parties. Garcia's presence as "leader from afar" enabled APRA militants to take to the streets earlier than other challengers – "well before"[98] the 2001 general election. On top of this advantage, the party's message was clearer and more decisive than its counterparts, mainly because Garcia *was* the party's only message: the APRA campaign slogan for the 2001 election was "*Alan vuelve*" (Alan returns). Although this message was not enough to secure victory in 2001, APRA demonstrated its ability to mobilize around a candidate and be competitive at the national level – which is verified by its victory in 2006. AP and PPC, on the contrary, both

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[95] Kenneth Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case," *World Politics*, vol. 48, no. 1, October 1995, p. 93-4; Carol Graham, "Peru's APRA Party in Power: Impossible Revolution, Relinquished Reform," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 3, Autumn 1990, pp. 75-115; In fact, by 1987 massive public sector strikes sent Garcia's approval rating plummeting to just 36 percent – half of what it was a year prior (*Wall Street Journal*, 10/26/1987).

[96] This point is bolstered by the fact that in 2011, when constitutional term-limits prevented Garcia from seeking a second consecutive term, APRA fell prey to intense infighting when trying to choose a successor to lead its presidential ticket. After engaging in puzzling alliance talks, APRA ultimately declined to field a presidential candidate. In legislative elections, the party won a paltry four seats, marking its second "fall from grace" as a national contender.

[97] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 135.

[98] Ibid., pp. 137-8.

lacked national candidates[99] with the same electoral potential as Garcia,[100] and thus struggled to rebuild their support at the national level.[101]

Ultimately, a candidate or figurehead with broad national appeal does not provide a guaranteed pathway to revival. However, it should be viewed as a necessary condition for a collapsed party to be able to *stand alone* and wage a national campaign for two key reasons. On the one hand, a competitive candidate can act as a campaign “centerpiece” and mobilize crucial resources and militants toward electoral victory – as demonstrated by the APRA case. On the other hand, this advantage also helps project a revitalized “face” to voters and communicate a break with the recent past,[102] but crucially in a way that justifies a party’s continued relevance in relation to new representative actors. For APRA, the 2001 campaign focused on the message of rekindling democracy, and Garcia turned out to be an effective conduit to deliver that message, despite his complicated history in office. Most parties, however, will not be as fortunate as APRA, and will therefore have to search for other pathways to revival.

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[99] Importantly, they all lacked strong subnational territorial resources as well (compared to other cases), making leadership an even more suggestive variable for party survival/revival in Peru. Figure 5.1 in Cyr’s (2017: 123) study notes each party’s subnational electoral decline.

[100] These parties lacked strong candidates for reasons alluded to during the discussion on party organization. AP is a largely personalistic party, rooted in the popular appeal of Fernando Belaunde Terry. After Belaunde Terry’s presidency (1980-1985) and the party’s defeat in 1985, he retired from politics, leaving AP headless in the run-up to the 1990 general election. This helps explain AP’s decision to ally with Vargas Llosa and why the coalition was ultimately a tense one. PPC, on the other hand, never truly developed a leader with national appeal. The party’s electoral support is still predominantly situated in Lima.

[101] AP has suffered an immense decline since its defeat in 1990 (allied with Vargas Llosa). Except for the 2011 election (during which the party supported Alejandro Toledo’s candidacy), AP has not garnered over 7 percent in a national presidential election since 1990. In 2020, however, AP experienced a marked resurgence in legislative elections after gaining 20 seats. it is now narrowly the largest party in Peru’s highly fragmented congress with 24 seats in total. PPC never managed to place higher than third after its collapse (competing on the rebranded UN ticket). Its leader, Lourdes Flores, gained notably individual popularity as the coalition’s figurehead, but the PPC itself never recovered.

[102] For a similar idea on this, see Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Party Revival and Pre-Electoral Coalitions: Collective Action as an Alternative Strategy

The above discussion begs the question: what does a successful revival typically look like, given that a collapsed party will face such exceedingly high constraints? To begin at an answer, we can take a cursory glance at the remaining cases. Excluding APRA, UCR and AD represent the only true remaining cases of revival, and even these force us to dampen our expectations. Neither of these parties won a presidential contest outright (like APRA). However, UCR exceled to become a co-governing party after its 2003 collapse, and in doing so helped put an end to more than a decade of Peronist dominance in the executive. AD, by contrast, reemerged as a prominent fixture in Venezuela's democratic opposition, which managed to weaken the PSUV's hegemonic grasp on the legislature in 2016. Both are significant feats for parties that the literature has deemed "incoherent"[103] and "decayed."[104] Additionally (and puzzlingly), both the Radicals and AD remain the largest and best organized parties in their opposition fields. In Argentina, the UCR is still the second-most prominent force during elections, with large nationalized territory and a deeply entrenched organization.[105] AD, while its position is slightly more complicated due to Venezuela's contrasting democratic experience, continued to bear a large swathe of territory and critical resources compared to its allies in the MUD alliance until 2018.[106] At the same time, both parties lacked viable leaders and marketable candidates to field at the national level when they revived. This suggests that the UCR and AD

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[103] Carlos Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System: Fragmentation, Denationalization, Factionalization, Personalization, and Increasing Fluidity," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 260.
[104] Jana Morgan, "Deterioration and Polarization of Party Politics in Venezuela," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 291.
[105] E.g., Gervasoni, 2018; Jones and Mainwaring, 2003; Malamud 1997, 2008.
[106] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, pp. 153-54.

found an alternative way to transfer their resource advantages into success. This section offers a possible explanation for how they were able to accomplish this.

My central contention is that the key to a "leaderless" revival lies in a collapsed party's ability to pursue collective action with other parties during national elections. To understand the nature of this coordination and how it can aid in the process of revival, we first need to remember that its fundamental purpose for a collapsed party is to solve a problem of national-electoral marketability. Without a "dominant candidate" or popular figurehead to act as the party's electoral "face," there is a large possibility that it will struggle to both stand out among new competitors and mend its public image. Having established this purpose, we can deduce that the ultimate goal of collective action for a collapsed party should be to form a pre-electoral coalition (PEC) that is nationally competitive. Specifically, a PEC can refer to any situation in which "multiple parties choose to coordinate their electoral strategies rather than run for office alone." [107] Accordingly, PECs can vary considerably, both in terms of their composition as well as why they form. Golder notes that at times, PECs can be as simple as two parties signaling to form a government if in the event they perform well. Strøm and Müller,[108] on the other hand, explain that PECs are often highly formal, institutionalized via written agreements, and tensely negotiated to produce pre-planned electoral lists. Still, most of our knowledge on PECs is based on studies that analyze parliamentary democracies, given their high regularity in proportional electoral systems. However, scholars have noted that they also form for specific reasons in

[107] Sona Nadenichek Golder, "Pre-Electoral Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 36, no. 2, April 2006, p. 195.
[108] Kaare Strøm and Wolfgang C. Müller, "The Keys to Togetherness: Coalition Agreements in Parliamentary Democracies," *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3-4, 1999, pp. 255-282.

presidential systems as well. For example, Samuels[109] and Bunker[110] both agree that parties are more likely to merge if electoral rules are restrictive and tightly regulate the entry of new actors. Along the same lines, others have established a connection between party system fragmentation and an increased willingness to join a multiparty coalition during elections and in government.

Aside from these general qualities, there are good theoretical reasons to believe that PEC membership could help a collapsed party solve its marketability problem. On the one hand, it can help the party "stand out" at the national level, which is necessary when competing in a climate of voter rejection. This is intuitive when we consider that any PEC agreement in a presidential system requires multiple parties to formally support a single national candidate. Thus, membership alone should effectively solve the leadership deficit as well as any electoral coordination problems that arise from being leaderless (as discussed in the APRA case). On top of this, we can assume that the candidate with top billing will have sufficient external appeal if they are already poised to compete for the presidency.

However, membership in a coalition could also help a collapsed party mitigate the electoral threat from other competitive parties in the opposition. To understand this, we need to remember that unlike PECs in parliamentary systems, presidential PECs "always involve a nomination agreement."[111] This is important because it means that, through negotiations, an "alliance-seeking" party can wield considerable influence on the matter of down-ballot candidate nominations. This can be a major advantage for a collapsed party, which will likely face steeper

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[109] David J. Samuels, "The Gubernatorial Coattail Effects: Federalism and Congressional Elections in Brazil," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 62, no. 1, February 2000, pp. 240-253.
[110] Kenneth Bunker, "Coalition Formation in Presidential Regimes: Evidence from Latin America," Ph.D. diss., (London School of Economics, 2015).
[111] Marisa Kellam, "Why Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Presidential Systems?," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2015, p. 394.

competition just to gain access to ballots at the national level.[112] In this way, a collapsed party can avoid "battling it out" with opposition parties and instead seek mutually beneficial cooperation. Crucially, Kellam also argues that the presence of a formal agreement can provide smaller (or disadvantaged) parties with greater leverage to hold their allies accountable (particularly those that lead the coalition) once an alliance is established. By this logic, parties can strategically choose to lend their support to presidential candidates who are more inclined to back their policy-seeking goals. Crucially, PEC membership itself allows them to this exert pressure and ideally force a candidate to commit to certain policy concessions during the campaign, thereby raising the cost of deviating from these promises after the election.[113] This argument is convincing in light of additional studies that analyze coalition-formation as a strategy for weak presidents to overcome policy gridlock.[114]

Finally, PEC membership may also help a collapsed party mend its public image by communicating a "break with the past"[115] to national voters. This is a crucial step in the context of revival because it facilitates a party's long-term viability after collapse. PEC membership, in addition to providing a viable leader and access to candidate nominations, can give a collapsed party the ability to claim new programmatic associations, such as symbols or slogans, that may reinvigorate it with purpose at the national level. More simply put, it may help a party "rebuild its brand." Marek and Powell provide some preliminary evidence to support this assertion by studying PECs in Eastern Europe. They first note that in highly fragmented or in newly

[112] For instance, it may face primary contests and have to face-off against other opposition parties just to be nominated. This can prevent a national revival, especially if a collapsed party lacks a marketable candidate to begin with.
[113] Crucially, Colomer and Negretto (2005) point out that this "blackmail" power only works for smaller (or disadvantaged) parties before voting takes place.
[114] See Paul Chaisty, Nic Cheeseman, and Timothy J. Power, *Coalitional Presidentialism in Comparative Perspective: Minority Presidents in Multiparty Systems*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[115] See Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past*.

developing party systems,[116] voters often have better reasons to vote for PECs than for single parties. This is primarily because multiparty coalitions can act "as a substitute for developed party systems that offer voters clear electoral choices by being large political entities rather than small parties unable to have real impact on policymaking."[117] Interestingly, the authors also find that in many of their cases, PECs "provided a fairly consistent set of ideological reference points across elections."[118] In some instances, their presence even contributed to the formation of "deeper ideological" cleavages that "are consistent with a more developed party system."[119] Although suggestive, these findings help us shed light on the link between PEC formation and party revival in Latin America. In post-collapse party systems, voters have a similar dilemma in terms of where to redirect their support from traditional parties. By associating with new actors with less baggage and a more legitimate claim to national representation, a collapsed party may be able to launder its public image via coalition membership. The result is a programmatic "face lift," where voters see the new messaging of the coalition but not necessarily the individual members that comprise it. In the end, this is good for a collapsed party because it can form the basis of a new (or updated) brand – and thus a new linkage with voters – without fundamentally changing core aspects of its organization.[120]

At this point, we must note that there are clear risks associated with coalition formation, regardless of what type of alliance is being sought. On a general level, both Golder and Kellam point out that presidential PECs tend to create serious "distributional issues" between parties that

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[116] Post-collapse party systems are certainly comparable, in the sense that they also contain high fragmentation and generally unstable patterns of competition.
[117] Paulina A. Marek and G. Bingham Powell Jr., "Pre-Election Coalitions and Party System Development: Central European Variations," paper presented at the 2011 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, WA, 2 September 2011, p. 2.
[118] Ibid., 17.
[119] Ibid., 13.
[120] In other words, it can claim the residual benefits of being a new party without actually being "new."

can spoil any premise for collective action. This usually boils down to material concerns, or "who gets what" in terms of candidate nominations and cabinet appointments. In these situations, we can surmise that if a party already has prominent access to such advantages, they will be less inclined to "deal" with a potential ally who has little to offer. In the context of collapse and revival specifically, we can view the climate of voter rejection as a baseline reason that other parties will be averse to cooperation. Thus, to clear this obstacle, a collapsed party needs something good to offer its potential allies. Luckily, an intermittent party system may strengthen its bargaining position in this respect – particularly among new parties with national aspirations. In this type of electoral environment, a territorial organization can act as a powerful bargaining chip. For new parties that are more likely to forego organization-building, it represents a "formative" resource that they will desperately need to grow at the national level. It is also one that is intensely difficult to cultivate, especially for new parties in a rapidly changing competitive setting. Thus, gaining access to a territorial organization should be seen as a strong basis for collective action, because new parties will immediately benefit by expanding their electoral reach to new areas of a country. We should expect new parties to be the most motivated to do this during elections. Importantly, PEC membership is the gateway to this advantage.

Ultimately, the material incentives that motivate a collapsed party and a new party to coordinate derive from their common plight in the opposition. In a sense, both need one another to satisfy the mutual goal of national victory, especially when facing the constraints of an intermittent party system. If they forego collective action, there is a significant chance that it could end up strengthening a common enemy – namely, an incumbent that now has the advantage of a weak and fragmented opposition field. Across Latin America, ascendent presidents have readily exploited this advantage to marginalize opponents. The regimes of

Fujimori and Chavez (now Maduro), for example, brutally antagonized opposition parties through autocratic maneuvers that turned public frustration against modes of traditional representation.[121] However, presidents have opted for these tactics in democracies as well. For example, both Alvaro Uribe in Colombia and the Kirchners in Argentina sought to co-opt opposition parties through various institutional mechanisms and were quite successful in doing so.[122] Thus, opposition actors not only have the material incentives to work together in a post-collapse environment, but they also have strong reasons *to act upon these incentives*, given the potential stakes. This, combined with the above coordination problems, is likely why we see revival take place in a context of multiparty cooperation and practically never occur when a party operates alone.

In the end, PEC membership alone does not guarantee revival. Rather, we should treat this pathway as the only viable solution to the various constraints that weigh a party down in the aftermath of collapse. In this sense, it becomes a "natural" tendency in the post-collapse party system – not just for collapsed parties, but for parties more generally. However, whether PEC membership fosters a revival (or happens at all) depends on how party elites pursue negotiations and avoid intransigence that can ruin a mutually beneficial alliance and sink each member's chances in the long run.[123] In this way, achieving a national revival is no different from avoiding defections or engaging in adaptation. At each step, party elites can rely on their rational tendencies to survive an alternative outcome that is unknown, unmanageable, and thus inherently

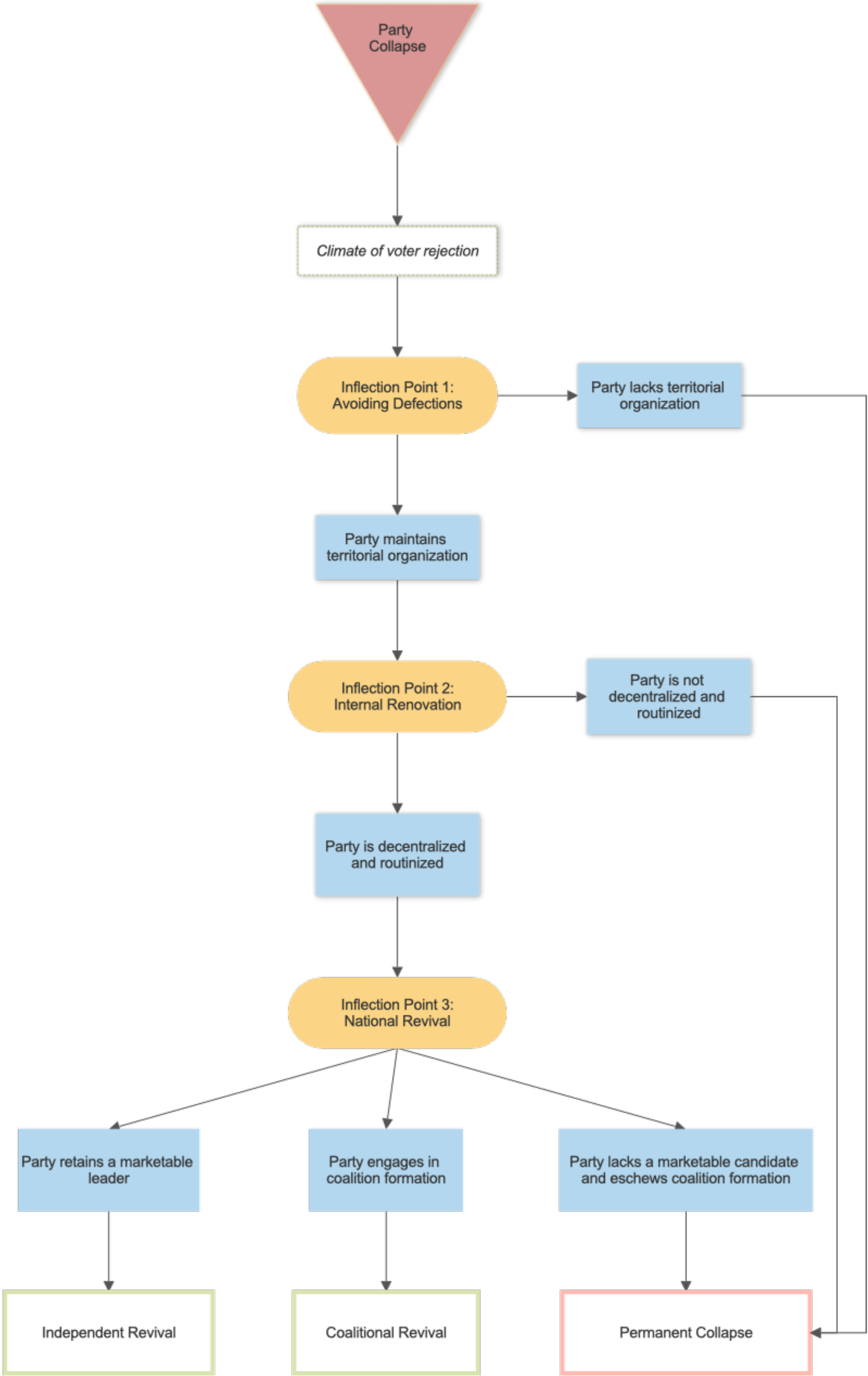
[121] E.g., Levitsky and Cameron, 2003; Morgan, 2011; López Maya, 2014.
[122] Juan Albarracín, Laura Gamboa, and Scott Mainwaring, "Deinstitutionalization without Collapse: Colombia's Party System," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 227-254; Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System," p. 258.
[123] Tanaka (2006) and his analysis of AP and FREDEMO makes this all too clear.

riskier. This guiding framework can lead to a national revival as long as elites see their fates tied to their party organization(s).

Observable Implications

To conclude this chapter, we can briefly discuss the observable implications of my argument. The theoretical framework applied throughout pushes us to view "party survival-to-revival" as a three-stage process: a collapsed party must live through the initial shock of electoral rejection; it must then muster the strength to reform itself from within; and finally, it needs to put together a slate of competitive candidates at the national level – or sidle up to allies that can help it do this in the absence of a strong leadership profile. The major advantage of this approach is that it allows us to observe potential evidence in conjunction with each stage of a party's post-collapse trajectory. In other words, it suggests *what* evidence to look for, as well as *when* it should be available for observation. Through this framework, we can extract five relevant implications with respect to empirical testing. The first can be observed at the earliest stage of the post-collapse cycle, when party elites are under the most intense pressure to defect. My argument stresses that ambitious politicians should be more likely to jump ship after collapse if their party lacks a robust territorial organization. Equally, it asserts that those who remain will generally be linked to a territorial machine or seek to build in-roads with one if they are not already. Importantly, this organizational advantage must exist before collapse; a party cannot engage in organization-building while in the throes of crisis. The implication here is that a politician will choose to exit the party if they do not have access to territorial resources.

Figure 2.1: Party Survival and Revival as a Process



If this claim is valid, scholars should expect one of two things to happen. The first possibility is that a party will lack a territorial organization at the time of collapse. In this case, defections must be treated as imminent and will likely apply to officeholders that face the greatest resource constraints in the post-collapse setting. Politicians, if they do not abandon politics completely, will almost certainly seek office via an alternative method of electioneering – possibly in the form of a new personalistic party or an independent candidacy. Whether or not these defections occur rapidly (before the next election cycle) or gradually is not always clear and can vary depending on the level of organizational support a collapsed party can provide its rank and file during crisis. However, the bottom line is that if a party collapses without a territorial organization, it will ultimately fail to serve the individual electoral goals of its politicians, who are necessary to foster internal reform. A preliminary scan of cases broadly supports this claim. Of the 10 now-defunct parties included in my comparative data set, about half were built as personalistic vehicles (APRA, AP, ADN, and PR-PSC).[124] The remaining (PAN, COPEI, MIR, MNR, PC) were either weakly organized to begin with or suffered from severe constraints that eroded their territorial reach over time.[125] All of these parties fell prey to severe membership defections, the vast majority of which occurred after collapse.

The second option is that a party can collapse *with* a territorial organization. In this case, we can find confirmatory data by examining *how* loyal elites survive electorally by remaining in the party – particularly at the subnational level. Crucially, this assumes that these members are foregoing defection because they rely on their party's organizational resources and are not likely

[124] E.g., Crisp, Levine, and Molina (2003); Martz (1999: 646); Crabtree (2000: 167); additionally, Lazar (2004) conducts an ethnographic study exploring personalistic party linkages in Bolivia.
[125] For the latter point, scholars have made a series of recent claims that point to various conditions that have eroded once-established party organizations (e.g., Muñoz and Dargent, 2016; Bruhn, 2016; Van Dyck, 2017; Morgan, 2018).

to cultivate independent resources without party membership. Thus, “going it alone” poses an acute risk. For the same reason, *loyalists* are more likely to come in the form of a dominant subnational or local executive (governor vs. mayor). This is because these positions often facilitate an independent resource base. Given this level of independence, we should initially anticipate these elites to diverge with the national party in terms of electoral strategy and messaging, but perhaps from one another as well. To visualize this point, we can think of it as a party organization expanding to absorb the blow of collapse. As such, party unity will breakdown (at least temporarily) and politicians will pursue whatever electoral strategy helps them reap voter support in the short-term. At the same time, however, subnational and local elites may criticize their party as an electoral tactic; they may challenge one another in highly public displays; they may even threaten to renounce their membership in an effort to display their commitment to local voters.

The final implications have to do with how these elites can pull together and mobilize a national-electoral strategy. On the one hand, this requires formal organizational channels (such as party conventions) that broker conflict resolution. Without these, any process of internal reform is liable to break down, as elites may need to resort to extra-institutional measures to salvage their career prospects. Importantly, these structures *must exist before collapse occurs* (as the following chapter discuss further). However, a national revival also has to do with larger dynamics of party competition. Ultimately, to make up for the condition of voter rejection, new (and organizationally underdeveloped) parties must emerge and display tendencies toward multi-party cooperation.

Chapter 3 – The Origins, Structure, and Persistence of an Elite-Based Party

Political parties, especially established ones, do not survive and recover by accident. In the rare instance that survival and revival do happen, it is because a party has already developed and maintained "enduring" features that both insulate its organization from crisis and facilitate its recuperation at the national level. For example, many mass party organizations can rely on a secure "electorate of belonging"[1] that may provide enough voter support to ride out a crisis at the polls or avoid it completely. A collapsed party benefits from this advantage when it falls back on its lingering subnational support in order to persist at the ground level.[2] Additionally, as Levitsky and many others[3] point out, entrenched mass parties also "provide important electoral advantages, such as stored knowledge and experience, activists for campaigns, and channels for distribution and patronage."[4] In the context of party revival, this type of "grass-roots" mobilization can make a critical difference during national elections, particularly when we recall that new opponents are much likelier to be organizationally underdeveloped and will therefore lack access to such advantages. More simply put, a party organization *must be built to survive and recover* from collapse. It cannot develop a strong organization on its own once crisis has already set in.[5]

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[1] Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 267; Also see Wolinetz, 1988, p. 310.
[2] Perhaps a notable difference here is that in the context of collapse, an electorate of belonging is geographically scattered on a territorial basis and confined to subnational elections.
[3] E.g., Peter Mair, "Party Politics in Contemporary Europe: A Challenge to Party?" *West European Politics*, vol. 7, no. 4, October 1984, p. 180; Alan Ware, "Activist-Leader Relations and the Structure of Political Parties: 'Exchange' Model and Vote-Seeking Behavior in Parties," *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 22, January 1992, pp. 73-5.
[4] Steven Levitsky, "Crisis, Party Adaptation, and Regime Stability in Argentina: The Case of Peronism, 1989-1995," *Party Politics*, vol. 4, no. 4, October 1998a, p. 451.
[5] Additionally, the work of Van Dyck (2017) provides support for this claim by showing that new parties fail similarly because they fail to develop enduring organizations.

However, a party requires more than the "assets to survive." It must also develop "survival instincts" that guide it and its members through crisis mediation. We can gain a sense of these instincts by examining a party's internal structure and the institutional norms that it generates with respect to conflict resolution. For instance, if a party has "well-institutionalized rules and procedures"[6] to handle internal disputes, members "come to expect behaviors within a relatively narrow range of possibilities."[7] In theory, we should expect this condition to make party members more likely to engage with formal channels of conflict resolution and therefore less likely to act rashly or in a way that jeopardizes the long-term viability of the party. In the context of party survival and revival, this is essential because – like continued access to resources – it provides ambitious politicians with a strong reason to stay committed during crisis. In the end, routine norms that develop around conflict resolution may be a reason to exercise loyalty in the wake of collapse, provided that deviating from such norms entails substantial costs. An enduring and routinized organization is thus a necessary condition for both survival and revival because without one, political aspirants cannot trust that their party affiliation can secure their "personal and fundamental goals"[8]

The *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Party, UCR), over its extended history, has developed both the assets and instincts to survive. Unlike its counterpart in the *Partido Justicialista* (Peronist Party, PJ), the UCR stems from Argentina's landowning elite and forged its organization as a pressure group that sought to expand political participation to a growing professional class. In doing so, early Radicals constructed Argentina's first nationalized party

[6] Steven Levitsky, "Institutionalization and Peronism: The Concept, the Case, and the Case for Unpacking the Concept," *Party Politics*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 1998, p. 81.
[7] Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1994, p. 58.
[8] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5.

organization, which its politicians would use to initially dominate national elections from the turn of the twentieth century up until the Great Depression. However, by virtue of its wide-spanning history, the party has experienced both soaring highs and crushing lows in terms of its electoral performance. Since Argentina's most recent democratic transition in 1983, the UCR has performed inconsistently as a national force – although its blunders in office have been inimitably repetitive. Over nearly four decades, a Radical has occupied the Casa Rosada[9] only twice – during the presidencies of Raul Alfonsín (1983-89) and Fernando de la Rua (1999-2001).[10] Each administration ended prematurely and amid a profound economic crisis (for which they were largely blamed).

However, as a territorial actor, the Radical Party has been remarkably persistent if not an "uneven" electoral performer. In every province, it continues to rank only second to the PJ in terms of membership and remains a consistent top finisher in subnational elections. For this reason, it tends to stand out among Latin America's traditional parties – many of which have eroded at the ground level.[11] This chapter will argue that this persistence can be attributed to its *decentralized* but *routinized* party organization. From the Radical Party's early beginnings, power and influence have largely been concentrated in the hands of fragmented personalities. However, the party adopted formal channels to broker unity and compromise during its proto foundations in the 1890s. The UCR's two co-executive leadership bodies – the *Comité Nacional* and the *Convención Nacional* – jointly reflect this dual characteristic in that they tend to only wield direct influence over the party's operations during national elections. Even then, these

[9] Argentina's presidential palace.
[10] More recently, however, the UCR served as a co-governing party in Mauricio Macri's administration (2015-19).
[11] For examples, see Fernando Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

bodies are ultimately deliberative organs that include multiple party professionals and politicians; many representing their provincial or local constituencies.[12] Thus, decentralization and routinization when combined, have enabled the UCR to "expand and contract" during moments of crisis. When facing defeat at the national level, Radical politicians have an advantage in that they may fall back on their territorial resources. However, when the opportunity to mobilize at the national level arises, these aspirants can pull together via the party's system of internal deliberation.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. The first section traces the UCR's early history and origins as an elite-based party. It shows that, from the start, the UCR was designed and maintained to solve the career aspirations of upper middle-class elites. Through its recruitment of territorial party bosses, the Radical organization developed into a vast and decentralized party machine, achieving full national status by the early 1900s. It also constructed highly regimented internal structures, such as multi-level committees and national convention bodies, primarily aimed to solve candidate selection issues at the national level. The second half analyzes the UCR's more recent electoral history since 1983. It attempts to draw a connection between the party's formative development and its ability to endure through successive crises in Argentina's most recent democratic era.

The UCR's Elite-Based Origins: Leandro Alem and the Unión Cívica

[12] Mariana Laura Prats, "I Will Survive: Resources, Strategies, and Institutional Framework in Political Parties' Lives: The Case of the Unión Cívica Radical within Federal Argentina," Ph.D. diss., (Universidad de Buenos Aires/Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne, 2016), pp. 157-9.

According to John Aldrich, the political party, in its most basic form, is "the ambitious politicians' creation."[13] Argentina's Radical Party is a quintessential example of this point. From its inception, the UCR has been a thoroughly elite-based party, and its organization, primarily constructed to solve for the ambitions of a bourgeoning upper-middle class elite. The party's origins, as David Rock explains, "…began in 1890 as a minority splinter group from within the elite. Only later, after the turn of the century, did it develop its populist features when it evolved into a coalition movement between the elite sector and important segments of the middle class."[14] At its outset, the UCR was born out of the political aspirations of Leandro N. Alem, the party's founder and first official president. Alem entered political life as a student activist while pursuing a law degree at the University of Buenos Aires – the same way many Radicals receive their introduction into politics today. After a brief and active period of militancy for the *Partido Autonomista*,[15] a stint he would share with other ambitious political upstarts, such as Carlos Pellegrini and Roque Sáenz Peña,[16] Alem initially sought self-promotion as a poet and writer for a newspaper daily. However, he failed to acquire any meaningful success in these roles.

By the 1870s, Alem chose to officially try his luck as a politician. In 1870 and 1871, he had developed clear national aspirations and ran for a seat in the Argentine national congress – both times unsuccessfully. A year later, however, "he had better luck"[17] and was elected as a deputy to the provincial legislature of Buenos Aires. As a provincial politician, Alem quickly

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[13] John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5.
[14] David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 41.
[15] This was a very short-lived coalition of provincial elites that favored autonomy from the newly established central government in Buenos Aires. After 1874, it would merge with the *Partido Nacionalista* to form the *Partido Autonomista Nacional* (National Autonomous Party, PAN).
[16] These figures would go on to become presidents of Argentina; Paula Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box: The Origins of the Argentine Radical Party in the 1890s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 95-6.
[17] Ibid., p. 96.

became adept at building and maintaining stable electoral coalitions. This was a valuable skill for Argentine politicians at the time, primarily because voting was still restricted, and thus electoral support was often scarce and/or conditional. To win recurrent elections, officeholders needed to acquire personal bases of support, which they often maintained via repressive or clientelistic tactics.[18] Alem, opted for different methods, however, and built his network of support through pure electioneering, mainly by organizing "elections among creole voters" [19] in Buenos Aires and its surrounds. Eventually, he expanded this support from his urban perch in the Balvanera neighborhood of the capital – a location that would give him the nickname, the "Lord of Balvanera." Alem's status as an ascendant political boss garnered him attention from a growing segment of the country's political elite. From his position in government, he was quick to leverage his growing popularity to fuel his national ambitions. In 1877, he joined a small group of defectors dubbed the *Partido Republicano* (Republican Party), which had split from the ranks of the *autonomistas*. As Alonso explains, this alliance

> …experienced a brief period of success, which took Alem to the legislature in 1878, but the del Valle-Alem ticket was defeated in the elections for the governorship and vice-governorship of the province of Buenos Aires in 1878 by Carlos Tejedor. The Partido Republicano disbanded after the electoral defeat, and most of its members, Alem included, returned to the Partido Autonomista.[20]

Alem's failure to achieve upward mobility in office forced him into a precarious position with respect to his aggrieved former party. Two years later, when faced with the decision to support the *autonomista* government's bill to establish Buenos Aires as a federal

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[18] Rock (1975: 62) details this quite nicely by noting that in the provincial interior, for example, "elections were still largely a matter of winning the support of the local *hacendado* [landowner], who could browbeat the peasants into voting whichever way he wished."
[19] Rock, *Politics in Argentina*, p. 43.
[20] Alonso, *From Revolution to the Ballot Box*, p. 96.

district, he chose to oppose and instead resign his seat altogether. For the next decade, Alem would remain absent from politics.

When Alem returned to public life by 1890, Argentina's political landscape had become dramatically unstable. The country had entered a severe economic depression that the embattled Juárez Celman government (1886-1890) was thoroughly unequipped to handle. The economic downturn generated routine episodes of civil unrest, all of which were intended to topple the incumbent government.[21] However, this backdrop also established a new premise for collective action among the regime's growing opposition. Becoming increasingly frustrated by the government's incompetence, a group of established politicians and military bosses joined forces under a new alliance – the *Unión Cívica* (Civic Union, UC). The Civic Union served as the organizational precursor to the Radical Civic Union. As a unified front, the alliance quickly achieved its central objective: a change of government, by violent means if necessary. In the end, violence was unnecessary, as mass insurrection and not the UC itself, was ultimately responsible in forcing Juárez Celman's hand into resignation. The alliance unsurprisingly found itself devoid of purpose once this happened. As Alonso explains, "disputes arose within the UC as soon as the euphoria over the president's downfall had evaporated and the leading members of the [Civic Union] needed to agree on policy."[22] This weak basis for unification would ultimately doom the UC as a national political actor.

The UC's main problem was that it was a beast with too many heads. Both Rock and Alonso trace the alliance's origins to two broad groupings. The first included Argentina's increasingly active university groups, which were "for the main part the younger sons of

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[21] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 41.
[22] Ibid., p. 70; In addition, Rock (1975: 42) explains that the elites who comprised the UC had vastly different reasons for resenting the Juárez Celman government – adding to the fragmented nature of the coalition.

patrician families."[23] The second group was comprised of "a number of personality-dominated political factions, which controlled politics in the city and over much of the province of Buenos Aires."[24] This faction included four subgroupings: supporters of Bartolomé Mitre (*mitristas*), *autonomistas*, Alem's republican-defector allies, and elements of the Catholic Church.[25] This not only made the UC "multidenominational" in its politics, but geographically diverse as well. Its fragmented nature, however, created several large coordination problems with respect to its ability to build a unified base of support. On the one hand, each faction differed dramatically in terms of "leaders, supporters, and platforms,"[26] making them, in many ways, irreconcilable as a single electoral option. On the other hand, none of their leaders, including Alem who was already well-established in the city, were able to build or merge this support outside of the Federal Capital.[27] Thus, there were few reasons to engage in party-building on a territorial scale, as voter support seemed to be *non-transferable* between the different factions.[28]

However, a much more obvious problem loomed in the distance for the UC and its constitutive parts. After the revolt of 1890, new elections were called by the interim Pellegrini government that would be held in two years' time. The UC's scattered leadership, now in a reasonable position to claim power, had to devise an amicable way to determine which of its *caudillos* would compete for the highest political office. The choice was unclear, as Mitre, Alem, and his extended allies, all had a legitimate claim to the presidency. At the same time, none had an outright majority of voter support. To solve this problem, the UC's leadership agreed on a

[23] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 42.
[24] Ibid., p. 43.
[25] Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box*, p. 70.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Rock (1975: 44) argues that this was largely due to the UC's "patrician elements" failing to connect with the concerns of urban middle class voters.
[28] On this point, we can also remember that voter support was more-often commanded and not "won over" during this era of Argentine politics.

bold and formative solution. Just months before the pending vote, the leaders "decided that the UC should follow the U.S. model and select its presidential candidate at a party convention,"[29] a significant innovation for the time. This decision launched a full-scale attempt to implement candidate selection procedures on a multi-level basis. By September of 1890, the UC held district level, provincial, and national conventions to select its entire slate of candidates that would stand for election by next April. These new institutional subgroupings of the UC were designed to regularize party activities. Importantly, in doing so, "the intention was to adopt a *decentralized form of party organization and democratic procedures in the selection of party candidate[s]*" [30] (emphasis added). However, these new structures failed to expand given the above concerns.

Ultimately, the UC's convention unraveled due to the ambitions of Mitre, whose supporters "prematurely launched his candidacy"[31] in the interior provinces. However, the leaders' differences were deeper seeded. Alem and his closest ally (by convenience), Bernardo de Irigoyen, also took issue with Mitre's conciliatory stance toward the PAN government (led by the incumbent Pellegrini). For Alem and Irigoyen, the choice was basically a question of whether to join the state or to oppose it and push for expanded suffrage.[32] This conflict came to a dramatic head in June of 1891, when the UC convened to hold a formal vote on whether to formally support the PAN government. Alonso details this scene quite nicely:

> On 27 June 1891, knowing they would not win over the party convention, the *mitristas* decided to split from the party before the convention was due to take place. The UC became definitively divided into *acuerdistas* (in favor of the agreement) and *anti-acuerdistas* (against the agreement), soon to be known respectively, as the Unión Cívica Nacional, led by Mitre, and the Unión Cívica Radical, led by Alem and Irigoyen.[33]

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[29] Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box*, p. 77.
[30] Ibid., p. 80.
[31] Ibid., p. 82.
[32] For a superbly detailed account of this rift, however, see Chapter 3 in Alonso (2000).
[33] Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box,* p. 89.

Thus, the UCR was officially born out of a party split. From the perspective of Alem this decision was understandable, especially when we consider that his individual power as a politician was largely concentrated in his ability to attract younger, urban voters who near-unanimously supported the expansion of (male) suffrage.[34] Aside from these officeseeking ambitions, the split also suited his lifestyle ambitions. When Alem became the UCR's president, he also became "the first professional politician in Argentina."[35] At the time, it was more common for political aspirants to hold other occupations. Once Radicalism was founded, Alem literally survived off the party, collecting a meager salary from the Radical committee of the Federal Capital. Thus, membership expansion was not solely good for the party's organizational fortitude, but also for the material well-being of its founder.

Still, the UCR hit a wall in its expansion by the time of Alem's death in 1896. In addition, Alem had encountered several problems in his personal life, among them mounting debts, personal loss, and deteriorating health.[36] In July of 1896, he committed suicide while inside of a horse-drawn carriage near his home in Buenos Aires. Historians continue to speculate as to why Alem chose to take his own life. What is clear is that his drive for power and prestige remained until the very end – he left a dramatic suicide note that, in retrospect, is difficult to not see as an intentional act to further synonymize his personal legacy with that of the Radical Party.[37] The UCR organization, however, would grow to transcend Alem's personality under the subsequent leadership of his nephew, and the young upstart he once appointed (via patronage) to the position of Balvanera neighborhood commissioner, Hipólito Yrigoyen.

[34] Ibid., p. 71.
[35] Ibid., p. 97.
[36] Ibid., p. 184.
[37] The note itself is a dramatic (if not rambling) call to let the "political will" of Radicalism perish with its founder.

The UCR's Formative Party-Building Phase: The Yrigoyen Years (1896-1930)

Between 1896 and 1905, the UCR underwent a drastic reorganization. During this time, the party fell prey to a series of partisan squabbles, primarily because Alem had not handpicked a viable successor to take his place. For nearly a decade, this conflict forced the UCR into organizational paralysis. However, the infighting would culminate around two prominent Radicals (who ironically bore the same surname): Bernardo de Irigoyen, a lawyer-turned-politician who helped found the UCR, and Hipólito Yrigoyen, a young political upstart and Alem's own nephew. The former had his electoral support, like Alem, situated in the city of Buenos Aires. Bernardo de Irigoyen represented a "moderate tendency"[38] within Radicalism, and one that would reprise itself in leadership coalitions after him for decades to come. As Alonso explains, this faction was "composed of those who wanted to change [the party's] original image to a new one of peaceful and well-organized opposition which would focus the party activities on elections and congressional representation."[39] The problem for Irigoyen, however, was that he lacked firm inroads with the UCR national committee. His electoral success mainly relied on his ability to court voters from other city-based parties and form multi-party tickets among emergent opposition groups.[40]

Like his uncle before him, Hipólito Yrigoyen quickly showed himself to be a uniquely adept politician and campaigner – traits he would use to ascend to the status of Radical icon. By the 1890s, his power inside the UCR had arguably outpaced Alem's. Since 1891, Yrigoyen had quite successfully[41] led the party's main organizational branch in Buenos Aires province. As a

[38] Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box*, p. 140.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, A skill that would become critical after the UCR's collapse in 2003!
[41] Alonso, *Between Revolution and the Ballot Box*, p. 182.

provincial boss, he took great advantage of the party's decentralized authority structure and operated "in complete independence of the [its] National Committee."[42] Also like Alem, Yrigoyen had become a master of political organization. This would explain his ability to rise through the UCR's ranks as a rogue, independent actor, despite his tense and often-hostile relationship with his uncle as well as the *alemnistas* who preserved this familial rivalry. However, Yrigoyen's autonomy from the city based UCR would prove to be an indispensable advantage. With it, he was able to quickly marginalize Bernardo de Irigoyen and force his way into the party's national-leadership role.[43]

As Rock points out, between 1905 and the signing of the Sáenz Peña[44] law in 1912, the UCR "made rapid strides"[45] in terms of its party-building activities. It was during these years that the Radical organization became thoroughly "professionalized" at the ground level. For example, political "clubs," typically organized on a "cell-like and clandestine" basis, quickly transformed into Radical "committees," which appeared more as "management agencies in the task of popular [mobilization]."[46] The nature and the speed of the party's growth at this stage was important. With new members, the UCR had developed a mid-level leadership, mainly comprised of young middle-class professionals. Among them were hordes of university students and "former failed businessmen."[47] Unlike the UCR's early rival, the Socialist Party, these new recruits were not driven into politics by any ideological ties, but rather by their ambitious

[42] Ibid., pp. 140-41.
[43] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 47.
[44] This would introduce full male suffrage for the first time in Argentina.
[45] Ibid., p. 48.
[46] Ibid., p. 49.
[47] Ibid.

tendencies.[48] Entry into political life, at this time, provided young aspirants with "the wealthy and prestigious positions which were becoming increasingly unavailable by any other means."[49]

The vast and rapid penetration of Argentina's interior provinces provided the UCR with a formidable local organization and a channel with which it could acquire mass popular support. Under the leadership of Yrigoyen, the party set up committees in major locales across the country. It maintained its territorial network via a system of "ward bosses," who would, in turn, enforce a patronage-based system of support. The Radical organization, like the UC before it, established a multi-level (and pyramidal)[50] structure, consisting of the top tier National Committee, provincial committees in charge of their own activities, and neighborhood or "ward" committees below, which would serve as the typical entry point for new Radical recruits. At each level, committees not only shared the same structure, but they also operated by similar rules and procedures. According to Rock, territorial bosses, who stemmed from the country's elite, maintained considerable influence over party operations outside of the Federal Capital, while lower-ranking party officials, often hailing from the urban middle class, were left to their own devices:

> One of the great boasts of the Radicals was that their office-holders were elected in a free vote of party members, and this avoided the traditional 'personalist' practices of recruitment by cooptation or by ascriptive status. At least up until 1916, however, the more familiar pattern was for the national and provincial committees to be dominated by the landed groups, and the local committees by the middle classes. Recruitment to the former more often than not operated on a cooptive basis, but in the local committees open elections were held annually. These elected the presidents of the committee – in effect the ward boss – and a large number of subordinate officials. In each of the committees in the city of Buenos Aires there were as many as 108 committee officers elected every year.

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[48] For a discussion on the rivalry between the early UCR and the Socialists in Buenos Aires, see Peter Calvert, "Urban Electoral Politics in Argentina," in Henry A. Dietz and Gil Shidlo, eds., *Urban Elections in Democratic Latin America*, (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1998), pp. 2-20.
[49] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 49.
[50] Prats, "I Will Survive," Chapter 5.

> Often they remained in their posts for many years at a time, except where more than one ward boss figure was struggling for control over the party machine. In cases like this acute factional disputes were rife.[51]

Importantly, the fact that these committees were so large only made it easier to dole out patronage, in the form of "symbolic official positions," that could strengthen "loyalty and commitment to the party."[52]

By 1916, the UCR had not only achieved wide-spanning national support, but it was also able to organize this support via a "flexible" party apparatus. Despite this, the party's ultimate aims and ideology were still vague. Prior to 1912, the UCR's single defining issue was expanding the vote, which was achieved due to the Sáenz Peña law. After this happened, the party failed to build a discernible programmatic brand, beyond the personal appeal of Yrigoyen himself. Yrigoyen would use this resource to ascend to the presidency twice, from 1916-1922 and again from 1928-1930.[53] However, the UCR ultimately remained a beast with too many heads. While Yrigoyen represented the party's growing popular clout in the cities, its elite sector, led by Marcelo T. de Alvear, had grown suspicious of his large share of power and influence. By the end of the 1920s, economic depression and mounting public frustration had once again sent the UCR out of government and back into the opposition – where it would remain for decades to come.

Many scholars[54] characterize the period from 1916-1930 as the UCR's "rise and fall," given that the party experienced its most competitive electoral results during these years.[55] However, what many often ignore is that the party managed to survive even after it was deposed

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[51] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 57.
[52] Ibid.
[53] The latter term would end prematurely due to a military coup.
[54] E.g., Horowitz, 2008; Privitellio and Romero, 2005.
[55] Much of this characterization also has to do with the entrance of Peronism to the Argentine political scene.

from government and forced into a brief period of proscription. Throughout the 1930s, it was not unusual for Radicals to compete for office, even though elections were largely fraudulent and subject to military intervention. The UCR's lingering organization is primarily how these actors maintained their political linkages. Thus, while the UCR was never "built to thrive," it was designed with enough "penetration and flexibility"[56] to survive, if not flourish.

Contemporary Struggles and Uneven Performance: The UCR Since 1983

In 1983, Argentina entered its most recent and longest-lasting era of democracy. At its outset, the transition was a political blessing for the Radical Civic Union. The party defied all expectations by winning an astounding 51 percent of the electorate. This represented a decisive turning point for the UCR, which, in the previous three decades had never won more than 25 percent in a general election. For the first time, it had defeated Peronism – its seemingly omnipotent rival – by an 11 percent margin. The UCR's triumph gave the party a reignited sense of purpose. On the one hand, the death of Ricardo Balbín opened the door for a new undisputed figurehead in Raul Alfonsín to redefine the Radical ethos. The party's momentum at the polls was, in large part, thanks to Alfosnín's sharp rebuke of the prior military government. This marked a strong contrast for the UCR, which in earlier decades had tacitly accepted military interjection if it sent Peronists out of office.[57] He campaigned against amnesty for the armed forces and supported transitional justice for those who had been repressed. These issues allowed

[56] Rock, *The Politics of Argentina*, p. 57.
[57] See Linz and Stepan (1996) and O'Donnell (1973).

the Radicals to cultivate support from political sectors it had never been able to penetrate in the past. Alfonsín won with the backing of a heterogenous coalition of leftwing voters, activist youths, as well as its more traditional backers from the center-right middle classes. On the other hand, its opposition was in shambles. While the Radicals were pushing an agenda that was fueled by democratic optimism, the Peronists were burning effigies of their rivals at campaign rallies.[58] This was not a great look for the PJ coming out of the country's darkest and most violent period of authoritarianism. The harshly different portrayals of each party allowed their rivalry to carry over into the new incarnation of democracy.

However, like much of the UCR's history, this early blessing quickly morphed into a curse. Alfonsín's administration had inherited a gut-wrenching financial crisis that had laid the premise for the military's collapse from power.[59] For this, the government was not just ill-prepared, it demonstrated a complete lack of comprehension as to how to remedy the situation. During the Radical administration, Argentina's economy suffered from the highest inflation in the world. To combat the currency crisis, the government implemented a series of toothless measures that failed to contain the situation. Throughout the decade, the crisis contributed to Alfonsín's decline in support. This was marked by a pronounced decrease in electoral support for the UCR. From 1983-1987, the party's cumulative vote share decreased by 10 percent at the national level. It also suffered at the gubernatorial level as well. By 1987, the PJ held 17 of the country's 22 provincial executives – including the highly coveted governorship of Buenos Aires Province. The party's lack of success pitted its rank and file against Alfonsín. In the lead up to the 1989 general election, the Radicals staged a public insurrection against their figurehead and

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[58] James W. McGuire, "Union Political Tactics and Democratic Consolidation in Alfonsín's Argentina, 1983-1989," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1992, p. 44.
[59] David Pion-Berlin, "The Fall of Military Rule in Argentina: 1976-1983," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer 1985, p. 62.

chose to nominate Cordoba governor Eduardo Angeloz for the party nomination. Despite suffering through a torn and embittered election cycle, the Radicals poor fortune would not end with the party's defeat. A last-ditch effort to stabilize the economy would prove to be Alfonsín's undoing. Unable to control the rapidly deteriorating economic situation, Alfonsín turned over power in July 1989, two months after the election and five months before his scheduled transition date.

In turn, third party options emerged that presented new modes of competition for the Radicals – a challenge that the PJ avoided given its largely working-class base. To the right-of-center, there was the Center Democratic Union (UCEDE), which converged with the Radicals on its (predominantly) liberal economic agenda. To the left-of-center, the Intransigent Party (PI) maintained close ties to human rights groups, which began to pressure Alfonsín to pursue stronger policies against the armed forces. Consequently, the Radical party found itself in a bind, vying for votes against two competitors that converged on core elements of its governing agenda.

These new modes of competition created a highly contentious political environment for the Radical Party.[60] In legislative contests, which abide by a proportional representation system, both the UCEDE and the PI were able to gradually increase their share of former Radical voters throughout the 1980s. By the 1985 midterm elections the PI was able to garner 7.7 percent of the vote, directly contributing the Radicals' loss of ground in the legislature. Similarly, by 1987, the UCEDE built an electoral coalition that comprised 5.8 percent of the national electorate by running on a platform that directly attacked Alfonsín's handling of the economy. Importantly, while the Radicals were facing challenges on both sides, the PJ benefitted as its electorate was mainly left untapped by third party competitors. Moreover, due to the PI's relatively minor

[60] See Juan Carlos Torre, "Los huérfanos de la política de partidos Sobre los alcances y la naturalez de la crisis de representación partidaria," *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 42, no. 168, January/March 2003, pp. 647-665.

impact on presidential politics, the party prompted its voters to support the PJ's presidential candidate, Carlos Saul Menem, for the 1989 general election, further damaging the Radicals' ability to maintain a firm grasp on national politics.

On the subnational level, the Radicals were deeply damaged by this fragmenting of their vote share. Although the party was able to secure the support of various conservative provincial parties to back its candidate, Eduardo Angeloz, for the presidency in 1989, the UCEDE remained a crucial holdout. Instead of joining this conservative coalition, the UCEDE decided to run on a separate ticket, which split the center-right vote that the Radicals desperately needed to cobble together a winning coalition. To make matters worse, 1989 proved to be the UCEDE's best electoral showing yet, garnering 7.2 percent of the national vote for its presidential candidate, Alvaro Alsogaray, as well as 9.9 percent of legislative votes. Crucially, this support was widespread in provincial urban locales that the Radicals depended on to compete against Peronism. In the Federal Capital of Buenos Aires alone – a traditionally reliable Radical support base – the UCEDE obtained an impressive 22 percent of votes, effectively paving the way for Menem's victory.

Whereas the Radical Party began the decade with a reinvigorating presence in the context of redemocratization, it ended the 1980s delegitimized on the national stage and significantly weaker than it had been before. Not only did the party see its vote share diminished by the rise of third parties, but also it virtually conceded the presidency with Alfonsín's resignation. This blunder would leave a lasting scar on the Radicals' national credibility for years to come.[61] The 1989 elections kept the party out of the presidency, with Menem winning a decisive 47.5 percent of votes to Angeloz's 37 percent. On the legislative front, the Radicals now comprised minorities

[61] See Ernesto Calvo and Maria Victoria Murrillo, "Who Delivers? Partisan Clients in the Argentine Electoral Market," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 48, no. 4, October 2004, pp. 742-757.

in both houses by wide margins. Additionally, the party faced severe losses at the provincial level. Angeloz only carried three provinces, winning Salta, Cordoba, and Chubut. In stark contrast, Menem won the remaining twenty as well as the Federal Capital. This combined with the PJ's accumulation of over half of the country's governorships left the Radicals at a severe disadvantage going into the 1990s.

The Radicals as a Fractured Opposition (1989-1995)

Entering the 1990s, Argentina remained in the throes of economic crisis. The Radical Party, now out of power, suffered a critical electoral blow that left the party at the mercy of a unified Peronist government. Given Alfonsín's inability to mend the country's economic situation, observers were unfazed by Menem's victory, which he had secured by running on Peronist policy staples such as intense wage increases and price controls to quell inflation (Lupu, 2016: 69). This agenda drew support from a firm majority of voters, who increasingly distrusted the Radicals' ability to mend the economy.[62]

However, to the surprise of many, Menem abandoned these quintessentially Peronist policies once in office to pursue a strategy of deep market reforms. This about-face enabled Menem to simultaneously accomplish two things that stifled the Radical Party. First, converging on economic issues allowed Menem to divide the Radical opposition in government, which effectively removed any barriers that would slow-down the implementation of his policies. This internal fracture within UCR was predominantly split between those who maintained support for

[62] According to Lupu (2016, p. 69), by February of 1989 50 percent of Argentines reported that their economic situation had worsened in the previous five years. By March of the same year, two-thirds of the country reported that their economic situation had worsened since the previous month.

Alfonsín and took issue with the increase in corruption emanating from Menem's government, and others who staunchly backed the economic orthodoxy advocated by Angeloz. In the early years of his administration, Menem gained the support of many Radical deputies that strayed from their party's ranks to shake the poor public reception they had gained due to Alfonsín's resignation.[63] As a result, the Radicals we largely left defending a muddled policy of "constructive opposition," which supported Menem's reform agenda but opposed its implementation.[64]

Second, by adopting a neoliberal economic agenda, Menem ensured the support of center-right voters who were disillusioned with the Radical Party, which strengthened the PJ's electoral mandate. This led to another reshuffling of the electorate. Whereas Menem had benefitted from Peronism's historically left-leaning base as well as the center-left constituencies of the PI to get elected, he quickly marginalized each group's political concerns once in office. As a result of its alliance with Menem, the PI had largely ceded its electoral base to the PJ. By the 1991 midterms, the PI could only garner a disappointing 0.1 percent of votes. Moreover, the PJ's programmatic shift prompted alliances with center-right forces, like the UCEDE, which backed the administration's expansive austerity policies. Though, due to Menem's success in stabilizing inflation with the implementation of the convertibility plan, supporters of UCEDE quickly flocked over to the Peronist camp, which provided a more robust electoral alternative. By the 1991 legislative elections, the UCEDE's national vote share dropped to 8.6 percent, and by subsequent elections in 1993 the party could barely obtain 3 percent.

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[63] Marcos Novaro, "Shifting Alliances: Party Politics in Argentina," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, vol. 31, no. 6, 1998, p. 13.

[64] Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 83.

The Radical Party, without the credibility to mount a proper fight for these displaced voters, were unable to prevent the PJ from absorbing many of them. Menem's successful containment of inflation also triggered a surge in his approval rating, which made matters definitively worse for the Radicals.[65] In legislative elections in both 1991 and 1993, the party faced substantial defeats that intensified its internal divisions.[66] Despite winning provincial governorships in Catamarca and Chubut in upset victories, the new elects quickly distanced themselves from the national party leadership along with hundreds of Radical mayors throughout the country. Instead of antagonizing the increasingly popular central government – which controlled the distribution of funds to the provinces – these local politicians saw it more advantageous to improve the Radicals' ailing image at the subnational level. Due to the lack of a cohesive national agenda, the UCR remained largely confined to its provincial bastions of support.

With the 1995 election looming in the distance, Menem had begun to seek avenues that would allow for his reelection. Even though the Argentine constitution prohibited consecutive reelection, Menem was already searching for ways to change this provision. As this issue gained traction in the national political debate, the UCR unsurprisingly gave into its organizational divisions. Its internal tensions came to a peak in 1993 when several Radical governors vocally supported Menem's bid to alter the constitution to allow for his reelection. To avoid a full-blown internal rupture of the party, Alfonsín, still at the helm, sought to form an agreement with Menem that would back his constitutional amendment in return for a set of institutional changes that would limit the current administration's democratic oversteps – an issue that resonated with the Alfonsín wing of the party. On November 17, 1993, Alfonsín and Menem both appeared at

[65] Ibid., p. 82.
[66] Novaro, *Shifting Alliances*, p. 13.

the presidential residence in Olivos to announce their mutual agreement for a constitutional reform framework.

The "Olivos Pact," generated a few minor gains for the UCR compared to the resounding concession it made to Menem. In exchange for abolishing presidential term limits, the number of elected senators per province increased to three, with the third seat going to the second-place finisher. This provision would have helped the Radicals bolster their legislative presence, as it remained a predominantly second-place finisher against Peronism in the provinces. Additionally, some modest limits were placed on presidential powers. The presidential term was reduced to four years and judicial oversight was placed in the hands of a non-executive body of deputies that would include members of the opposition. However, most importantly for the Radicals, the president would no longer appoint the mayor of Buenos Aires. This sealed the Federal Capital as an electoral stronghold for the Radicals, given its largely middle-class electorate. In 1994, both leaders secured the legislative backing that formally implemented the reforms.

The Olivos Pact further converged the Radical Party with its PJ rivals. Despite receiving mild concessions, many Argentines viewed the agreement as the UCR effectively handing Menem a ticket to reelection. Additionally, the agreement did little to assuage the sharp divisions that were tormenting the Radicals. Just over a year prior to the 1995 general election, the Angeloz wing of the party came dangerously close to backing a joint list of Radical-PJ candidates with the support of Menem.[67] However, some analysts speculate that Alfonsín's actions were self-motivated. Whereas he had justified the pact to mitigate the President's executive overreach, claiming that Menem likely would have been able to reform the constitution anyway, it also provided a way for him to recapture the Radical organization after its members

[67] Lupu (2016, p. 85); also see *Clarín*, January 6, 1994.

began to distance themselves from the leadership. In addition to the pact negotiations, the Radicals also held a secret vote in which Alfonsín was reaffirmed as the party's president. While this allowed Alfonsín to temporarily consolidate power within the UCR, it did little to win back its depleted vote shares.

Going into the 1995 election, the Radicals had effectively relinquished their role as an opposition against Menem and the PJ. With the economy maintaining steady progress after a dramatic drop in inflation, Menem was able to run a campaign that invoked his administration's progress on the economic front. Furthermore, a survey conducted only weeks before the election indicated that most Argentines viewed "the country's economic situation as average or better."[68] As a result of the Olivos Pact blunder, the Radicals faced a series of high-profile defections to a growing third-party option that threatened to once again absorb voters who continuously flocked from the party. The Front for a Country in Solidarity (FREPASO), led by Peronist dissident José Octavio Bordón, represented an emerging center-left force that consisted of former members of the PJ who were at odds with the Menem's neoliberal agenda, as well as defected Radicals that could not tolerate more convergence with Peronism. Bordón's candidacy in 1995 split the Radical vote at the national level, creating an easy pathway for Menem, who not only picked up voters that supported him on the economy, but also nonpartisans who had a favorable view of his administration. The Radical candidate and governor of Rio Negro, Horacio Massaccesi, only garnered 16.4 percent of the national vote, marking the end of the UCR's disappointing term as the opposition.

Although the Radicals were flailing on the national stage, a silver lining appeared for the UCR. Despite Massaccesi's loss, the party retained four crucial governorships in 1995 and won

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[68] Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis,* p. 87.

the additional province of Chaco as the result of a subnational alliance with FREPASO.[69] By December of 1995, Alfonsín had stepped down as head of the party, which helped to unite the Radicals in the wake of their embarrassing loss. This unification provided the UCR with the revitalization it needed to achieve victory in municipal elections for the city of Buenos Aires just a year later. With its subnational presence still intact, the party could create new electoral alliances that forged inroads with centrist voters – a demographic the Radicals would need to recapture to build a strong opposition against a second term Menem.

The FREPASO Alliance and Recapturing the Casa Rosada

The rise of FREPASO generated yet another shift in the Argentine party system. The PJ's right-turn under Menem cultivated the need for a center-left option that could firmly oppose the administration's neoliberal reform agenda. The Radicals, having bowed to their traditional rivals in the eyes of their voters because of the Olivos Pact, needed to revive their public image by representing a clearly partisan alternative to Menem's structural adjustment and lax stance towards democratic institutions. At the same time, the party was suffering a slew of defections to FREPASO, with ex-Radical politicians claiming that their party had become a toothless opposition against an executive that had free range over the constitution. With Argentina's center-left urban electorate once again up for grabs, FREPASO continued to transform into a political contender against Peronism. Indeed, the nascent party was able to outshine the Radicals on the national stage with the modest but decisive performance of Bordón. However, it was still lacking at the subnational level, where provincial and municipal Radicals still had firm control

[69] Novaro, *Shifting Alliances*, pp. 13-14.

over their locales. Each organization's shortcomings gave way to a logical partnership two years into Menem's second term.

In the immediate wake of the 1995 elections, FREPASO and the UCR began negotiating a possible partnership that could potentially put each organization in a position to take the Casa Rosada from the PJ. Both parties reached common ground as a result of the negotiations process, each calling for a vocal dissent to Menem's unbridled executive authority as well as calling for a special Congressional committee that would tackle the growing problem of unemployment. Early attempts at collaboration also produced significant results in the public arena. Radical President and Alfonsín's predecessor, Rodolfo Terrango, and FREPASO president, Carlos "Chacho" Alvarez organized a "multi-sector forum" that included an array of representative from unions, parties, the business community, and social organizations, which led to a series of protests against the incumbent government.[70] These demonstrations had promising results for the opposition and solidified a growing consensus among non-PJ voters. With opposition sentiment growing in the Federal Capital in particular, both parties saw the undeniable benefit of a legislative coalition.

In 1997, just two months before the October midterm elections, this partnership came to fruition. The Alianza por el Trabajo, la Educación, y la Justicia (Alliance for Jobs, Education, and Justice) centered its core message around the country's diminishing economic progress, which they attributed to Menem's reforms. Argentina's economic climate was indeed entering a steady slow-down, with unemployment and inequality at drastic levels despite contained inflation. After eight years in power, Menem's administration had begun to fight an uphill battle and was unable to fall back on the strength of the economy. In addition, Menem's finance

[70] Novaro, *Shifting Alliances*, pp. 14-15.

minister – and the brains behind the convertibility plan – Domingo Cavallo, resigned to run on a third-party ticket. Acción por la República (Action for the Republic) effectively split the center-right electorate to steal voters that had supported the PJ because of the UCEDE's decline. Able to capitalize on the administration's weak position, the UCR-FREPASO alliance made its potential as a united opposition resoundingly clear with an impressive showing during the 1997 midterms. The coalition garnered 45.6 percent of the legislative vote, which easily surpassed the PJ's 36.4 percent. This victory marked the end of five consecutive national Peronist victories between 1987 and 1995.

The Radicals' alliance with FREPASO provided the opposition with a new momentum. Whereas the UCR had remained fractured during previous elections due to its convergence with Peronism under Alfonsín, the coalition unified non-Peronist forces against Menem's administration and rekindled a level of party system parity that had not been present in Argentina since the return of democracy. In 1999, the alliance ran a joint ticket for the presidency, which placed the UCR's Fernando de la Rua at the top of the list along with Alvarez as vice presidential contender. The coalition maintained its firm anti-corruption stance and formulated its campaign around the PJ government's institutional transgressions while in power. Harnessing voters' growing dissatisfaction with Menem's administration, the alliance staged a shocking political victory against PJ candidate Eduardo Duhalde, winning by a margin of 48 to 38 percent.[71]

Party System Change: Radical Resurgence

[71] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murrillo, *Argentine Democracy: The Politics of Institutional Weakness*, (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2005), p. 37.

With a Radical back in the presidential palace, the UCR had dramatically reversed its electoral fortunes in as short as a decade. In stark contrast to the party's general election losses in 1989 (in which it garnered only three provinces) and 1995 (in which it garnered no provinces), the Radicals won all but three provincial regions in 1999. This dramatic turnaround shifted the national political landscape in a way that loosened the PJ's "iron clad" grip on national elections to provide a greater outlet for centrist voters that were generally opposed to Peronism's provincial focus. Although the UCR did not *collapse* because of its significantly decline under the leadership of Alfonsín, the party achieved a significant reversal of fortunes that enabled it to reclaim the Argentine presidency. This experience can offer valuable insights into the party's adept ability to weather organizational crisis.

The UCR's turnaround was made possible by two important developments that occurred throughout the decade. First, the party was able to prevent its full-blown disintegration in the years succeeding Alfonsín's resignation. Although the UCR managed to draw relatively consistent vote shares even after the party's willful concession of the presidency, such a high-profile blunder took its toll on the organization. By 1995, less than 10 percent of Argentines identified with the Radical Party. The presence of third-party challengers created a situation in which the UCR was left to convince voters of its efficacy as an opposition force while simultaneously preventing defections from its ranks. Despite his controversial presence within the party, Alfonsín was ultimately successful in appeasing rival factions to the extent that they did not flock to rival organizations, as did the UCR's voters. This was aided by the party's extensive subnational network, which provincial and municipal politicians could still exploit despite the Radicals' damaged national image. In Buenos Aires city, for instance, the party remained incredibly consistent throughout its fractionalization, accumulating steady vote shares

among middle- and upper-class voters throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. Although damaged, the Radicals remained viable in key areas where they could monopolize party politics.

Second, the UCR leveraged this subnational persistence to forge a crucial partnership with FREPASO, which made its 1999 presidential victory possible. Despite the increasing fragmentation of the Argentine electorate, the UCR remained the only non-Peronist party organization that maintained a broad political presence in vast areas of the country. Whereas FREPASO proved to be an effective force at the national level, as is evident by the 1995 general election results, it mainly constituted an "opinion movement" rather than a well-institutionalized political party. This left it at a grave disadvantage during legislative contests. In merging their appeals with FREPASO's anti-corruption message, the Radicals rekindled a core component of their brand, which is fundamentally structured around the party's opposition to Peronism. This dynamic, combined with Menem's declining favorability, generated an extremely effective partnership that provided a political "home" for displaced centrist voters.

Although the UCR's success proved to be short-lived, the strategy implemented to achieve this success would come to define the party's role in Argentine politics in the post-Menemist era. Even with a tarnished national image, the Radicals still maintained a vast subnational infrastructure, which allowed it to control inroads to middle class voters throughout the country. This asset allowed the UCR to remain an important political player, and in many ways the electoral "gatekeeper" for non-Peronist votes that spanned beyond the Federal Capital. However, even with a political machine, the national electorate had become increasingly skeptical of parties in general, making outright national victories more difficult for the Radicals.[72] On the one hand, the party's core electorate had fundamentally changed to become

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[72] Torre, *Los huérfanos*, pp. 171-78.

more critical of their representatives, triggering the de facto rise of third-party opinion movements that could funnel votes away from the Radical ticket. While the PJ could maintain steady support through its patronage activities, the Radical base had become increasingly fragmented and more concerned with the accountability of elected officials than with Radicalism as a symbolic political identity. On the other hand, the party had cultivated an image of incompetence due to its inability to effectively govern once in power. This forced the UCR to reinvent itself on the national stage by linking with adjacent opinion movements that actively reflected the preferences of the middle-class electorate. Combined with its subnational leverage, the Radicals learned how to cope with party system change through persistence and bargaining.

Chapter 4 – The Radical Party Survives: Defection, Resources, and Territorial Persistence

In April 2003, the Radical Civic Union suffered its worst national-electoral defeat since its establishment in 1891. The party won only 2 percent of votes in the first round of that year's general election. This was a remarkably swift fall from grace for the UCR, whose candidate won the presidency with nearly 50 percent of the electorate just four years prior as part of an electoral alliance. In addition to inducing profound social and political ramifications, the Radical collapse marked the transformation of the Argentine party system. Whereas stable two-party competition had remained a predominant feature of the country's democracy throughout much of the twentieth century, the post-collapse party system became increasingly fragmented and volatile.[1] This created significant challenges for the UCR as well as the wider opposition to Peronism. New parties that emerged in the years surrounding collapse – many of which were formed by Radical defectors – directly challenged the UCR for primacy as the main alternative to the ever-viable PJ. This dynamic changed the logic of competition at the national level. To defeat Peronism, opposition parties now faced higher incentives to cooperate or risk smaller vote shares.[2]

The "disjointed" and factionalized condition of the Argentine party system after 2003 created intense challenges for the UCR's survival.[3] Some party elites with access to provincial

[1] Kenneth M. Roberts, "Party-Society Linkages and Democratic Representation in Latin America," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, vol. 27, no. 53, 2002, pp. 9-34; Omar Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay: The De-Institutionalization of Party Systems in South America," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2008, pp. 315-337.
[2] Carlos Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System: Fragmentation, Denationalization, Factionalization, Personalization, and Increasing Fluidity," in Scott Mainwaring, ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 255-290.
[3] Hector Schamis, "Populism, Socialism, and Democratic Institutions," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 4, October 2006, p. 26.

resource networks, were able to salvage their careers by retreating to subnational territories in which they remained competitive. However, despite this persistence, the UCR was largely unable to make progress at the national level during the immediate years following its collapse. From 2003 to 2007, the party's electoral performance was marred by infighting and membership defections. This led to conflict between internal factions and the pursuit of divergent competitive strategies. At times, these strategies would put the UCR in direct competition with itself, with multiple Radicals (or candidates endorsed by Radicals) facing off against one another on the national-electoral stage. Although the party had access to resources and various opportunities when it came to alliance-formation, membership defections and organizational discord acted as main impediments to recovery.

The chapter attempts to trace and analyze the first stage of the UCR's recovery and its inability to revive at the national level despite resource continuity. I begin with the UCR's "unsuccessful years" for two predominant reasons: First, party revival is typically a drawn-out event that occurs non-linearly and over the course of many years.[4] Thus, a chronological approach is the most effective way to trace the full scope of the of the process and discern the difficulties associated with revival at the national level, party responses to these difficulties, and how these responses may change and develop over time. Second, this method allows us to take advantage of the wide internal variation that exists within the Radical case to measure the party's performance from election to election. In doing so, it constructs the first round of empirical tests of this dissertation's central argument. While the UCR frequently utilizes its resource leverage to gain access to nationally viable coalitions throughout these initial years, it often opts for suboptimal alliance configurations due to the lack of a unified party strategy.

[4] The Radical Party's revival took a total of 12 years from its collapse in 2003. This is excluding the pre-crisis episodes that primed the party's breakdown, which began in early 2000.

UCR Presidential Vote Share (Pre- and Post- Collapse)				
1999*	2003	2007*	2011	2015*
48.37%	2.34%	16.91%	11.14%	51.34%

Table 4.1: UCR Presidential Vote Share (1999-2015)
* Starred years indicate when the UCR was leading or endorsing an alliance ticket.

Importantly, these strategies were not predetermined, but rather highly contingent and relied upon the preferences of actors within the broader opposition.

Radical Collapse and the Pressure to Defect

To recall, my theory anticipates that the condition of voter rejection will trigger strong incentives for rank-and-file politicians to defect. This is the first major inflection point that a party must endure if it is to survive indefinitely. The UCR's crisis and collapse initiated a series of changes within the Argentine party system, all of which reinforced the pressure to defect. The first change was a dramatic increase in the number of parties or electoral actors competing in elections. Since the 1940s, scholars largely considered party politics in Argentina to be well-institutionalized in comparison with neighboring South American democracies.[5] This has been evidenced by a relatively stable exchange of power between the country's two established parties: the PJ and UCR.[6] This changed slightly after the return to democracy in 1983, with the entrance of FREPASO as a nationally viable opposition party. Even with a bourgeoning third

[5] E.g., Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
[6] Although there have been a number of third parties at the subnational level, the national party system has remained heavily anchored by the PJ and UCR.

party, the pre-2003 party system was stabilized by relatively few national parties. This began to change starting with the public's declining confidence in the De la Rua government. Like in the early 1990s after the Alfonsín debacle, the Radical Party's decline in the early 2000s opened the door for new actors within the opposition that threatened to directly challenge its hegemony as a dominant competitor – this time, however, there were more challengers to fend off.

The pressure to defect gripped the Radical organization almost immediately upon crisis. From 2002 to 2005, defections from the UCR generated three different parties. In 2002, Elisa Carrió, an emergent UCR deputy, renounced her party membership and formed the Movement for an Equal Republic (ARI), which would later change its name to *Coalición Cívica* (Civic Coalition, CC).[7] Carrió and her allies justified defection for two reasons. First, the group had taken issue with De la Rua's handling of the economy. The president had sought approval to unilaterally implement reform measures, which drew heavy opposition from legislators as well as many from his own coalition bloc. The second reason pertained directly to the government's bribery scandal. The unveiling of the administration's possible involvement put pressure on deputies aligned with the Alianza due to its emphasis on Peronist corruption in the previous two election cycles. The loss of legitimacy tanked De la Rua's approval. By December 2001, the president's favorability sat at an abysmal 8 percent. At the time, this was the lowest rating of any sitting executive in South America.[8] The perceived risks of associating with the incumbent had simply become too high for these members.

Carrió, in many ways, represents the ideal "early defector" with respect to my theory. This is because she was able to build a personal base of support over the span of her career. Like

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[7] Carrió's insurrection began in the lead-up to the 2001 legislative elections, in which the Alianza suffered a bad defeat. While she was not facing reelection, Carrió was able to form a bloc of six deputies that challenged the coalition via a new electoral list. However, the party was formally established in 2002.
[8] *Rio Negro*, 14 December 2001.

many Radical elites, Carrió's origins in politics stem from her university days, where she studied law. Her early career as a politician began in her home province of Chaco, where her father was a prominent Radical leader before her.[9] By the mid-1990s, she had become thoroughly inducted into the "family business" when she was elected national deputy. For most of the decade, Carrió spent time building inroads to the Federal Capital and forging alliances among fellow Radicals, but also Peronists and FREPASO.[10] By the 2001 crisis, she had already cultivated an oppositional stance against the De la Rua government "as a prominent anti-corruption crusader."[11] Her political ambitions, as the press[12] speculated during this time, clearly had national aims. She also needed to leverage her appeal to build a solid base of support in the Federal Capital. Thus, the UCR's damaged credibility stood in the way of her aspirations for higher office.

Another defection in 2002 produced a second party, this time spearheaded by De la Rua's former economy minister, Ricardo Lopez Murphy. However, *Recrear para el Crecemiento* (Recreate for Growth or *Recrear*) struck a decidedly different tone than CC and framed its criticism against the Alianza around fiscal responsibility. Unlike Carrió's bloc, *Recrear* was comprised of center-right Radicals that sought distance from the embattled administration despite aligning on most of its economic policies. Lopez Murphy, who served a mere two weeks in his cabinet post before being forced out, initiated a reform package that conformed to the government's neoliberal agenda. Thus, *Recrear's* appeal was comparatively technocratic and centered around expertise rather than ideology. On issues, it remained extremely close to the

[9] *La Nación*, 19 July 1998.
[10] In the above *La Nación* interview, she boasts that she is "loved by many people from Peronism, Radicalism, and FREPASO."
[11] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murrillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 14, no. 4, October 2003, p. 156.
[12] *La Nación*, 7 July 2001.

UCR – even framing the basis for its creation around the familiar Radical ideals of institutional order and rule of law.[13] In this sense, *Recrear* amounted to a distinction without any meaningful difference from the rightist faction of the UCR. For this reason, it only lasted a total of five years and two election cycles.

Lopez Murphy's defection also conforms to my theory's expectations. Like Carrío, he also managed to build an image that was somewhat independent from Radicalism. Also, like Carrío, his lineage traces back to a long line of Radicals – a connection that would earn him the two first names, Ricardo and Hipólito.[14] However, in the early 2000s, his base of support was much smaller than Carrió's and located in the Federal Capital. By trade, Lopez Murphy is an economist and continues to represent the "moderate tendencies" of the UCR. Much like Bernardo de Irigoyen in the early days of the party, his support in 2002 was cosmopolitan and an amalgamation of various city-based parties with similar enough policy stances. The problem for Lopez Murphy was his prior role in the De la Rua government. So, in the end, defection was simply the only way for him to break from the government and justify an independent candidacy.

The rapid rise and fall of *Recrear* contributed to the formation of the third and most successful party to emerge out of the Radical collapse. In 2005, Lopez Murphy and a handful of dissident candidates formed an alliance to compete in that year's legislative elections. It partnered with *Compromiso para el Cambio* (Commitment to Change), a Buenos Aires based party created around the candidacy of Mauricio Macri, a prominent business elite and the President of Boca Juniors football club. The alliance proved remarkably successful, particularly for Macri, who was elected as a deputy for the Federal Capital after garnering nearly 30 percent of votes. For Lopez Murphy, however, the alliance proved to be a resounding failure, largely due

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[13] *Recrear para el Crecemiento, Bases de Acción Política*, 2002.
[14] Ricardo, for Ricardo Balbín, and Hipólito, for Hipólito Yrigoyen.

to *Recrear's* poor organization compared to Macri's camp. The former minister placed fifth in the race for senator in the highly coveted district of Buenos Aires province. Lopez Murphy would go on to compete for the presidency in 2007, however *Recrear* was quickly overshadowed by the growing national profile of Macri's party, which would change its name to *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO) by 2008. The Radical Party's waning influence in the Federal Capital created the space for PRO to quickly develop and set up a strong territorial base. In the latter half of the 2000s, PRO quickly entrenched itself as a predominant force in the federal capital and compounded its national representation via elections in 2007 and 2009. Macri's success was a significant catalyst for the party's expansion. In 2007, he was elected mayor of Buenos Aires – a position he maintained until 2015.

A second change that contributed to the pressure to defect was that parties themselves became more "factionalized." Party factionalization refers to the splintering of party organizations into separate, and often opposing internal groups that are typically led by dominant personalities.[15] We can see these effects within the Radical organization. After 2003, party elites retreated to the subnational territories into enclaves where they remained competitive. While this allowed the party to continue to contest elections (as we will see in the following section), it provided some of its members with incentives to pivot away from the organization. For some Radicals, it made sense to engage in broad alliance-building, at times even entering negotiations with factions aligned with Peronism – this would later result in an open insurrection within the UCR. For others, crossing the aisle would be harshly punished. These divergences occurred during the 2005 legislative elections. In Corrientes and Neuquén, for example, the UCR allied with the PJ and benefitted as a result. In locales where the party had stronger ties, such as

[15] Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System," p. 272.

Mendoza and Santa Fe, it maintained its autonomy or chose to ally with non-Peronist forces.[16] The question of whether to align with the PJ would develop into a broader internal conflict within the UCR, with party leaders galvanizing support behind either side of this cleavage. Some would choose to formally leave the Radical organization. Moreover, these decisions were often made on a self-serving basis. Party elites would frequently advocate for a national strategy that would coincide with their own personal preferences at the subnational level. As we will see in the further analysis, this required internal reconciliation.

While the opposition suffered its own problems with respect to defections, the effects of factionalization can perhaps be seen more prominently within the PJ. During the 2003 elections, Peronism suffered its own organizational rupture that resulted in two predominant camps. Menem, who had lost the support from many within the PJ ranks, attempted to run for a third presidential term – a prospect that many advocated against. In response, party leader and interim president, Eduardo Duhalde, endorsed Nestor Kirchner, the relatively unknown governor of Santa Cruz province, to openly challenge Menem in a primary. This rivalry gave way to two distinct factions of the PJ. On one side, Menem ran under the label *Frente por la Lealtad* (Front for Loyalty), its name itself a not-so-subtle intimidation to members considering breaking with Peronist orthodoxy. On the other, Kirchner's *Frente para la Victoria* (Front for Victory, FpV) represented a sharp left turn away from the PJ's neoliberal make-up that prevailed through the 1990s, instead campaigning on a platform that invoked the classically populist aspects of Peronism that permeated Argentine politics in the 1940s. The UCR's catastrophic result in the first round of 2003 ensured that the country's next president would be a Peronist. Kirchner was ultimately able to gain the support of the remaining sectors of the PJ as well as some left-leaning

[16] *Clarín*, 25 October 2005.

elements of the opposition, despite Menem's first round victory. Before the two could face off in round two, Menem dropped out of the race due to the swelling odds against his candidacy. Kirchner would become the first elected president since the 2001 crisis having won less than a quarter of the national vote.

Kirchner's victory supplanted the PJ's old guard and ushered in a decade-long era of *Kirchnerismo*. Until 2015, the FpV developed into a hegemonic force within the party system, winning national elections in 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2011. In true Peronist fashion, Nestor Kirchner endorsed his wife, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, for the presidency in 2007 after declining to run for a consecutive term. This move added to speculation that the two would attempt to circumvent term limit rules by trading candidacies from election to election – a plan that became unfeasible due to Nestor Kirchner's sudden death by heart attack in 2010. The FpV's hegemonic grasp on politics also enabled it to co-opt various forces within the opposition to consolidate its power as the country's central political force. Throughout the 2000s, the Kirchners engaged in a strategy dubbed "transversality," which attempted to build cross-party coalitions along the political left.[17] This strategy had a dual effect. First, it enabled the FpV to quickly dislodge the old Peronist guard and phase out members of the party that stood against his policy agenda. Second, it allowed the Kirchners to further divide the opposition, particularly Radicals and third-party candidates that maintained social democratic credentials. For most of the decade, this would mitigate the UCR's ability to maintain unity against an increasingly dominant incumbent.

[17] Alejandro Bonevecchi and Javier Zelaznik, "Argentine Democratic Politics in an Era of Global Economic Crisis," *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 1, July 2012, p. 7.

Radical Party Survival: Territorial Resources

A party survives collapse when it continues to perform at least some of its organizational functions despite its rejection at the national level.[18] For collapsed parties in Latin America, this has typically entailed persistence at the subnational level in electoral bastions where they remain competitive. The limited research on post-collapse parties indicates that survival is made possible when they retain certain organizational resources after crisis.[19] The case of the UCR adheres to these theoretical expectations. The UCR's decimated vote share inflicted severe damage to crucial aspects of its organization. This devastation was perhaps most notable in the Federal Capital, an historic UCR stronghold. In 2003, the party only obtained 3.2 percent of total votes and lost all four of its seats in Congress.[20] As a result, the Radicals lost its hegemony in Buenos Aires city. This vacuum was subsequently filled by new parties that established their bases in this locale – the CC and PRO shortly after. Tellingly, many Radicals from the Capital chose to jump ship and join these parties. Outside of Buenos Aires, however, the UCR still maintained important resources after its breakdown that stemmed from its territorial organization. Thus, it is not surprising that many elites and militants in the interior chose to stay committed despite a climate of intense animosity.

Although defections had completely fragmented the UCR organization in the capital of Buenos Aires, the Radical Party was able to shift its electoral operations to the interior. The first is Córdoba, the second largest province in Argentina by population and, by extension, a crucial electoral district. This region has been essential to the UCR's national electorate since the early

[18] Jennifer Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown: Conceptualizing Party Survival," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 1, October 2016, p. 129.
[19] E.g., Cyr, 2017; Langston, 2017; Loxton, 2015; Hale, 2006.
[20] Ministerio del Interior, 1999.

20th century, in which the party first aligned itself with pro-reform student movements during a series of university uprisings. Since then, the party's provincial machine has been extensive, and has been the second largest membership pool for the party (only to Buenos Aires Province).[21] After the most recent democratic transition, it acted as a vital recruiting ground and hub for party mobilization.[22] In 2003, the Radicals kept its national deputies from Córdoba and had the second-highest number of representatives in the subnational legislature. The second provincial stronghold is Mendoza. This is the fourth-most populous Argentine province. Unlike Córdoba, this territory has been less stable for the Radicals. Despite losing to successive Peronist administrations throughout the 1990s, the UCR reclaimed the provincial governorship in 1999 and managed to keep it in 2003. While the party collapsed nationally, its performance strengthened in Mendoza – that same year electing more national deputies from Mendoza than any other party in addition to winning the second-most seats in the provincial legislature.

In addition to these two mainstay provinces, the Radicals also remained viable within the country's interior. In Chaco, for example, a northeastern province with just over one million inhabitants, the UCR managed to sustain its hegemony. Between in elections in 2003, 2005, and 2007, the party maintained a combined average vote share of 39.8 percent in the lower house and 70.3% percent in the senate.[23] Similar results were obtained in provinces such as Catamarca, Chubut, Corrientes, and Jujuy – all within Argentina's interior. In these, Radical coalitions continued to be competitive electoral options in the absence of opponents with broad national appeal. Despite the UCR's predominantly *porteño* (Buenos Aires hailing) leadership, the party

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[21] *Cámara Nacional Electoral*, 2020.
[22] Gerardo Scherlis, "Provincial Partisan Patronage and National Party System Stability in Argentina, 1983-2005," Paper prepared for delivery at the workshop "Political Parties and Patronage," ECPR Joint Sessions, Nicosia, April 2005, pp. 1-32.
[23] Author's calculations, *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2019. The senate figure applies to all elections between 2001-2007, as concurrent elections for the senate only occurred in 2001 and 2007.

has remained strongest in the provinces since 2003 – a fact that has informed leadership appointments since collapse.[24]

The perceived importance of the UCR's subnational strongholds was reinforced by interviews with party leaders. Importantly, those who maintained access to large territorial machines saw their own survival as linked to their party organization. Angel Rozas, former Governor and Senator from Chaco Province, made this quite clear. As a UCR president upon De la Rua's resignation, he maintained that the UCR "had to be a federal party"[25] to survive and compared the UCR's subnational territories to a military garrison that insulated its politicians from opponents. Andres Lombardi, the current secretary of the UCR National Committee echoed this sentiment. The territories were a "safe space" for existing members to pursue electoral incentives while at the same time avoiding targeted public rebukes in national elections.[26] Subnational persistence came to be key to the UCR's ability to recuperate and served a dual function for provincial elites. The maintenance of resources provided a premise for them to continue to contest local elections and preserve their locales from being eaten away from opponents. This is important because elite personalities tend to characterize local elections in Argentina, whereas national elections may depend more strongly on the programmatic labeling of parties. At the same time, party elites could avoid public scrutiny and "lick their wounds" out of the national spotlight until the pressure from voters died down.

Where territorial elites were able to rely on these kinds of advantages, the UCR stayed thoroughly intact. This was particularly the case among Senators that were able to keep their seats throughout this period. Out of the eight provinces with seats up for reelection in 2003,

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[24] Andres Malamud, "Por qué los partidos argentines sobreviven a sus catásrofes?" *Iberoamericana*, vol. 8, no. 32, 2008, p. 160.
[25] By "federalized," we both understood this to mean territorially broad; Author interview, 25 April 2018.
[26] Author interview, 17 April 2018.

Radicals maintained five: Catamarca, Chubut, Corrientes, La Pampa, and Mendoza. As table 3 indicates, the UCR's national vote share in the senate remained relatively stable between 2001-2007 (except for 2005), in contrast with its national vote share overall. Jorge Alvarez, a Radical legislator from the San Isidro district in Buenos Aires, explained that the party's continued presence in the upper house was a "main asset" in terms of its ability to contest elections in the wake of 2003.[27] This has to do with both Argentina's legislative electoral rules as well as the lack of nationalized parties throughout the country. Each province is guaranteed three seats, with the third reserved for the party that finishes in second place.[28] As the only party with an existing national infrastructure, electoral rules worked in the Radical Party's favor and enabled it to revert to the provinces after losing its traditional bastion in Buenos Aires city. Even where it suffered, the lack of a competitor with national support allowed it to secure at least one senate seat even in territories where it finished in a distant second to Peronism. Senate elections in La Pampa – a central agricultural province – serve as a case in point. In 2003, the UCR was able to keep its seat, despite finishing 25 percent (about 37,000 votes) behind the first-place PJ.[29] Even after collapse, the party maintained its status as a routine second-place finisher for Senate elections in a majority of provinces. The continued loyalty of Radical legislators can be explained by the party's ability to compete in districts where it remained viable. This competitiveness was made possible by its territorial persistence.

This becomes clear when we compare cases of early defection with cases of loyalty. On the one hand, those that stayed with the party, like Rozas, quickly exceled through its organizational ranks once crisis hit. The shift of the UCR's resources from the Capital to the

[27] Author interview, 6 March 2019.
[28] In 1995, a constitutional reform established that the third seat would be appointed by provincial legislatures, however this changed to direct election in 2001 (Micozzi, 2013: 140).
[29] *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2019.

UCR National Legislative Vote Share (Pre- and Post- Collapse)								
1999*	2001*	2003	2005	2007*	2009*	2011*	2013*	2015*
43.7%	22.19%	14.29%	11.67%	14.15%	28.80%	13.62%	30.3%	36.2%

Table 4.2: UCR Legislative Vote Share (1999-2015)
* Starred years indicate when the UCR competed as a coalition ally. These percentages reflect the coalition's total share.

UCR National Vote Share: Senate Elections (2001-2007)*			
2001	2003	2005	2007
17.2%	14.5%	8.1%	14.4%

Table 4.3: UCR Senate Vote Share (2001-2007)

provinces offered party leaders and elites opportunities to strengthen their influence over the national party organization. We can see this, first, through changes in the party's leadership selection. From 1983-2001, the president of the UCR's national committee was almost always a porteño, with only one from the interior (Mario Losada from Misiones, 1991-1993). After the crisis and collapse, every national chairman of the party hailed from the provinces; four, in particular: Chaco, Mendoza, Jujuy, and Santa Fe – all locales in which the UCR stayed competitive. When we acknowledge this alongside the fact that these figures also maintained strict control over their territories, it highlights the role of decentralized channels of internal authority – a key condition for internal renovation. As the UCR's central leadership became more discredited in the wake of collapse, provincial elites consolidated more control from the periphery.

Interestingly, some of the Radicals who chose loyalty over exit – particularly those from the interior of Argentina – expressed that antipathy directed toward the party emboldened them to stay. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many pointed the blame at Peronism. Among several party members and leaders that I interviewed, there was a perception that the 2001 economic crisis, for

which the party is still largely blamed, was ultimately not the UCR's fault. In interviews, many blamed the previous Menem administration for having laid the foundation for the crisis to come. As the same Senator put it: "De la Rua was given a bomb with the fuse lit, [the PJ] put it in his hands."[30] Another prominent Radical strategist and former member of the De la Rua administration shared this view, even going as far to refer to the PJ as the "party of crisis" that largely remains immune to its effects.[31] More interview evidence suggested that this mentality may have safeguarded against further defections. Instead of prompting more members to leave, those that were already entrenched at the subnational level chose to leverage defections to bolster their Radical credentials. The following quote captures some of this resentment towards the defectors:

> Many of the important leaders who left the UCR to form other political parties cost [the remaining members] a lot of effort…Those of use that remained were a very large group of Radicals and we stayed to support the party, to travel to the interior of the country inch by inch and explain to the people that a party of 112 years cannot be measured by a government administration under circumstances in which it was not our turn to govern.[32]

This thinking was prevalent among the Radical leadership after De la Rua's abrupt resignation. The former president himself referred to his ousting as a "civil coup"[33] and suggested that the PJ had orchestrated the fall of his administration to assume power.

[30] Author interview, 25 April 2018.
[31] Author interview, 27 March 2018.
[32] Author interview, 25 April 2018.
[33] *La Nación*, 20 December 2009.

Party Survival and Strategy Experimentation: The Long Road to Adaptation

When a party loses its legitimacy as an independent electoral entity, its leaders must pursue adaptive strategies. Although the Radical Party held on to a wealth of organizational resources, its leaders struggled to unify and use them collectively. Importantly, this is not for lack of opportunity. In addition to being able to field candidates for national office (in legislative elections) in select locales, elements of the UCR leadership chose to support national alliances in every general election after its collapse. However, these decisions were marred by party infighting and the divergent goals of party leaders themselves. Disagreements and discord that unfolded in the wake of collapse, along with the self-preservation instincts of party elites, often led to counterproductive results – some of which threatened the disbandment of the UCR. Additionally, pre-existing resources that Radical elites relied on to survive meant relatively little for the party's revival due to the increasingly factionalized nature of the party system. Armed with their own resources, provincial politicians were free to pursue their own strategies, which often put them at odds with the national party leadership. As a result, formalized channels within the UCR were used to openly sanction members rather than to broker compromise among elites. These decisions maintained internal divisions within the party and ultimately prevented its recovery at the national level.

Intra-Party Conflict and Post-Collapse Power Dynamics

To understand what kept the Radicals divided during its early survival, we must first unpack the details of its internal conflict between 2003 and 2007. The party's discord throughout this period was heavily conditioned by the dispersed nature of party resources, which endured

mainly in the provinces. The Radical Party's persistence in the immediate wake of collapse heavily depended on its ability to remain competitive in Argentina's interior provinces due to its eroded presence in populous locales. This responsibility largely fell upon the party's remaining governors, or those with disproportionate control over the allocation of resources and the formation of electoral lists. This meant that the UCR's provincial elites could maintain a significant amount of power compared to the central party authority, or the UCR national committee. Federal governors in Argentina enjoy broad discretion in the use and distribution of provincial resources, which often coincides with the interests of political parties.[34] Additionally, provincial executives can broker electoral lists and often directly engage in candidate selection – both activities in which central party leaders have a considerable stake. The UCR is no exception in that its power has largely been concentrated in the provinces, particularly in the post-collapse period.

As my theory holds, the decentralized structure of the Radical organization is crucial to understand with respect to the party's early attempts to adapt. With nearly unrestrained access to the UCR's territorial network, the party's remaining governors used their position to engage in various, and often inconsistent coalitions. Early in the survival phase, however, many of these strategies were initially counterproductive. During national elections in 2005 and 2007, Radicals engaged in dozens of small-sided alliances, most of which varied from province-to-province and included allies from across Argentina's political spectrum. For example, in those two elections alone, the UCR engaged with three predominant electoral strategies at the national level that often put the party at odds with itself. In the bulk of provinces fielding Radical candidates for the national legislature, the UCR joined multiparty alliances with opposition (non-Peronist) parties.

[34] E.g., Gibson, 1996; Behrend and Whitehead, 2016; Gibson and Suarez-Cao, 2010.

However, it also tried its luck as an independent competitor in key locations, such as the city and province of Buenos Aires as well as Cordoba. At times, these divergences deeply conflicted with the preferences of the national committee, which preferred electoral lists that maintained a firm stance against the incumbent administration. In Neuquén, Radical elites formed an alliance with the FpV to compete against the Neuquén People's Movement (MPN) – an historically dominant third party at the subnational level.

Although counterproductive, these strategies would soon create a premise for adaptation. The seemingly unrestrained autonomy of the Radical governors led to the development of two competing factions within the UCR organization: one that comprised the ailing UCR organization in the Federal Capital and favored a unified stance within the opposition and another group of rogue provincial elites (governors and mayors) who favored any alliance configuration that would keep them alive in the polls.[35] The persistent conflict that engulfed the UCR throughout the 2000s was, in no small part, intensified by several major coordination problems that drove a wedge between these two factions. For the remaining Radical governors, an alliance with the Kirchner administration was an increasingly advantageous prospect. There were clear reasons to align with the incumbent. One benefit was the FpV's growing hegemony and domination within Argentina's political space. As a result of the 2005 legislative elections, the FpV had dramatically consolidated its mandate to govern with a firm majority at the polls. Kirchner's ruling party won a combined 73 seats obtained among allied Peronist factions.[36] The UCR, on the other hand, lost a total of 15 seats, despite finishing in the top three in 18 out of 24 provinces.[37] Another reason was that the Kirchner government offered transactional benefits to

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[35] Author interview, 27 March 2018.
[36] *Clarín*, 24 October 2005.
[37] *Dirreción Nacional Electoral*, 2019; see table 4.

those who broke with the opposition. Now armed with a sound majority, the president began to use budgetary measures to draw the support of opposition actors at the local level. For political loyalty, provincial governors and mayors received federal funds – a powerful tool that presidents have been quick to use to ensure cooperation from opponents. This policy also allowed Kirchner to maintain majorities within the legislature and instill partisan discipline when necessary. In Argentina's fragmented congress, this was instrumental for the smooth implementation of the president's policy agenda. The growing hegemony of Kirchnerismo fostered more friction within the opposition. The midterm results not only allowed the president to solidify his power over the dissident factions within the PJ, but also take steps to co-opt politicians that had increasingly become impatient with the lagging success of their own parties.[38]

Growing disenchantment within the UCR's ranks made some members particularly vulnerable to the administration's overtures. For governors in the provinces, there were clear incentives to align with the FpV. On the one hand, the Radical Party had already lost its national influence and was continuing to see its representation decrease. Allying with the incumbent could satisfy the short-term career prospects for those that wanted to avoid a lengthy (and likely unsuccessful) battle with the newly emboldened government. On the other hand, governors could guarantee that federal funds would continue to flow into their provincial districts and potentially insulate themselves from future retrospective voting.[39] Kirchner's success in stabilizing the Argentine economy strengthened the argument to support his administration. Simply put, the UCR's crisis-ridden state left party elites with virtually no guarantees. In contrast, the government provided a clear offer that would enable provincial members to endure with or

[38] See Bonvecchi and Zelaznik, "Argentine Democratic Politics in an Era of Global Economic Crisis."
[39] There is abundant evidence that voters' economic assessments strongly influence provincial elections in Argentina (e.g., Remmer and Gélineau 2003; Wiesehomeier and Doyle 2013).

without their party label. This, combined with the fragmented state of the opposition, left the UCR with few alternatives to offer its elites who had very clear incentives to go against the national leadership's preferences. Newly formed parties, such as the CC and *Recrear*, were more inclined to battle Radical candidates in the electoral arena rather than cooperate and face negotiations. The CC had made substantial gains in the Federal Capital by filling the vacuum left by the Radicals' absence. Additionally, the wounds of collapse were still fresh for the UCR, and new, nationally viable actors were predominantly focused on building their own support in highly populous sectors.

The tensions between the dissident Radicals and the central leadership came to a dramatic head in the lead up to the 2007 general elections. The five remaining Radical governors formed an official bloc that would discuss the possibility of a broad UCR-FpV alliance. The *Radicales K*, as the group was dubbed, formalized their strategy with a summit in Rio Negro, a lingering Radical locale, and the home province of one of its members.[40] In response, the central party leadership decided to bar the governors from entering and participating the UCR's national convention. Rather than compelling the discipline of the dissidents, the move only made matters worse. The Radicales K doubled down on their position and used the ban to launch a campaign against the national committee. For its part, the committee decided to forego nominating its own candidate for the presidency and instead backed Roberto Lavagna, a former economy minister under the interim PJ government and briefly for Nestor Kirchner during the early days of his administration. The lack of a formal Radical candidacy allowed the governors to further justify their insurrection and did more to push them into the arms of the FpV. In a shocking turn of events, the group's leader and Mendoza governor, Julio Cobos, countered the UCR's

[40] *Pagína 12*, 13 August 2006.

endorsement of Lavagna by accepting the Vice-Presidential slot on Cristina Kirchner's 2007 presidential ticket. For what the Radical leadership deemed as a "lack of ethics," Cobos received a lifetime ban from the UCR, marking a very costly late-stage defection.[41]

The two opposing national candidacies solidified the party's rupture and further entangled the UCR's revival prospects. The high-profile break with Cobos left the UCR without a viable candidate, without a unified electoral strategy, and thus, with no opportunity to reclaim its role as a main opposition actor. Further, the potency of the party's territorial network was compromised by the work of the national committee to alienate provincial party elites. Instead of being directed for the broader success of the UCR organization, the party's remaining viable candidates and territories were working to the benefit of its direct competitors. Overall, the decisions made by the formal Radical leadership in 2007 were counterproductive for its revival prospects. The move to back Lavagna proved to be a spectacular failure. His ticket finished in a distant third place behind the Kirchner-Cobos alliance and Elisa Carrió, whose second-place finish was considered a moderate success by observers. The UCR's loss confirmed its pronounced decline on the national stage. Not only did it lack the legitimacy to field its own candidate but had also become overshadowed by those that had defected from its own ranks. Cobos and Carrío both maintained relatively high favorability ratings in the months surrounding the 2007 election.[42] While both leveraged their rifts with the party to build upon their national credentials – one presiding over an increasingly successful third party, the Radical leadership did little to shirk its baggage at the national level and arguably made matters considerably worse.

[41] *La Nación*, 21 September 2007.
[42] *Clarín*, 21 October 2007.

Party Survival in Argentina: Some Brief Concluding Thoughts

Ultimately, this chapter has highlighted key theoretical claims embedded in my theory. First, it has shown that the pressure to defect set in during the immediate stages of the UCR's crisis and drove defections through its electoral collapse in 2003. This is important because my theory anticipates that the pressure to defect will be strongest during these initial stages of crisis. Secondly, it has indicated that those who defected were able to rely on a personal base of support and conversely did not require the UCR's territorial resources to compete in elections – another key claim of my theory. Oppositely, those that remained demonstrated a reliance on the party's territorial organization, a sense of greater opportunity within the party, or both. Finally, it shows how the party's decentralized leadership structure led to the cultivation of new electoral strategies, although these initially sparked discord within the organization. However, as we will see in Chapter 5, not all hope was lost. Although the UCR's decentralization initially drove factional tendencies, these divisions would become important later in cultivating new successful strategies at the national level. As theorized, internal renovation is often a long and messy process.

Chapter 5 – The Radical Party Revives: Strategy Renovation and National Resurgence

The initial years after collapse marked a period of profound internal conflict within the UCR. Although the party had overcome the brunt of mass defections, it had yet to develop a clear and cohesive national-electoral strategy on which the bulk of the party could agree. However, the party's decentralized channels provided a latent advantage. It allowed many rank-and-file politicians to experiment with different electoral alliances at the subnational level. This not only enabled these members to remain active and competing in elections, but it also opened the door to the UCR's internal renovation. This chapter traces this process from 2005 to the party's revival in 2015. It will show, importantly, that the UCR's ability to develop a successful strategy relied on two conditions. First, it began to channel new electoral strategies through the party's organizational channels and debate them. This was made possible by the UCR's multi-tier convention system as well as more informal summits – both examples of its routinized organizational structure. Second, it established formal links with other parties in the opposition. As we will see, the Radicals became much more susceptible to alliance-formations as the renovation process progressed and new potential allies became available.

Strategy Renovation: Coalition-Formation and Electoral Competition

Tense debate surrounding electoral strategy permeated through the UCR all through the lead up to the 2005 legislative elections. Despite their acknowledgment for the need to adapt, the party's pragmatic wing – open to alliances – faced a conditional obstacle. While new parties were emerging within the opposition, there were few actors that would be susceptible to a

Radical alliance. Further, the parties that were closest aligned to Radicalism were offshoots that were born out of defections. For the time being, these actors were to remain estranged from the party. This situation severely limited the options available. An integrated coalition at the national level was likely out of the question for now. Thus, the onus was on provincial elites to engage in alliance-building within their own local districts. These circumstances led to mixed results in terms of the UCR's revival prospects. On the one hand, it led to a lack of consistency in terms of the party's electoral message. Alliance tickets varied from province to province. In some cases, Radicals situated their candidacies among center-left allies – some of which maintained close links with the Kirchner administration. In other provinces, where it was deemed advantageous, the UCR outright supported Peronism and ran on tickets with PJ candidates, as it did in Neuquén. This created more friction between provincial actors, who prioritized their own survival above party unity and the urban elites who felt it imperative to maintain a well-congealed opposition against the incumbent. On the other hand, however, the UCR performed markedly better in locations where it ran as part of an electoral coalition, regardless of which parties formed the alliance. For the 2005 midterms, the UCR fielded candidates for the lower house in 23 provinces.[1] The party's total proportion of votes in provinces where the party ran solo was 4.5 percent as opposed to 11.8 percent where it joined some type of coalition. The 2005 results confirmed the pragmatists' concerns – that independence was simply not a viable option.

This is verified by the UCR's engagement with multiparty coalitions and overall performance in the 2007 general elections (see table 5).[2] Here, the number of provinces in which Radicals ran on alliance tickets increased to 16 compared to the 8 provinces in which the party

[1] Except for Tierra Del Fuego.
[2] The party did not compete for the presidency, but instead backed the candidacy of Roberto Lavagna.

ran as an independent competitor. Again, the Radical Party was significantly more competitive when competing as part of an alliance than where it chose to go it alone. This is reflected by the

UCR Performance in the 2005 Legislative Elections: National Deputies					
Independent Ticket			Alliance Ticket		
Province	Place Finished	Vote Share	Province	Place Finished	Vote Share
Buenos Aires	4th	7.92%	Catamarca	2nd	33.18%
Federal Capital	7th	2.23%	Chaco	1st	56.61%
Chubut	2nd	23.67%	Córdoba	3rd	18.50%
Entre Rios	2nd	21.78%	Corrientes	1st	72.76%
Formosa	2nd	26.95%	Jujuy	2nd	30.16%
La Pampa	2nd	31.27%	Mendoza	1st	35.26%
La Rioja	3rd	6.25%	Misiones	3rd	11.58%
Salta	5th	8.09%	Neuquén	2nd	35.46%
San Juan	7th	2.08%	Rio Negro	2nd	38.68%
Santa Cruz	2nd	27.58%	San Luis	3rd	7.24%
			Santa Fe	1st	43.05%
			Santiago Del Estero	1st	71.05%
			Tucumán	5th	4.57%
Total Vote Share		4.5%	Total Vote Share		11.8%
Source: *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2019 and Author's Calculations.					

Table 5.1: A comparison of alliance and non-alliance UCR performance in Argentina's 2005 Midterm Elections.

total proportion of the national vote the UCR received as a coalition party, 16.8%, compared to 7.7% where it ran independently (see table 5). There are a few possible explanations for this. First, although it formed alliances in double the number of provinces, there were approximately ten million more votes available in the districts where the UCR ran independently.[3] Thus, on some level we can expect the party's performance to appear to be much stronger due to the

[3] Specifically, 15,275,283 compared to 5,405,680 total votes.

higher possibility it would garner a larger proportion of votes in smaller, less populous provinces. However, this deceptiveness is offset by the fact that the party still placed higher nearly across the board when it was part of a coalition: it finished in the top three in all but three provinces (Misiones, Rio Negro, and Salta). Conversely, Radicals were only top finishers in three out of the eight provinces when running solo (Chubut, Cordoba, and Entre Rios). Further, its performance in Córdoba is by far the most impressive within this category, and somewhat unsurprising given that the province is a Radical subnational stronghold. Second, the UCR's lagging vote share as an independent competitor could also be due to higher levels of competition in select provinces. In the eight districts that it ran with no allies, there was an average total of about 19 parties competing for votes. In the 16 districts it ran on a coalition, that number is reduced to approximately 11.[4]

Though, the way in which the UCR went about coalition-formation may shed light on the possibility of spuriousness. In nearly every provincial alliance (except for Neuquén), the Radicals consolidated its vote share with other opposition parties, or ones that posed a direct threat when the party ran on its own. This was certainly not a foregone conclusion, as the general policy towards coalition-formation was highly contingent and subject mainly to the unique preferences of the UCR's provincial elites, as was made clear by former UCR heads and their advisers.[5] Despite this, there was still a logic guiding alliance-building that sought to maximize vote returns. In Neuquén, for example, the UCR forged a ticket with Peronism to challenge the provincially hegemonic MPN and succeeded. In Chaco, the Frente de Todos included the Socialist Party and other provincially aligned actors to maintain its status as a main contender in

[4] *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2019 and author's calculations.
[5] Author interview, 11 March 2019 and 27 March 2018.

the province. We can see similar configurations and results in Santiago Del Estero, Santa Cruz, La Pampa, and Catamarca. Thus, we should attribute the party's disproportional success to its

UCR Performance in the 2007 General Elections: National Deputies					
Independent Ticket			Alliance Ticket		
Province	Place Finished	Vote Share	Province	Place Finished	Vote Share
Buenos Aires	4th	6.17%	Catamarca	1st	31.18%
Federal Capital	7th	5.81%	Chaco	2nd	27.81%
Chubut	3rd	12.75%	Corrientes	2nd	15.88%
Cordoba	1st	22.8%	Formosa	2nd	16.4%
Entre Rios	2nd	18.51%	Jujuy	2nd	23.49%
Mendoza	4th	9.19%	La Pampa	2nd	34.09%
Santa Fe	4th	5.26%	La Rioja	2nd	21.6%
Tierra Del Fuego	6th	6.56%	Misiones	5th	5.6%
			Neuquén	1st	36.69%
			Rio Negro	4th	11.48%
			Salta	4th	2.74%
			San Juan	3rd	12.75%
			San Luis	2nd	9.84%
			Santa Cruz	2nd	28.44%
			Santiago Del Estero	1st	52.39%
			Tucumán	2nd	16.05%
Total Vote Share		7.7%	Total Vote Share		16.8%
Source: *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2019 and Author's Calculations.					

Table 5.2: A comparison of alliance and non-alliance UCR performance in the 2007 General Elections.

alliance behavior and not to external party system dynamics that existed outside of the UCR's control.

A View Toward Party Unification

Still, as my theory anticipates, these strategies tended to be ad hoc and only moderately effective because none were channeled through the UCR's national convention system. What the party needed at this stage was an organized front for renovation that could sell one of these strategies as a possible way to reinvent itself at the national level. On the one hand, this posed a serious challenge. The defections of the *Radicales K* obfuscated the UCR's stance within the opposition and decreased the prospect of a nationally integrated alliance that could challenge the FpV. This, in turn, weakened its leverage to negotiate with other parties and limited the options available – both factors that led to suboptimal alliance configurations at the national level.[6] On the other hand, however, the inconvenient marriage between Peronism and Radicalism that formed the incumbent government was on the rocks. The wedge between the FpV and the *Radicales K* began with the deteriorating performance of the incumbent Kirchner government. Whereas the FpV had gained credibility for its role in taming the 2001 economic crisis, the end of the decade brought with it a new wave of economic challenges that were largely driven by the 2008 global recession. By the beginning of 2009, analysts forecasted contracted GDP growth for the first time since the Kirchners' hegemonic rise to power.[7] Caught blindsided by the lagging performance, the government hastily responded with a series of unpopular measures, which included the nationalization of one the country's major airlines as well as several private pension funds. Among the most controversial was the government's proposal of a severe tax hike on farming exports, which had been curtailed due to severe drought conditions. The bill drew a harsh reaction from opposition actors from across the country's political spectrum – including many of the President's own allies in the PJ. The confrontation also rested uneasily among members of the government. The numerous detractors included Cristina Kirchner's sitting Vice

[6] The 2007 alliance with Lavagna in particular.
[7] Noam Lupu, "The 2009 Legislative Elections in Argentina," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 29, 2010, pp. 171-177.

President, Julio Cobos, the most prominent of the *Radicales K*. The threat of export tariffs presented a dilemma for the former governor of Mendoza – a large agricultural province. As the head of the province, Cobos' electoral success had strongly relied on his long-standing alliance with the region's powerful agricultural sector. Maintaining loyalty to the government could alienate this relationship. On the other hand, killing the bill would guarantee his estrangement from the Casa Rosada and effectively terminate his links with the Kirchners. Initially opting for a neutral stance, Cobos petitioned the administration to present the bill to the legislature so it could be debated on the floor. However, the measure reached a stalemate in the senate, which triggered institutional protocols that require the Vice President to cast a tie-breaking vote. In what is now considered to be a renowned display of Argentine political theater, Cobos notoriously voted against the bill and by doing so, handed his own government a colossal setback.[8]

The "no-positivo" vote, as it was dubbed by media, worked to dramatically ease tensions between the UCR establishment and the embattled Radicales K, most of whom had wavered in their support during the government's clash with the farmers. In addition to Cobos' open dissent, Radical governors in Corrientes and Rio Negro began to distance themselves from the FpV, with several speaking out publicly against the government.[9] A collection of *Radicales K* went so far as to "request the permission to dissent" with the ruling party in a decidedly symbolic open letter to the administration.[10] With this momentum, the official UCR leadership began to formulate the groundwork for a unified opposition alliance to compete in the 2009 elections. In the immediate months after the farm bill fiasco, the party began to hold a series of negotiations with Cobos and the repentant *Radicales K*. Many were initially reluctant to readmit the former defectors back

[8] See *Clarín*, 17 July 2008.
[9] See *Perfil*, 13 July 2009.
[10] See *La Nación*, 12 June 2008.

into the fold. The new national chair, Jujuy senator, Gerardo Morales, took a firm public stance against amnesty for those that abandoned the party. Cobos and his allies, although formally separated from the FpV, still maintained the view that Radicalism should adopt a broad electoral strategy with an agnostic view towards Peronist alternatives. How the leadership chose to handle this friction mattered for the party's reunification. The talks to mend the split were now taken seriously and debated at multiple institutional levels of the UCR organization.[11] Despite the wishes of some senior party members, former defectors were not sidelined from these discussions. Cobos, in a sign of good faith, agreed to maintain his distance and abide by the decisions of intermediary actors. Ultimately, the prospect of a united Radical Party outweighed any lingering animosity held by those in the leadership, which adopted a more or less open-door policy for those that would abide by the party's firm stance within the opposition. For his part, Cobos' was granted a conditional reentry into the UCR, if he would not appear on any electoral ticket during the 2009 elections – a stipulation he agreed to.

In addition to smoothing the UCR's internal tensions, its new unified stance laid a strong premise for collective action among the wider opposition. Without the looming threat of uncertainty that inherently came with defections, party leaders were in a stronger position to negotiate with neighboring parties and could now scrutinize between different potential alliance configurations. The debate surrounding strategy for the 2009 midterm elections revolved around the UCR's possible fusion among three different opposition parties. The first was Carrió's Civic Coalition. An alliance between the two was seen by many observers as a naturally compatible fit, given Carrió's prior history as a Radical and each's similar programmatic tendencies that were overtly critical of the FpV. A second possibility was a formulation that would include the

[11] See *La Nación*, 13 December 2008.

Socialist Party. There were clear incentives for doing so. In addition to maintaining an antagonistic stance toward the incumbent government, the Socialists had consolidated a strong base of support in Santa Fe province. In 2007, its candidate, Hermes Binner, won the governorship by a 10 percent margin – a victory that fueled speculation of a possible presidential bid. Lastly, some within the UCR that favored a broad alliance strategy supported the inclusion of the increasingly ascendant PRO. Since its establishment in the early 2000s, the PRO had institutionalized itself as the predominant force in the Federal Capital. This was solidified with the 2007 election of Mauricio Macri as the city's mayor. However, this idea was quickly cast aside. Despite its growing momentum, PRO maintained close links with members of the PJ, many of whom became party dissidents in the wake of its factionalization and turn towards Kirchnerismo.

A potential alliance with both CC and the Socialists presented a strong opportunity for the UCR. On the one hand, it was projected to be highly competitive. A coalition between the three could present itself as a sizeable force against the FpV. With the national infrastructure of Radicalism, the Socialists representation in Santa Fe, and CC's clout in the Federal Capital, the opposition posed a significant threat to the ruling party. This combined with the ailing image of the incumbent made for a unique advantage. At the same time, the Radicals could approach negotiations with a considerable amount of bargaining leverage. Like in prior instances, the UCR's resources endowed it with the power to play into the national ambitions of both the Socialists and CC. It was an open secret that both had intentions to forge a path to the 2011 presidential elections and the midterms provided a training ground in which to launch a viable campaign. Additionally, both parties lacked a nationalized organization. This prospect not only made an alliance feasible but could motivate all actors to sustain the partnership. Finally, a

nationally integrated opposition alliance provided the UCR with a chance to distance itself from its post-collapse baggage. The party's internal reconciliation put it in a firm position against Peronism, which the alliance could tap into due to its association with the country's most prominent opposition actors. Additionally, the coalition provided the ability to signal a credible vision of the future to voters in terms of how a "post-Kirchnerista" political era might look.[12] In the end, the three parties ratified their partnership with the formation of the *Frente Civico y Social* (Civic and Social Front, ACyS) bloc.

Alliance Behavior and National-Electoral Performance: 2009

Unlike previous election cycles in 2005 and 2007, the 2009 legislative elections marked the first time the UCR performed on a nationally integrated coalition. Apart from five provinces, it competed consistently as part of ACyS at the national level. In line with my theoretical expectations, we can see the Radical vote share markedly improve. In provinces where it competed as part of an alliance ticket, it managed to draw a combined 21percent of votes, compared to just 6 percent where it ran independently. However, the party's progress is perhaps more notable if we look at the regions in which it adopted a coalition strategy and changed its approach from 2007. For the first time since its collapse, the UCR formed a coalition in Buenos Aires province and the Federal Capital – the most competitive districts at the national level. In both, the Radical vote share substantially increases as does its performance overall. In the former, the UCR increases its vote share by 15 percent and finishes third – a marked increase from 2007 where it only maintained 6 percent of votes. Similarly, its performance in the Federal

[12] *La Nación*, 23 November 2008.

Capital significantly improves as well. In 2007, the independent Radical list finished seventh, with a mere five percent of votes. In 2009, it becomes a top three finisher with just under 20 percent. The party also improves its standing in Entre Rios, where it formed a new list as part of the ACyS. Here, the party nearly doubles its vote share from 2007-2009 from 18 to 35 percent and ascends to first place. Lastly, the UCR dramatically improves its performance in Santa Fe and Mendoza – increasing its vote share in each by 40 percent and 35 percent, respectively.

We can test my theory's claims by noting a few possible explanations for the Radical Party's dramatic improvement in 2009. The first is the incumbent's weakened performance due to Argentina's economic downturn. Several months before the midterm elections, Cristina Kirchner's approval rating plummeted to 23 percent – a development that caused observers to attribute gains to the opposition.[13] It is undeniable that the declining image of the Kirchner government circumstantially contributed to the opposition's gains. However, this explanation is dampened by the fact that Kircher's FpV alliances, despite losing its legislative majority, won more raw votes across the board in races for national deputies.[14] Additionally, it was able to maintain an effective working majority in the Senate. Hence, explanations focused on incumbent performance appear to be somewhat overstated. The opposition's success becomes clearer when we examine *where* it increased its support, which were predominantly locales in which the vote was consolidated by the ACyS alliance – as clarified above.

Second, one could also argue that the opposition's success was facilitated by the rise of the PRO, as its vote share also grew and solidified its place as a top three competitor at the national level. Despite symbolic a symbolic victory in Buenos Aires province, in which the party narrowly defeated the FpV, the PRO's success remained almost totally confined to its stronghold

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[13] *El País*, 9 April 2008.
[14] See Lupu, 2009, p. 176.

of the Federal Capital. This is an unsurprising result, considering that the FpV has never garnered a plurality of support in this district. Thus, the inability of the two prior accounts point to the nature of the UCR's alliance itself. The Radicals' comparative success as part of the

UCR Performance in the 2009 Legislative Elections					
Independent Ticket			Alliance Ticket		
Province	Place Finished	Vote Share	Province	Place Finished	Vote Share
Chubut	2nd	18.28%	Buenos Aires	3rd	21.46%
Cordoba	1st	29.03%	Federal Capital	3rd	19.14%
Misiones	4th	10.10%	Catamarca	1st	38.69%
Neuquén	2nd	25.43%	Chaco	2nd	44.48%
Tierra Del Fuego	3rd	14.95%	Corrientes	2nd	32.76%
			Entre Rios	1st	35.01%
			Formosa	2nd	35.67%
			Jujuy	2nd	30.94%
			La Pampa	2nd	37.74%
			La Rioja	2nd	32.21%
			Mendoza	1st	48.58%
			Rio Negro	2nd	27.50%
			Salta*	7th	4.85%
			San Juan	3rd	15.11%
			San Luis	2nd	15.72%
			Santa Cruz	1st	42.57%
			Santa Fe	2nd	39.81%
			Santiago Del Estero*	3rd	11.12%
			Tucumán	2nd	15.56%
Total Vote Share		6.25%	Total Vote Share		21.07%
Source: *Dirección Nacional Electoral,* 2019 and Author's Calculations.					

Table 5.3: A comparison of alliance and non-alliance UCR performance in the 2009 Legislative Elections.

ACyS can be attributed to its leverage as a unified electoral front, which was made difficult in previous election cycles due to its internal rifts. With this advantage, party leaders not only avoided pitfalls that could stifle their chances at the national level but focused their negotiating leverage on the right allies in the CC and Socialists. Provincial alliances formed in the immediate aftermath of collapse were often inconsistent and included mismatched allies. Many were formed with the expressed intention to broaden electoral coalitions, with little consideration given to programmatic appeals at the national level. In contrast, the ACyS presented an advantage in that all its members were strictly aligned along Argentina's predominant cleavage structure in their opposition to Peronism.[15]

This coherency enabled the UCR to revamp its image in two ways: First, it allowed the party to shift attention away from its poor track record in government and signify a credible commitment as an actor within the opposition. This coincided with the deteriorating image of the incumbent administration. Crucially, this would have been unlikely if UCR elites had remain divided in their stance toward the incumbent. Secondly, the alliance made it possible for the UCR to rely on its usable past as the preeminent anti-Peronist force. In addition to consolidating the opposition, the ACyS framed its appeals against what it perceived as the executive's (and thus, the broader PJ's) democratic oversteps. We can compare this to the characterization of FREPASO in the mid-1990s, which similarly justified its formation in the context of Menem's frequent circumvention of democratic institutions. This option would have likewise been closed-off if a pan-opposition alliance had not been achieved.

[15] See Ostiguy 1998.

UCR Renovation and National Revival (2011-2015)

Despite the UCR's impressive legislative showing in 2009, it continued to face some persistent issues. One was that it was still sluggish to unite under a unified framework. Some, despite the party's improved performance, were stubbornly opposed to coalitions on the right – which included most of the opposition field. Even more concerning, however, was that the party's differences seemed to magnify in between elections. In the dramatic aftermath of the 2011 general election, the UCR's internal divisions reached a critical inflection point. The party's electoral performance was dismal. The UCR candidate, Ricardo Alfonsín – a national deputy and son of the former president – only obtained 11 percent of the vote, which looked paltry in comparison to the FpV's 54 percent (or even the Socialist coalition's 16 percent). To add insult to injury, no one in the party was particularly enthusiastic about the ticket to begin with. Alfonsín had only become the UCR's nominee through a series of broken alliances, which divided the party from its usual electoral partnership with the Socialist Party. This time, collective action was sullied largely by the presidential ambitions of Hermes Binner, the top Socialist and governor of Santa Fe Province. This forced Alfonsín to search for other means of electoral support. In a bold move before the October vote, he formed a puzzling electoral alliance with Francisco de Narváez, a Peronist candidate running for Governor of Bueno Aires Province. To many in the UCR, this was a grave overstep. The party had only just solved the rift with its dissident faction of *Radicales K*. Thus, to pivot back toward Peronism made little sense. The crushing defeat confirmed this.

The aftermath of the 2011 election is one of the clearest examples of the benefits of internal routinization after collapse and thus, marks a crucial juncture with respect to my theory. About one month after the election, the entire Radical organization convened to hold a "postmortem" on the defeat. The convention, intended to "debate the modernization of the party," would instead descend into "a battlefield with shoves, insults, and even slaps, where different lines of the party fought loudly."[16] The Radical leadership was furious about Alfonsín's decision to align with de Narváez, and the lines drawn were abundantly clear. The leadership faction had developed into a steady cohort of territorial Radicals. These included Ernesto Sanz, the UCR's outgoing president, Gerardo Morales, Angel Rozas, and Julio Cobos, among others. Alfonsín's backers were mainly city-based Radicals who had drifted from the organization after 2003. Perhaps understandably, one of Alfonsín's biggest allies at the convention was Leopoldo Moreau – the only other Radical to achieve a lower electoral result for the presidency in recent history. In a particularly dramatic display, Moreau and Morales came to the point of physical blows on the convention floor and had to be separated.[17] A third party[18] to this chaos was the UCR's youth and student militant wing, the *Franja Morada* (Purple Stripe or *La Franja*). Thoroughly fed up with the UCR's dysfunction, the activists displayed signs with a simple but effective message: "*Es la renovación, estúpidos!*" (It's the renovation, stupid!).[19]

Here, it is important to note the intense galvanizing effects of the UCR's national conventions and thus, internal routinization. Although the 2011 meeting descended into a melee, the party was in fact able to exercise its grievances. Some even left the 2011 fiasco with clearer heads. Indeed, the election was a near-death experience for the UCR. But it was also a wakeup

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[16] *La Nación*, 19 November 2011.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Author interview, 3 April 2018.
[19] Ibid.

call. This was clear to its leadership, who increasingly saw reasons to act.[20] Sanz, upon leaving his post as party president, realized the risk of a full-blown decline and warned that "without power, the UCR risks becoming a sect."[21] The debacle surrounding Alfonsín's candidacy and the resulting discord at the convention had taught the Radicals a valuable lesson: they could no longer rely solely on their machine in the Federal Capital to compete for the presidency. Although a pathway had cleared for the provincial renovators, constructing a unified electoral alliance was initially a gradual task. However, the orderly way that it happened was beneficial over the long-term. For the 2013 midterm elections, the UCR successfully negotiated a pan-opposition alliance that included Carrió's CC along with several moderate third parties. Still, this failed to mount any serious challenge to the FpV and its affiliates, which claimed strong majorities in the legislature.[22] Ultimately, the CC alone could not compensate for the UCR's waning support in the Capital.

Some of the problem was that the UCR's alliances during legislative elections often included elements of Peronism. In subnational contests, this was advantageous because these factions provided their support on a non-programmatic basis. At the national level, the costs of association were much higher. A much more central issue, however, was that the Radical Party's design[23] made for divergent interests among its top brass – always a beast with too many heads. The divisions among the Provincial Renovators correlate directly to their territorial interests as well as their ambitions for higher office. One flank included Angel Rozas and Julio Cobos. Both of whom opted for excessively broad alliance configurations. Their agnosticism toward allies

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[20] Author interview, 11 March 2019
[21] *La Nación*, 19 November 2011.
[22] Matthew M. Singer, "The 2013 Congressional Elections in Argentina," *Electoral Studies*, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 370-73.
[23] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

made sense. Rozas, while governor of Chaco, had learned how to survive during the 1990s, after the UCR was thrown into a decade-long opposition in the wake of Raul Alfonsín's resignation. He did this by cultivating his own subnational alliance networks, which included Peronists.[24] Crucially, Rozas credits his long career to this ability, citing how it has enabled him to rise through the ranks as Governor and then Senator, but also through the UCR's bureaucratic ranks.[25] Rozas served as President of the UCR National Committee from 2001-2005. In government, he has represented Chaco from each of its highest political offices: National Deputy (1983-1995), Governor (1995-2003), and Senator (2013-2019). Cobos's career reflects a similar drive to excel toward higher office. Like Rozas, he has occupied all three of Mendoza's top political positions from 2003, taking a brief pause to join the insurrectionary campaign of Cristina Kirchner in 2007. Unlike Rozas, however, Cobos has built a public image less intertwined with Radicalism. For instance, while Rozas had joined the UCR as a student militant in *La Franja*, Cobos joined the UCR later in life and as a bureaucrat in the Mendoza city government. This sheds light on his tendency to go against the central party during its formative survival years.

Ernesto Sanz, then-Senator representing his home province of Mendoza, occupied the opposite flank. Sanz's position represented somewhat of an innovation for the UCR's post-collapse electoral strategy. He sought to exclude elements of Peronism from any possible electoral alliance. His public reasoning for this was that the UCR could never justify itself as a competitive electoral option if it did not form a coherent programmatic stance against the

[24] This alliance was called *Frente de Todos* (Front for All).
[25] Mariana Prats, "I Will Survive. Resources, Strategies, and Institutional Framework in Parties' Lives: The Case of the Unión Cívica Radical in Federal Argentina," Ph.D. diss., (Universidad de Buenos Aires/Sorbonne), p. 253; Author interview, 25 April 2018.

incumbent government.[26] Excluding Peronism from the ticket was, thus, a message to voters that the UCR stood firmly in the opposition. Yet, when asked about the programmatic aims of this plan, Sanz and his allies were remarkably vague. He cited the need for a coalition that is both "ideologically diverse," but also "firmly anchored in the values of democratic republicanism."[27] In reality, however, his plan was much more pragmatic, and seemed to be the perfect solution to the UCR's "Peronism problem." Instead of navigating tense and fragile alliances among off-shoot parties on the political left (or right), the UCR could build its inroads back into the Federal Capital by joining forces with Mauricio Macri's PRO.

An alliance with the PRO showed massive potential for two reasons. First, although the UCR had a large swathe of territory in the provinces, none of its territorial politicians could pull enough popular support to stage a competitive run for the presidency. Thus, the party had a severe leadership deficit at the national level. The PRO posed an obvious solution to this problem. Macri was well into his second term as the Mayor of the Federal Capital. By 2014, it had long been speculated that he was angling for a presidential bid.[28] Macri had taken a highly visible stance against the Kirchner government throughout his tenure as Mayor. In this way, he represented a clear and popular distinction from the incumbent government and its declining public image. Although forging an alliance with the PRO would effectively risk relinquishing a Radical on the top of the ticket, it seemed to represent a safer route to power in general, which was Sanz's goal.[29] The second reason is that the PRO had effectively overshadowed the UCR in the Federal Capital as the city's preeminent party.[30] Where the Radicals once dominated the

[26] *La Nación*, 14 March 2016.
[27] Ibid.
[28] *La Nación*, 18 January 2014.
[29] *La Nación*, 19 November 2011; Author interview, 11 March 2019.
[30] Author interview, 15 March 2018.

urban middle-class districts of the city, the PRO had established deep connections. Crucially, it had done this by absorbing elements of Peronism that drifted after the Menem years.[31] This meant that in addition to solving two crucial coordination problems for the UCR, it also escaped any *outright* association with Peronism. Importantly, the PRO also stood to benefit from an alliance. Although its penetration of the Capital occurred rapidly and extensively, it lacked any organizational presence in Argentina's interior. Macri would need this type of advantage to wage a competitive campaign.[32]

These two broad preferences – Peronism or PRO – set the stage for the UCR's National Convention in 2015. The meeting was held in March, seven months before the election. However, it occurred during a shocking time for Argentine politics. The country was still reeling from the death of Alberto Nisman, a federal prosecutor who was mysteriously found dead in his apartment just weeks prior.[33] In a rare moment of vulnerability for the incumbent FpV, all eyes were on the Radical leaders.[34] The stakes were dramatically high as 337 party elites from across the country convened in the Gualeguaychú Theater in Entre Ríos Province. In stark contrast to the scene of the 2011 post-convention, the atmosphere was one of tense anticipation rather than outright discord. The opening speeches reflect a strong emphasis on party unity and a "passionate but respectful discussion of differences."[35] Beneath the surface, however, ambitions were bubbling. Throughout the day, both Sanz and Cobos frantically hurried in and out of meetings with Radical leaders to mobilize support for their respective strategies.[36] The

[31] See the discussion of the PRO in Chapter 4 of this dissertation; Eduardo Amadeo (interviewed for this work) is a good example of a Peronist-turned-PRO politician.
[32] Author interview, 9 May 2018.
[33] The official ruling was suicide. However, speculation grew of a conspiracy involving Cristina Kirchner. This continues to be a highly controversial issue in Argentina.
[34] *La Nación*, 14 March 2016.
[35] *La Nación*, 14 March 2015.
[36] Ibid.

convention itself was a grueling affair. Unable to reach a firm consensus, the activities extended well into the evening. Sanz and Cobos, hoping to end things as quickly as possible, sent emissaries to meet and negotiate on their behalf.[37] The result came in the early morning hours. Sanz's camp won a total of 186 convention votes to Cobos's 130.[38] In the end, the vote was definitive, and Radicals of all stripes respected the result (for the most part). Cobos, in a show of good faith, made it clear that he would not contest the result, solidifying the UCR's convergence as a national force. However, this civil discourse broke down with convention. At dawn, crowds of UCR student activists, led by Sanz's detractors, swarmed on the Gualeguaychú Theater. To avoid a reprisal of 2011, he and a small group of his confidants were led out of a side door and quickly made their exit.[39] At six in the morning and "almost twelve hours of debate,"[40] the top Renovator had accomplished his mission. Through the UCR convention, Sanz managed to successfully sell his strategy to the UCR rank-and-file.

The alliance with Macri's PRO paved the way for the UCR's national revival on three levels. First, it helped the party rebrand itself on a national scale. A large problem stemming from the 2003 collapse was that different ideological strains within Radicalism saw very few reasons to work together. This stifled the UCR's electoral message at the national level, particularly when its candidates took a lukewarm stance against Peronism (as seen in the 2011 candidacy of Alfonsín). Associating with PRO provided the Radicals with a refreshed image, with which it could justify itself as a force for change. The PRO-UCR campaign leaned into this message hard – dubbing its alliance *Cambiemos* (Let's Change!). In interviews with PRO and UCR activists, it was also explained that the party's reinvention created a new premise for its

[37] *La Nación*, 14 March 2015a.
[38] *Página 12*, 16 March 2015.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

activism. After the alliance was forged, young PRO supporters began trickling into the ranks of the UCR's student militant groups.[41] By extension, the alliance also served to bolster the UCR's performance in its once-critical stronghold in the Federal Capital. In the City of Buenos Aires, *Cambiemos* performed much better than anticipated. Although Macri had narrowly lost the first-round election to Daniel Scioli, candidate for the FpV, he was able to resurge in the second-round and achieve victory – largely due to amplified support in "swing districts" in the city.[42] In total, *Cambiemos* and its affiliates won nearly 80 percent of votes in the Capital.[43] Importantly, the partnership also paid-off handsomely for Macri and his younger party. He won the most votes in Argentina's four largest territories by population (Buenos Aires City, Córdoba, Mendoza, and Santa Fe), which made the crucial difference.[44] Finally, the partnership and extending victory helped the UCR resurge its role in government. Because the PRO lacked a broad slate of candidates to run down ballot, most of the coalition's legislative candidacies were filled by Radicals. Upon Macri's victory, UCR leaders effectively became congressional leaders due to their seniority. Some Radicals were offered posts in the government.[45] Sanz himself was offered the role of Justice Minister. Though, he mysteriously declined the position and has since kept an arm's length from political life.[46] Others, however, are firmly committed to the coalition's future or have since come around to accept it as a necessary path to national power for the UCR.[47]

[41] Author interviews, 3 April 2018; 5 April 2018.
[42] *La Nación*, 22 November 2015.
[43] *Dirección Nacional Electoral*, 2020.
[44] Author interview, 25 April 2018.
[45] It should be noted here that many in the UCR feel that they were not rewarded enough for their role in the 2015 victory.
[46] He has not publicly disclosed his reasons for this.
[47] This was particularly the case in interviews with Rozas and Rodriguez.

Party Revival in Argentina: Some Brief Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has revealed several novel conclusions with respect to party revival. For one, it shows that the UCR's renovation process relied on the implementation of new strategy at multiple electoral levels. From 2007 to 2015, the party engaged in numerous attempts to broker collective action with other opposition parties. However, at times, these attempts were spoiled by an unavailability of potential allies. Like the last chapter, it stresses the role of decentralization in developing these strategies. While strategy experimentation initially acted as a way for rank-and-file politicians to survive and remain competitive, it gradually transformed into a workable solution to the UCR's problems regarding national-electoral competition.

Additionally, and crucially, this chapter stresses the role of internal routinization in protecting the renovation process from breaking down. This is demonstrated at its clearest during national conventions in 2011 and 2015. Despite being messy affairs, they provided an outlet to resolve grievances. Without these channels, it is probable that the party would have split across multiple lines as tension was mounting in this direction from 2003 to 2007. Interestingly, we can also see how these events kept members wedded to the Radical "project." For example, even politically "disgraced" members of the party felt emboldened to participate in its conventions, despite having a weak standing in the organization. Ultimately, these episodes provided clarity throughout the UCR's post-collapse trajectory. Between elections, Radicals displayed a tendency to expand away from one another, which led to divisiveness. However, in the lead up to elections – when the UCR would convene and at times, fight – it managed to alleviate some of its internal discord.

Finally, this chapter clues us in to role of coalition-formation in facilitating a national revival. Like other parties, the UCR lacked a marketable leader throughout its survival phase. The only possible figure with national traction – Julio Cobos – left the party opportunistically and damaged his credibility upon returning a few years later. Likewise, the influx of new opposition parties created a problem for the UCR. That is, until it began to pivot toward these parties – a development that only occurred because of a mass consensus reached at the 2015 Gualeguaychú convention. Ultimately, this was the key development that enabled the Radical Party to leverage its territorial organization to assist the PRO and revive.

<u>Chapter 6 – Party Survival and Revival in Comparative Perspective: Evidence from Venezuela, Peru, and Costa Rica</u>

The previous empirical chapters argue that the Argentine Radical Party's survival and national revival both amount to its ability to do three things in the aftermath of collapse. First, the party avoided mass defections and was able to retain a stock of rank-and-file politicians – mainly at the subnational level. My theory argues that avoiding defections is the principal concern after collapse. At times, mass defections occur so suddenly that they can vanquish a party before the next election cycle. Just as important, defections can also deprive a party of renovators at a time when they are desperately needed to communicate a break with the past to voters. The Radical case suggests that a robust territorial organization is a necessary condition in the retention of ambitious rank-and-file politicians after collapse. This is because many tend to rely on their party's electoral machinery at the subnational and local levels to remain in office – party survival is a "mutual endeavor." Equally, the alternatives of forging an independent candidacy, defecting to a rival party, or establishing a new party altogether will likely entail substantial costs for politicians that lack their own personal appeal. When considered in these terms, defection is inherently riskier than staying wedded to a well-stocked party organization for such members.

Secondly, and as a direct result of the prior, the Radical Party was able to renovate its strategy from competing in elections at both the national and subnational levels. Rank-and-file members that chose to remain in the UCR were also able to leverage their continued access to its territorial resources and reform its electoral strategy in provincial and national elections. This activity had two consequences – each critical for the party's survival and revival. On the one

hand, it reinforced the survival of individual politicians by providing them with a basis (i.e., resources) to challenge the perceived failings of the central party leadership. This was important to communicate a change to the electorate and mitigate the effects of voter rejection. On the other hand, it inspired new electoral strategies, some of which would become integral to the Radical Party's revival as part of the Cambiemos coalition in 2015. Ultimately, the UCR's ability to reform itself was conditioned by two key characteristics of its party organization. Decentralized channels of internal authority allowed rank-and-file politicians to maintain virtually unfettered access to the UCR's subnational resources, and thus made it possible for these members to deviate from the central party. However, internal routinization – as seen in the UCR's entrenched and frequent use of conventions and committees – kept the renovation process from breaking down and further jeopardizing the party's future.

Finally, the renovation process spawned a unified strategy of coalition-formation at the national level. Like other parties that have survived collapse, the UCR was struck with two crucial limitations in the context of national revival: a lack of marketable candidates and an influx of new competition (in the form of other parties or electoral movements). These constraints made coalitional revival the most likely (if not the only) pathway for the party to resurge as a national actor. This explains the Radical Party's willingness to pursue collective action with other emerging parties, such as the PRO and CC. The success of the coalition, however, I argue was due to the transactional basis on which Cambiemos was built. By joining forces, the Radicals gained access to a marketable national candidate in Mauricio Macri and its allies gained access to the party's nationalized organization, which was required to win the presidency.

The Radical Party is indeed an ideal case to demonstrate the process of party survival. Still, one could speculate that its ability to escape the constraints of voter rejection was due to certain unique characteristics inherent to its organization or competitive environment. For example, the UCR's territorial organization was both vast and deeply entrenched at the time of collapse, which allowed the party to divert its political efforts to Argentina's interior provinces and continue to reap subnational votes without any serious interruptions. This is an important difference with many other collapsed parties, which tend to quickly lose territory to emergent parties or defectors after collapse or only have "localized" organizations.[1]

The UCR organization can also be considered unique in its composition. Not many Latin American political parties have decentralized channels of internal authority but also abide by routinized norms and procedures. In Latin America, where a party is decentralized and primarily competes as a subnational actor, competing interests within the organization tend to factionalize and often eschew attempts at collective action.[2] This condition can stifle any collective effort toward renovation. On the other hand, highly routinized parties tend to adapt from crisis slowly or not at all, as hierarchical authority will likely prevent the necessary reforms that could mend crisis.[3]

Regarding coalitional revival, one could argue that the post-collapse competitive environment was more favorable for the Radicals than in other countries where party collapse has occurred. In Argentina, new parties struggled to displace the UCR everywhere but the

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[1] For example, Cyr's (2017, pp. 86-7, 123) study shows that APRA's organizational resource wealth at the time of collapse is somewhat disputed by scholars and party members. Interestingly, the party lost most of its subnational territory from 1993 to 1995 – the immediate years after its collapse. Similarly, COPEI in Venezuela only had a "localized" party organization, which hamstrung its ability to stay afloat even in districts where it had been historically competitive (Cyr. 2016, p. 132-34).

[2] We can see this tendency within the Conservative and Liberal Parties in Colombia (in their current forms).

[3] Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Federal Capital of Buenos Aires. Moreover, its primary competition was (and is) the Peronist Party (PJ) – its historically prevalent rival. This created a strong transactional basis for collective action among opposition parties allied against Peronism. Moreover, the UCR had the advantage of experimenting with different coalitions due to splintering within the incumbent PJ. In the Andes, by contrast, the absence of traditional parties paved the way for hegemonic-turned-autocratic[4] presidents and heavily fragmented opposition fields. Indeed, these factors heavily constrained the logic of coalition formation as well as the composition of multiparty alliances in cases apart from Argentina.

To challenge these alternative explanations, this chapter argues that the central theoretical claims of this thesis can be further supported through brief examination of three additional cases of party collapse and survival. In addition to the UCR, these cases include Democratic Action (AD) in Venezuela, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) in Peru, and the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC) in Costa Rica. The following sections explore each party's ability to prevent defections, renovate its strategy, and successfully adapt under the condition of voter rejection. In doing so, it leverages crucial elements of my theory. The AD case works as a centerpiece for this discussion. As a most similar case to the UCR, it helps to emphasize the centrality of an entrenched territorial organization in both mitigating the tide of defections and providing a strong basis for collective action at the national level – two key ingredients for success after collapse. APRA and PUSC, on the other hand, help illustrate common pitfalls that prevent post-crisis adaptation over the long-term. For APRA, this boiled down to the highly personalistic and often erratic leadership of Alan García, which prevented the party from experiencing a true break with its past and adapting to Peru's post-collapse electoral

[4] Particularly in the cases of Chavez/Maduro in Venezuela and Fujimori in Peru.

environment. The PUSC, alternatively, serves as a highly suggestive contrast to the UCR case. After collapsing amidst corruption allegations in 2006, the party has failed to make any sort of recovery at the national level. In fact, recent studies point to the PUSC's "rapid organizational deterioration," low exit barriers, and lack of internal discipline in preventing its post-collapse recovery.[5]

The Case of AD in Venezuela: Organizational Persistence and Coalitional Revival

The case of AD in Venezuela is perhaps the closest comparison to the Radical case in Argentina, and thus presents itself as a positive case of party survival and revival. Like the UCR, AD "dramatically and suddenly"[6] collapsed amidst a tidal wave of voter rejection during Venezuela's 1998 presidential election. Despite facing such a deep crisis, the party managed to persist for nearly two decades as a territorial competitor. From 1998 to 2015, AD continued to reap significant, if not volatile, vote shares from its "subnational strongholds,"[7] where holdover support for the party still existed and new challengers were slow to move in and establish themselves. Also like the UCR, AD learned how to leverage its new position as a subnational competitor and stage a national comeback during key midterm elections in 2015. As Cyr's study notes, this was a "surprising"[8] development in Venezuelan politics. Most party scholars have anticipated that AD was unlikely to survive or recover from collapse – usually on the grounds

[5] See Fernando Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 120.
[6] Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 1.
[7] Jennifer Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown: Conceptualizing Party Survival," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 1, (October 2016), pp. 130-32.
[8] Jennifer Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 153.

that it was too organizationally routinized to avoid crisis in the first place. On the contrary, AD's entrenched organization was the critical advantage that enabled it to adapt *out of crisis* while under the constraint of voter rejection.

To begin, we can analyze how AD's organization helped prevent mass defections in the aftermath of collapse – the primary obstacle blocking survival. In Venezuela, the context of party crisis presented politicians with uniquely high incentives to defect. Whereas Argentina experienced a "partial party system collapse,"[9] Venezuela's traditional party organizations – AD and COPEI – both crumbled under public rejection.[10] This situation not only contributed to a sizeable opening for new parties and new competition but also opened the door to the populist ascent of Hugo Chavez and his Fifth Republic Movement. Upon election, Chavez quickly began to exploit "popular dissatisfaction with traditional politics"[11] and channel it against traditional parties and politicians to their detriment.[12] This uniquely hostile party environment imposed significant costs for politicians that remained affiliated with a traditional party label. As a result, many chose to defect, which is evidenced by the litany of new parties and independent candidacies (formed by "old" politicians) that sprouted up in Venezuela from 1998 to 2008 – particularly within the *anti-Chavista* opposition.[13]

AD was by no means immune to this pressure. This became clear in 2000, when a group of rank-and-file *Adecos* from Zulia State chose to abandon the party in the lead up to regional

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[9] Omar Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay: The De-Institutionalization of Party Systems in South America," *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2008, p. 328.
[10] This makes Venezuela one of the few cases of party system collapse in Latin America, along with Peru and Bolivia.
[11] Martin Tanaka, "From Crisis to Collapse of the Party Systems and Dilemmas of Democratic Representation: Peru and Venezuela," in Scott Mainwaring, Ana Maria Bejarano, and Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez, eds., *The Crisis of Representation in the Andes*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 63.
[12] This is also a tactic we will observe in Peru at the hands of the Fujimori government.
[13] Jana Morgan, "Deterioration and Polarization of Party Politics in Venezuela," in Scott Mainwaring ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 302-312.

elections and form their own, *Un Nuevo Tiempo* (UNT). Importantly, Zulia had become an embattled locale for AD – a fact that speaks to the motives for defection.[14] After losing control of the governorship in 1989 elections, AD failed to fend off a tide of new challengers from the left. After 1998, many began to question their future in the organization. Among them was Manuel Rosales, an AD member of nearly three decades and a local mayor who the party nominated to run for governor of Zulia in 1998. In many ways, Rosales was the ideal defector. In that gubernatorial election, one could argue that Rosales gained even though AD lost. Despite finishing in second place, he still managed to win 44 percent of votes against an incumbent, hinting at a strong individual base of support. Two years later, he spearheaded the creation of UNT and relaunched a campaign for governor, this time successfully. Rosales's defection and the emergence of UNT was costly for AD. Not only did it permanently lose control of Zulia – Rosales went on to win two consecutive terms as governor – but it also contributed to a leadership deficit later. Rosales eventually built on his popularity to become a presidential candidate in 2006.

Just as with the Radicals, defections were much less of an issue where AD's organization remained entrenched.[15] This coheres with my theory's expectations, that rank-and-file politicians will stay committed to their party if they have access to a territorial organization and especially if they require territorial resources to stand for election.[16] Unlike its historic counterpart, COPEI, AD was still widely competitive at the subnational level and resource endowed. This enabled it to continue actively competing at the subnational level. As Cyr's study illuminates, "AD

[14] To recall, my argument expects a politician to defect if they do not (or cannot) rely on their (collapsed) party's territorial organization.
[15] If we recall, most of the early Radical defections involved politicians from the Federal Capital where the UCR had withered.
[16] As opposed to their own personal appeal.

remained a top three finisher in *every* subnational election since the 1998 collapse."[17] Not only was its vote share the highest among other opposition parties over this time, but this support was also distributed more evenly on a national basis.[18] By 2011, AD had become "the only opposition party with a permanent structure in more than three states."[19] This all made it immensely valuable as a party organization and a safer haven for those unwilling to incur the risks of defection. Another detail we can point to in this regard is AD's national legislative performance at the time of collapse. Even though it was rejected for the presidency, AD still won more votes – 24 percent in both legislative houses – and more seats – 29 percent in total – than any other party at the national level in 1998. This includes the Fifth Republic Movement and suggests that AD still very much retained the capacity to provide for rank-and-file careers, at least in the immediate wake of collapse. Thus, we do not see mass defections spoil the party's survival prospects.

To survive, a party must retain its rank-and-file politicians. To revive, however, it must project a renovated image to the national electorate. Compared to the UCR, AD struggled immensely on this front. One prominent reason for this, as others have noted,[20] is that AD's organization is not designed to cycle new blood into its leadership ranks. All the party's national operations are directed by the National Executive Committee (CEN). According to Levitsky, this body was designed to limit "the strategic autonomy of office-holding leaders."[21] This proved to be a particularly dire problem because it effectively rendered AD paralyzed in the lead up to crisis. On the one hand, the CEN's governing body consisted of a small cadre of elites, resulting

[17] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 160.
[18] Ibid., pp. 161-63.
[19] Ibid., p. 168.
[20] See Levitsky, 2003, pp. 233-36; Cyr, 2017, p. 168.
[21] Ibid, Levitsky is referring specifically to presidents here, but the CEN's authority extends broadly.

in a highly stagnant leadership. AD's most recent Secretary General, Henry Ramos Allup, for example, had been a main figure in AD "since at least the early 1990s,"[22] and had largely insulated his internal power by preventing new blood in leadership ranks. Moreover, when an *Adeco* did go on to assume higher office, that member would be forced to relinquish their role on the governing board along with their institutional authority inside of the party.[23] Thus, AD could not benefit from a small cadre of leaders committed to renovation – a crucial aid to the UCR's revival.

However, AD came to a workable solution to this problem. While it lacked new blood to carry out internal reforms, the logic of national competition that emerged after party system collapse worked in its favor. This is partially explained by Venezuela's highly fragmented opposition field. After 1998, the rapid influx of new opposition parties made it virtually impossible to match Chavismo's electoral prowess without engaging in coalition formation.[24] This put the entire opposition at a disadvantage with respect to national competition. Yet, AD was the only Venezuelan party capable of competing on a national scale, which made it a logical "anchor" for the opposition field. The party's leaders seemed to realize this relatively early and became steadfastly committed to engaging in collective action with other parties. As early as 2005, AD realized its capacity to decentralize its territorial resources and lend them to parties allied against Chavismo. One effective way AD did this – much like the Radicals – was by loaning its own rank-and-file candidates to "fill electoral lists for regional and national offices."[25] AD's support was so decisive in this regard that its refusal to participate in 2005 legislative

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[22] Ibid., p. 168.
[23] Michael Coppedge, *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 123.
[24] This was not the case in Argentina, where Peronism was also factionalized. In Venezuela, Chavez's Socialist Party became more hegemonic and unified as an electoral force. This presented opposition parties with clear incentives to engage in collective action.
[25] Ibid., p. 154.

elections led the entire opposition field to abstain due to a dearth of candidacies. AD's ability to leverage its resources to maintain influence in the opposition was indeed impressive. Even with the potential risks of associating with AD's damaged label, other parties and candidates were often not able to decline support. At times, this verged on desperation. During the 2006 presidential campaign, for example, Rosales himself approached AD to "unofficially"[26] endorse his candidacy, which resulted in crucial vote returns from rural locales where UNT was weakly supported. Thus, while AD was unable to renovate its leadership or project a revitalized "brand," it still managed to renovate its strategy for national-electoral competition. The party's high routinization, perhaps in a slightly different way than in the Radical case, made for a more streamlined implementation of this strategy. If we recall from Argentina, factions within the UCR fought intensely to implement their preferred strategies through the party's organizational channels. In AD – a party once plagued by factional discord[27] – the leadership seemed to avoid this conflict by strategizing to leverage the party's organizational resources almost from the start. This is an interesting development with respect to strategy implementation – particularly as it speaks to my theoretical argument – because it suggests that old guard leaders may not necessarily work against efforts toward party survival, so long as they are operating under conditions that heavily prioritize multiparty coordination for *all* parties.

Thus, AD's status as the only nationalized party helped it "carve out a strategic role at the national level within the Venezuelan opposition."[28] This influence only grew with the broader opposition's efforts to engage in a formal electoral alliance. Opposition coordination in Chavez's Venezuela underwent two successive stages. In the immediate wake of Chavez's victory in 1999,

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[26] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 169.
[27] See Coppedge, 1994; and Martz, 1966.
[28] Ibid.

a small opposition group, *Coordinadora Democrática* (CD) formed to channel a broad set of national interests including business, trade unions, and certain media outlets. Parties, however, played only a minor role. The broad and largely ephemeral nature of CD quickly led it to disband, and by 2006, another plan sprang into action. Out of the opposition's failed presidential bid that year emerged a new, institutionalized electoral front in the *Mesa de la Unidad Democrática* (MUD). By 2008, AD, being the most organizationally adept party, became an authority figure within the coalition. Another advantage AD offered came in the form of elite skills.[29] Among other parties in the opposition, its leaders maintained portable knowledge of the country's "electoral dynamics."[30] Unsurprisingly, Allup and AD quickly occupied key institutional roles within the MUD. More telling however, was that "AD's national-legislative performance rebounded,"[31] almost immediately upon entering the alliance.

The larger pay off occurred during Venezuela's 2015 legislative elections, where AD ultimately experienced its revival. For the first time since Chavez's rise to power, the opposition experienced national-electoral triumph. Not only did it secure a congressional supermajority with 56 percent of votes and 112 seats, but it managed to reduce the seat share of the Chavista bloc by nearly half.[32] The victory was consequential for AD and its leader, albeit briefly. After the party's resurgence in 2016, Allup became the chosen head of Venezuela's National Assembly due to AD's senior position within the MUD. In a bizarre turn since, however, the party's future as a competitor has once again been cast into doubt, due to targeted repression on behalf of the Maduro regime as well as puzzling leadership decisions from within AD itself. In 2017 regional

[29] In this regard we can recall Anna Grzymala-Busse's (2002) seminal study of post-communist successor parties.
[30] Ibid., 169.
[31] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 170.
[32] Manuel Hidalgo and Ángel E. Álvarez, "The 2015 Parliamentary Elections in Venezuela," *Electoral Studies* vol. 43, (2016), p. 189.

elections, AD won four governorships.[33] Yet, the party chose to abstain from the 2018 presidential election, citing allegations of electoral fraud committed by the ruling party. It has since resigned from the MUD and has had its legal status revoked, making it even more difficult to ascertain whether the party will remain competitive in future elections. Despite its current condition, the AD case largely confirms the theoretical expectations laid out in Chapter 2. Like the UCR in Argentina, AD's survival and revival can be attributed to its ability to avoid defections, adapt its strategy for competing in elections, and become a decisive player within the national opposition.

APRA in Peru: The Pros and Cons of Undisputed Leadership

The APRA case presents another prime opportunity to test some of my theory's central claims. It should be noted off the bat that APRA stands in contrast to the UCR and AD in that it is a much less straightforward case of party survival. For this reason, it must be treated somewhat carefully. Indeed, APRA is the only established party in Latin America to win a presidential election after collapse *as an individual competitor*. This success was largely owed to the lingering presence of APRA's undisputed leader, Alan García. As Cyr and others have shown, Garcia "was undoubtedly instrumental to APRA's revival."[34] His return from self-imposed exile in 2001 coincided with APRA's dramatic reversal at the national level. In that year's general elections, García reclaimed his place at the top of the APRA ticket. Almost immediately,

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[33] This was significant as well, given that the opposition in total won five governorships that year. AD provided most of those victories.

[34] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, p. 134; Also see Steven Levitsky and Mauricio Zavaleta, "Why No Party-Building in Peru?" in Steven Levitsky, et. al., eds. *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 412-38; Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay," p. 322.

APRA's national polling numbers shot up 25 percent.[35] This stands in stark contrast to the party's performance in the 2000 presidential election, where its candidate, Abel Salinas, received just 1.4 percent of votes. From 2001 to 2006, APRA experienced a marked resurgence at the national level. In the 2001 presidential election, García finished second – a notable turnaround. Five years later APRA won the presidency, marking the second García administration in Peruvian history. Without García's name on the ticket, it is highly unlikely that APRA would have experienced revival.

APRA's revival aligns with a key theoretical claim of my theory. If we recall from Chapter 2, I argue that the presence of an undisputed leader after collapse can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, a viable and marketable figurehead is a necessary asset that can quickly arm a collapsed party for national-electoral competition. This is because the party will need a strong internal leader to mobilize crucial resources during a campaign but also a marketable candidate to communicate lingering relevance to voters in an environment of heightened competition. As the APRA case demonstrates, García performed both tasks in 2001 and 2006. His presence as "leader from afar" while still in exile helped mobilize APRA militants earlier than other competitors in the lead up to 2001.[36] More crucially, however, was that his personality served as APRA's sole claim to the presidency and only actionable campaign message – *"Alan Vuelve"* (Alan returns) was APRA's galvanizing campaign slogan in 2001. As a result, the party flourished as a national competitor.

On the other hand, however, my theory also holds that undisputed leadership – particularly when that leadership is centralized and personalistic – can stifle internal renovation and prevent new strategies from developing. This is important because without a process of

[35] Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay," p. 322.
[36] Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties*, pp. 137-8.

strategy renovation, the returns offered by a marketable candidate will likely begin to diminish. Fortuitously, this is exactly what happened for APRA. In every national election since 2006, the party has performed abysmally. Tellingly, its troubles began to reemerge when García became ineligible to run for a successive presidential term. The party planned to compete in earnest for the presidency in 2011. However, internal disputes spoiled attempts to select a national candidate. *Apristas* could not agree on a successor to García. In 2016, APRA engaged in a desperate attempt to reverse course by once again nominating García, this time for a third non-consecutive term as is permitted under Peru's constitution. By then, however, Garcia's popularity had waned considerably, just as it did after his first presidency (1985-1990).[37] In a remarkable display of "brand dilution"[38] before the general election, APRA allied with the PPC – a center-right party based in Lima that also collapsed in the 1990s. The campaign was a spectacular failure. After unfurling in 2011 due to internal pressures, APRA suffered what could be considered its second bout of voter rejection in 2016, receiving just 5.8 percent of votes. Thus, although APRA revived its national prominence, it never developed a clear or consistent ideological message. Nor did it renovate its strategy for competing in elections. The party's debacle in 2011 strongly suggests that putting García on the national ticket was the only way APRA could compete credibly. This strategy lost viability after García's second term in office.

If García's entrenched and personalized leadership was indeed responsible for APRA's fleeting revival, my theory predicts that it would be due to certain characteristics inherent to the party's organizational composition. Upon examining APRA, its organization stands out among other established parties in Latin America. Although it developed a moderately "structured and

[37] Kenneth Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case," *World Politics*, vol. 48, no. 1, October 1995, p. 93-4.
[38] See Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis*.

disciplined organization," it maintains "clear populist features, particularly a centralized and personalistic leadership."[39] These features raise a major red flag with respect to my theory. We can recall that centralized leadership will typically stifle internal renovation, usually because leaders in the party will have a stake in maintaining the operational status quo and thus battle against reforms. However, the APRA case suggests that when leadership is centralized and electorally viable, it may also communicate to rank-and-file politicians that renovation is not necessary. There is evidence to support this when we consider that APRA's national-electoral strategy from 2001 to 2011 was almost entirely contingent upon García's erratic and often arbitrary governing style. During the party's resurgent period, there were no attempts to build an image of the party that remained separate from García's personality. As a result, APRA's electoral prospects became tied to García's popularity by 2011 – when it obtained the worst result in its history as a party.[40] To explain this, we need to bear in mind that (paradoxically) like AD in Venezuela, APRA was not designed to recycle its leadership. Instead, its original founder, Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, established leadership patterns entirely based on his charismatic authority within the APRA organization.[41] When Haya died in 1979, García was his hand-picked successor. This meant that García's personal charisma now characterized APRA's internal authority.

Relatedly, APRA's centralized and personalized leadership meant that the party never developed strong internal procedures, nor did it establish any robust channels for conflict resolution among its ranks. The Radicals, for example, could rely on a multi-tier convention system and frequent internal votes. APRA lacked this advantage. In line with my theory's

[39] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 236.
[40] *El Mundo*, 12 April 2011.
[41] Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties*, p. 236.

expectations, this crucially damaged APRA's ability to maintain its national influence in 2011. With García ineligible to run for a consecutive term, APRA was forced to squabble over who would receive top billing on its electoral ticket. During the lead up to the 2011 election the party's internal factions were deadlocked. Because none could decide on an *Aprista* to head the ticket, each wing was split between supporting the still viable candidacies of Ollanta Humala, Alejandro Toledo, or Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. Making matters worse, these internal deliberations were completely disorganized – so much so that headlines in the wake of elections quipped that APRA was a "dismembered party."[42] Ultimately, no agreement was reached, and APRA was forced to withdraw itself from the race. This marked the definitive moment when APRA was no longer strong enough to compete on its own.

Crucially, my theory provides a compelling explanation for APRA's fleeting revival where existing accounts are conspicuously silent. Even Cyr's resource-based theory – the most meaningful contribution to the party survival literature to date – struggles to explain why APRA's revival was ephemeral. For instance, if APRA's turnaround in the 2000s was primarily explained by its "ideational resources" – as Cyr argues – and not by García's personalistic grip on the party, then why did it fail to avoid a second collapse in 2011 and fail again in 2016? The resource-based argument does not provide a sufficient answer, assuming APRA's widespread organizational resources at the time of collapse did not dry up or disappear. The analysis in this section lends itself to the popular argument that APRA's post-collapse persistence was not necessarily about *APRA*, but rather about "the magical oratory and effective, populist campaign skills of Alan García."[43] Ultimately, APRA could not survive without its undisputed leader. In

[42] *El Mundo*, 12 April 2011.
[43] Sanchez, "Transformation and Decay," p. 322.

2019, García committed suicide while facing corruption charges. APRA has since disappeared from the political scene.

The Case of PUSC in Costa Rica: Party Collapse and Decay

The PUSC in Costa Rica serves as a suitable foil to my theory of party survival, and thus to the Radical case in Argentina. From 1983 to 2002, the PUSC formed part of a two-party duopoly in Costa Rica alongside its main competitor, the National Liberation Party (PLN). For nearly two decades, party competition remained stable and fixated on these two actors – a quality that made Costa Rica stand out among its Central American counterparts.[44] Like the UCR, the PUSC was established within the opposition and initially comprised of four proto-political organizations that aimed to compete against the dominant PLN. Party-building efforts were primarily spearheaded by Rafael Ángel Calderón Fournier, the PUSC's first official leader and former Costa Rican president. After suffering an embarrassing defeat in 1982 while running under a makeshift coalition – the *Unidad* coalition – the four opposition parties merged to support Calderón Fournier's candidacy a year later, forming the PUSC. Throughout the 1980s, the party quickly developed into an established national competitor. Since its birth in 1983, the PUSC has won the presidency three times: in 1990, 1998, and 2002. During each of these elections, it also secured legislative majorities – marking the influence of concurrent elections in Costa Rica.

[44] Forrest D. Colburn and Arturo Cruz S., "The Fading of Costa Rica's Old Parties," *Journal of Democracy* vol. 29, no. 4, (October 2018), pp. 43-53.

However, the PUSC encountered some dramatic problems beginning in the 1990s. On the one hand, Costa Rica's two-party system began to realign.[45] This resulted in a blurring of ideological lines between the PUSC and the PLN. In striking similarity with the Argentine case, the two parties diluted their brands via a formal pact in 1995, which resulted in each adopting broad support for the government's neoliberal economic agenda.[46] Many have cited this "ideological mimesis between the PLN and PUSC" as a general contributor to party system change in Costa Rica – and thus, the decline of the PUSC. However, the PUSC – like the Radicals in Argentina – was the only party to collapse in Costa Rica. This occurred during the 2006 presidential election. In 2004, two of the party's most prominent leaders and former Costa Rican presidents – Calderón Fournier and Miguel Ángel Rodriguez – were sent to prison. Each was accused and convicted of corruption. Despite winning the presidency in 2002, the PUSC was essentially gutted by these developments. In a clear show of rejection four years later, it only managed to obtain 3.6 percent of votes in 2006 – a clear distinction from its 58 percent finish in 2002.

In a notable point of departure with the UCR, the PUSC has not managed survive as a competitive party organization in national or subnational elections. After 2006, the party's influence in Costa Rican politics "was dramatically reduced to almost a testimonial presence."[47] This is verified by a brief review of the PUSC's electoral performance since 2006. Apart from a particularly dramatic contest in 2018,[48] the PUSC has never managed to obtain more than a

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[45] Miguel Carreras, "Party Systems in Latin America After the Third Wave: A Critical Re-assessment," *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012): 135-153.
[46] If we recall, this is nearly an identical situation to the 1995 *Pacto Olivos* in Argentina, which was signed by both Menem (of the PJ) and Alfonsín (of the UCR) in 1995. Lupu (2016) emphasizes this as a key component of the party's "loss of identity."
[47] Fernando Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 136.
[48] See Colburn and Arturo S., *The Fading of Costa Rica's Old Parties*; the PUSC's performance was still quite weak during 2018. It only won 15 percent of votes in the first round

single digit result at the national level. Its performance in legislative and subnational elections has been equally abysmal. Currently, the PUSC only holds a handful of municipal offices and just 9 of 57 seats in the Legislative Assembly. Moreover, "the successors of those who originally forged the party in 1983 have re-divided."[49]

Notably, comparative scholars and country experts have paid little attention to the Costa Rican case – and to the PUSC in particular. While several accounts[50] have crucially traced the long-term breakdown of Costa Rica's party system, virtually none provide any possible answers to what has prevented the PUSC from resurging as a national competitor. Upon examination, this is a question that requires an answer. Rosenblatt, for instance, theorizes about the PUSC organization's loss of "vibrancy" since its electoral collapse in 2006. However, his study cannot pinpoint exactly how this process has contributed to the PUSC's persistent alienation in national politics or its inability to reverse this situation.[51] To attempt at a possible answer, however, we can turn to the theoretical claims laid out in this dissertation. Upon closer analysis, the PUSC suffered from crucial organizational deficits at each juncture of its post-collapse trajectory: it lacked a territorial organization, strong internal channels to broker renovation, and was ultimately unable to leverage any existing capacity at the national level. As such, the PUSC experienced crucial defections and continued to decay after 2006.

The first area we can probe to test my theory's viability against the PUSC case concerns post-collapse defections. We can recall that in my theory, defections occur as the result of a rational calculation on the part of elites after collapse. A politician should choose to defect when they have little reason to believe that their party can still channel career mobility after collapse.

[49] Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, p. 139.
[50] See Lehoucq (2005, 2006); Seligson (2002, 2017).
[51] For example, Rosenblatt speculates (pp. 139-140) that the corruption scandals and subsequent imprisonment of its former leaders "may explain this situation," but provides no further clues as to how exactly.

In line with my theoretical expectations, the PUSC suffered prominent defections after its corruption scandal(s) and subsequent rejection in 2006. Most notably, a wave of 2014 defections resulted in a new party – the Christian Social Republican Party (PRSC) – which has engaged in direct competition with the PUSC ever since. As Rosenblatt[52] notes, the PUSC stands out among other Costa Rican parties in the respect. It suffered more persistent and targeted antipathy in the wake of collapse, making the pressure to defect quite severe. On top of this, the PUSC's organizational presence at the time of collapse was comparatively scant. This is important because I also argue that a robust territorial organization is needed to stem the tide of mass defections. This advantage was crucial for the UCR and AD to continue competing on a subnational basis. Not only did a territorial organization enable each party to remain active but it also provided rank-and-file members with reasons to choose loyalty over exit. Although little data exists on the PUSC organization prior to 2006, Rosenblatt's account illustrates a grim picture for the party since collapse. In interviews with current PUSC members, he shows that there was a consensus within the party that its "organization was almost non-existent."[53] More strikingly, as recent as 2018 the PUSC lacked a definitive headquarters, official telephone number, and even a twitter account, indicating the extent of its organizational paralysis.[54]Additionally and crucially, this data reflects a rank-and-file that has become deeply unsatisfied with their party's operations in the wake of collapse. Many attested to low exit barriers, which permeated under the condition of voter rejection. These two factors combined – strong pressures to defect and lack of organization – offer a compelling preliminary explanation for why the PUSC has remained largely inactive at both the national and subnational levels.

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[52] Rosenblatt, *Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America*, p. 124.
[53] Ibid., p. 138.
[54] Ibid., p. 139.

Second, we can test my theory's claims on party organization against the internal structure of the PUSC. It should be noted off the bat that given the PUSC's weak organization and inability to stem defections, we should anticipate that renovation will be unlikely. This is because the prior concerns create strong incentives to exit than to remain and partake in hard fought party reforms. Still, we can leverage my argument to show why the PUSC continues to field candidates despite its irrelevant status. On the one hand, the PUSC has always abided by centralized and personalized leadership. Until his incarceration in the 2000s, Calderón Fournier "exerted extreme influence" [55] over the career prospects of rank-and-file politicians. Indeed, Rosenblatt notes perceptions among PUSC members that the party contained no credible channels for career advancement. One's career in the PUSC was more often determined by parochial social ties, such as wealth, level of education, and/or family name. The loss of an undisputed leader mattered considerably for the PUSC. Since collapse it has suffered from persistent internal disagreements that have contributed to stalled renovation efforts.[56] Currently there are two predominant factions within the PUSC. One is comprised of its older members, many of whom serve as leaders and largely poses an obstacle to renovation. The other is made up of younger and middle-aged politicians that have yet to make a definitive impact. Despite its weak internal structure, the party never developed strictly "populist" features – like APRA, for example. Even after its collapse, the PUSC abided by a system of internal primaries and national conventions, which lead to unified national candidacies in 2010, 2014, and 2018. This displays an intermediate level of routinization, which may have helped the PUSC stay intact over the years – at least during elections. From 2014 to 2018, for instance, the PUSC unified under the candidacy of Rodolfo Piza, a former Supreme Court Justice. This decision led to the first bump

[55] Ibid., p. 137.
[56] Ibid., p. 136.

in the PUSC's national vote share in over a decade – the party won nearly 16 percent of votes in 2018. This paid off for Piza, who managed to spin this success into a cabinet appointment after the election. Still, this hardly represents any sort of marked turnaround for the party itself.

Finally, we can analyze national-competitive dynamics in Costa Rica to test my theory's claims on national revival. As an organizationally weak party without internal channels to promote renovation, the PUSC again shows weak prospects for national recovery. One reason is that, like most collapsed parties, the PUSC suffered from a lack of marketable candidates. At the same time, new, able competitors rapidly entered the national fray beginning in the 2000s amidst the onslaught of voter rejection. My theory argues that collapsed parties must engage in collective action with other parties to overcome these two constraints. As expected, this continues to be a serious problem for the PUSC. On the one hand, this is partially explained by institutional rules that compel parties to compete on their own.[57] Barriers to form new parties and contest national elections are considerably low in Costa Rica by comparison. At the same time, all of Costa Rica's main parties are more organizationally adept than the PUSC, indicating that there is a weak transactional basis for any parties to work together. Simply put, *what would other parties have to gain by allying with the PUSC?* This point is emphasized by the fact that new parties have established themselves since the decline of both the PUSC and PLN, diminishing the former traditional parties' electoral influence. Thus, no attempts have been made to build links within the opposition, as my theory would anticipate. This situation is unlikely to change by Costa Rica's general elections in 2022. The PUSC will likely remain a testimonial presence as it has in the past. However, only time will tell.

[57] We can note this tendency with the defections and subsequent formation of the PRSC in 2014. This occurred after Piza's nomination for the presidency and drove the competing faction – aligned under Rodolfo Hernández Gómez – to form its own party instead of remaining inside of the PUSC.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion: Party Survival and the Implications of an Elite-Based Approach

This dissertation has established and articulated a novel, elite-based theory of party adaptation under the condition of voter rejection. First, it has advanced the notion that party survival after collapse amounts to more than a party's resource wealth at the time of crisis. Beyond crucial resources, it has argued that a party must be stocked with individuals that can marshal any existing capacity toward electoral victory. Second, it has elaborated on the conditions under which party elites may (or may not) accomplish this task. In brief, party renovators must have both strong *material* reasons to remain loyal to a party after it has been rejected as well as an organizational framework that can help them further the goal of renovation. Outside of these conditions, it is very unlikely that a party will persist after collapse. Ultimately, this dissertation contends that party survival after collapse is fundamentally about how individual politicians respond during key junctures in the aftermath of crisis and the conditions that help or hinder these responses.

A case study of the Radical Party has demonstrated the value of an elite-based approach, particularly in strengthening and clarifying previous resource-based accounts. On the one hand, the UCR confirms what many have found in previous studies on political parties more broadly. A robust territorial organization has been observed to help new parties persevere through formative phases of development.[1] Others point to its ability to help authoritarian successor parties survive a transition to democracy.[2] And now, this dissertation builds on key research that emphasizes the

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[1] See Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Brandon Van Dyck, "The Paradox of Adversity: The Contrasting Fates of Latin America's New Left Parties," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2, (January 2017), pp. 169-89.

[2] See James Loxton and Scott Mainwaring eds., *Life After Dictatorship: Authoritarian Successor Parties Worldwide*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Joy K. Langston, *Democratization and Authoritarian Party Survival: Mexico's PRI*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Redeeming the*

role of organizational resources in promoting adaptation as a *response to crisis*.[3] However, the Radical case also pushes this research further. It tells us that survival is more complicated than a party simply having a stable cache of resources at its disposal when crisis strikes. The UCR, for example had extensive territorial resources – perhaps more extensive than any collapsed party previously studied – but many Radicals became divided on the question of how to use them. This resulted in persistent internal challenges. From 2003 to 2009, a large portion of the UCR's territorial rank-and-file (*Radicales K*) mobilized their resources in support of the incumbent Kirchner administration instead of syphoning them through the opposition. For years, this stood in the way of the party's ability to implement an effective national-electoral strategy and nearly tore it apart.[4] Here, the resource-based argument falls crucially silent. An elite-based approach alternatively allows us to theorize the goals and expectations of politicians on an agential level, gain insight into how they perceive their role inside the party with respect to its resource capacity, and ultimately determine how these factors may contribute to survival and revival over the long-term. This crucially furthers our knowledge on parties and how they behave *during crisis* rather than simply in anticipation of it.

This dissertation has also shed new light on factors concerning party adaptation and its organizational determinants by developing a framework for adaptation under the condition of voter rejection. Until recently, scholars have primarily treated successful party adaptation as something that occurs before crisis sets in. Others have clarified that this is not always the case.[5] Often enough, parties are required to adapt and compete under uniquely hostile conditions that

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Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[3] Jennifer Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[4] On this point, we can recall the high-profile defection of Julio Cobos.

[5] See Jennifer Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown: Conceptualizing Party Survival," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 49, no. 1, (October 2016), p. 125.

transpire after a crisis begins. By treating the condition of voter rejection, this dissertation has broken new ground in at least two respects. First, it has showed that even when parties become unpopular at the national level, there are still clear and powerful incentives for politicians to remain loyal.[6] The Radical case demonstrates this point quite well. Although the UCR suffered widespread delegitimization as a national competitor, many rank-and-file members communicated that it continued to protect their political careers, particularly at the subnational level. As a result, many stayed committed after collapse. Importantly, this finding stands in contrast to what previous studies expect about elite tendencies during a profound crisis of voter rejection. Many assume that when the "going gets rough," party members will see unanimous incentives to jump ship – a point that some have made to overstate a party's *inability* to survive collapse.[7] While defection is indeed a principal and immediate concern in the wake of collapse, the fact that members jump ship does not mean that a party is doomed to irrelevance. Again, this finding would have been difficult to ascertain without theorizing the effects of voter rejection down to the level of the agent.

Additionally, this framework has allowed us to gain a clearer sense of how different types of party organizations may be equipped to handle the pressures of voter rejection. Taking cues from previous seminal theories on party adaptation, my work has elaborated on the internal features that promote adaptability. However, it adds to this discussion by noting that the characteristics that help a party avoid crisis may not be the same ones that help it dig itself out of crisis. Here, I contribute a novel finding by noting the positive effects of party institutionalization

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[6] Importantly, this is a point that Cyr notes but does not explore in detail or provide systematic evidence to support.
[7] See Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murrillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 14, no. 4, (October 2003), pp. 158-9; Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Barry Ames, "The Reverse Coattails Effect: Local Party Organization in the 1989 Brazilian Presidential Election," *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 1 (March 1994), pp. 95-111.

in the context of survival after collapse. Importantly, this is highly counterintuitive to what previous studies prime us to expect.[8] Usually, we anticipate that weakly institutionalized parties are freer to make drastic reforms, which can help sidestep a crisis before it begins. After collapse, however, a weakly institutionalized party is likely to be more vulnerable to breakdown. Again, the Radical case has exemplified this claim. Numerous times, the UCR encountered critical moments that had the potential to split the organization. First, the party was forced to endure a wave of crucial defections. Next, it had to solve for dissidents within its own ranks that were more inclined to support its rivals. Finally, the party had to exercise its grievances and select a unified strategy for competing in national elections. All these obstacles occurred under the constraint of voter rejection, which exacerbated tensions between different internal factions. As my empirics showed, the UCR's routinized organization provided a stable venue for these problems to be resolved. Instead of breaking down into a scattered network of provincial bosses, as has occurred to other established parties in Latin America that have entered decline,[9] the Radicals decisively remained intact.

Finally, this dissertation has broken new ground on the politics of coalition-formation in Latin America – an exceptionally understudied area of comparative politics research. On the one hand, I contribute knowledge on the tendency to build electoral alliances among formerly predominant parties throughout the region. Since the Third Wave of Democratization, this tendency has grown as established parties continue to lose their national-electoral viability. The UCR is, of course, no exception in this regard. Even before its 2003 electoral collapse, the party became open to pre-electoral coalition-formation and even leveraged it to ascend to the presidency in 1999. Thus, my theory links the concepts of party decline and coalition-formation

[8] The seminal works of Kitschelt (1994) and Levitsky (2003) stand out in this regard.
[9] For examples, see the Conservative and Liberal parties in Colombia.

in an innovative and important way. However, it also leverages this connection to say something explicit about why collapsed parties are more likely to benefit from multiparty coordination. It has shown – through the UCR case study as well as the additional shadow cases from the previous chapter – that parties will turn to alliance-building to compensate for the lack of a marketable national candidate but also to neutralize the threat from new parties that emerge within the opposition after collapse. Both problems affected the parties included in this study (with the crucial exception of APRA). To escape these constraints, my work has established a transactional basis for coalitions that form between collapsed parties and new opposition parties. The most successful cases analyzed in this study – the UCR and AD – both learned how to trade organizational resources to draw the support of new, popular parties that could lend a marketable national candidate. Importantly, this finding provides compelling support for the idea that coalition-formation is a key mechanism that lays the groundwork for a national revival – even amidst severe conditions of democratic breakdown.[10] Indeed, when parties eschew coalition-formation – as did APRA – it is probable that any success it experiences in the wake of collapse will be temporary.

In all, the theoretical process laid out by this dissertation has offered a compelling case that party survival (and revival) is not merely a twist of fate, as some argue.[11] Rather, these outcomes are opportunities seized by party elites, who choose to ambitiously fight for their party's – and thus their own – political survival. As such, my findings – both theoretical and empirical – raise several implications for future research. The remainder of this chapter addresses them.

[10] See the case of AD.

[11] For example, the works of both Cyr (2017) and Van Dyck (2017) contribute to this notion, albeit in different ways.

Political Party Survival: Broadening the Debate

The findings laid out by this dissertation help shed light on a critical shortcoming within the literature on political parties. Outside the bounds of national-electoral competition, we know exceptionally little about what political parties do, how many of them work, and for whom. This has led many scholars to define parties, their lifespans, and organizational capacities almost-instinctively in terms of the ability to reap high national vote shares. The problem with this assumption, as others have noted in the past, is that parties are not typically designed to fulfill the single goal of winning national elections. Nor are they typically built to serve voters. Rather, "they are created by politicians in an effort to resolve coordination problems and further their own careers."[12] Winning elections is simply a means to accomplish these fundamental goals.[13]

A case study of the Radical Party exemplifies this simple fact. Even though the UCR was barred from competing for the presidency for over a decade, it still managed to work for its politicians. It solved various coordination problems, specifically by providing a framework for elites to converge around party resources and weaponize them in time for national elections. It also demonstrated a capacity to further the careers of its rank-and-file politicians after collapse. Many provincial Radicals, for example, found their way into the UCR's leadership structure, which had been dominated by politicians from the Federal Capital before 2003. The fact that the UCR organization could still do this was instrumental to its survival. Put simply, we should not

[12] Steven Levitsky and Maxwell A. Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties? Political Parties and Regime Change in Fujimori's Peru," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 45, no. 3, (2003), p. 27.
[13] John Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

expect an "incoherent"[14] party to be able to meet these goals. Still, many discard cases where parties show clear signs of resilience despite no longer commanding mass popular support.

However, beyond the fundamentals, a tendency to exclusively focus on national-electoral competition also diverts scholars' attention from the novel or less straightforward functions that parties perform – in democracies and non-democracies alike. The party survival literature has already broken new ground in this regard. Cyr's 2016[15] article introduces an innovative conceptualization of party adaptation that is rooted in the various things that parties do in the context of democracy. Aside from winning national elections, parties can govern, shape policy, and impact broader public opinion, among other things. Importantly, by expanding the conceptual knowledge on "what parties do," we can denote their meaning beyond winning national elections. Indeed, Cyr's work shows that parties still matter when they perform any of these residual functions.

An extensive case study on the UCR has furthered these theoretical claims in at least two ways. First, it showed that the UCR – like AD in Venezuela – realized its latent potential as a resource anchor within the opposition. Importantly, this is a relatively novel observation and indicates somewhat of a pattern among established parties in Latin America. Aside from Argentina and Venezuela, similar developments have transpired in Colombia. Despite their decay, the traditional Liberal and Conservative Parties now occupy a decisive role as territorial power brokers – a fact that made the Conservative Party an influential player during Colombia's 2018 general elections.[16] Interestingly, traditional parties have shown a propensity to adapt into

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[14] Carlos Gervasoni, "Argentina's Declining Party System: Fragmentation, Denationalization, Factionalization, Personalization, and Increasing Fluidity," in Scott Mainwaring ed., *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 260.
[15] Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown," p. 127-8.
[16] See Laura Gamboa, "Latin America's Shifting Politics: The Peace Process and Colombia's Elections," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29, no. 4, (October 2018), pp. 54-64.

this role, particularly if they maintain a stable organization. While "decisive coalition partner" may not be the same as "top billing" on a coalition itself, it still denotes a high level of influence in politics. Second, aside from playing a supportive role, the UCR organization became central to the actual development and implementation of new opposition strategies. Compared with CC and PRO, which were primarily candidate-driven movements, the UCR was the only opposition party that had the capacity to generate new national strategies from within its ranks due to its robust organization. This meant that it was not only decisive as a purveyor of resources, but also in the tactical implementation of electoral strategy. Crucially, this all suggests that vote-winning is not the only way a party can be influential in national elections.

So, how can party scholars push this debate even further? My findings offer us some clues. First, in line with Cyr's existing work, we need to continue to widen our conceptualization of political parties and the various functions they perform. However, we can enhance this idea by detaching from the normative assumption that parties are fundamentally designed to promote democratization or fulfill roles that are only significant in a democratic context. As recent studies have shown, there is scant evidence to support this idea.[17] Moreover, bourgeoning work[18] on authoritarian successor parties clarifies that political parties can perform similar functions and wield crucial electoral influence in non-democracies or competitive authoritarian contexts as well. Thus, while democracy may still be "unthinkable save in terms of political parties,"[19] parties are not unthinkable save in terms of democracy. By narrowing our focus to national-electoral competition alone, scholars risk contributing to the idea that parties primarily exist in

[17] See Van Dyck, "The Paradox of Adversity"; and Levitsky and Cameron, "Democracy Without Parties."
[18] See Langston, *Democratization and Authoritarian Party Survival*; James Loxton, "Authoritarian Successor Parties," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 3, (July 2015), pp. 157-70.
[19] E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government: American Government in Action*, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

the minds of voters – in the form of partisan labels, diffuse ideologies, or "brand names." As such, many accounts assert that the political party "dies" when voters no longer see a use for it.

In reality, however, parties are material organizations that exist to serve professional politicians. It is easy to lose sight of this fact when scholars tend to overwhelmingly focus on environmental determinants that may alter a party's ability to compete. In turn, relaxing our normative expectations of parties has become even more difficult by the fact that scholars have moved away from studying individual party organizations as was common in the 1980s and 1990s.[20] My work stresses Michael Coppedge's point, that there is as much within-case variation among Latin America's political parties (and party systems) as there is cross-case variation. The problem is that this variation has yet to be teased out. To do this, scholars not only must "pay more systematic attention to the substance of party competition," but also dive deeper into the substance of party organization.[21] Theoretical arguments from this dissertation could, thus, be useful in the context of an edited volume that explores parties under conditions of crisis and in comparative perspective. This type of research plan could pair well with current volumes that revive questions on party-building.

Once again, party scholars stand at a crossroads. Just as many sought to explain the decline of established parties during the twentieth century, we must now explain why long-standing parties are currently struggling to survive and fulfill their most basic democratic functions.[22] The theoretical framework presented in this dissertation provides a basis for understanding more than just party survival from collapse. Its principles should hold up in any

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[20] Michael Coppedge, "The Dynamic Diversity of Latin American Party Systems," *Party Politics*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1998, p. 548.
[21] Ibid., p. 547.
[22] Cyr, "Between Adaptation and Breakdown," pp. 125-145.

case where a mass-established party encounters a sudden and protracted form of organizational crisis, where the stakes are high, voters are scarce, and the logic of defection remains the same.

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