

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Recipes for Political Party Success ... and Failure

Peter M. Siavelis

Wake Forest University, US

siavelpm@wfu.edu

This essay reviews the following works:

Democracy and Its Discontents in Latin America. Edited by Joe Foweraker and Dolores Trevizo. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2016. Pp. xi + 325. \$79.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9781626372764.

Reformas políticas a las organizaciones de partidos en América Latina (1978–2015). Edited by Flavia Freidenberg and Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú, Organización de los Estados Americanos, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas de la UNAM y Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Político, 2016. Pp. 524. ISBN 9786124713408.

Recycling Dictators in Latin American Elections: Legacies of Military Rule. By Brett J. Kyle. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 267. \$79.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9781626374379.

Democratization and Authoritarian Party Survival: Mexico's PRI. By Joy K. Langston. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 256. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780190628529.

Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America. Edited by Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, Brandon Van Dyck, and Jorge I. Domínguez. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii + 574. \$105.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781107145948.

Life after Dictatorship: Authoritarian Successor Parties Worldwide. Edited by James Loxton and Scott Mainwaring. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xxii + 405. \$34.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781108445412.

Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse. Edited by Scott P. Mainwaring. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. p. xxviii + 496. \$39.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781316627525.

Party Vibrancy and Democracy in Latin America. By Fernando Rosenblatt. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xiv + 280. \$82.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780190870041.

Analysts of almost every country in Latin America point to a crisis of representation in the region. Symptoms of this purported crisis have taken various forms in different countries, including the election of neopopulists in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico; widespread social mobilization in Argentina, Brazil, and Nicaragua; the outbreak of violent and deadly protests in Chile, Ecuador, and Bolivia; and the persistence of anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal governments in Venezuela and, until recently, Bolivia. The latter's president, Evo Morales, was effectively forced from office, and the future of the former is precarious and uncertain. Nicaragua and Venezuela have reverted to authoritarianism, and Mexico remains mired in citizen malaise and exhaustion stemming from the endless war on drugs. Sebastián Piñera's government is reeling in Chile, with an approval rating in the single digits, amid demands to scrap the constitution. A showdown between Peru's executive and legislative branches has analysts pointing to the prospects of a constitutional reversal. Given undisputable political crises across the region, what is the state of representation in Latin America? How are legacies of authoritarian rule related to contemporary challenges of representation? Do political parties continue to be the main interlocutors of citizen representation or have they lost their central role? Is it the representative failure of mainstream parties or party decay that has led to the election

of populists and outsiders? The books reviewed here seek to ask and answer the question of what role political parties will play in the future.

Political parties are a central and, for some, defining feature of democracy. One of the most influential works on parties in Latin America was the study by Mainwaring and Scully, first published in 1995. Their point of departure was a criticism of previous categorizations of party systems based on numerical criteria. They underscored, instead, the importance of institutionalization, building a typology of the extent of institutionalization of Latin American party systems. Though their work was recognized as important, and indeed seminal, for a whole host of reasons, it was subject to criticism, mostly with respect to the lack of differentiation between political party institutionalization and party system institutionalization, the unidimensionality of the framework, and its purported inability to account for changes in party system institutionalization over time.¹ In addition, it became clear in the Venezuelan case (and to a certain extent the Chilean case) that over-institutionalized party systems could actually be inimical to democracy.²

In his recent edited volume reviewed here, Scott Mainwaring returns to these questions. Part 1 revisits the idea of party system institutionalization, asking what it is and why it matters for democratic politics. The second section presents country case studies of seven of the most important Latin American party systems. The final section provides comparative analysis of party brands, the importance of parties' roots in society, the importance of party system institutionalization for macroeconomic policy making, and a final chapter placing Latin American parties in comparative international context.

Mainwaring claims that party and party system institutionalization still matter for democratic politics. His volume attempts to set out how it has evolved over time and to take account of changes in levels of institutionalization across the region, from those countries whose parties remain relatively well institutionalized (Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay) to those that have deinstitutionalized (Peru and Guatemala), those that have increased levels of institutionalization over time (El Salvador and Brazil), and those that have collapsed (Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela). The five stated goals of the volume are to reconceptualize party system institutionalization, to measure it, to advance knowledge on why it is important with respect to democratic outcomes, to explain better what contributes to institutionalization and deinstitutionalization, and to generate new empirical knowledge about Latin American party systems.

With respect to reconceptualizing party system institutionalization, Mainwaring and Scully originally contended that it had four dimensions: (1) stability of interparty competition; (2) strong party roots in society; (3) major actors accord legitimacy to the electoral process and to parties; and (4) solid organizations. In the introductory chapter of the new volume, Mainwaring makes a case for shedding numbers 2, 3, and 4 to focus only on the stability of interparty competition, and to widen and expand the analysis of this variable. He contends that this makes sense, because by definition an institutionalized party requires the first of these elements, yet not necessarily the other three. This revised framework stresses predictability and the expectations of organized actors that they will continue to compete within established party structures. Mainwaring states that the second goal of the volume is to be able to measure party system institutionalization, making the case for employing the original measures of stability in membership, vote shares, and ideological preferences.

In discussing why party system institutionalization is important, the author recounts the many variables that enhance democracy where parties are institutionalized, in terms of predictable outcomes, more experienced politicians, policy stability, and longer time horizons. Mainwaring adjusts the original argument to establish better the idea that high levels of institutionalization are not "always good," but that "weak institutionalization is associated with democratic shortcomings" (7).

When determining what explains institutionalization and deinstitutionalization, Mainwaring relies on many of the same arguments as other authors analyzed here. Where party organizations are strong, economic performance good, and other institutions contribute to institutionalization, we are more likely to see institutionalization, and where they are not then deinstitutionalization may result. The final, empirical section recategorizes the countries originally analyzed by Mainwaring and Scully.

¹ Juan Pablo Luna and David Altman, "Uprooted but Stable: Chilean Parties and the Concept of Party System Institutionalization," *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, no. 2 (2011): 1–28; Herbert Kitschelt, "Linkages between Citizens and Politicians in Democratic Polities," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, nos. 6–7 (2000): 845–879; Gary Hoskin, "Democratization in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 32, no. 3 (1997): 209–223.

² Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Michael Coppedge, *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Luna and Altman, "Uprooted but Stable."

This is an important book. It addresses many of the criticisms leveled at Mainwaring and Scully's original arguments. The theoretical discussion is richer than the original and better explains the diversity of pathways toward institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. Mainwaring's analysis usefully sets down five new categories that are much more nuanced than the original ones: persistent institutionalization (Chile and Uruguay), increasing institutionalization (Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador, and Panama), deep erosion (Argentina, Colombia, and partially Costa Rica), collapse (Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela), and persistently low institutionalization (Peru, Paraguay, and Guatemala). By establishing these new "paths" rather than types, the work also better accounts for change than the original one.

However, as in most of the works analyzed here, it is difficult to employ the argument to understand contemporary developments in party systems across Latin America. Despite its ability to account for change, the Mainwaring model is less satisfying in addressing the recent, deep qualitative changes in party systems across the region.³ While in certain countries party identification was relatively high (i.e., Chile, Uruguay, and Venezuela), across the region it has plunged, accompanied by a trend toward political parties becoming the least trusted institutions in many countries. Long-standing patterns of partisan competition have also been transformed, with parties disappearing or becoming irrelevant in the terms employed by political science. Acción Democrática (AD) and the Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI) in Venezuela, Bolivia's Acción Democrática Nacionalista (AND) and Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), and Peru's Acción Popular (AP) and Partido Popular Cristiano (PPC) are among the most cited cases of almost complete party collapse. However, the spectacular decline in influence of historic party giants like Chile's Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC) and Argentina's Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), among others, also points to deep transformations in the dynamic of political party competition in these countries. These transformations raise empirical and theoretical questions as to whether institutionalization is even relevant in a region (and, indeed, a world) where the essential role of political parties as vehicles of representation has come into question.

Like Mainwaring's collection, the volume edited by Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, Brandon Van Dyck, and Jorge I. Domínguez notes political parties' centrality to representation. However, it underscores that almost four decades after the Third Wave, parties remain weak and efforts at party building have usually failed. The editors ask why this is the case. Their point of departure is to note that while there has been plenty of work on how parties are born and on party system institutionalization (such as the above-referenced work by Mainwaring and Scully, Mainwaring's new volume reviewed here, and many others), very little work focuses on party building, which they define as "the process by which new parties develop into electorally significant and enduring political actors" (4). In this sense, their volume is also more concerned with parties rather than party systems.

To answer the question, they challenge a long-standing theoretical assumption in work on Latin American political parties, which suggested that successful party building was rooted in the slow, gradual, and messy process of electoral competition. The editors challenge this notion by contending, instead, that party-building success grows out of conflict rather than normal democratic politics. They argue that conflict contributes to three dynamics that are central to successful party building: conflict strengthens partisan attachments, it encourages the process of party organization, and it provides sources of organizational cohesion.

In the introduction, Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck carefully construct their theoretical framework, clarifying what they mean by party building in contrast to the usual approach that focuses on the birth of parties. They are more interested in how "new parties actually take root" in order to constitute a case of successful party building (4). To be considered a success, a party must "achieve a minimum share of the vote and maintain it for a significant amount of time," win "at least 10 percent of the vote in five or more consecutive national elections," and "survive the departure of its founding leader" (4). Employing these criteria, they identify only eleven cases of successful party building in the region since the onset of the Third Wave. This is a small fraction (only 4 percent) of the 244 new parties they analyze that were born between 1978 and 2005).

Their conflict-centered approach, however, is not the only one that can explain successful party building. They also note that some successful parties have relied on organizational inheritance. Chapters focus on authoritarian successor parties (the Chilean Unión Demócrata Independiente, or UDI, and the Salvadoran

³ For a review of these changes see Ryan E. Carlin, "Party Competition in Latin America in Flux: Party Systems, Parties, and Partisans," *Latin American Research Review* 54, no. 2 (2019): 540–547; as well as Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), and Jennifer Cyr, *The Fates of Political Parties: Institutional Crisis, Continuity, and Change in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Alianza Republicana Nacionalista, ARENA), those that emerge from a state of war (the Salvadoran Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, or FMLN, and Nicaraguan Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN), and parties that grow out of social movements (linked to churches, indigenous groups, trade unions, and other social movements, a prime example of which is the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT). Finally, corporate-based parties may be built on the foundations set down by private firms (which has been the case in Panama and Ecuador).

The volume's chapters also employ this theoretical framework. The book is divided into four sections: party-voter linkages and the challenges of brand building, challenges of organization building, alternative platforms for party building, and failed cases. The editors convene an impressive set of contributors who analyze party building in each of these areas with richness, detail, and sophistication.

This is a pathbreaking contribution to our understanding of why parties succeed. The editors place their arguments well in the literature, carefully distinguishing their approach from the classic works by Aldrich, Ames, and Mainwaring and Scully, while building on other classics like the foundational work of Lipset and Rokkan.⁴ The data represent a treasure trove in terms of understanding parties' historical emergence. Finally, the findings represent a paradigm shift in demonstrating the revolutionary insight that conflict rather than the slow and plodding unfolding of elections and democracy may provide the most propitious environment and context for successful parties.

However, because there are so few successful cases, we might be more interested in the reasons for failure. Indeed, as the argument stands, the takeaway lessons remain unclear for party leaders seeking to build successful parties. In addition, in theoretical terms, the authors could do a better job of discussing how their approach differs from those focused on party and party system institutionalization. Finally, the question of whether parties will continue to play their traditional roles is not analyzed as thoroughly as it could be, nor is their connection to populism, which is mentioned but not analyzed in depth. That said, the findings do provide the theoretical building blocks to explain why so many parties have failed in their efforts to endure. In addition, with respect to populism, it is important to note that the work was published before the Bolsonaro and López Obrador phenomena burst onto the region's political stage.

While Levitsky et al. are concerned with the foundational moments of party building, Fernando Rosenblatt focuses on the variables that determine the vibrancy or decay of parties over time. Rosenblatt establishes the importance of understanding party vibrancy, noting, "I claim that party vibrancy provides a clear causal link between political parties' stability over time and the quality of democratic representation" (4). Rosenblatt's fundamental question does not diverge radically from that of Levitsky et al., but he focuses more on what determines longevity for vibrant parties: in essence a contrast between foundational moments (crises of birth) versus what allows parties to survive over time. Nonetheless, these works have many parallels and the similarities between them are fascinating, suggesting that Rosenblatt and Levitsky and his contributors are on to something.

Rosenblatt's meticulous and well-researched study identifies four causal factors that determine whether parties are vibrant over the long term or fall into decay: purpose, trauma, channels of ambition, and moderate exit barriers. Rosenblatt's level of analysis, however, unlike that of Mainwaring and Levitsky et al., is the individual politician. In this sense Rosenblatt's variable "purpose" parallels Levitsky and colleagues' "partisan attachments" variable, which the latter characterize as the ability of parties to unite members around a shared set of ideals. While Levitsky et al. point to crisis as the origin of vibrant parties, Rosenblatt notches down an analytical level to focus on the crises of individuals who have a shared experience of trauma. This shared experience of trauma, in turn, reinforces purpose. Rosenblatt remains at the individual unit of analysis to demonstrate the importance of satisfying individual politician's career interests. He finds that vibrant parties must establish career paths that give individual politicians an incentive to join and sustain membership in party organizations, which he terms "channels of ambition." Finally, "exit barriers" must be sufficiently high to prevent politicians from abandoning the party but not so high to lead to the entrenchment of alienating party barons.

Rosenblatt's study is an important contribution to our understanding of what allows certain parties to remain vibrant and avoid decay, finding that the stream of literature that treats party decay as inevitable is clearly off the mark. Basing his study on impressive fieldwork in Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay, Rosenblatt

⁴ John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Barry Ames, *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Mainwaring and Scully, *Building Democratic Institutions*.

engages counterarguments that have been advanced to explain party vibrancy, including global trends, regime type, electoral rules, time in office, government success or failure, and party organization. He engages each fairly, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, and differentiates his argument from previous ones.

Rosenblatt's findings are compatible with those of Levitsky et al. Part of the richness of the book lies in the extensive interview excerpts that bolster his findings. That said, Rosenblatt, like Levitsky et al., fails to answer some broader questions regarding political parties empirically and in the academic literature. First, Rosenblatt bases his study on the democratic "good guys" in the region, raising the question of whether systemic features are also at play in underpinning the vibrancy of parties. Second, Chile is currently undergoing a substantial remapping of its party system, and along with it, the variables that Rosenblatt ties to vibrant parties are also changing. For most of the post-authoritarian period, the party system was characterized by competition between two coalitions undergirded by what could largely be considered vibrant parties. Nonetheless, in the last five years, and particularly since the *estallido* (the violent protests of late 2019 and early 2020), the original ideals of shared purpose are changing, the trauma of the military regime is fading with the passing of generations, and patterns of political ambition and exit barriers are in flux. Thus Rosenblatt's theory will have to explain what elicits change in parties that may, indeed, be losing their vibrancy. Third, neither Rosenblatt nor Levitsky et al. address the worldwide decline of support for political parties to deal with the question of whether parties will remain the main interlocutors between society and government or if representation in the future will come by way of some other mechanism. In fairness, this is one of the major questions facing the world's democracies and is certainly not simple to answer.

Of course, one of the next logical questions is the impact for representation of failing or decaying parties. Analyzing citizen malaise and citizen discontent has become something of an academic cottage industry. Scores of books and symposia have been dedicated to analyzing the sources and consequences of citizen discontent in Latin America. Joe Foweraker and Dolores Trevizo's collection on the issue stands out from the rest for its quality and its caution in declaring that what is happening in Latin America differs significantly from parallel phenomena in the rest of the world. In particular, the volume seeks to analyze "both failings and achievements" (3) with respect to initial citizen and academic aspirations for democratic quality at the outset of Latin America's Third Wave of democratization. It does so by analyzing contemporary democracy and its discontents, with the assumption that democracy has fallen far short of expectations across the region.

While the unity of focus in this edited volume is far looser than others reviewed here, a central strand of analysis for all authors is the thinness of vertical and horizontal accountability in Latin American democracies. This lack of accountability is evident in myriad state institutions and in citizen perceptions of political parties. For the authors, the response—and the hope for democracy—lies in the continuing vibrancy of social movements that have made demands for justice, change, security, and rights in face of the failings of parties and state institutions. While not providing a definitive answer, this is one of the few volumes that addresses the question of a future role for parties and whether some other representative mechanism will step in where parties have failed.

For the interests of this review, Will Brandt's chapter on political parties is particularly relevant. While, as noted, neither Rosenblatt nor Levitsky et al. take on directly what might come after parties with respect to representation, Brandt's chapter argues that across the region parties have been transformed by the changing nature and expectations of electoral constituencies. He notes the movement of parties toward conservative, electoralist entities aimed at simply winning elections or focusing on particular issues. This dynamic has come about, he argues, because of the need to amass substantial resources in order to build parties. This imperative has driven parties to seek out private and often corporate funding in order to sustain and build party organizations, with negative implications for accountability and the potential for the delegitimization of parties as vehicles of representation.

A partial solution presented in the chapter by Neil Harvey is the channeling of social movements into party movements. He analyzes efforts of indigenous movements to build ethnic parties through social mobilization to make his point. This is an interesting and deeper analysis of the organizational inheritance model set down by Levitsky et al. However, a potentially more negative outcome, the volume suggests, would be the emergence of populist politics in response to the conservative domination of parties by economic elites. Brandt and Harvey both point to the relative failure of indigenous-based parties to build enduring organizations, suggesting that the insights offered by Levitsky et al. and Rosenblatt in terms of how vibrant parties are born and maintained might well be accurate. Finally, some of the chapters in the volume, paralleling the collection edited by Flavia Freidenberg and Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, are concerned with technical ways to enhance wider representation within existing party systems. The excellent chapter by

Jennifer Piscopo on gender quotas and their capacity to enhance wider representation of underrepresented groups is a prime example.

Freidenberg and Muñoz-Pogossian are more convinced than other authors reviewed here that parties are here to stay. Their groundbreaking volume lifts the hoods of political parties to analyze their internal workings. While Levitsky et al. and Rosenblatt want to know what makes for successful and vibrant parties, this edited volume aims to understand the effects of recent reforms on the roles that parties play in Latin American democracies in a much more mechanical way. This includes parties' typically analyzed roles of political recruitment and candidate selection, organizing party activities, making decisions, running campaigns and competing in and winning elections. In particular, the volume focuses on understanding what the series of over 250 types of political, institutional, and electoral reforms in eighteen countries means for the life of parties in Latin America.

The authors trace some of the citizen malaise and discontent with parties to their traditionally oligarchic stance. They understand recent reforms as an effort to open up, democratize, and improve the image of parties. The volume's first section poses the questions and sets the stage for the analysis in subsequent chapters. It sets out the reasons for reform processes and why these reforms are important for representational quality in Latin America. The following sections focus on reforms to candidate recruitment and selection processes, with chapters on primaries for presidential candidates, the growing centrality of independent candidates, and case studies analyzing the causes and effects of the reform of selection procedures in Costa Rica and Argentina. The second section, which is one of the strongest, focuses on efforts to enhance women's representation across the region. Chapters go beyond simply analyzing the effects of quotas to also deal with how the internal workings of parties can be improved to be more gender inclusive and to establish best practices for the representation of women in parties. The final section turns to an underanalyzed, yet crucial, variable for understanding the role of parties. Both the Levitsky et al. and Foweraker and Trevizo volumes underscored the troubling tendency for parties to become increasingly dominated by corporate groups tied to economic elites. Freidenberg and Muñoz-Pogossian's volume provides a series of chapters analyzing reform of and best practices in campaign finance, which might help to counteract this trend. In particular, the authors' summary recommendations point to the importance of regulation and transparency on the funding and spending side. These includes rules regarding the amount and sources of private financing and donations, a transparent and fair system of state financing, and regulations regarding how much can be spent and where. These must be accompanied by a transparent and regulated financing system and a strong regimen of sanctions when rules are violated.

The volume is complete, well edited, wide-ranging, and inclusive. One of its primary virtues is the inclusion of academics and practitioners from think tanks and NGOs and representatives of the various national electoral bodies across the region. This makes the volume unique in providing both detailed academic analysis along with insights on practical solutions to the problems raised by the various chapters. That said, like other volumes here, there is a certain hole in the analysis when it comes to what roles parties will play in the future. In this sense, it is mechanistic to the extent that there is an underlying assumption that if we could just determine the right reforms, we could somehow "fix" what is wrong with Latin American parties. As already suggested, it is probably incorrect to assume that citizens' profound dissatisfaction with the representational capacity of their democratic systems, which characterizes contemporary Latin America, can be remedied solely through institutional reform.

Levitsky et al. note that one of the pathways toward successful party building can come by way of the perseverance of authoritarian successor parties. Loxton and Mainwaring devote an entire edited volume to authoritarian successor parties. It is a readable and well-executed, monumental work that provides the first cross-national take on authoritarian successor parties. These parties warrant attention because, as the editors note, authoritarian successor parties have endured in three-quarters of Third Wave democracies and have been voted back into power in half of them. The volume, unlike others here, is not exclusively focused on Latin America but rather discusses authoritarian successor parties around the world. It poses three crucial questions: Why do authoritarian successor parties exist and sometimes win elections? Why are some of these parties more successful than others? What effect do authoritarian successor parties have for democracy?

The introduction to this incisive volume provides a common framework for the analysis of authoritarian successor parties and sets down the questions answered by each of the authors in tight, coherent chapter contributions that engage each other. The volume underscores the paradoxes associated with these types of parties. On the one hand, they may inherit valuable material and nonmaterial resources including the party brand, territorial organization, clientelistic networks, finances, and party cohesion. On the other hand, while these types of parties can rely on benefits that other parties cannot, they also carry baggage that can prove a

liability. The most significant of these include citizens' understanding of the parties' association with human rights abuses and poor policy performance. One of the central assertions of the volume is that parties must balance these benefits and liabilities, and part of what makes them more or less successful is how they do it. Loxton underscores the various methods parties have used in the past, including contrition, obfuscation, scapegoating, and embracing the past. The wide-ranging introduction goes on to outline why some parties are more successful than others at doing this, with contextual and institutional variables at the forefront.

However, perhaps the most important question the volume and its contributors ask regards the effect of authoritarian successor parties on democracy. A central tenet of the volume is that these parties have doubled-edged effects. Authoritarian successor parties may damage democracy by getting in the way of transitional justice, propping up vestiges of the previous regime, or continuing to operate in an authoritarian way at the subnational level. Finally, they may support or trigger an authoritarian regression. On the positive side, however, these parties may facilitate democratic transitions and enhance democratic performance by providing some semblance of party system institutionalization, incorporating potential veto players into the democratic system, and encouraging the deepening of transitions because authoritarian regime incumbents will feel they have a voice.

The volume provides a general chapter on personalistic authoritarian successor parties in Latin America and individual chapters on Brazil and Mexico. The chapter by Loxton and Levitsky on personalistic authoritarian parties argues, in line with the volume's assertion, that successful dictators who run with their parties may be able to win votes even if they do not break connections with the past, and may even be able to disassociate themselves from an unpleasant past. Timothy Power's explanation of the differential success of Brazil's two authoritarian successor parties—the Partido Democrático Social/Partido Progressista (PDS/PP) and the Partido da Frente Liberal/Democratas (PFL/DEM)⁵—lies in the PDS/PP's privileged access to state resources when compared to the PFL/DEM, confirming one of the volume's contentions that successor parties may be helped by privileged access to resources. Gustavo A. Flores-Macías focuses more on the negative effects of authoritarian successor parties on democracy, arguing that Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was hurt by its association with subnational authoritarianism, human rights abuses, and corruption.

Joy K. Langston devotes an entire book to analysis of the PRI as a successor party. In her detailed and expertly executed analysis of the PRI, she takes a different approach than Flores-Macías by focusing on the party's success and perseverance. She asks the intriguing question of why dominant, formerly authoritarian parties are able to remain influential. As one of the longest-ruling parties in existence, the Mexican PRI relied on a web of clientelism, corporatism, and particularistic distribution of state resources to build a political machine unrivaled in the Americas. In addition, the Mexican president acted as what Langston terms "a third-party enforcer," who compelled politicians in the party to cooperate. Most assumed, with the advent of democracy, that the PRI would go the way of other dominant authoritarian parties like the Russian Communist Party and the Kenya African National Union. Without access to vast state resources and with few incentives for traditional party stalwarts to stay loyal to the party, most scholars subscribed to a doomsday scenario for the PRI, arguing that it would cease to be relevant.

Langston asks how the PRI was able to survive and prosper despite premature predictions of its demise. While the PRI has changed, Langston notes that it survived the transition to democracy in relatively good and stable form and has gone on to establish itself as a competitive party. She argues that the success of authoritarian parties in maintaining relevance relies on the abilities of certain internal factions that are better able to adjust to democratic circumstances while avoiding fracturing. Langston provides an elegant, nuanced account of the roots of the PRI's durability, combining analysis of internal party factions with a cogent discussion of how Mexico's political institutions, such as federalism, multimember districts, and generous public finance of campaigns, allowed certain factions within the party to prevail. In the process, rather than disappear, the PRI was able to transform itself successfully "into a more competitive, decentralized party, without obligating it to become a more programmatic organization" (199).

Langston's work makes several important contributions. First, it is really the first monograph on the PRI in over thirty years. This in itself is a contribution to our understanding of the basic mechanics of change within a hegemonic party undergoing a democratic transition. However, this is clearly not just a book on the PRI or, for that matter, on Mexico. It contributes to the literature on party systems and party change more generally by demonstrating the importance of internal party dynamics to the survival of parties. Finally, with respect to the literature on democratic transitions, Langston's analysis shows how continuity of a formerly hegemonic party can actually contribute to the success of democratization (paralleling some of the arguments

⁵ Brazilian right-wing successor parties have undergone fusion and transmutations, explaining the multiple names and initials.

advanced in the Levitsky et al. volume regarding organizational inheritance). The Mexican transition might have looked quite different had the PRI splintered and immediately dissolved amid internecine conflict following its first bruising electoral defeat.

Langston's study is particularly interesting at this juncture in Mexican politics. The PRI suffered a monumental defeat in the 2018 general elections (the worst since the 1917 Revolution, from which it grew), with its candidate José Antonio Meade garnering only 16.4 percent of the vote and dropping from 203 to 45 deputies and from 57 to 13 senators. This raises the question of the proper time metric to measure the longer-term survival of authoritarian parties, and whether the PRI will, indeed, continue to survive. It is difficult to untangle whether the rout of the PRI was due to its authoritarian past and factional infighting, or if it is simply falling victim to the same sorts of crises plaguing traditional parties around the world.

Brett Kyle asks a different question about the relationship between authoritarian regimes and democracy. Unlike Loxton and Mainwaring, and Langston, who are concerned with the role of former authoritarian parties in contemporary democracy, Kyle analyzes the role that former authoritarian *leaders* play in its performance. He notes some troubling trends with respect to the state of democracy in the region. The first is less than solid, absolute support for democracy, where almost a third of people would support an authoritarian regime in certain circumstances. The other is the more central focus of his book: What explains the relative success or failure of the myriad former authoritarian leaders that have thrown their hats into the electoral ring to run for president? Kyle systematically analyzes the role of former regime officials in the twelve countries in Central and South America that experienced dictatorships followed by democratic transitions during the Third Wave. Though he focuses on twelve countries, he includes in-depth case studies of Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Kyle presents several thoughtful and carefully constructed typologies of what he calls "recycled" dictators and considers the constellation of variables that explain their relative success and behavior when they return to politics. Kyle's most significant explanatory variable is the country's previous experience with democratic rule, which can provide the basic building blocks for a return to democratic politics. In particular, he highlights Argentina and Chile to make this point, contrasting them with countries like Guatemala and El Salvador, which had less experience with democratic rule before their authoritarian governments. However, the study also considers the impact of the type of dictatorship and transition, with a focus on the level of uncertainty created by the processes. Leaving power in a position of strength, as was the case in Chile and Uruguay, versus leaving power amid complete defeat (i.e., Argentina and Panama) can help to determine the relative position of the military following a transition, and in turn, the degree of uncertainty. This allows Kyle to construct a two-by-two table with a four-cell typology of different types of candidates, who have different levels of electoral success.

Kyle presents valuable data that demonstrate that roughly 10 percent of the six hundred presidential candidacies he analyzed were some sort of "recycled" dictator. However, he also finds that these types of candidates rarely win, though they may garner significant shares of votes. The findings lead Kyle to takeaways with potential cross-national significance. Where recycled dictators are successful they tend to share certain characteristics like serving as a candidate in an existing party, being an heir to a successful departing regime, acting as a rebel and transforming rebellion into a political movement, or serving in other elective positions before leaving the presidency. Kyle's study emphasizes the importance of institutionalized parties to ensuring the success of democratization and high-quality representation, and avoiding the potentially pernicious effects of recycled dictator presidencies.

All the works reviewed here are sophisticated and ask many of the questions we need to ask if we seek to understand the state of representation in the region. They demonstrate the vibrancy and richness of the analysis of the representational roles of parties in the region. However, important questions remain.

The biggest representational elephant in the room that these works do not sufficiently address is the existential status of parties. While it is true that all analyze parties, whether it be their institutionalization, collapse, decay, or role after authoritarian regimes, what is missing is analysis of a deeper question: Will parties remain the main vehicle of democratic representation in the region, or will other representational mechanisms emerge? What is certain, and a reality that all analysts here recognize, is that there is a widespread rejection of traditional parties across the region. They are consistently identified as the institutions in which citizens have the least confidence. However, since Elmer Schattschneider, who characterized democracy as "unthinkable" without parties, they have been considered central—and for some, indispensable—for democracy. Will they remain so? There have been various responses to this question. Popular and academic narratives suggest that perhaps social movements or social media can provide more direct and meaningful representational channels. Still, it is clear that successful social movements at some point need

to institutionalize in a way similar to parties in order to have the influence to effect meaningful change. But the conundrum is that if they do, they can become subject to the same derision as parties. Chile provides a contemporary example of this phenomenon, where previous leaders of the student protest movement who subsequently were elected to Congress are now routinely derided as “just like all the other politicians.”

Similarly, social media can be influential, but without preexisting social networks and connections to more traditional forms of democratic institutions, its influence is likely to be minimal. Social media is a representational tool and not a vehicle of representation in the way that parties have been traditionally in the region.

The other glaring hole in these studies relates to the dramatic democratic decline the region has experienced in recent years. While these works are rich in analyses of the roles of parties and party systems and trends within them, absent from the equation are voters and the question of why citizens have taken extreme positions and taken to the streets in reaction to the stunning failure of parties in the region.

Finally, the current status of representation in Latin America is muddied with respect to the relationship between parties and populism. How do parties connect to resurgent populism, and what is the consequence of this connection for the quality of representation and the future role of parties? Will individual cults of personality built on populist appeals displace institutionalized, enduring, and regularized mass parties?

What appears clear, at the very least, is that the continuing vitality of democracy depends on the revitalization of parties. Though the works reviewed here do not directly answer some of these existential questions regarding parties, they do provide some clues. Uncovering the sources of party decay and collapse can provide insights into what it might take to build parties that respond better to the contemporary representational dilemmas facing the region. We know from Mainwaring that enduring institutionalization is key. We know from Rosenblatt that for vibrant parties to persist, the individual interests of politicians must be taken into account. Levitsky et al. show us that conflict may actually be beneficial with respect to producing enduring parties. Freidenberg and Muñoz-Pogossian provide answers to the mechanical fixes that can enhance the myriad roles parties play in a successful democracy. Langston, Kyle, and Mainwaring and Loxton demonstrate the pros and cons of authoritarian legacies for representation, while Foweraker and Trevizo provide an analysis of the failings of contemporary Latin American democracies. Without analyses of the problems with political parties in Latin America, solutions will be elusive or ineffective. If these books are any indication of the quality and creativity of scholarship and the scholarly understanding of realities of representational deficits in Latin America, answers and solutions are likely to be forthcoming, despite the stark challenges to representation that the region faces today.

Author Information

Peter M. Siavelis is professor and chair in the Department of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University, where he is also the associate director of the Latin American and Latino Studies program. His most recent book is *Democratic Chile: The Politics and Policies of a Historic Coalition* (coedited with Kirsten Sehnbruch) and he has published in journals including *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Democratization*, *Electoral Studies*, and *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

How to cite this article: Siavelis, Peter M. 2020. Recipes for Political Party Success ... and Failure. *Latin American Research Review* 55(4), pp. 850–858. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.1265>

Submitted: 07 January 2020

Accepted: 21 April 2020

Published: 22 December 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

LARR

Latin American Research Review is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the Latin American Studies Association.

OPEN ACCESS 