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Bolivia's Movement toward Socialism

A Political Party Based on and Anchored in Social Movements

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INTRODUCTION

In Latin America and elsewhere, new political parties rarely succeed (Levitsky et al. 2016). This chapter offers an in-depth account of one of Latin America's rare party-building successes in the contemporary landscape – the Bolivian Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism, MAS) – and explains its organizational development. My central goal is to shed light on current scholarly debates about the internal operations of Latin American parties and, in so doing, draw lessons about party building, political representation, and democratic accountability in the region.

The MAS began as an electoral vehicle for a social movement of coca producers in 1995. It captured the presidency only ten years later, and although the party was forced out of power in 2019, it remains competitive and is Bolivia's only truly national political party. Although the party as a formal bureaucratic organization is weakly developed, and although party leaders often eschew talking about the MAS as a "political party," it meets the two criteria established in this book's theoretical framework at fairly high levels: The MAS does coordinate the behavior of ambitious politicians both in and between election cycles, and it does aggregate collective political preferences. Reflecting its origins in autonomous social mobilization, its main source of organizational power still derives from its close ties to a wide array of popular movements and associations, which provide a formidable mass base.

The MAS is a clear example of what I call "movement-based" parties – parties formed directly by social movements (Anria 2018, 7–11). The

ability of movements to transition into political parties, and then to capture national-level government, is remarkable in the contemporary political landscape. Given that their internal politics remain poorly understood and weakly documented, there are great analytical payoffs in studying and drawing lessons from such a paradigmatic example.

The Bolivian MAS shares some similarities with Uruguay's Frente Amplio (Broad Front, FA) (Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt this volume). They are two of Latin America's most electorally successful and innovative new political parties. Both parties were formed in opposition and created from the bottom up by a wide array of subordinate social actors, including labor and social-movement activists. Both parties became a place of convergence for several actors on the left, and both captured the presidency after spending their formative period in opposition. Both parties, moreover, preserved bottom-up features as they grew territorially, organizationally, and sociologically – and as they exercised national-level power for consecutive terms. Finally, both qualify as political parties on the basis of this volume's theoretical framework.

Yet, despite their similarities, they fulfill the functions of political parties differently. The FA, since early in its formative period, developed strong party organizational structures that boosted the influence of base activists in internal decision-making processes. Thus, the FA case invites us to think about the operation of those channels. The case of the MAS invites us to theorize about the relationships between social movements, party politics, and democratic representation in a more fluid and loose political organization. It illustrates a path whereby the development of weak bureaucratic structures facilitated the concentration of decision-making at the top, enabling the party's top leadership to perform a central role in coordination and interest aggregation, and also provides strong incentives and opportunities for the party's social-movement bases to act autonomously in performing some of the party's functions. The chapter demonstrates, in short, that both the horizontal and vertical components of party building can occur in the absence of major bureaucratization.

This chapter makes two central contributions. First, it deepens our understanding of a "movement path" to successful party building, a path that remains under-theorized. The chapter shows that social movements not only can facilitate the development of new parties, but they also meaningfully shape party organizational models, leadership patterns, and internal operations. Following this book's theoretical framework, the chapter shows that social movements and civic

networks – the party's core organizational constituencies – are key actors in processes of horizontal coordination and vertical interest aggregation. Not only does the MAS represent those constituencies in the electoral arena, but those constituencies also coordinate candidate-selection procedures, electoral campaigns, and political strategy. Second, the chapter dissects the most relevant organizational attributes of the MAS. It not only describes how those structures work on the ground, but also links them to broader issues related to democratic representation and accountability.

This chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section, I conceptualize movement-based parties and highlight the distinctive genesis of these parties as organic political expressions of social movements. In the second section, I classify the Bolivian MAS as a movement-based party. In the third section, I explain the origins and organizational evolution of the MAS. I trace, in particular, the transition from being a local movement of coca producers to a national party with strikingly heterogeneous social bases and hybrid organizational features. In the fourth section, I discuss the weakness of formal party structures. In the fifth section, I elaborate on two critical processes of political horizontal coordination and vertical interest aggregation within the MAS – candidate selection and national policymaking – where weak bureaucratic development generates important incentives for the party's bases to operate with independence and shape party decision-making. In the sixth section, I provide some conclusions.

MOVEMENT-BASED PARTIES

As the social-movement literature recognizes, many social-movement activists are hostile toward, or at least wary of, political parties and generally oppose participating in electoral politics. Part of this hostility can be explained by the imperatives of electoral contestation and office seeking – a situation that often leads to a widening gap between the objectives of the party or its leaders and those of the movements. Movements have their own set of goals, and they seek to avoid party co-optation and often reject the horse-trading politics that lie at the heart of coalition building. Parties prioritize vote seeking, and restive social movements can be unreliable partners. Often, then, parties and movements operate independently of one another, and avoid the liabilities associated with trying to broker some sort of alliance. And yet, sometimes movements go as far as to form parties, through which they can gain access to

formal electoral and policymaking arenas. These are best described as movement-based parties.[1]

Movement-based parties share two attributes. First, they are parties directly formed by social-movement activists and leaders. This means they have a different logic of party formation than that stipulated in the dominant, Downsian models of party formation (Downs 1957). In the latter influential models, parties are seen as the creation of strategic legislators; they are depicted as electoral vehicles for political elites and as structures largely detached from their social bases (Aldrich 1995, 29–50). By contrast, movement-based parties are the direct creation of militant movement activists and grassroots leaders forged in the heat of social mobilization who decide to enter into the electoral arena and compete for office while sustaining collective action in the streets; they are generally formed as opposition parties or as regime challengers, and they follow a distinctively "bottom-up" logic of party genesis. In short, if in Aldrich's (1995) dominant model the logic of party formation consists of rootless political entrepreneurs in search of social bases, movement-based parties stand out because they follow the reverse logic: they begin life as movements.

Second, movement-based parties are parties with a core constituency of grassroots social movements.[2] This definition parallels Levitsky's (2003) definition of labor-based parties, with grassroots social movements rather than organized labor as the sponsoring organizations and core constituency. Movement-based parties are also different from Kitschelt's (2006) analytical characterization of movement parties, which are almost always the electoral vehicles of a social movement mobilized around a single issue (Kitschelt 2006). By contrast, movement-based parties are broader alliances of various movements and other popular organizations and, as such, they are better prepared to incorporate a broader set of issues, actors, and demands. My conceptualization is also different from della Porta et al.'s (2017) definition of movement parties, which stresses the strength of the associational linkages between parties and movements. In della Porta et al.'s definition, movement parties are those that have particularly strong organizational and external links with social movements. My definition of movement-based parties also considers those connections but emphasizes

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[1] This section draws heavily on Anria (2018).
[2] The term "core constituency" refers to specific sectors that provide financial resources, policymaking support, and guidance to a political party (Gibson 1996).

that these parties are the direct creation of social movements. They are, in short, founded directly by movements.

In contemporary Latin America, examples of these parties include, but are not limited to, the Bolivian MAS, the Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party, PT), the Ecuadorian Pachakutik, the Salvadorian Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, FMLN), and the Uruguayan and Chilean FA.[3] The rise in popularity of some of these parties, and especially their ascension to national-level power in some countries, generated theoretically relevant questions at the interface of the party–society nexus: How do these parties work internally? How do they perform representative functions? How, in particular, do they coordinate the actions of their multiple constitutive parts so the organization functions as a unit?

Although the aforementioned parties are similar in their emergence as electoral vehicles for social-movement entrepreneurs, they do not have the same starting points in their founding organizational characteristics. For example, while the Brazilian PT developed a bureaucratic, centrally organized party organization with hierarchical leadership structures, the MAS did not develop these kinds of structures and developed instead a looser organizational model. As I discuss in the following, this founding organizational characteristic enabled the party to sustain a great deal of grassroots participation even as the party formed national governments – and it has been strongly resistant to change (Anria 2018).

Movement-based parties offer a unique opportunity to examine the relationships between social movements, party politics, and democratic representation. First, they provide insight into the role that movements can play in facilitating successful party building.[4] Existing studies tend to focus on explaining how the inherited infrastructures of interest associations help to explain variation in party strength. As recent empirical work shows, the presence of a robust associational

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[3] Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt (this volume) do not classify the FA as a movement-based party because the FA, unlike the MAS, was not formed directly by social movements. It still has deep roots and connections with social movements.

[4] Keck (1992) focuses on labor unions in the formation and early expansion of the PT; Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt (2020) focus on labor unions in the formation of the FA; Van Cott (2005) and Madrid (2012) focus on indigenous movements and the formation of ethnic parties in the Andes; Van Dyck (2016) focuses on urban popular movements and rural unions in explaining the origins of Mexico's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD). On the Mexican PRD and its ties with social movements, see also Combes's chapter in this volume.

inheritance can provide invaluable resources to emerging political parties that allow them to take off and that contribute to their long-term empowerment (Levitsky et al. 2016). New parties are more likely to establish deep roots, and also to persist over time, where party builders can draw upon the mobilizing structures of preexisting civic organizations (Cyr 2017).

Second, movement-based parties are a crucial channel by which those civil society actors can gain access to and effective representation in formal electoral and policymaking arenas. Because the organizational boundaries of these parties are fuzzy and permeable, they offer unique opportunities to examine a type of political organization that, in recent years, has become common in both new and established democratic regimes (della Porta et al. 2017; Roberts 2019). They offer lessons not only for the comparative study of political parties but also concerning the impact that movements have on political institutions.

THE MAS AS A MOVEMENT-BASED PARTY

The MAS is an especially interesting case because it deviates sharply from the conventional theorizing about this type of party: defying theoretical expectations, the MAS has followed a different organizational trajectory that has facilitated grassroots impact and constrained elite control, even after assuming and exercising power at the national level. The party's social-movement origins not only facilitated successful party building, but also enabled the party to maintain high levels of grassroots participation and to develop structures of accountability where movements continue to influence, constrain, and hold the party leadership accountable. The party achieved, in short, high levels of horizontal coordination and vertical interest aggregation as a governing organization. Although the party did not invest heavily in the development of formal bureaucratic structures (as did Uruguay's FA; Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt this volume), it represents strongly organized social constituencies, and these play a leading role coordinating party action. As such, the case of the MAS can offer important lessons to key debates articulated in the book's theoretical framework. The case invites us to think about how loose organizational formats may shape modes of horizontal coordination in political campaigns, in the selection of candidates for electoral office, and the vertical aggregation of interests once in power. It can also contribute to our understanding of how mechanisms of social accountability develop and operate on the ground.

This last issue is crucial for democratic politics. When democratic participation within governing parties is deficient, those parties can more easily become vehicles for the unrestrained will of political elites and even dominant single leaders. In such contexts, the voices of regular citizens or even of the party's own social bases may not be heard, thereby hindering the average citizen's participation in political life while enhancing the discretion of the party leadership – a condition conducive to personalistic politics.

At the party level, using Hirschman's (1970) terminology, where groups and individuals that constitute a party's social base have limited opportunities to exert "voice" in party decisions, it is generally much harder to establish and maintain high levels of organizational loyalty, partisan engagement, and mobilization capacity (Anria and Cyr 2017; Pérez Bentancur, Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt 2019; Rosenblatt 2018). At the broader political regime level, where instances for bottom-up input are significantly narrow while in power – or where there is little room for the party's social bases to play a meaningful role in horizontal coordination and vertical aggregation – bait-and-switch policymaking may become more likely (Roberts 2014a). This, in turn, can negatively affect the consistency of the party brand and impact the stability of the overall party system (Lupu 2016).

When governing parties are more open to bottom-up input, by contrast, there are greater opportunities to establish checks on the decisions of their leaders and constrain their strategic behavior and hierarchical control. In such contexts, it is less likely that the party will become a vehicle to advance the goals of a personalistic leader – even if oligarchic temptations are readily available. The presence of channels to exert "voice" provides incentives for the social bases to shape important decisions, as these bases become de facto veto actors within the organization. Developing greater opportunities for bottom-up input, moreover, makes it comparatively easier for these parties to maintain strong grassroots linkages as well as to breed organizational loyalty, partisan engagement, and mobilization (Rosenblatt 2018). At the broader regime level, when a governing party establishes and upholds well-developed opportunities for bottom-up grassroots participation, instances of bait-and-switch policymaking are less likely – a condition conducive to policy stability. This, in turn, makes the consistency of the party brand more likely to stick and the party system more stable (Lupu 2016).

When governing parties – especially those formed by social movements pushing for inclusion – are more open, they may generate opportunities

and incentives for the political empowerment of traditionally marginalized groups by boosting the input that those groups have in the political power game. Seen from this angle, then, movement-based parties that remain open and responsive can become effective channels for the integration of interests from excluded groups. Inclusion, in turn, is both a good in itself and also has instrumental value: it enhances participation and empowers citizens to demand better representation.

<div align="center">ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION</div>

The MAS emerged in 1995. It started out as a small, localized party that was initially regarded as an "instrument" of a specific social group, the *cocaleros* in the Chapare. Although the MAS started out small, it experienced very rapid growth to become the electoral vehicle for a broad set of urban and rural grassroots social movements. It expanded to Bolivia's largest cities and in less than a decade became the country's largest party, as its leader, Evo Morales, was elected to the presidency in 2005 and then reelected in 2009 and 2014. The MAS achieved territorial and organizational expansion not so much through the development of an elaborate territorial party infrastructure, but by tapping into the organizational apparatus of existing mass organizations and civic networks and integrating them within the party. It followed a social movement path to party building.

The history of the MAS has been widely documented.[5] It bears noting, however, how truly organic and bottom-up the party and the leadership were at the party's founding. Evo Morales rose to the fore of the *cocalero* movement in the heat of the cycles of contention around coca eradication in the early 1980s (Sivak 2010). Morales had started as the Secretary of Sports for his local union in 1982 – the San Francisco Syndicate – but then worked his way up the union ladder and was elected as the Executive Secretary of the Federation of the Tropics in 1988 (Sivak 2010). His leadership was distinctively bottom-up. Cocalero unionism was Morales' political school. It marked his " … political origin, and for many years he understood politics as the sum of assemblies, negotiations with politicians and officials, and fights in the streets and roads" (Sivak 2010, 43).

Before the MAS became what is known as "the MAS," Morales and other peasant leaders formed several electoral vehicles based on the idea of

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[5] See, e.g., Grisaffi (2018).

self-representation of popular social actors – an idea that had been on the agenda of rural unions since the early 1990s (García Linera, Chávez León, and Costa Monje 2004). Attaining legal registration was not easy, however; it happened only after *cocaleros* borrowed the legal registration of a dying party, the Bolivian Movimiento al Socialismo-Unzaguista (Movement Toward Socialism-Unzaguista, MAS-U), which enabled them to participate in national elections using the MAS's legal registration, its emblems, and its blue, black, and white colors. The union leaders who founded the MAS still reject the party designation and refer to the MAS as a "political instrument" or, better yet, a direct extension of the union organization (Van Cott 2005; Grisaffi 2018).

The MAS won four congressional seats in the 1997 elections. A major turning point for the party was in 2002, when Evo Morales finished second in his presidential bid. Although the MAS did not capture the presidency in 2002, the size of its parliamentary block grew from four to thirty-five representatives. By 2002, the MAS had become Bolivia's main opposition party and significant institutional positions in Congress would then serve as a power base for future elections. The party's major breakthrough was in 2005 when Morales was elected to the presidency in a landslide victory.

The MAS's ascent to national power was meteoric. In its rapid march to power, between 1995 and 2005, the party became a hybrid fusion of party and movements and developed two strikingly distinctive social coalitions. The central coalition – or the party's core constituency – is highly stable and targeted; it is based in Bolivia's rural sector and consists of the *cocaleros* in the Chapare, as well as three national-level peasant associations, which conceive of the MAS as their creation under their tutelage.[6] In this segment, the MAS is organized from the bottom up and relies on the collective, assembly-like (*asambleísta*) style of decision-making utilized in Bolivia's rural social movements – especially those in the country's highlands.

The MAS maintains strong organic links to its core constituency, and there are permanent interactions between grassroots leaders and party

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[6] These organizations include the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Unique Confederation of Rural Laborers of Bolivia, CSUTCB); the Confederación Sindical Intercultural de Comunidades de Bolivia (Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia, CSCIB); and the Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Originarias de Bolivia – Bartolina Sisa (Bartolina Sisa National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Native Women of Bolivia, CNMCIOB-BS).

leaders, who work closely together selecting party candidates and defining party electoral strategy. This often happens in meetings called *ampliados*, which are important spaces for horizontal coordination. From the point of view of the party leadership, *ampliados* and other forms of union meetings, like *cabildos*, serve not only to shape party strategy but also to collect valuable information from the rank and file.[7] In those meetings, there are also strong pressures from below to keep the leadership accountable to the rank and file over aspects of policy, a pattern that is closely associated with the movement origins of the MAS and the legacies of social mobilization that forged the party organization since its inception. However, it bears noting that the idea of strict bottom-up control in this segment is not always empirically accurate. As has been documented, the MAS's top leadership does not always respect the wishes of the social bases, and there are in fact growing tensions and challenges of coordination between the rank and file and the party leadership over aspects of party strategy and policy (Anria 2018; Grisaffi 2018).

The peripheral coalition is broader and more flexible. It relies on a wider set of urban-popular organizations in Bolivia's largest cities, where neighborhood associations, trade unions, cooperatives, and other forms of local collective organization play a key articulatory role. This expansion of the party to urban areas was based, on the one hand, on the ability of the MAS to vertically aggregate interests and bundle issues together by finding common programmatic ground, articulating the claims for a remarkably diverse array of movements that were mobilized in opposition to neoliberalism and extractive policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s – a process by which the MAS became an "instrument" for a broader set of subordinate social actors. On the other hand, the strategy used to attract these more diverse peripheral constituencies combined attempts to co-opt the leadership of local organizations with the pursuit of political alliances with established center-left parties in hopes of reaching middle class segments (Anria 2013).

In this regard, the MAS provides an example of a party that relies on a clearly segmented linkage strategy to mobilize different constituencies (Luna 2014). The different electoral strategies pursued by the MAS to reach core and peripheral constituencies are, at the same time, associated

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[7] In my observations during these meetings, Morales, who is often present, usually beings by telling grassroots leaders and the rank and file that he is there "to listen to them," to "inform them about the things that we are doing in government," and "to ask you [affiliates] and your leaders to come up with proposals."

with different organizational formats in each segment. On the one hand, the MAS's rural roots reflect patterns of bottom-up organization and organic movement–party linkages, a pattern that has facilitated some degree of grassroots control over the leadership and is associated with the party's "movementist" origins. On the other hand, this ten-year period of rapid growth and extension into urban areas – and the evolution of the party apparatus in power, with growing access to patronage resources – posed important challenges to the party's original, bottom-up organizational characteristics. The party expansion fostered not only the emergence of top-down mobilization strategies but also the co-optation of community- and social-movement leaders into mid-level government positions – a process that at the same time compromised the autonomy of many civil society groups (Zuazo 2010). Although expansion posed important challenges to the party's bottom-up foundational characteristics, the party's grassroots social bases found ways to preserve relative autonomy and replicate the party's genetic imprint as expansion occurred.

This is in part because the party adopted, from its early days, a loose bureaucratic structure, which facilitated the reproduction over time of the party's DNA. The absence of those structures as transmission belts contributed to the de facto concentration of power in the hands of Evo Morales, whose leadership became increasingly personalistic and plebiscitarian (Madrid 2012). This mode of top-down horizontal coordination is similar to the one described by Conaghan (this volume) in her description of Correa's Alianza PAIS in Ecuador. At the same time, the weak bureaucratic development of the party provided opportunities for the party's social bases to act autonomously, with few bureaucratic constraints. This meant that, as organizational expansion took place, MAS-affiliated movements in Bolivia retained significant degrees of autonomy from Morales and the MAS and continued to influence, constrain, and hold the party's leadership accountable.

To summarize, the MAS was formed over twenty years ago, and it became Bolivia's largest party. After ten years in opposition and thirteen in national power, it is truly remarkable that the party has retained several founding organizational characteristics. The MAS does not function under a purely bottom-up logic, however. Rather, it operates as a hybrid organization that combines top-down leadership by a dominant personality, weak bureaucratic development, and the bottom-up power of autonomous social mobilization. Although party leaders do not refer to the MAS as a party and prefer to call the MAS a "political instrument," it meets the two criteria established in this book's theoretical framework:

The MAS does coordinate the behavior of ambitious politicians both in and between elections, and it does vertically aggregate interests. For both dimensions, formal party structures play a marginal role, as I discuss in the pages that follow, and the bulk of coordination and interest aggregation within the party occurs through nonbureaucratic channels.

WEAK PARTY STRUCTURES

The bureaucracy of the MAS is weakly developed, both nationally and subnationally.[8] The party has limited professional paid staff, equipment, or records of membership and finances. Its headquarters are located in a modest office in La Paz, where members of the Dirección Nacional (National Directorate) meet at least once a month to coordinate activities. However, formal leadership bodies such as the National Directorate and the Direcciones Departamentales (Departmental Directorates) lack independent authority vis-à-vis MAS officeholders, particularly the president and his ministers, and also prominent leaders of allied civil society groups who often have an upper hand in coordinating party activity.[9] Prominent political figures within the MAS see formal leadership bodies as "empty shells" with no real power and little capacity for coordination.

Formal party organs – whether at the local, departmental, or national levels – have little independent power for shaping competitive processes of candidate selection, campaign strategies, and defining overall party strategy in electoral periods. They also have very limited influence in coordinating legislative behavior once in office. Although party organs do not have sufficient decision-making autonomy or even independent capacity to generate decisions, they play an important role in dealing with intraparty conflicts, especially conflicts between MAS-affiliated social movements. Instead of relying on party organs to generate decisions, influential figures within the MAS rely more on *ad hoc* committees for input on specific topics.[10]

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[8] This is a difference between the MAS and Uruguay's FA (Pérez Bentancur, Piñeiro Rodríguez, and Rosenblatt this volume).

[9] Positional authority within the party generally does not correspond to "real" authority, legitimacy, or political influence. The exception is Morales, who is both the president of the MAS National Directorate and the Executive Secretary of the overarching union of coca growers in Bolivia's Chapare region.

[10] For example, an ad hoc political committee was formed to design the strategy for the 2005 electoral campaign. Party organs, as independent structures, played no role. Instead, key actors included individuals who would then become ministers under the first Morales government. The tendency to bypass party organs became more pronounced as the MAS

According to the party statute, the highest decision-making body is the Congreso Nacional Ordinario (Regular National Congress, CON). The CON invites delegates of MAS-affiliated movements and organizations to participate and elect members to the party's National Directorate. It also invites allied movements and popular organizations to approve, reform, and/or modify the party's Declaración de Principios (Declaration of Principles), the Programa de Gobierno (Program of Government), and the Estatuto Orgánico (Statute) (Article 18, c). In addition, it reviews disciplinary sanctions imposed by the Comisión de Ética (Ethics Commision) and resolves disputes over statutory provisions. Another important party convention includes the Congreso Orgánico (Congress), which meets to decide matters of party organization and fundamental questions about the party's future (Article 19). These party conferences meet regularly and ensure a great deal of internal grassroots participation. Yet, although they help to coordinate campaign activities and resolve conflicts during and between election cycles, they lack real independent power.

Party structures also play a marginal role in coordinating the relationships between the MAS and its representatives in Congress. In fact, there is nothing in the party's statute that specifies the terms of those relationships. The expectation, however, is that representatives work closely with their social constituencies; that they contribute financially to the party organization; and that they regularly attend party conventions to inform authorities and the rank and file about their work in Congress.

Elected representatives for the MAS are only related to the party structure indirectly, as they are agents of many principals. Many have been nominated by civil society organizations with which they retain strong connections; others have been nominated "from above" due to their individual contribution to the overall party list; and finally, they all have been elected by voters, most of whom are neither party nor social movement members. The lack of a strong party structure coordinating legislative activity means that representatives typically lack common socialization inside the party. And because they come from multiple sectors of society, they have no common socialization outside the party either. This creates incentives for the executive branch to centralize power and discipline the behavior of MAS representatives. Most of the legislators I interviewed commented that they have limited capacity to initiate

became a governing party, revealing an increasing weakness of the formal party structures vis-à-vis power holders.

important legislation as independent agents. And, in fact, most legislative proposals are brought to the floor by the executive branch. The party's loose bureaucratic structures, again, create strong incentives for the executive branch to develop its own instances of coordination "from above," in order for the party's top leadership to centralize power and discipline the legislative behavior of MAS representatives.[11] Their behavior in office follows an executive-enforced party discipline that, at times, is at odds with the logic of constituency representation, with positions imposed by the executive often prevailing.[12]

In sum, though formal party structures do exist and operate on a regular basis, they lack independent power and their role is fairly limited. Coordination between the party leadership, party representatives in Congress, and the party's social movement bases happen mostly through nonbureaucratic and informal channels. I discuss how these channels operate in practice by examining a key process of horizontal coordination – the nomination of party candidates for electoral office – and a central process of political interest aggregation – national policymaking.

HORIZONTAL COORDINATION AND VERTICAL INTEREST AGGREGATION

Candidate Selection

As the editors of this volume rightly note, a central process of horizontal coordination is the nomination of party candidates for electoral office. It shapes who rises to leadership positions and who actually gets into public office using the party label. A critical question is then: how broad or

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[11] My observations indicate that such efforts occurred in the vice presidency, where representatives met weekly to decide on legislative strategy. The presence of the president or the vice president and of key ministers was not uncommon in these meetings. The idea behind the meetings was to generate an internal space for debate before legislative proposals were sent to Congress, and to avoid open discussion on the legislative floor by projecting an image of unity. While some representatives conceived of this as a collective agenda-setting exercise designed to ensure a balance between territorial and sectoral demands, others saw it as an imposition from above.

[12] Rebeca Delgado, a former president of the Chamber of Deputies, commented: "If an individual legislator brings in a legislative proposal for a specific project, the executive branch generally does not send any financing for it. This leads me to say that, in a context where the executive gives you the agenda, constituency representation is undervalued and not fully exercised" (interview with Rebeca Delgado).

narrow is grassroots participation in the process? Both in opposition and after the MAS assumed national power, the party's grassroots social bases retained significant influence over the selection of party candidates for elective office, even though party leaders have sought to concentrate power in their own hands. The capacity of the grassroots social bases to wield at least some degree of control is key to ensuring vertical accountability and facilitating democratic representation.

No clear rules guide selection processes within the MAS. According to its statute, the MAS is "the political and ideological branch of the social organizations that represent Bolivia's cultural diversity in rural and urban areas" (Article 5).[13] The statute further stipulates that "members and activists participate in the different levels of the political structure [of the MAS] through their natural social organizations, which guide the work of these leaders and extend their own loyalty, work, and honesty to the structure of the MAS" (Article 9).

According to the party statute, moreover, the organizational structure of the MAS is decentralized along territorial and functional lines. The statute recognizes directorates at no fewer than eight levels: national, departmental, regional, provincial, municipal, indigenous territories, districts, and sectors (Article 12). For example, it recognizes the organizational structures of the social organizations and unions at the rural level, the districts and social sectors in urban areas, as well as the autonomous territories of indigenous peoples.

Although the party statute clearly defines the internal mechanisms for selecting leaders for internal leadership bodies such as the National Directorate, as noted previously, it is less clear on the procedures that regulate the selection of candidates for elective public office. Article 37 says that it is a responsibility of the National Directorate of the MAS to

coordinate and respect the modes of selection, as well as the norms and procedures used by social organizations for the creation of the candidate lists – for national assemblies, departmental assemblies, regional or provincial assemblies, municipal governments, districts and sectors – that the MAS will present in electoral contests.

In short, there is no unified candidate selection method within the party, and the MAS employs several selection methods across the country. Generally, however, the MAS delegates responsibilities and control to the movements and civic networks that are present in a given electoral district. Generally, once candidates are prescreened and nominated by those

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[13] All direct quotes that appear in the chapter were translated from Spanish by the author.

organizations, they then become candidates for the MAS – they use the same campaign logo, the party emblems and colors, and the party platform.[14]

It bears noting, however, that the degree of grassroots influence within the party varies widely across different localities, indicating striking levels of internal heterogeneity. Some of those methods, or how they unfold, help to diffuse power territorially and among many grassroots actors; they often act as countervailing bottom-up correctives to hierarchy and concentrated authority. Other methods help to concentrate power at the top (Anria 2018).

It also bears noting that party structures are unevenly developed across the country, and that, indeed, party builders have invested differently in creating formal party structures across social constituencies. For the most part, even where those structures exist, as in Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, those structures are strikingly irrelevant in shaping candidate selection outcomes. What really matters, however, is the configuration of civil society, or the nature of party–society relations. In electoral districts where civil society actors are strong, united, and aligned with the MAS, they can most effectively defy the tendencies toward top-down control by the leadership. Where civil society actors are strongly organized but lack unity, top-down elite choices are more likely to prevail. A similar pattern occurs where civil society is weak.

The MAS is one single party but it looks and operates strikingly differently in different environments based on the configuration of civil society and the nature of party-movement connections. These patterns can be seen as both the result of a deliberate mode of party development that privileges fluidity versus party institutionalization and as a reflection of existing de facto power distributions within the MAS and its social allies – and also among these actors themselves.

The influence of densely organized grassroots actors over candidate selection – over who represents them in high electoral office using the MAS label – has been highly consequential in the Bolivian political arena: it served as a crucial mechanism of political inclusion that led to the increased representation of previously underrepresented groups in both national and subnational political arenas. Table 4.1 illustrates the major trend lines. While the percentage of middle-class professionals has decreased from 48.7 percent in the 1993–97 legislative period to 17.7 in

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[14] Failures of coordination among grassroots actors usually create an organizational space for the leadership to centralize power and dominate candidate selection from the top.

TABLE 4.1 *Representatives' occupations prior to being elected to Congress*

	1993–97	1997–2002	2002–06	2006–10	2010–14
Public Administration	14.2	16.3	21.9	16.5	18.6
Middle-Class Professions	48.7	37.8	28.1	25.0	17.7
Politician	4.3	4.1	7.6	7.3	11.1
Workers, Artisans, and Primary Sector	3.9	11.2	11.2	18.6	26.3
Transportation	–	2.0	1.2	4.2	5.2
Business and Private Sector	24.0	26.5	27.3	27.4	19.0
Retirees, Students, Other	7.7	2.0	2.8	1.0	2.1
Sample Size	74	98	80	96	97

Source: Zegada and Komadina (2014, 57).

the 2010–14 period, the percentage of peasants, artisans, and both formal and informal sector workers – groups strongly linked with the MAS – grew from 3.9 percent to 26.3 percent in the same period.

Groups that gained increased representation through their links with the MAS include peasant unions, cooperative miners, transport unions, and urban workers in Bolivia's large informal sector, among others. Partially as a result of this political inclusion, the sociodemographic composition of elected representatives has changed dramatically in the country, such that there is an increasing number of women, as well as members of indigenous, peasant, and urban-popular groups.[15] Today, representative institutions at the national and subnational levels more closely mirror Bolivia's social and cultural diversity – an exceptional change in a society characterized by deep ethnic divisions and social exclusion.[16]

[15] Bolivia's 2009 Constitution established seven special seats for indigenous peoples and Afro-Bolivians. Although these "special" seats are a key component in the construction of Bolivia's Plurinational State, it would be historically inaccurate to attribute them to the MAS; rather, they were put on the agenda by lowland and highland indigenous movements during the Constituent Assembly. By the same token, although there was a shift to greater representation of women after the 2006 Constituent Assembly, this increase cannot be attributable only to the MAS; it is, rather, a by-product of the mobilization of Bolivia's women's movement. Bolivia introduced a gender parity law with the 2009 constitution.

[16] Zegada and Komadina (2014) reached similar conclusions. To be sure, as Wolff (2018b) notes, greater political inclusiveness in Bolivia is "far from egalitarian or universal" and has brought about new exclusions. For one thing, the national peasant organizations that

The impact of inclusion on representation is also felt strongly at the subnational level, where greater representation of previously marginalized groups consolidated since the MAS came to power (Zegada and Komadina 2014). These representatives enjoy comparatively higher levels of autonomy from the executive than do representatives in the Asamblea Nacional Plurinacional (Plurinational National Assembly) (Zegada and Komadina 2014).

Policymaking

As the editors of this volume note, policymaking is a critical process of interest aggregation. The way in which parties set agenda items, priorities, and policy choices once in office is of crucial importance because it reveals who actually wields power within the party. In the case of the MAS, the party's grassroots social bases wielded significant influence over the crafting of public policies, even though the party's top leadership concentrated a great deal of power during its tenure in office. However, formal leadership bodies never played an important decision-making role and they lacked authority vis-à-vis MAS office holders. In more general terms, party organs do not generate policies or shape party strategy. Political interest aggregation does occur within the party, but it happens mostly though informal channels. As key advisor to the National Directorate Ximena Centellas commented in a personal interview: "The formal party organs at the local, departmental, and national levels are 'political' bodies, and, for the most part, they do not have the strength or the experience to propose anything, really" (interview with Ximena Centellas; also with Concepción Ortiz).

As discussed, the lack of a strong party structure providing policy guidance also means that representatives lack common socialization inside the party. The result is that, when in power, the executive branch played the upper hand in shaping the legislative behavior of MAS representatives – mostly through informal channels. In fact, many of the MAS representatives I interviewed expressed high levels of discontent with this decision-making pattern, conceiving of themselves as relatively powerless

founded the MAS have enjoyed privileged access to and direct participation in policymaking, whereas identity-oriented indigenous movements (e.g., Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano/Bolivian Confederation of Eastern Indigenous Peoples, CIDOB and Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu/National Council of Ayllus and Markas of the Qullasuyu, CONAMAQ) have been comparatively sidelined from the policy process (Silva 2017; Silva and Rossi 2018).

to generate independent decisions. It is telling that most of them could not identify important or controversial legislative proposals that they had introduced to Congress.

While MAS representatives lacked independent influence while the party was in power, there were elements in the organization of the MAS that worked against the top-down control of the party leadership and that functioned as effective channels of political interest aggregation. Most prominently, the party's loose bureaucratic structure provided – and continues to provide – opportunities and incentives for the social bases to act autonomously, with few bureaucratic constraints. While the party was in power, this allowed MAS-affiliated groups to place issues and priorities on the agenda or block and veto executive proposals. Examples of this can be observed in the behavior of representatives of the transportation sector or cooperative miners, two of the most powerful groups that gained representation through the MAS. Both became pressure groups from within and made it difficult for the MAS to pass legislation that threatened their group interests. And they also became pressure groups from without, leading to resistance to legislation in the streets. In general, the capacity of the party's social bases to mount and sustain autonomous collective action often helped to promote responsiveness and leadership accountability to organized constituencies in a more or less continuous way.

While the MAS wielded power, mobilized pressure from below generally served as a mechanism to aggregate political interests. It helped to bring issues to the public agenda and forced the party leadership to negotiate and reach compromises with social allies, which contributed to maintaining the party's responsiveness to (at least parts of) its grassroots social bases. This happened at two levels. On the one hand, sponsoring and allied groups generated decisions by putting issues and priorities on the public agenda. In fact, the policy influence of the party's social bases should not be overlooked because decision-making was an interactive, negotiated, and contentious process (Anria 2018). This means that the party leadership in power could not impose its agenda without facing challenges, and setting the agenda requires consultation and negotiation.

Consultations over policy happened mostly through informal channels, however. Not only did Morales consult about strategic decisions with the leadership of major popular movements, but he also included their demands, claims, and priorities on the agenda. The overwhelming majority of these consultation channels, however, were and still are

nonbureaucratic and noninstitutionalized. An example would be the Encuentro Plurinacional de Cochabamba (Cochabamba Plurinational Summit) of December 2011, which was an ad hoc meeting convened by Morales and the MAS to aggregate collective interests and receive input on public policies from below.[17]

On the other hand, sponsoring and allied groups generally had constraining capacities. This refers to the veto and countermobilization power of the party's social bases. Social mobilization erupted several times during Morales' governments – in 2010, forcing Morales to reverse his decree ending gasoline subsidies, and again in 2011 when the government stated its intention to build a highway through an autonomous indigenous territory – the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure (Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park, TIPNIS). Here, too, Morales was forced to back down. In both cases, Morales' capacity to govern unhindered by the demands of his organized social bases was at play. Each time, Morales failed.[18]

The vertical interest aggregation capacity that the MAS initially achieved on its road to power became much more complicated once the MAS took power, and interest aggregation became especially difficult after the aforementioned TIPNIS crisis. In its aftermath, the MAS proceeded with a form of state-led developmentalism that alienated some of the indigenous movements that had come together behind the MAS when the party was in opposition, leading to harsh conflicts between the MAS and its social movement bases over aspects of policy.

Despite co-optation attempts, groups linked to the MAS maintained a strong capacity for autonomous collective action, particularly when seen in comparative perspective. Their capacity to mobilize autonomously helped to reproduce the party's "genetic imprint" over time and also provided a social accountability mechanism by which social allies could steer policy in their preferred direction – thereby enhancing vertical accountability (Conaghan 2018; Wolff 2018b). By responding to mobilized pressure from below, the party remained relatively open and vibrant between election cycles, which helps to explain its political longevity (Anria and Huber 2018). In Bolivia's MAS, moreover, mobilization

[17] By the end of the summit, which ensured the participation of a wide array of allied and nonallied groups, seventy legislative proposals were made and sent to Congress. Critics argue that the MAS uses these types of meetings instrumentally to boost its image and its alleged participatory ethos when its relationships with social movements are contested in the streets.

[18] These dynamics have been observed in additional instances (Mayorga 2019; Silva 2017).

turned interest aggregation into a contentious bargaining game between the MAS and its social allies, where in the absence of strong national and local party structures serving as transmission belts, such groups regularly forced the party to respond to (or at least try to reconcile) mobilized pressure from below in a continuous way.[19]

CONCLUSIONS

Best described as a movement-based party, the MAS is not the creation of strategic legislators devoid of social bases (*à la* Aldrich 1995); it is, rather, the creation of densely organized social actors, which still form the party's core constituency – its anchor. The party's deep roots in autonomous social movements set the case apart from other electoral vehicles discussed in this volume.

More than twenty years since the party's founding, with thirteen of those years spent in national-level power, the MAS still does not have an elaborate bureaucratic structure. Yet, it meets the two criteria established in this book's theoretical framework at fairly high levels: The MAS does coordinate the behavior of ambitious politicians both in and between election cycles, and it does aggregate collective political preferences in office. The bulk of this horizontal coordination and political interest aggregation, however, occurs through nonbureaucratic, informal, and often-contentious channels – and among the very same organized mass constituencies that spawned and shaped the party. The MAS not only represents those constituencies in the electoral arena, but also coordinates party strategy and government action with them. Critical internal processes, including the selection of candidates for elective office, provide good examples of how the party functions. They also show how, in the absence of a strong bureaucratic party apparatus, the party operates differently depending on how the political space is structured across the country's territory. Party builders did not invest evenly in developing formal party structures across social constituencies, and as a result the party experienced strikingly diverse development trajectories in differing local contexts. It is when these nuances are examined that the party's organizational complexity and heterogeneity becomes visible.

Other authors have made the similar argument that Latin American parties are not always uniformly bureaucratic. Levitsky (2003) focused on

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[19] This is a difficult game: while, in a democracy, mobilization enables groups to make their weight felt between elections, it can also make democracy ungovernable and undermine it.

party organizational characteristics, such as informal and weakly institutionalized party structures, to explain the politics of labor-based parties. In the case of Peronism, Levitsky's core case, informal party organization allowed the party leadership to act autonomously, with few bureaucratic constraints. As I have shown in this chapter, the obverse is true in the case of the MAS, where similar organizational attributes generally provide incentives and opportunities for the social bases to act autonomously – with few bureaucratic constraints – and wield influence over some of the party's most important decisions. Informal, loose channels thus provide a means for the party's social bases to shape the party's agenda and also constrain the behavior of the party leadership.

The MAS also helps to illustrate a path whereby fluid party organizational attributes can facilitate responsiveness and help to keep parties open and leadership accountable to organized mass constituencies. In the case of the MAS, open candidate selection procedures have boosted the representation of previously underrepresented groups and contributed to the inclusion of their interests in the political power game. Weak bureaucratic development also enabled the party's movement bases to operate autonomously and influence, constrain, and hold the leaders accountable in the realm of national policymaking, not only shaping strategic decisions but also serving as a "social veto" over the policy objectives of party leaders. These mechanisms of accountability, however, are far from perfect. As the chapter has described, they are reliant on social mobilization, which is hard to sustain and can also make democracy ungovernable.

At the moment of this writing, in January 2021, the MAS is undergoing a sea change and internal restructuring after it experienced a massive political crisis in 2019 that forced Evo Morales from power. The party's impressive electoral comeback in October 2020 so soon after losing power marked a partial solution to a tense political impasse in the country and demonstrated that the MAS cannot be viewed merely as the personalistic tool of a charismatic leader or understood simply as a co-optative machine. It performs classic representative functions for major segments of Bolivia's population and remains Bolivia's only national-level force that is anchored in and connected to Bolivia's popular sectors and movement constituencies.

Social movements played an important role in maintaining vertical aggregation and horizontal aggregation when Morales was in exile and MAS leaders and supporters faced violent persecution; indeed, in the absence of major bureaucratization, movements made the return of the MAS to power possible in a changing context. In recent months,

moreover, social movements have pushed hard to reclaim ownership of the "political instrument" and have challenged what used to be a fairly unified leadership. The result has been what might be considered a process of "returning to the origins" while the party appears to be outliving its dominant leader – a process in which social movements are reclaiming ownership of the party and pushing, with some successes and setbacks, for leadership and programmatic renewal. It remains to be seen how this process will unfold, and what kinds of relationships and lines of tension will develop along the way, in light of the many governing challenges that the party faces today in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only time will tell.

8

The Colombian Liberal Party and Conservative Party

From Political Parties to Diminished Subtypes

Laura Wills-Otero, Bibiana Ortega, and Viviana Sarmiento

INTRODUCTION

Colombia's Partido Liberal (Liberal Party, PL) and Partido Conservador (Conservative Party, PC) are two of the oldest party organizations in Latin America. They both arose in the middle of the nineteenth century (in 1848 and 1849, respectively), and have participated in almost all national and subnational elections that have taken place since then. Over 170 years of history, they have managed to adapt and to survive changing conditions, both structural and circumstantial, and to maintain a substantial degree of electoral political power. While the Paraguayan traditional parties, the Liberal and Colorado parties, remain to this day the main electoral vehicles for accessing power (see Abente Brun this volume), the electoral powers of Colombia's PL and PC have declined since the 1990s. Even though both organizations are still able to win votes and elect candidates in popular elections, they do not always do so in a coordinated way. Their internal fragmentation has prevented them from accumulating a greater number of votes and from integrating programmatic agendas within the representative organizations in a coherent manner throughout the different levels of power (e.g., national, regional, and local). Between elections, and thanks to legal incentives – the Law on Blocs of 2005[1] – these parties achieve a minimum degree of coordination when promoting or blocking certain policies in Congress. Nevertheless, party leaders usually leave their legislators free to vote as they please most of the time. While this parliamentary freedom in decision-making enables the traditional parties to

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[1] See "Horizontal Coordination between Elections" section.

survive despite their extreme factionalism, the confluence of contrary interests and positions erodes programmatic coherence and thus undermines the parties' connection with their voters.

The PL and the PC have lost much of their ability to aggregate collective interests vertically. Their electorate has declined substantially since the early 1990s, and there are no substantial sociodemographic or ideological differences between the voters of the two parties at this time. Furthermore, the linkages to formal and informal organizations of the PL and the PC have not always been stable, so there have been no real incentives to promote programmatic agendas that respond to the interests of a clearly defined electorate. In other words, the vertical interest aggregation that is characteristic of political parties falls short in these organizations. Therefore, taking into account their lack of vertical interest aggregation as well as their minimal degree of horizontal coordination, both the PL and the PC exhibit characteristics of the Independents and Uncoordinated types (Luna et al. Introduction this volume). Both electoral vehicles still manage to compete in elections with relative success, but without representing a clearly defined electorate.

This chapter describes the behavior of Colombia's traditional PL and PC, and argues that these organizations classify as diminished subtypes. In this chapter, we concentrate on the period that began with the promulgation of the new constitutional charter of 1991 and lasted until 2018. The Constitution of 1991 promoted the political opening that transformed the traditional two-party system into a multiparty one. Since then, both the PL and the PC have suffered a systematic decline in electoral results.

The next section synthesizes the history and trajectory of the PL and the PC from the time of their birth in the middle of the nineteenth century to the 2018 presidential and legislative elections. The section following describes and illustrates some of the characteristics of the two organizations in terms of horizontal coordination and vertical interest aggregation. In the last part, we present our conclusions. We used official and secondary sources and we reviewed laws regarding parties and party by-laws, election results, opinion-poll results, interviews with officials and activists from both parties, as well as academic and press articles.

ORIGINS AND TRAJECTORY

Colombia's traditional parties, the PL and the PC, arose in the late 1840s. The first to promulgate a political program was the PL in 1848, while the PC did the same in 1849. Each party presented a presidential candidate for

the election of 1849, and the ideas they defended were clear in each case. The programs of the two parties contrasted clearly with each other. On the one hand, the PL promoted the decentralization of political power and the weakening of executive power, with federalism as the conceptual basis for institutional design. It also fostered separation of the state and the Catholic Church, defended civil liberties such as universal suffrage along with freedom of speech and press, and advocated for the abolition of the death penalty. For its part, the PC promoted centralization and strong power at the head of the executive branch, union between the state and the Catholic Church to promote anti-liberal moral values, the defense of private property, and limitations on voting rights and individual liberties for the population (Bushnell 2016; Dix 1987; Melo 2018). With some variations and innovations, these were the central and general principles that defined the programmatic agendas of the traditional parties from the time of their birth to the middle of the twentieth century.

Throughout that period, there were moments in which the PL dominated over the PC, and others in which the PC won electoral power and went on the offensive against liberal ideas. For that reason, there were various civil wars during the second half of the nineteenth century in which the winner imposed a new constitution and a new type of structure for the state. Although elections were held without interruption over almost the entire period, at times the losing party – or one that abstained from taking part in the elections – was entirely or almost completely excluded from political participation afterwards. This is why historians have classified successive periods as the Hegemony or Republic of one party or the other (Bushnell 2016; Melo 2018).[2]

During the first century of PL and PC existence, political society was sharply divided between liberals and conservatives: one group excluded the other entirely and instilled hatred for the counter-party among their supporters. This inherited hatred nourished a sectarianism that divided the country into two separate and almost always antagonistic political subcultures (González 1997; Sánchez and Meertens 1983) that shaped a two-party system which lasted for almost a century and a half even though the parties themselves suffered constant internal ruptures that sometimes generated attempts to create new groupings of dissident

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[2] The historical periods in which one or the other party predominated electorally and/or politically, have been defined in the following way: (1) the Liberal Revolution of the nineteenth century (1849–85); (2) the Regeneration (1885–1904); (3) the Conservative Hegemony (1904–30); and (4) the Liberal Republic (1930–46).

factions. At different times, the elites managed to bring an end to periods of liberal-versus-conservative violence by reaching political or programmatic agreements (e.g., 1905–29 and 1957), thus ensuring the survival of their parties and maintaining the exclusionary two-party system.

Both the PL and the PC were originally parties of elites that defended the interests of clearly identified sectors of society: large landowners, merchants, large and small coffee-growers, and industrialists. Their constituencies, therefore, mainly comprised members of the country's political and economic elites. Neither party responded to the interests of the lower classes or marginalized sectors of society, although there were artisans in the ranks of the PL and peasants in the PC in rural areas (Bushnell 2016).

After twenty-five years of relatively peaceful and prosperous PC governments between 1905 and 1930, the PL regained the power of the presidency in 1930 and managed to remain in power until 1946. The PL incorporated the interests of the working class into its political agenda at that time and thus broadened its electorate and changed the nature of the political competition (Albarracín, Gamboa, and Mainwaring 2018, 229). Between 1948 and 1953, the PL and the PC faced each other once again in a conflict known as *La Violencia* (the violence) that was waged throughout much of the national territory, with greatest intensity in remote zones far away from the center of political power. The main goal of the parties to this conflict was to achieve control of state power through violent elimination, co-optation of political institutions, and exclusion of the opposition party (Guzmán Campos 1962).

As a result of the interparty conflict, a coup d'état carried out by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953 imposed a military government that lasted until 1958, when the period known as Frente Nacional (National Front, FN) began as a result of negotiations between leaders of the traditional parties. For sixteen years (1958–74), the PL and the PC would alternate in the presidency every four years and divide up the political and bureaucratic power of the state on a parity basis. While there was a return to electoral democracy and the period of *La Violencia* was left behind, the FN agreement eventually led to the de-ideologization and the clientelization of the PL and the PC. The confrontations between the parties were no longer about the type of state that each promoted but were instead transformed into bureaucratic conflicts over the distribution of government resources (Chernick 1989, 288). Competition took place not between parties but within them, among different lists. This competition led to their fragmentation, and both parties became divided into two

or more major factions.[3] In some cases, these internal conflicts led to the formation of dissident factions that would eventually dare to challenge the traditional parties in the predetermined elections – for example, the Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal (Liberal Revolutionary Movement, MRL) in 1960 and 1962, and the Alianza Nacional Popular (National Popular Alliance, ANAPO) in 1970.

The de-ideologization of both the PL and the PC and the absence of programmatic differences between them led to their decline and voter disenchantment with and detachment from them. The candidates from both parties, and even candidates who dared to challenge the pact between the elites, promised the same things: "health, education, land and work, agrarian and urban reform. ... In this way, voters ceased to receive a message that motivated them" (Melo 2018, 239).[4] Abstention increased during the period, along with a "gradual deterioration in the numbers of those voting in favor of the FN candidates, and continuous growth of the flow of candidates of the ANAPO" (Gutiérrez Sanín 2006, 148).

To remedy the decline in electoral participation, those running for popularly elected office who needed to obtain votes resorted to clientelistic strategies: they did favors for their clientele in exchange for votes (Melo 2018, 239). Thus, popular mobilization was concentrated on very concrete and particularist requests. Projects of national scope were reduced to reliable solutions, many of them short-term and regional in scope (e.g., a country road, an electrical grid, a local school). Regional party bosses or caciques of both the PL and the PC occupied bureaucratic posts in state institutions and awarded contracts and government jobs strategically, so that "the relations of intermediation increasingly became the most important link between the leaders and the followers of the parties" (Hartlyn 1988, 238). Patronage relationships, particularly in terms of parliamentary aides and provision of jobs, grew much deeper during the FN period (Dargent and Muñoz 2013; Dávila Ladrón de Guevara and Delgado 2002; Hartlyn 1988; Leal Buitrago and Dávila Ladrón de Guevara 1990; Wills-Otero 2015, 2016). At the subnational level, parties dedicated themselves to seeking quotas for their factions so they could

[3] In the PC, each faction revolved around one of their leaders: the *ospinistas* (Ospina Pérez) vs. the *laureanistas* (Laureano Gómez). In the PL, the initial division arose between the establishment, known as *oficialismo*, and the MRL, which was led by the more liberal López Michelsen.

[4] All direct quotes that appear in the chapter were translated from Spanish by the authors.

have bureaucratic power. In other words, "the factions at the regional level became guardians of patronage resources" (Dargent and Muñoz 2013, 58). In this process, regional leaders acquired a power that diminished the traditional power of the party center, and that generated problems of collective action (Gutiérrez Sanín 2007).

In cities that had become urbanized at an accelerated pace due, among other things, to the displacement of peasants from rural areas, the traditional parties proved unable to channel the new social forces that arose. During the years of the FN there were strikes and civic work stoppages by means of which citizens expressed their discontent in the face of inaction on the part of their elected representatives. Given the lack of attention to their demands, some opposition movements persisted in their objective of becoming recognized as political parties despite the politics of exclusion (Chernick 1989, 289). The relative inaction of the PL and the PC during this period was due to the centralization of political power at the head of the executive branch, the parity pact between the parties, and the two-thirds majority requirement for decision-making in the collegial bodies, among other things (Hartlyn 1988).

Although the coalition regime was originally conceived to last sixteen years (1958–74), a constitutional reform adopted in 1968 determined that "the losing party in the presidential election [that would be held with unrestricted competition as of 1974] should receive an adequate and equitable quota of power" (Art. 41, Legislative Act 1, 1968). The coalition mandate was prolonged until 1986 (Bushnell 2016, 319). In the meantime, the perception of political crisis was extended as a result of "the high levels of political immobility and the corruption scandals associated with this clientelistic political system" (Dargent and Muñoz 2013, 58). This led to a set of political reforms at the end of the 1980s. However, in addition to the political crisis, the social demands associated with the violence produced by drug-trafficking and the guerrilla and self-defense movements also promoted a desire for constitutional change that would create a window of political opportunity for the traditional parties.

The latest stage in the trajectories of the PL and PC began with the promulgation of the Political Constitution of 1991. The new constitution sought to reduce the power of regional bosses, as well as to increase the representation of national interests (Dargent and Muñoz 2013, 59). This is reflected in the changes introduced in the composition of electoral districts for the Senate and the House of Representatives, to the effect that senators would be elected based on a single national district and would no longer represent regional and particularistic interests.

Moreover, the new constitution eliminated what had been known as parliamentary subsidies in order to decrease the resources available for clientelistic exchanges. A series of political and electoral reforms were also proposed to allow the party system to evolve from a two-party system into a multiparty system. Some of the reforms aggravated certain problems within the traditional parties and party system. On the one hand, the fractioning of the political parties and the dispersion and atomization of electoral lists increased in the first few years after the Constitution of 1991 went into effect. The opening up of the political system did not lead to a greater organization, nor did it necessarily lead to better political representation (Vélez, Ossa, and Montes 2006). In 2003, a political reform, aimed to strengthen the parties and to reverse their fragmentation, was approved in Congress.[5] Although the institutional design created incentives for ambitious politicians to coordinate and modify intraparty competition, the reform did not produce strong parties. The winner of the 2002 presidential election was Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a former PL politician who ran as the candidate of an independent movement. Neither of the two traditional parties has been able to win the power of the presidency since then. The triumph of Uribe Vélez generated new dilemmas of collective action for the parties. In the case of the PL, there was an exodus of politicians to the new Uribista movement, while in the PC the members remained within the party but constantly disputed the scope of the coalition with Uribe. This dynamic increased with the legalization of presidential reelection in the constitutional reform of 2004.

In this scenario, and given a para-political scandal,[6] enthusiasm grew for the idea of a new political reform that would punish the illegal funding of electoral campaigns and promote mechanisms of internal democracy within the parties. The political reform of 2009, regulated by Law 1475 of 2011, was another attempt to strengthen the political parties. Nevertheless, phenomena such as *transfuguismo* (switching of party affiliation), interparty coalitions, and scandals concerning illegal campaign

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[5] Some of the reforms were the following: elimination of multiple lists for parties, and the approval of a single list in each electoral district; allowing parties to choose the type of list they want (closed or with preferential voting) as a mechanism for coordinating ambitious politicians; the establishment of an electoral threshold for a party to win seats in the legislature; a change from the Hare quota to the d'Hondt method; and finally, a system of blocs regulated through Law 974 of 2005.

[6] This scandal broke out in 2006 when legislators from the opposition alleged that government officials and around 35 percent of congressmen had links with paramilitary groups from the country's northern regions. A group of politicians were convicted and imprisoned after it was proved that they did, in fact, have these links.

financing indicate the weakness of traditional party organizations with respect to the ability to unite ambitious politicians in a cohesive group and maintain a programmatic coherence that favors the identification and representation of political preferences.

In observing the electoral trajectories of the PL and the PC (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2), it is clear that the voting numbers obtained by these organizations have fallen sharply since 2002 with Álvaro Uribe's accession to power as president of the country and the rise of the Uribismo phenomenon that attracted politicians from both parties, especially from the PL. It is in presidential elections that both parties have suffered the greatest voting losses. In congressional elections, on the other hand, while the number of votes received by the traditional parties has declined for both chambers, the Senate has suffered a greater decrease than the House of Representatives. This may be related to the profile of each chamber. New parties with national demands have arisen in the Senate, which is organized based on a single national district. The powers rooted in certain local PC and PL caciques can be more easily maintained in the House of Representatives, which is based on the representation of departmental electoral districts. In local elections, the
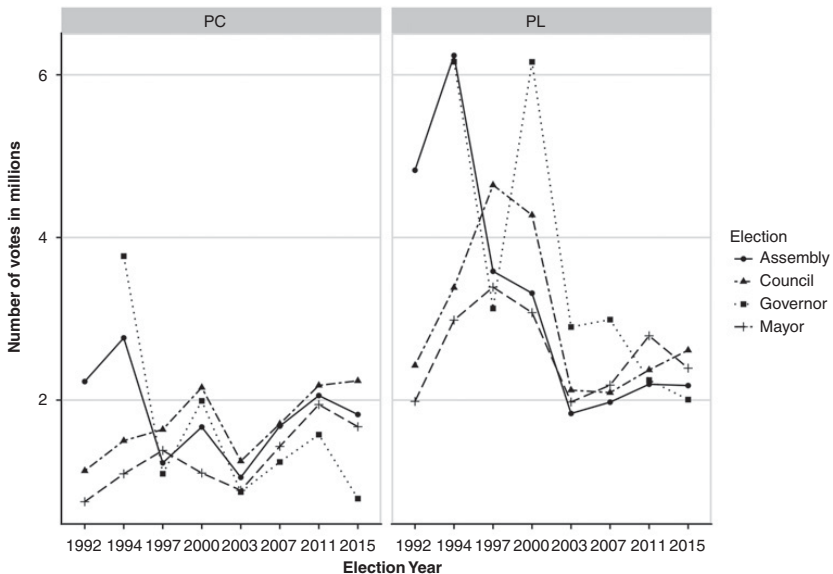

FIGURE 8.1 Local elections
Source: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil.
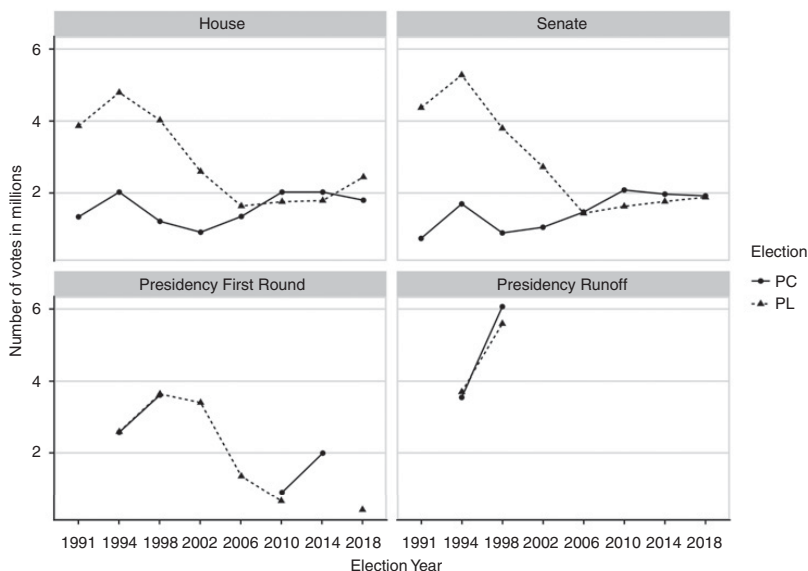* Governor elections were not held in 1992

FIGURE 8.2 National elections
Source: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil.
* The PC did not run for the 2002, 2006, and 2018 presidential elections. The party did not qualify for the second round of the presidential elections in 2010 and 2014. For the PL, the party did not run in 2014, taking part in the coalition for the reelection of Juan Manuel Santos. The party did not qualify for the second round of the presidential elections in 2010 and 2018, in 2002 and 2006 no second round was held.

reduced number of votes for governors may be related to the increased number of coalition candidates. Despite their historic rivalry, PL and PC candidates have united in trying to win office through popular election. In elections for mayors' offices, municipal councils, and departmental assemblies, after the reduction in the number of votes due to the rise of Uribismo, the voting levels for both parties have remained constant in recent years Although the two traditional parties have declined in electoral power and face greater coordination problems during elections, they are still able to coordinate ambitious politicians during electoral processes and to win offices.

HORIZONTAL COORDINATION

During the 1991–2018 period, the PL and the PC successfully coordinated ambitious politicians and thus gained power in all the legislative elections

that took place. In this sense, these organizations have been relatively successful as electoral vehicles. Despite this, the amount of electoral power that they have won has notably diminished due to their inability to monopolize the candidate selection process efficiently and to coordinate the electoral strategy of all members of the respective parties, among other things. All of this is in addition to the rise of Uribismo, which has absorbed members from both parties.

In both organizations, the coordination of politicians for coherent action in representative institutions between elections has varied widely. While the PL and the PC have acted with discipline and have managed to advance programmatic proposals at certain times and on specific topics, their internal fragmentation has manifested itself in their inability to promote public policies on which all the members agree. The historical regionalization of politics in Colombia makes it difficult for the parties to propose, coordinate, and manage policies that traverse the different levels of government (local, departmental, regional, and national).

Horizontal Coordination during Elections

The PL and PC statutes define the way their candidates are selected. Formal rules, however, do not always define the parties' behavior. Candidate selection often involves debates and internal negotiations that do not follow the formal rules (Batlle 2011; Montilla 2011). Over time, the two organizations have made various adjustments to these procedures. The mechanisms the PL uses most frequently to select candidates for executive posts include popular consultations (on either an open or an inter-party basis), opinion polls, and designations by the party's National Convention, its most important organizational body (Batlle 2011; Gehring 2016). In principle, those who vote in internal consultations should be the members of the respective organizations. Nonetheless, any citizen can participate in them because there is no strict control over the members. On many occasions, consultations have been held because the leaders have been unable to reach consensus on a single candidate. These processes usually produce internal fractures and lead unsuccessful aspirants to withdraw from the party (Barrero and Acuña 2015). In 1998, for example, when Serpa was designated in a closed and anti-pluralistic convention as the PL presidential candidate, PL leaders and activists decided to support Pastrana, the conservative candidate who won the election (Hoskin 1998). Another example occurred in 2018, when Gaviria – the PL leader – decided in the second round of voting to support

presidential candidate Iván Duque from the Centro Democrático (Democratic Center) party, which, unlike the PL, had opposed the peace process during the administration of Juan Manuel Santos.[7] In these processes, particularly when internal fights occur, former presidents wield considerable influence in the selection of candidates. From the level of the national committee of each party, they act as national leaders who mediate these fights, and, in some cases, they decide who the candidates will be.[8] There have been occasions where not all aspiring candidates accepted the results of popular consultations.[9]

In the PC, national and decentralized conventions have been common. Through party conventions, the National Committee seeks the consensus that gives the party its internal cohesion and facilitates coordination of the politicians' electoral strategy. However, as in the PL, these processes have produced internal fractures. Dissident candidates form alternative political movements, support candidates in other parties, or look for other parties' endorsements (Batlle 2011; Hoskin 1998). There have been presidential campaigns (2006 and 2010), in which the PC decided not to present candidates, and instead supported those whom it viewed as having a greater probability of success (Uribe in 2006 and Santos in 2010). In 2014, a strong division occurred when a sector within the party agreed to support the reelection of President Santos, and another sector preferred to present its own candidate. This division affected the candidacy of Marta Lucía Ramírez, who finished third with 15.5 percent of the votes (Barrero and Acuña 2015). In 2018, the party did not present candidates and

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[7] Between 2012 and 2016, a peace process between the government of Juan Manuel Santos and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) took place in La Havana, Cuba. They signed the final agreement in November 2016. The process was supported by the parties that belonged to the government's coalition. The PL, led by former President César Gaviria, was part of that coalition.

[8] "Impugnan sanción a congresistas" (*El Tiempo*, April 18, 2005, pp. 1–7); "4 sancionados por votar reelección irán al congreso liberal" (*El Tiempo*, May 21, 2005, pp. 1–3); "Propuesta de Unidad Liberal hacen ex presidente Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala y ex ministros del Partido" (*El Tiempo*, May 26, 2005, pp. 1–17); "Liberales declaran oposición al gobierno" (*El Tiempo*, June 11, 2005, pp. 1–5); "Senadores Uribistas critican congreso liberal" (*El Tiempo*, June 15, 2005, pp. 1–10); "Peñalosa se va del Partido Liberal" (*El Tiempo*, August 9, 2005, pp. 1–6); "CNE levanta sanción a congresistas liberales" (*El Tiempo*, August 26, 2005, pp. 1–5).

[9] An example of this was Noemí Sanín, from the PC, who decided to leave the party and run as an independent in 1998. For other examples see: "La encrucijada conservadora: dos puntas tiene el cambio" (*El Espectador*, November 12, 1995, p. 5A) and "Reglas de juego para el candidato conservador" (*El Espectador*, December 5, 1997, p. 14A).

decided to instead support the winning Uribista candidate, Iván Duque, from Centro Democrático.

Although the influence of national political leaders is significant in these processes – more so in the PL than in the PC – the regional political bosses in the departmental and municipal directories – many of whom are members of Congress – also influence the decisions and independently grant their endorsements. The power of subnational political bosses is partly explained by the political decentralization processes that have been occurring in the country since the late 1980s. Since that time, the parties have suffered an accelerated process of organizational decomposition, especially in terms of their ability to control the processes of nominating candidates (Albarracín, Gamboa, and Mainwaring 2018, 235). This decentralization eroded the national elites' control over regional and local forces that have gained considerable power. Given the lack of control on the part of the central elites, the granting of endorsements is very often indiscriminate, and those who aspire to become candidates look for the organization that is willing to grant an endorsement without requiring programmatic commitments. Receiving the endorsement of the PL or the PC provides candidates with resources that would be more difficult to obtain in smaller parties that are less prominent. Resources are very often obtained only in exchange for electoral effort.

The electoral strategy of the PL and the PC has been mediated by the rules of the electoral system. The possibility of registering an unlimited number of lists before 2003, and the preferential vote after that year, produced incentives for the internal fragmentation of the parties (Pachón and Shugart 2010). With the reform of 2003, the parties exhibited an increased tendency to become confederations of politicians, instead of centralized and hierarchical organizations (Albarracín, Gamboa, and Mainwaring 2018, 251). Preferential voting lists have promoted intraparty competition, even though the votes of all candidates are added up at the party level. These rules have negatively affected the horizontal coordination that they were intended to achieve through consultations and other selection mechanisms. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 show the number of lists registered by the PL and the PC between 1986 and 1998 for the election of the Senate, and from 2003 and 2018 for election to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Table 8.1 also shows the effective number of parties and the effective number of lists. Table 8.2 shows the electoral strategy that these parties have chosen (i.e., either closed lists or preferential votes). As can be seen, ever since the first legislative election following the adoption of the reform of 2003, the

TABLE 8.1 *Number of lists registered for the senate election, 1986–1998*

	1986	1990	1991	1994	1998
Lists	201	213	143	251	309
NEP	2.14	2.16	2.70	2.56	2.57
NEL	103.3	102.3	37.6	153.7	164.4

Source: Gómez Albarello and Rodríguez-Raga (2007, 49–83).

TABLE 8.2 *Number and type of lists registered by the PL and the PC in legislative elections, 2006–2018*

		PL		PC	
Election	Chamber	Open list	Closed list	Open list	Closed list
2006	Senate	1	0	1	0
	House	30	1	29	0
2010	Senate	1	0	1	0
	House	30	1	28	0
2014	Senate	1	0	1	0
	House	33	0	26	0
2018	Senate	1	0	1	0
	House	32	1	25	0

Source: Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, 2006–18.

two parties have preferred the open list. This has also been the case in subnational elections for departmental assemblies and municipal councils. Open lists produce competition between candidates from the same party. This hinders coherent performance by the organization.

Before the reform of 2003, the multiple lists of the parties in multi-candidate elections, as well as the difficulty of nominating single candidates for presidential elections, favored personalism in political campaigns. Each list represented a certain faction of the party. Therefore, until the 2002 elections, the electoral ballots for legislative bodies at the national and local level included photos of the candidates without party-associated logos. For single-candidate elections, by contrast, both the PL and the PC have made use of their respective logos on the ballots and campaign materials at least since 1990 when the electoral ballot was created. Although the political parties in Colombia have

defined logos and labels, they are not associated with clearly defined programmatic agendas, so the labels do not have much meaning. Therefore, the incentives for protecting the party trademark and remaining in one party or the other are very weak, and there is little pressure for members who exhibit the label to render accounts (Albarracín, Gamboa, and Mainwaring 2018, 252; Pizarro Leongómez 2006).

Horizontal Coordination between Elections

Since 2005, Colombia has had a system of rules governing political blocs (Law 974 of 2005) to maintain political-party discipline within the collegial bodies.[10] By this legislation, the members of the parties elected by popular vote have the legal obligation to act as a group in a coordinated manner. National and local directorates should orient the blocs and the spokespersons regarding the positions within the corporate bodies. The blocs may establish mandatory voting for all of their members on specific issues, and sanctions were established to be applied in case of disobedience. The law determined that, on some occasions, the members of the bloc may deviate from the position of the bloc (e.g., as conscientious objectors), and the parties decide when one of their members may invoke this right. Although disciplinary codes establish sanctions for those who disobey the voting decisions of the blocs, some disciplinary processes are carried out through informal channels, such as calls from regional directorates for national observers to intervene in cases of possible disobedience by verbally urging attention before the voting. This shows that the party prefers to informally dissuade its members in advance from infringing the decisions of the bloc to avoid having to establish formal disciplinary processes.

Before and after the enactment of the law regarding congressional blocs, the PL has had various experiences in which its members in the Congress have been notoriously divided. For example, in 1998, when the conservative Andrés Pastrana was president, the PL was divided between those who collaborated with and those who opposed the government. The former believed that it was inappropriate to oppose the government at a critical juncture for the country's economy. For that reason, they called

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[10] Colombia is the only country that has a specific law regulating parliamentary blocs and party discipline. No other country includes such regulation in its legislation governing political parties and, where disciplinary processes have existed, they are promulgated under the statutes of the parties.

for "patriotic collaborationism."[11] For its part, the *oficialista* faction led by the party leadership held that the PL was obliged to present democratic opposition to the conservative government.[12] The rupture within the PL led to a situation in 2002 in which the collaborationists created an alternate national liberal directorate that caused their expulsion by the official party bloc.[13]

Another situation that divided the party was the election of Álvaro Uribe Vélez to the presidency in 2002. Uribe Vélez, who had been a member of the PL, was elected president as an independent candidate. Some members of Congress who were elected from the liberal lists wanted to form part of the government coalition to support the new president. This divided the party between *uribistas* and *no uribistas*. In 2005, nineteen liberal members of Congress voted in favor of a constitutional reform to permit presidential reelection and to allow Uribe to participate in the race. This led the party leadership to expel those members of Congress.[14] After the second Uribe administration (2006–10), the PL managed to unite around the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos (2010–18) and formed part of the National Unity coalition that obtained representation at different levels of the government. In some cases, the PL has managed to discipline its members or to sanction them through informal mechanisms. One example of this was the case of liberal senator Viviane Morales, who gave up her seat after twenty years of activism in the organization, upon receiving pressure from PL members of Congress who believed that her initiatives to prohibit the adoption of children by same-sex couples were contrary to the programmatic agenda of the party. Morales was unable to seek the PL presidential nomination for that same reason.[15]

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[11] "Caicedo plantea colaboracionismo patriótico" (*El Espectador*, June 25, 1998, p. 6A); "¿Oposición o colaboración patriótica?" (*El Espectador*, June 30, 1998, p. 3A).

[12] "Serpa declara oposición patriótica" (*El Espectador*, June 24, 1998, p. 6A).

[13] "Surge una nueva dirección liberal" (*El Tiempo*, November 10, 1999, p. 6A); "El neoliberalismo ha sido sepultado: López" (*El Tiempo*, November 11, 1999, p. 8A); "Estalló la división liberal" (*El Tiempo*, November 11, 1999, p. 6A); "Liberalismo socialdemócrata Jaime Castro" (*El Tiempo*, January 3, 2000, p. 5A); "'Agarrón' en el liberalismo" (El Tiempo, January 22, 2000, p. 9B).

[14] "Impugnan sanción a congresistas" (*El Tiempo*, April 18, 2005, pp. 1–7); "4 sancionados por votar reelección irán al congreso liberal" (*El Tiempo*, May 21, 2005, pp. 1–3); "Propuesta de Unidad Liberal hacen ex presidente Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala y ex ministros del Partido" (*El Tiempo*, May 26, 2005, pp. 1–17); "Liberales declaran oposición al gobierno" (*El Tiempo*, June 11, 2005, pp. 1–5); "Senadores Uribistas critican congreso liberal" (*El Tiempo*, June 15, 2005, pp. 1–10).

[15] "Liberales ¿se liberan de Viviane Morales?" (*Semana*, September 19, 2017, www.semana.com /nacion/articulo/partido-liberal-manifiesto-contra-viviane-morales/541067,   last   accessed

The PC, for its part, has since the early 1990s established various channels to articulate the legislative activity of its members of Congress and the position of the National Directorate. For example, the main function of the Parliamentary Board, which is composed of the party's senators and representatives, is "to harmonize the parliamentary action of the party and to determine the policy, rules, and conduct of members of Congress concerning the projects for their study and decision" (By-law 1996, Art. 1). The Secretary-General shall have the function of "communicating to the members of congress the political ideas, plans and programs that the party decides to present for consideration and study by the legislative chambers" (By-law 1996, Art. 1). This function was extended to all territorial levels in 2005. The statutes establish guidelines for determining the position of the bloc on different topics, to harmonize policies through all party levels, and to sanction those who fail to follow the rules defined therein. However, some examples show the autonomy of PC members of Congress concerning the National Directorate. For instance, Omar Yepes resigned from the presidency of the Directorate in 1999 given the refusal of PC members of Congress to "deny the extension of the terms of the current governors and mayors"[16] as enshrined in the political reform the government was negotiating with Congress at that time.

There are moments in which PL and PC legislators act as a bloc and others in which every legislator votes individually. The members of congress are generally disciplined when they discuss and vote on laws of great national significance. For example, during the first administration of President Santos (2014–18), there were laws – some of them regarding the peace agreement between the government and FARC – for which the coalition parties, which included the PL and the PC, voted in a very disciplined way, especially in the Senate. Similarly, during the inaugural year of Duque's, government (2018–19), the PL decided not to support Democratic Center's objections to the transitional justice procedures established in the 2016 peace agreement. Another party decision that showed discipline was the opposition to the main executive project, the Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (National Development Plan, PND). In the House of Representatives, given the diverse constituencies and

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May 21, 2020); "#YoMeVoy: Así se da la desbandada del Partido Liberal" (*Semana*, September 19, 2018, www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/dirigentes-del-partido-liberal-renuncian-por-postura-frente-al-gobierno-de-duque/583381, last accessed May 21, 2020).

[16] "Cayó jefe conservador" (*El Espectador*, May 14, 1999, p. 5A).

internal factions, the levels of discipline are generally lower, although the PL scored higher than the PC on this measure (Congreso Visible 2014). Despite this, it is also evident that many legislative initiatives are drafted by individual members of these parties, and they do not always act as a bloc in decision-making when it comes time to vote. This prevents party cohesiveness, and hinders parties from either translating their programmatic agendas into consistent policies or from acting as a group in the opposition when they do not belong to the government coalition. The existence of different ideological tendencies within the parties – particularly within the PL – explains why some of their members do not vote according to their principles. An example of this behavior occurred during Duque's presidency among the right-wing Democratic Center. The PL declared itself in the opposition. However, not all legislators have concurred with this decision. Some of them preferred to be aligned with the official coalition. This has fragmented the party internally.

As far as coherence between government programs at both the departmental and regional level, where PL policies at the national level are concerned, the party's disciplinary codes of 2002 and 2013 establish the duty to comply with the programs adopted by the organs of the party. Despite this, in practice, no coherence exists across programmatic agendas between national and subnational levels (interviews with activists). The party at the national level participates only marginally in the party's regional decisions. As in other parties, legislators in their departments are the leaders who determine how politicians at the local level should act. A rupture between national and departmental leaders explains the difficulty of coordinating actions and agendas across the party. Personal interests prevail over shared interests. Coordination among the different levels of the PL and the PC has been affected by the great degree of autonomy that regional and local politicians have won with respect to national leaders through the processes of political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization (Muñoz and Dargent 2016).

The territorial presence of both the PL and the PC has diminished over the years. Before the Constitution of 1991, these two organizations put forth candidates for all congressional seats and collectively obtained the majority of the votes. After that date, they began to reduce their presence and became significantly denationalized (Batlle and Puyana 2011). This reflects their loss of electoral power. Thus, "the institutional changes of 1991 and 2003 had important effects, not only on the number of parties

and their permanence in the political scene but also in terms of their arrival in the territory" (Batlle and Puyana 2011, 40). In this sense, the reforms and the rise of new political options influenced the denationalization of the PC, which gradually ceased to run candidates in different regions of the country. For its part, the PL has been able to maintain higher levels of nationalization than the PC, but lower than the levels it had before the institutional reforms of the 1990s and 2000s were introduced (Batlle and Puyana 2011).

VERTICAL INTEREST AGGREGATION

Electoral Mobilization of Collective Interests

In their programmatic platforms, the PL and the PC include general topics. The two organizations have a thematic agenda that is broad, and the predominance of departmental directorates has prevented the establishment of programmatic consensus. In addition, clientelistic linkages and the regionalization of politics has impeded the formation of ideological structures. Individual and, on occasion, regional or local interests, prevail over parties' programmatic agendas (Montilla 2011).

Toward the end of the 1980s, the PL defined itself as an organization that promoted social change, institutional security, protection of private property, and progressive values. Two decades later, in 2002, it included topics related to the promotion of human and union rights, protection of the environment, and rejection of neoliberalism. At that time, it called itself a social-democratic organization after having joined the Socialist International in 1992. Despite this, the party has been inconsistent in its economic orientation with junctures when neoliberal principles have prevailed over a more social-democratic approach. In 2011, the party declared itself a coalition of leftist groups and added its commitment to solving armed conflicts through dialogue and negotiation. The party has consistently advocated a negotiated solution to the country's armed conflict and favorable treatment of the war's victims. It has also shown consistency over time in its position on environmental protection policies (interviews with activists).

The PC appeals (still) to doctrinal bases linked to its foundational myth of 1849: the humanistic and Christian perspective continues to inspire many of the organization's principles (Roll 2002). It defends the rule of law and its legitimate authority, respect for life, the unitarian concept of the state, and the defense of values such as liberty, private property, and human dignity. In this sense, the PC led the presentation of legislative bills

against abortion,[17] euthanasia,[18] and same-sex marriage.[19] In recent statutes, the goals of participation, pluralism, equity, gender equality, transparency, and morality were established as its guiding principles. Despite defending these interests, the party's policies usually respond to the electoral context instead of a particular ideology.

The social groups to which these organizations are addressed are also very broad, and no significant differences appear when analyzing socio-demographic characteristics. In its programs, the PL mentions "professionals, students, women, *campesinos*, artisans, small business owners, pensioners and workers" (Partido Liberal 1987, Art. 12). More recently, they have included victims of the armed conflict. The party also decidedly addresses liberal youth groups in its statutes. By including them – as well as women and ethnic minorities – it receives economic incentives established by law. Despite this, members of the PL admit that their activists have been growing old, fewer youths participate in and vote for the party, and the majority of its voters no longer live in big urban centers. Youth organizations are useful for their members to acquire status, while women are only important during elections. In general, base organizations have weak structures, and many of them represent individual rather than party interests (Roll 2002).

Existence of Formal and Informal Links with Civil Society Organizations

Historically, Colombian political parties have had weak connections with formal civil society organizations (Londoño 2009). The relationship of the PC and the PL with think tanks is mixed, since they do have contact with different local and international organizations, but these relationships are not exclusive, since the think tanks and NGOs try to promote their agenda among all actors in the party system and not just the PL and the PC (Garcé 2007). The strongest relationships the PL and the PC have with these organizations are with those who work in the areas of democracy and transparency. The relationship is centered around the strengthening of Colombian democracy and political parties in general and, particularly, in the promotion of electoral reforms and accountability. To achieve these goals, the think tanks and NGOs organize events and activities with the parties and have been successful

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[17] "Hoy radican proyecto antiaborto" (*El Espectador*, August 3, 2011, p. 4).
[18] "El 'articulito' de los azules" (*El Espectador*, October 10, 2010, p. 4).
[19] "Unidos contra el matrimonio gay" (*El Espectador*, October 10, 2010, p. 7).

at creating an environment for electoral reforms in 2003 and 2009 (Leal and Roll 2013). Traditionally, the PL had formal linkages with trade unions, women and human rights organizations, and the Socialist International, among others. However, over time, it has lost the majority of these linkages, as well as the financial support of big entrepreneurs and productive sectors. Today, individual leaders (not organizations) support the party, but not consistently (interviews with activists).

The party statutes mention an "open sector" in which social groups that are not among the party's sectorial organizations participate. This open sector accounts for 20 percent of the delegates of the national, departmental, and municipal directorates and has representation in the party assemblies. Another type of link is the participation of local and regional mass-media directors affiliated with the party in municipal and departmental assemblies. Regarding the party's relationship with its donors, it is not clear what type of link exists because the private donations the party receives are directed to specific candidates rather than to the organization as a whole. According to the party directives, it is not clear how the candidates respond to the interests of those who donate to their campaigns.

The PC also has members who hold public office in the name of the party or belong to grassroots groups recognized by the party. There have been organizations attached to the national and regional directing committees ever since the statute of 1993 was introduced. For example, mention was made (art. II, Cap. IX, 1993) of the existence of the Comando de Trabajadores (Workers' Command), the Comando Femenino (Feminine Command), the Comando de Estudiantes (Students' Command) and the Comando de Defensa del Medio Ambiente (Command for the Defense of the Environment). With the changes introduced in the statutes of 2005, these groups were transformed into grassroots and local-organization groups. The PC paid special attention to party youth groups and encouraged the formation of such groups at the local level. More recently, the Secretaría Ténica de la Mujer (Women's Technical Secretariat) was established in 2012 to coordinate and encourage the participation of PC women, and the Secretaría Técnica de Minorías e Inclusión Social (Technical Secretariat for Minorities and Social Inclusion) was constituted in 2015. The current statute establishes rules for the formation of internal party organizations based on specific population groups. These organizations must have a national sphere of action and be present at all territorial levels.

The PC has relations with economic groups, with national labor unions, and with certain mass media. The party maintains important linkages with institutions for the promotion and formation of its bases such as, for example, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Hans Seidel, International Republican Institute (IRI), Universidad Sergio Arboleda, Universidad Católica, Universidad la Gran Colombia and Universidad del Rosario, Centro Pensamiento Siglo XXI, mass media such as El Nuevo Siglo, and entrepreneurial groups such as Grupo Éxito and Arturo Calle (Montilla 2011).

This section has shown that both the PL and the PC have lost much of their ability to aggregate collective interests vertically. At least until the mid-twentieth century, both parties were able not only to win elections, but also to represent the interests of their electorates. It was feasible to distinguish one party from the other in ideological terms, and therefore their programmatic agendas and constituencies were clearly defined. Today, however, these characteristics are no longer recognizable. Both political parties have transformed themselves into electoral organizations that seek to elect candidates, without paying attention to the representation interests of their voters.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have concentrated on the two oldest electoral vehicles in Colombia – the PL and the PC – and have shown how, throughout their history, they have transformed themselves to adapt to the new political circumstances that have arisen at different moments. After a long formational process in the second half of the nineteenth century, these two organizations became consolidated as political parties capable of coordinating ambitious politicians both during and between elections, and of representing social interests. In the second half of the twentieth century, the two parties began to turn into diminished subtypes, that is, organizations that are able (partially) to coordinate their politicians horizontally to win popularly elected positions, and lack clear programmatic agendas, stable electorates, and a reduced the ability to effectively represent the collective demands of social interests. The PL is an electoral vehicle that is a borderline case between the Independents and unrooted party types, while the PC performs slightly better in terms of vertical interest aggregation and is a borderline case between the uncoordinated party and Independents types (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.5 in Luna et al. Introduction this volume).

Currently, the PL and the PC participate in national and regional elections and are capable of maintaining a portion of electoral political power. In this sense, they survive despite predictions of their disappearance by analysts and the mass media. However, the differences between the electoral strategies they use and the representation functions they perform are blurred. To gain electoral power, these parties form coalitions among themselves and with other political organizations with whom they seem to have nothing in common in programmatic terms. By winning seats in this way, the representation function of these coalitions is confusing: To which voters do they respond? How do the interests of such diverse, and sometimes contradictory, electorates add up? What are the incentives for politicians at different levels to coordinate their programmatic agendas and act coherently?

The PL and the PC have more than 150 years of history behind them. They have been able to survive the challenges arising in a society that is constantly being transformed. They have been able to adapt their organizational structures and political strategies to the new institutional structures that have developed at different moments. They continue to be two of more than ten parties that obtain political power in national legislative elections and regional elections. Despite this, neither of them has been able to renovate its electorate or to reformulate its government programs successfully. The two parties fail in their representation function, that is to say, in their ability to vertically aggregate interests and they also have difficulty achieving horizontal coordination. Thus, the present challenge for these organizations is to recover their political identity and to construct agendas that are consistent with that identity and with the interests of their voters. Strengthening bonds with the electorate and responding to its demands will inevitably be a requirement for these organizations to increase their electoral power and to ensure their continued existence.