

*The Life and Death of Political Parties
Since Latin America's Third Wave*

Jason Seawright

Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, Brandon Van Dyck, and Jorge I. Domínguez, eds., *Challenges of Party-Building in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Tables, figures, bibliography, index, 572 pp.; hardcover \$99.99, paperback \$34.99, ebook \$80.

Juan Pablo Luna, *Segmented Representation: Political Party Strategies in Unequal Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Tables, illustrations, abbreviations, bibliography, index, 400 pp.; hardcover \$115, ebook.

Noam Lupu, *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Tables, figures, bibliography, index, 263 pp.; hardcover \$99.99, paperback \$32.99.

Laura Wills-Otero, *Latin American Traditional Parties, 1978–2006: Electoral Trajectories and Internal Party Politics*. Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 2015. Tables, figures, bibliography, index, 216 pp.

The third wave of democracy in Latin America has been a deeply turbulent period for political parties. One might offer the analogy that political systems in the region have come to treat parties as luxury goods. Parties are worth having around when times are good but easy to dispense with in periods of scarcity or conflict. Even when parties are present, systems choose to invest little in them in terms of resources, institutional growth, or cultural weight. Furthermore, even during times of peace and prosperity, it seems a bit extravagant to really invest in more than one.

In response to the deep decline or even destruction of longstanding parties since the beginning of the third wave of democratization in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela, as well as the manifest difficulty in building stable new parties in those and other countries of the region, scholars face pressure to build theory. How much weight should be placed on economic events, demographic change, mass media trends, and other factors outside the strategic control of political parties? How much attention should instead be directed to

Jason Seawright is an associate professor of political science at Northwestern University.
j-seawright@northwestern.edu

party origins and to strategic, organizational, and leadership issues directly connected to the parties themselves?

While it might be tempting to attribute the generalized atmosphere of party crisis in Latin America to external factors, the books discussed in this review essay reflect a broad trend toward the conclusion that party-specific factors have a crucial causal interaction with broad events. Indeed, as Wills-Otero (29–45) argues, parties have fared quite differently in the face of such environmental challenges. Thus, without denying the causal relevance of the environment, scholars of Latin American parties have largely converged on the view that the negative effects of outside events can be mitigated by some party traits and exacerbated by others.

Nevertheless, even a broad agreement that parties' traits matter in accounting for their trajectories in recent decades does not determine which traits matter or how they matter. Scholars could reasonably focus on party leaders' traits and strategies, on social and psychological linkages between parties and society, or on party origins and organizational features. The volumes under consideration here advocate a range of different explanations.

FACTIONS AS MEANS FOR SURVIVAL

Wills-Otero takes the view that traditional parties (i.e., parties with a long history and with at least two episodes of past electoral success by the start of the third wave) fare better or worse through environmental challenges depending on how much their internal organizations are vertical, semivertical, or horizontal, and on the amount of internal democracy in the party. These features help parties survive, Wills-Otero argues, because they facilitate the creation of intraparty factions. Factions, in turn, help parties survive in spite of the friction and conflict they perpetually create: "When one faction fails to respond to external demands, another might be more successful. Factions represent channels for representation of a multitude [of] sometimes contradictory interests and their leaders represent different political choices to voters" (62). Thus, when one faction in a party fails at economic governance, is weakened by corruption scandals, or is unresponsive on an important issue, other factions offer voters a credible way to vote for change without taking on the risks of supporting an unknown party. More unified and disciplined parties lack this safety net, and have thus fared worse through the turbulent recent decades.

While Wills-Otero differentiates the details of this argument from the existing literature, its emphasis on party organizational flexibility, and the resulting internal competition and occasional chaos, as an asset for long-term survival in challenging times resonates with work by Kitschelt (1994), Coppedge (1997), Levitsky (2003), Grzymala-Busse (2002), Seawright (2012, chap. 7), and others that similarly credit flexibility, intraparty diversity, and relatively loose intraparty organizational ties and structures. Nonetheless, Wills-Otero's perspective differs from these earlier views in its theoretical clarity and precision, its focus on factions, and its ambitions to explain trajectories throughout Latin America.

Furthermore, the empirical component of the book has a great deal to offer to the study of parties in the region. A close qualitative comparison of the trajectories of traditional parties in Colombia and Venezuela and a regionwide statistical panel data analysis provide evidence that traditional party survival tends to go together with the kinds of intraparty institutions that produce ideological diversity and contestation among rival party leaders. The case studies provide useful overviews of parties' histories in each country and establish convincingly the key differences between Colombia's and Venezuela's parties in organizational terms. They would have benefited from more attention to process-tracing detail explicitly connecting organizational features with party adaptability during times of crisis, but they nonetheless serve to establish that the theorized descriptive contrasts in fact exist.

The statistical analysis goes further than the published literature in showing—using data from elite surveys and electoral results, as well as economic and other control variables as appropriate—that party organizational traits are indeed connected with partisan electoral fortunes in third wave Latin America. Most of the organizational features that Wills-Otero considers are statistically relevant at some point or another of the analysis, but the two theorized traits (intraparty democracy and relatively horizontal organizational structure) have a particularly compelling set of results. Moving from one end of the range of these variables to the other is associated with a shift from a 20-percentage-point gain in vote share during recent decades to a more-than-20-point loss (144–51).

This set of results is striking enough that it calls for further investigation. Wills-Otero does not statistically analyze the hypothesized causal linkage from party organization to the existence of distinguishable factions, or the one from factionalism to party survival and adaptation in times of difficulty. Thus, extensions of this book that use either similar cross-national statistical methods or, when appropriate, experimental tools to investigate these linkages would be a productive way of building forward from Wills-Otero's clear and empirically valuable contribution.

BRAND IDENTITY

While Wills-Otero emphasizes party flexibility as key to survival, Lupu's book argues that too much flexibility and adaptation (or perhaps adaptation of the wrong kinds) causes parties to fail. In Lupu's framework, parties are insulated during times of crisis by a reserve of party identifiers; hence, understanding a party's decline or collapse requires first understanding the erosion of identification with that party. Lupu offers a nice theoretical development of a connection between party identification and the strength and content of a party's brand: if it becomes hard for voters to know who or what a party is, it then becomes hard for them to see themselves reflected in it. Brands are diluted, Lupu argues, when parties have internal ideological conflicts, when they change their policy stands, and when they collaborate with their traditional rivals (26–29). Parties that change too much in response to environmental pressures or strategic opportunities, or that form pacts of various sorts with the partisan opposition, dilute their brands, lose

their partisans, and become susceptible to defeat during times of poor governing performance.

Perhaps the book's pivotal contribution is its extension to Latin America of the primarily Americanist concept of party brands, a way of thinking about reputations that creates a theoretical space separate from a party's current policy stances or voters' identity attachments. While a party brand could consist of virtually any important attribute, for Lupu's analysis, a party brand boils down to the confidence with which a voter can place a given party on the standard left-right economic policy dimension. The book largely leaves the actual content of party brands as an unobserved category, using qualitative, survey, experimental, and cross-national analysis to test whether the proposed causes of brand dilution have the hypothesized effect of eroding party identification. The multimethod design is commendable, deftly deploying contrasting methods to speak to relevant components of the overall theory.

Some questions arise regarding the specifics, however. An initial statistical analysis shows that parties in Latin America during the period 1978–2007 were more likely to break down if they shifted ideological positions from left to right (or, presumably, vice versa), if they formed an interparty alliance, and if they experienced publicly known intraparty conflict (44–55). This is a useful finding, although it should perhaps be interpreted with care. In particular, it is reasonable to worry that these partisan behaviors might be the symptoms of a party frantically trying to avoid a looming crisis due to competitive pressures or poor governing performance, as well as, or even rather than, causes of the following crisis.

The book then offers detailed case studies of party trajectories during this period in Argentina and Venezuela. The Argentine case study gives clear and compelling evidence of Peronism's ideological fluidity during the democratic period, as well as of extensive intraparty conflict in the PJ and the opposition UCR, and finally of alliances between the two parties during the Menem years. Given all this evidence, it is a deep puzzle for Lupu's theory that Peronism shows no clear evidence of a durable negative trend in partisanship until at least the end of the De la Rúa presidency. Instead, Lupu's data show identification with Peronism falling in a broad range between roughly 18 percent and 32 percent—and with huge intersurvey variability guaranteeing that most of that range is occupied throughout the period of the case study (70).

Lupu argues for declines in the late 1980s and again in 1995 on the basis of a nonparametric regression of survey identification on time, although unfortunately he presents no evidence that these differences are statistically significant. Even given statistical significance, however, the declines in question are highly temporary; the data strongly imply that Peronism's brand was resilient during these years in a way that resisted multiple major changes in ideological appeal, significant episodes of intraparty conflict, and even explicit bargains with the UCR. This is what we would expect to see if, contra Lupu, party brands and, more fundamentally, identities reflect a dimension of attachment apart from a party's predictability or economic policy differentiability. Alternatively, the book's account of party brand dilution may be on track but may involve relatively long time gaps between the events and their outcomes.

The case study of Venezuela's traditional parties does little to resolve this dilemma. The book provides a compelling and empirically grounded account of the various political and economic crises that Venezuela faced through the 1980s and 1990s. It argues—again compellingly—that Venezuelans' partisan attachments were resilient until the early 1990s. Pointing to Carlos Andrés Pérez's implementation of radical market-oriented reform and the resulting conflict within his party, *Acción Democrática* (113–18), Lupu concludes that these events eroded party brands such that “attachments to AD declined throughout the [Pérez] administration, whereas attachments to [rival party] COPEI remained stable until the close convergence that began following the February 4 coup attempt” (121).

The basis for this claim is unclear. Lupu's presentation of available survey data shows no evidence of a decline in citizens' identification with AD until early 1993, and the first clear evidence of decline in identification with COPEI appears only in 1994 (111). The interpretation of this pattern is complicated by a pause in political polling in Venezuela during much of 1991 and 1992; it is nonetheless clear that AD's decline in identification rates does not begin until mid-1991 at the earliest and early 1993 at the latest. Given that market reforms and party conflict both began in 1989, it seems that the decline comes two to four years after the theory suggests that it should; COPEI's decline likewise shows an anomalous delay.

The strongest empirical chapter discusses a novel survey experiment on partisanship in Argentina. In this study, Argentines were presented with an information sheet about a collection of nationally competitive parties. The control condition provided as little information as possible. The first treatment included information about salient differences among the parties on major policy issues, while the second listed a series of episodes of party alliance or of prominent politicians' switching parties. A final treatment combined both categories of information.

The results impressively demonstrate that information about individuals acting in ways that breach the social boundaries between parties suppresses both the existence and the strength of partisan attachments (141–46); evidence also suggests, reasonably enough, that providing information about party alliances leads voters to see parties as more ideologically interchangeable (147–49). This is striking evidence of the dangers Latin American parties face when they collaborate. At the same time, it is unclear that the theory of party brands is necessary or even helpful in explaining these results; it seems altogether likely that a standard social identity theory approach to partisanship would predict exactly these results.

Taken as a whole, the book provides compelling evidence of the risks that parties in Latin America, and perhaps globally (see chap. 7), face when they collaborate. The case that ideological flexibility undermines party brands is less persuasive. The book's lasting—and major—legacy will no doubt be its work to bring the concept of party brands to Latin America; this work has already been extended by Castorena and Zechmeister (2017) and Cyr (2017), and there is little doubt that such a productive line of inquiry will continue.

DIFFERENT LINKAGES

While Lupu and Wills-Otero assess the (favorable or negative) consequences of parties' flexibility over time, Luna teaches us also to pay attention to spatial and social class flexibility. Refreshingly, Luna's book centrally emphasizes its concept-building and descriptive contributions, paying only abbreviated attention to issues of causal theory building or inference.

The core concept of the volume is "segmented representation," a situation in which parties appeal to voters in different socioeconomic and geographic segments using different linkage strategies (4–8). Linkage strategies are described via a two-by-three typology, building on well-known work by Kitschelt and others. Specifically, a linkage or appeal is either candidate- or party-based, and it involves symbolic resources, public policy, or the provision of private or club goods. Thus, if a party seeks votes among the rural poor using clientelistic appeals but reaches out to the urban middle and upper classes via a commitment to a certain economic policy package, that party is engaged in segmented representation.

Luna argues cogently that segmented representation in socioeconomically unequal societies tends to involve a heavier use of policy appeals toward the relatively affluent and symbolic or clientelistic appeals to the poor and working classes. This, in turn, reduces the influence of poorer citizens' preferences in policy formation, making segmented representation a normatively weighty issue.

This conceptual approach has much to recommend it, and clearly calls attention to an issue that has not been sufficiently analyzed in the Latin American literature on parties and representation. One might wish for a more flexible version of the concept that recognized a finer-grained and more inclusive set of linkage strategies. In particular, the category of programmatic appeal seems broad in ways that are sometimes unhelpful.

For example, consider a polity with two or more dimensions of programmatic competition, such as Chile (122–29), and suppose that voters differ systematically in the salience they attach to each dimension. Then a party could engage in purely programmatic segmented representation by responding to poorer citizens' preferences on social or religious issues (for example) and more affluent citizens' preferences on economics. Or, alternatively, a party or politician could appeal to the popular sectors with messages related to valence issues, such as reducing crime or fighting inflation, and to economic elites with a neoliberal policy package, a strongly segmented profile that surely captures part of the strategy of *Fujimorismo*. Such patterns would not qualify as segmented representation, given Luna's conceptualization, but it seems unclear that there is a benefit to excluding them.

A second conceptual and theoretical area for further development involves the strategic role of citizens in constructing patterns of segmented representation. Luna's conceptual and theoretical framework emphasizes the decisionmaking role of parties and candidates (3–8) but effectively omits ordinary citizens. Yet there is no reason to suppose that citizens might not have their own patterned preferences for one or another mode of representation. For example, formal education might make

abstract ideology and the structure of general economic doctrines relatively more approachable and interesting, which could lead to more educated citizens' demanding representation of this sort while less educated citizens avoid it in favor of more palpably pragmatic linkage types. While this would still have important effects on the overall party system and on dynamics of representation, it seems clear that the normative and practical implications would be quite different from a top-down dynamic.

Indeed, some of the exceptionally vivid and informative interviews that provide a major portion of the book's empirical contribution depict such a citizen-led dynamic. A right-leaning former mayor in Chile reports that "poor people need you more frequently, at every moment. They need you every time they need to survive, because they have all doors closed to them" (152). In comparison, a right-leaning congress member representing an affluent area in Santiago tells us, "90 percent of the people who live [in the district] are not expecting me to solve a specific problem for them. Nor are they expecting me to visit their home, give them something, or solve a social problem for them. What they expect is that I represent their opinions in the media" (155).

While there is obviously no denying the strategic initiative parties use in developing segmented linkage strategies across such different neighborhoods, the interview evidence here and throughout the volume makes it equally difficult to deny the relevance of citizens' preferences and strategies in constructing and maintaining local linkage patterns. Ultimately, the book makes a compelling case that segmented representation involves a complex, evolving, and sometimes geographically structured negotiation between citizens and local party organizations or candidates. Through a rich and authoritative qualitative analysis of this negotiation in a collection of Uruguayan and Chilean electoral districts, Luna convincingly argues that Chile's patterns of representation are more geographically structured than Uruguay's, and also that programmatic representation is on the rise in Uruguay and declining in Chile.

The book also introduces the intriguing concept of strategic harmonization; that is, how extensively segmented representation is planned and implemented in such a way as to be beneficial for the national party as a strategic entity, as opposed to individual candidates (63–66). For example, a harmonized personalistic appeal is one in which a party's candidates in different districts use advertising strategies that emphasize the candidate's name and personal slogan but use partywide typefaces, graphic design, and so forth, while a less harmonized personalistic appeal would have graphic design elements that are purely local (38–39). Low levels of harmonization are hypothesized to reinforce personalistic politics and undermine programmatic parties, while high levels of harmonization allow diverse strategies to coexist more readily. Luna presents a great deal of qualitative evidence showing that Chile's UDI and Uruguay's Frente Amplio achieve harmonization via quite different strategic and organizational logics (191–255). This is a potentially valuable concept, and I look forward to further scholarship exploring the consequences of degrees of harmonization on political psychology and behavior.

In a concluding section (259–80), Luna briskly generates 19 causal hypotheses related to segmentation and harmonization and offers a set of mostly bivariate statistical probes (281–302) and brief case study tests (303–23) of those claims. Readers who have been impressed by the conceptual and descriptive work of the main chapters and who are excited to carry out further work developing explanatory theory or carrying out causal inference regarding this material will find Luna's ideas a productive set of starting places.

In the introduction to the book, Luna voices a concern that his work might be taken as “just a footnote to conventional wisdom” (xix). The final book proves his wisdom in pushing past this concern: Luna offers a way of thinking about a set of phenomena that all close students of political parties have encountered, but for which few theoretically helpful frameworks have been developed. In putting together an intriguing, coherent, and empirically useful set of descriptive typologies regarding how parties structure appeals across space and class, this book turns a common but difficult-to-articulate experience into a prime topic for social science.

LEGACIES FROM CONFLICT

Levitsky, Loxton, Van Dyck, and Domínguez's edited volume approaches the chaotic party politics of Latin America's third wave period from a quite different perspective in comparison with the common focus, represented here particularly by Lupu and Wills-Otero, on explaining existing parties' persistence or decline. Instead, they ask why, out of the hundreds of new parties that have emerged in the region over the last few decades, only 11 have met criteria of durability and electoral relevance.

Finding that all but one of these successful new parties originated during either an authoritarian period or a civil war, the instantly classic introductory chapter by Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck argues that successful new parties inherit key resources from their origins in violent times. First, building on an expanded version of Lupu's conception of party brands that includes nonpolicy elements, such as cultural ideas or beliefs about the proper ways to behave in government, they argue that parties that originate during violent periods tend to inherit a strong party brand in the form of people's memories of adherence to one side or the other in the conflict.

Second, parties often inherit a territorial organization from times of conflict. Authoritarian successor parties may inherit a network constructed as part of the authoritarian state itself, while opposition parties under authoritarianism and insurgent parties during civil wars retain the territorial networks they develop for coordination and self-protection during periods of violent opposition. Third, new parties require “a robust source of organizational cohesion” (12–13), a resource that is perhaps difficult to fully distinguish from the expanded sense of a party brand. Simple counting of successful instances of party building per year under authoritarianism, civil war, and democracy (23–26), in conjunction with a helpful enumeration of successful and failed episodes of party building since the start of the third wave (36–

48), provides substantial initial credibility for the chapter's conflict-centric account of party formation.

As is common in edited volumes of this sort, subsequent chapters engage with this hypothesis to a greater or lesser extent. Several chapters involve authors' thoughtful extension of their published work to engage with the general theme of party building, rather than the conflict-centered hypothesis. Kenneth Roberts (chap. 2) analyzes party formation in the, for him, familiar terms of cleavages, critical junctures, and historical timing. Lupu (chap. 3) extends work from the book discussed above by comparing party brand formation in Argentina and Brazil. Luna (chap. 4) similarly uses material from his volume on segmented representation to consider dynamics of party building in Chile and Uruguay. Raúl Madrid (chap. 11) extends his publications on Latin American ethnic politics by analyzing difficulties in constructing ethnic parties in Latin America, and Domínguez (chap. 16) considers possible future party building in a postcommunist Cuba.

Other chapters engage much more directly with the line of argumentation developed in the introduction. Chapters by Loxton (9) and Alisha Holland (10) provide particularly direct empirical evidence of, and elaboration on, the volume's guiding framework by looking closely at the trajectories of authoritarian successor parties and those founded in civil wars. Van Dyck's essay (chap. 5) offers a similarly direct contribution by providing an explicit theorization of how authoritarian repression helps incipient left parties develop organizational strength by removing easier but less resilient party-building strategies from the possibility space. This is complemented by a brisk but instructive comparative historical analysis of left party projects in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina (138–55). Kenneth Greene (6) poses an interesting note of tension, drawing on his well-known work on Mexican party politics to argue that origins under authoritarianism create intraparty coalition constraints that, over the long run, tie parties to representationally and competitively suboptimal ideological extremes.

While these chapters are especially closely tied to the volume's central theory of conflict as the engine of successful party building, the book also offers instructive and well-written essays on public financing and party building (Kathleen Bruhn, chap. 8), new parties based on private business organizations (William Barndt, chap. 13), and trajectories of party building in Brazil (David Samuels and Cesar Zucco, chap. 12), Bolivia (Kent Eaton, chap. 14), and Peru (Levitsky and Mauricio Zavaleta, chap. 15). The volume raises so many interesting themes, and offers such a compelling central theory of party building, that it belongs in the collection of every scholar interested in parties or in Latin American politics.

Taken as a whole, the literature represented by these volumes depicts a hazardous and bewildering strategic landscape for party leaders and would-be party entrepreneurs. Those with the goal of building or maintaining parties for the medium or long term face the demand to create a clear and distinct brand, to recruit an internally diverse set of activists and politicians, to simultaneously segment and harmonize their appeals across geography and social class, and to build organizations that are both robust and predominantly horizontal. While these imperatives seem

nearly paradoxical, Levitsky and his collaborators convincingly argue that the strong social identities created during times of violent turmoil make the tensions among these various concerns far less acute. Perhaps, then, the turbulence of party politics during Latin America's recent decades is an unfortunate side effect of the relative peace and prosperity of much of that period.

Such a hypothesis is consistent not only with the evidence explored in these books but also with the facts regarding the rise of the few powerful political brands in the region not explicitly analyzed. *Chavismo* and *Fujimorismo* in particular are compelling examples of movements (if not exactly party organizations) that have proved capable of withstanding immense political pressures—perhaps in part because of the violent struggles through which they have governed. If this is correct, then advocates of more robust parties are placed in the awkward position of valorizing times of violent turmoil.

REFERENCES

- Castorena, Oscar, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2017. Representing the National Economic Agenda in Latin America: Variation by Fat and Lean Times and Party Brands. *Electoral Studies* 45 (February): 208–18.
- Coppedge, Michael. 1997. *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Cyr, Jennifer. 2017. *The Fates of Political Parties: Crises, Continuity, and Change in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna M. 2002. *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 1994. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levitsky, Steven. 2003. *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seawright, Jason. 2012. *Party-System Collapse: The Roots of Crisis in Peru and Venezuela*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.