PARTY BRANDS IN CRISIS:
PARTISANSHIP, BRAND DILUTION, AND THE BREAKDOWN
OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract

Why would a national political party that has been competitive for decades collapse overnight? In recent years, parties across Latin America went from being major contenders for executive office to electoral irrelevance over the course of a single electoral cycle. What explains these dramatic breakdowns? The standard answer is that these parties perform badly in office and lose support. But this fails to explain why some ruling parties survive disastrous terms in office while others break down.

The explanation proposed in this dissertation focuses on the role of party brands, that is, voters’ beliefs about what a party stands for. Voters develop stereotypes about parties, basing their partisan attachments on these stereotypes, or brands. When party brands are clear, voters form strong party attachments that are resistant to negative retrospective evaluations. The dilution of party brands erodes party attachments and makes party breakdown possible when parties perform poorly in office.

Why do parties allow their brand to become diluted? Answering this question forces us to understand intraparty dynamics, specifically the different time horizons of party leaders and party elites. The crises experienced by many Latin American countries during the 1980s and 1990s gave party leaders incentives to pursue policies they believed would lead to good performance in the short term. When this agenda required taking actions that diluted the party brand – such as forming strange-bedfellow alliances with rivals or provoking intraparty conflict – party leaders put their individual gains ahead of the long-term strength of the party brand.
I test both the micro-level and aggregate implications of this theory using a multi-method empirical strategy. This consists of two experiments embedded in a survey of Argentine voters as well as in-depth analysis and matched comparison of six case studies in Argentina and Venezuela. My theory of party breakdowns contributes to various areas of scholarly interest, including the nature of partisan attachments, the internal dynamics of parties, the competitive strategies of parties, and the lasting impact of politicians’ responses to economic crises on democratic representation. This study also highlights that partisanship, political parties, and partisan conflict are fundamental features of democratic politics.
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Chapter 1

The Puzzle of Party Breakdown

“What characteristics of an electorate or what conditions permit sharp and decisive changes in the power structure from time to time?”
– Key (1955: 18)

Between 1958 and 1993, the average joint vote share of AD and COPEI, Venezuela’s two traditional parties, was 78 percent. Scholars criticized Venezuelan democracy as duopolistic (Coppedge 1994). But by 1998 a mere 3.5 percent of Venezuelans cast ballots for these two parties. Following Bolivia’s transition to democracy in 1980, the three parties that dominated politics – the rightist ADN, centrist MNR, and center-left MIR – together received an average of 67 percent of the vote. But in 2002 ADN received a mere 3.4 percent of the vote, and neither it nor the MIR fielded a presidential candidate in the 2005 election.

Such dramatic and sudden declines in the staying power of established political parties is one of the most puzzling features of Latin American democratic politics since the Third Wave of democratization. Between 1978 and 2007, one third of the region’s

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1 Democratic Action (Acción Democrática, AD); Independent Political Electoral Organizing Committee (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente, COPEI).

2 Nationalist and Democratic Action (Acción Democrática y Nacionalista, ADN); Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, MNR); Revolutionary Left Movement (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR).
nationally competitive parties broke down, meaning that they suffered a sudden and
dramatic electoral defeat that durably relegated them to uncompetitiveness. Particularly
surprising was the decline to obscurity of nationally competitive parties – some over a
century old. These parties had survived cycles of economic boom and bust, violent
authoritarian interludes, guerrilla insurgencies, and revolutionary movements.

Party breakdown is puzzling from the perspective of theories of party competition
and voter behavior. Scholars of political parties typically expect party systems to form
around enduring social cleavages or the political struggles surrounding their emergence.
Alternatively, spatial models of party competition posit a more dynamic vision of parties,
one that expects them to adapt to match voter preferences. Neither tradition, however,
explains situations in which established parties break down suddenly and decisively.

Country experts and comparative scholars have often attributed these party
breakdowns to poor economic performance by incumbent parties, a phenomenon that also
frequently plagued the region over the past three decades. But bad incumbent
performance is far more widespread than party breakdown. And some parties have
survived even major economic crises. In Peru, for instance, Alan García’s (1985-90)
economic policies led to some of the worst hyperinflation in world history, peaking in
1989 at 12,378 percent. Still, at the end of García’s term in 1990, his APRA party
received nearly a quarter of the vote and fell just ten percentage points shy of the eventual
winner. In the US, George W. Bush oversaw the worst economic crisis since the Great
Depression during his final year in office, yet the Republican candidate received 45.7
percent of the popular vote that November.

Poor incumbent performance is undoubtedly important, but it is not the whole
story. Party breakdowns were preceded by the gradual erosion of partisan attachments. In
the early 1980s, many Latin American voters identified with these established parties, and
many had inherited these attachments from their parents. During much of the 1990s,
however, voters in many Latin American countries became gradually less attached to these
political parties. In 1985, 64 percent of Argentines professed identifying with either the Peronist or Radical party, but that number had dwindled to 15 percent by 2002. In Venezuela, over 70 percent of respondents identified with AD or COPEI in 1973, but less than 10 percent still did so in 1997. Importantly, the erosion of voters’ attachments to established political parties began before the economic declines to which their eventual fates are attributed. Something more than simple economic retrospection was clearly at work.

Observers of Latin America have suggested other plausible explanations of party breakdown. But these explanations often focus on changes at the level of the party system, highlighting system-level variables that fail to discern why some parties within a system break down while others survive. These studies also largely eschew behavioral explanations, or assume and leave untested underlying behavioral mechanisms. As a result, they have overlooked patterns in voters’ attachments with established political parties, patterns that are no doubt related to party breakdown but that are far from consistent with the implications of existing theories.

In this dissertation I provide a novel explanation of party breakdown that treats the erosion of partisanship as a mediating variable and incumbent performance as an interactive variable. I argue that the erosion of partisan attachments was the result of growing confusion among voters about party brands: voters’ beliefs about what a party stands for. To overcome economic and political crises, leaders from traditionally statist parties implemented neoliberal economic policies and formed alliances with traditional rivals. These actions often generated conflict between party leaders, who are interested in short-term electoral success, and younger party elites, who have a longer-term interest in preserving the party’s brand. The intraparty conflicts and strange-bedfellow alliances that characterized some Latin American parties in the 1980s and 1990s diluted these brands, weakening voter attachments. Without the assured support of partisans, parties become
more susceptible to negative retrospective evaluations and, when they performed poorly in office, broke down.

In providing this explanation and developing both the individual-level theoretical mechanism and intraparty dynamics underlying it, this dissertation contributes to various areas of scholarly interest. My theory of party breakdown is the first general explanation of the trend of party breakdown in Latin America. While previous studies have offered case-specific explanations and comparative work has examined related questions about systemic change, mine is the first comparative explanation of breakdown at the level of individual political parties. My branding model of partisanship also offers a new way of thinking about partisan attachments, one that conceives of partisan attachments as social identities but also allows for their responsiveness to the actions of party elites. Allowing party elites to foresee the effects of their actions on partisan attachments also opens new possibilities for theorizing party strategies in models of party competition. Finally, this dissertation improves our understanding of intraparty interactions by suggesting one way in which the preferences of different party actors may diverge and even conflict.

1.1 Identifying Party Breakdowns

I define a nationally competitive party as a party with a historically-based expectation of winning executive office.³ In other words, such parties have been at least competitive in national contests for executive office over several election cycles, making them likely future competitors. Across a sample of all 108 presidential elections that took place in 18 Latin American countries during the period 1978-2007, there were 26 nationally competitive parties.⁴ This coding scheme necessarily involves some reasonable

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³ Throughout the text I use the terms established party and nationally competitive party interchangeably.

⁴ The countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The electoral data are drawn from Payne, Zovatto G., and Mateo Díaz (2007) and updated by the author; where relevant, they apply only to the first round of balloting. I identify nationally competitive
but arbitrary cut-off points. In general, however, it identifies a set of parties that appears to be consistent with the major parties typically identified by country experts (e.g., Alcántara Sáez and Freidenberg 2001; Mainwaring and Scully 1995b).

I define party breakdown as a massive electoral defeat for a nationally competitive political party in a single election cycle. The party’s decline is so precipitous that it becomes, at least over the medium term, irreversible. When a party breaks down, it ceases to be competitive at the national level for a significant period of time, often permanently. Party breakdowns are thus dramatic and sudden events. They are not the steady ebbing of support, a secular decline that is conceptually less puzzling and typically accompanies the emergence of new parties. Instead, party breakdowns are typically accompanied by fragmentation of the political space. Party breakdowns are also such dramatic reversals of electoral fortune that they are nearly impossible for parties to overcome. Only a complete reorientation or reinvention of the party could allow it to reemerge as a nationally competitive party several election cycles later.

By this definition, then, the universe of cases in which breakdown is a possibility is limited to parties that reach a certain level of stability and competitiveness at the national level. This means that party breakdown is necessarily impossible in systems where no nationally competitive parties exist, in which parties are already fragmented and ephemeral. The rise and fall of parties in unstable systems follows a very different logic

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parties on the basis of two primary criteria: (1) the party attains a plurality of the votes, (2) the party attains no less than one half of the winning vote share. A party is coded as nationally competitive at a particular presidential election $t$ if it fulfills at least one of the primary criteria in the three previous presidential elections ($t-1$, $t-2$, and $t-3$). A party that changes its name between elections $t-1$ and $t$ is not counted as a new party at election $t$. An alliance or merger of previously existing parties is not counted as a new party, and is considered nationally competitive if its constituent parties can be considered nationally competitive. A coalition among a new set of parties is counted as a new party. In the case of an alliance split, senior alliance members are considered continuous and junior alliance members are considered new parties. In the case of a party split, the dissenting party is considered a new party and the parent party is considered continuous. A party-election is coded as a breakdown at election $t$ if the party is nationally competitive and it does not meet at least one of the primary criteria in election $t$. A party-election is not coded as a breakdown if its failure to meet at least one of the primary criteria is the result of an elite-led party split.
than the one examined here. It also poses less of a puzzle for theories of party competition.\textsuperscript{5}

Using this coding, I identify ten cases of party breakdown between 1978 and 2007 in Latin America, spanning nine countries. The specific cases are listed in Table 1.1. On average, party breakdowns entailed a 79.7 percent drop in party vote share, leaving these parties on average with 6.3 percent of the vote.\textsuperscript{6} The average age of these parties at the time they broke down was 67.3 years.

**Table 1.1:** Incidents of party breakdown in Latin America, 1978-2007

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<td>Peru</td>
<td>APRA</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Author’s calculations.

Consistent with studies of party-system breakdown in Latin America (e.g. Morgan 2007; Seawright 2007; Tanaka 2006), my coding scheme focuses on presidential rather than legislative elections. Although both types of elections are national in scope, presidential elections are far more influential. They attract greater attention from voters and media and also have more impact on policy, given the strength of executives in Latin

\textsuperscript{5} The focus here is on national elections and therefore national parties. Political parties compete at multiple levels of government and may be competitive at some levels while being uncompetitive at others. But the crucial distinction here is that theories of party competition and voter behavior fail to predict the sudden relegation of a previously competitive political party to uncompetitiveness within national electoral competition.

\textsuperscript{6} The worst drop in vote share among non-breakdown cases of nationally competitive parties was 55.5 percent.
American political systems (Jones 1994; Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). They also typically have strong coattails effects on legislative elections (Jones 1995). Indeed, in all the cases of party breakdown I identify, parties that broke down also suffered dramatic losses in either concurrent or subsequent national legislative elections. It therefore seems most appropriate to focus on presidential elections in identifying cases of party breakdown.

1.1.1 Why Latin America?

The longevity of many of its parties makes Latin America a particularly useful laboratory for studying the dynamics of party fortunes and the ebb and flow of partisan attachments outside the stable political and economic contexts of the advanced democracies. Unlike most new democracies in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia, Latin American democracies are by and large “interrupted democracies” (Lupu and Stokes 2010). The democratic institutions erected in Latin America during the return to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s largely resembled those that existed prior to the breakdown of democracy in the 1960s and 1970s. Among them was the party system, which in most Latin American countries reemerged in near-identical form. Political parties in the new democracies of Latin America are therefore relatively established, with a long – albeit interrupted – history of mobilizing voters and building party attachments. Indeed, many Latin American parties are in fact older than the major parties of Western Europe.

In other new democracies, the breakdown of fleeting political parties is a frequent occurrence, a result of the weeding-out process of democratic experience on the part of voters and coalition-formation on the part of elites (see Roussias 2009; Tavits 2005, 2007; Tavits and Annus 2006). The fact that many Latin American parties instead have long

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7 The exception is Brazil, where the military regime actively reorganized the political parties (see Mainwaring 1999).
histories that span across periods of democracy makes their breakdown in the 1990s and 2000s all the more dramatic and surprising.

In their long history of partisan attachments, Latin American democracies more closely resemble the advanced democracies than other new democracies in Africa and Eastern Europe, where partisanship is nascent. This prior longevity places the recent instances of erosion and party breakdown in Latin America in sharp relief. At the same time, party breakdown is extremely rare in the advanced democracies, owing to the strength of partisan attachments and the comparative moderation and infrequency of political and economic shocks.

This combination – the presence of pervasive political and economic shocks and established parties – makes Latin American new democracies particularly useful cases in which to study the interaction of partisanship with elite behavior. In the new democracies of Africa and Eastern Europe, it would be difficult to observe an effect of elite behavior on partisanship given that familiarity with parties and partisan attachments are still limited (see Brader and Tucker 2008b; Ishiyama and Fox 2006). In advanced democracies, we observe only marginal forms of the party behaviors I hypothesize to affect partisanship. The effects of these behaviors may therefore be difficult to detect empirically. While the theory developed and tested in this dissertation applies broadly – indeed, it is consistent with some evidence from advanced democracies and Eastern European new democracies – Latin America offers the optimal circumstances in which to begin testing its implication.

1.1.2 Party Breakdown versus Party-System Breakdown

Sartori (1976: 71) famously wrote, “By studying political parties we imply that the party is a meaningful unit of analysis. Yet we go above the party as a unit, for we also study the party system. By the same token we can go below the party as a unit and study, thereby, the party subunits.” Studies of the breakdown of political parties in Latin America in recent decades have so far largely focused on the level of the party system. They define
system-wide collapses as situations in which all of the established parties in a system break down simultaneously (e.g. Benton 2001; Morgan 2007; Seawright 2007; Tanaka 2006). Such cases are of course particularly dramatic and consequential. In Venezuela, the two-party system collapsed in 1998 with the election of Hugo Chávez, who proceeded to weaken democratic institutions and centralize power in the executive (Corrales and Penfold 2007). In Peru, a (younger) three-party system seemed to break down in 1990 with the election of Alberto Fujimori, who subsequently dissolved the legislature and appropriated near-dictatorial powers (Kenney 2004; Tanaka 1998).

Cases of party-system breakdown are extremely rare. Recent Latin American history includes only these two cases, and the Peruvian case would force one to both classify the pre-1990 party system as an established one and to identify the breakdown of the system at the 1990 election, both debatable propositions. This means that comparative inquiry limited to these two cases yields analytical tests that are over-determined (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994).

Studies of party-system breakdown have made significant contributions to our understanding of party competition in general and these important historical events specifically. But a focus on the breakdown of individual parties offers greater analytical leverage across a larger sample of cases. Party breakdowns are themselves infrequent events. But their larger number offers an opportunity to adjudicate more convincingly

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8 Although focused on party-system breakdown, Seawright (2007) applies his theory to the breakdown of the Radical party in Argentina.

9 Of the three nationally competitive parties in Peru in the 1980s, only APRA and AP had a national presence prior to the democratic transition, though APRA had never actually controlled the executive. Many scholars thus characterized Peru in the 1980s as having an inchoate party system (Mainwaring and Scully 1995a). My classification codes only one of the three Peruvian parties from the 1980s as breaking down but places the breakdown of APRA in 1995. As Tanaka (1998) notes, it seems strange to place the breakdown of APRA in 1990, when it received 22.5 percent of the first-round vote, only 10 percentage points below the winner.

10 Given the extremely rare nature of party-system breakdowns, it remains an open question whether they constitute an analytically meaningful phenomenon that is more than the sum of its parts. If party-system breakdowns are simply two or three simultaneous party breakdowns that can be explained by some commonality among the individual parties rather than systemic or structural factors, then there does not seem to be much analytical value in identifying system-level breakdown as a distinctive category in need of explanation.
among competing hypotheses and to test general theories of party change and voter behavior that can broadly inform our understanding.

1.2 Lessons from Previous Theories

The breakdown of political parties presents an important puzzle for theories of party and voter behavior. Early scholars of political parties focused primarily on explaining differences across party systems, expecting individual systems—and therefore their constituent parties—to ‘freeze’ around certain basic social cleavages (e.g., Bartolini and Mair 1990; Lipset and Rokkan 1967) or to be based around the political struggles surrounding their emergence (e.g., Collier and Collier 1991; LaPalombara and Weiner 1966). At the same time, spatial models of party competition offered a more dynamic vision of parties, one that expects them to shift ideological commitments to match voter preferences (e.g., Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005).

Neither tradition provides a causal explanation for situations in which parties break down and party systems change dramatically. The social-cleavages approach allows for the possibility of a new critical juncture that would lead to new systemic equilibria, an argument taken up by Roberts (2008). But critical junctures are difficult to identify (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Thelen 1999), and this approach leaves unexplained important variation in the timing of breakdowns. Spatial models, on the other hand, typically predict seamless adaptation and thus also provide little insight into the dramatic breakdown of established parties.

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11 Downs (1957) noted that parties would face reputation costs by constantly shifting positions, an argument later taken up by Strøm (1990), but which remains absent in most spatial models of party competition.
1.2.1 Theories of Party Change

Observing a variety of puzzling changes to party systems around the world, scholars have offered a variety of new theories to explain these events. Although my interest here is in explaining changes in individual parties rather than systems, theories of party-system change suggest hypotheses that may apply to party change.

Most such theories focus on programmatic changes (e.g., Kitschelt 1994; Mair 1997), organizational transformations (e.g., Harmel and Janda 1994; Katz and Mair 1994; Panebianco 1988), or shifts in parties’ electoral bases (e.g., Burnham 1970). One explanation for these changes notes that in Western Europe the class-based cleavages around which party systems ‘froze’ in the early twentieth century appeared in the 1970s to be giving way to new, post-industrial cleavages (Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck 1984; Flanagan and Dalton 1984). Another emphasizes that ideological foundations seemed to give way as the franchise grew, leading to the emergence of catch-all parties by the 1960s (Kirchheimer 1990). In later decades, the decline of party membership and introduction of public financing for parties seemed to explain the appearance of cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009).12

Studies of US politics have similarly sought to explain historical moments of party realignment, in which new parties emerged (the Republican Party in 1850) or the electoral bases of the existing parties shifted dramatically (the New Deal era) (e.g., Burnham 1970; Key 1955; Sundquist 1983).13 For instance, Aldrich (1995) argues that the breakdown of the Whig Party in the 1850s was the result of the declining prospects of a legislative majority: ambitious legislative candidates saw rising anti-slavery sentiment and therefore

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12 There is also significant research on party splits, particularly the case of the 1993 split of the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan (e.g., Cox, Rosenbluth, and Thies 1999; Cox and Rosenbluth 1995; Kato 1998; Reed and Scheiner 2003). These studies of course deal with one kind of party change in which party elites leave the organization. Such cases could, at least theoretically, lead to the swift electoral declines that define my cases of party breakdown if voters follow these splintering party elites. However, party splits rarely lead to such dramatic voter rejection. Moreover, the Latin American cases of party breakdown I have identified do not follow significant party splits.

13 For a broad critique of this research agenda, see Mayhew (2004).
switched parties, causing a realignment. Another explanation posits that new ideological cleavages appear first among legislators, changing congressional coalitions, and only subsequently, and then slowly, become embedded in the party system (Macdonald and Rabinowitz 1987).14

In both bodies of research, the party (and party-system) changes explained by these theories and the key variables used to explain them are slow-moving: changes in the electorate or the emergence of new cleavages gradually alter the party system. While these explanations are useful in predicting secular changes, they are difficult to apply to the more rapid changes in parties’ electoral fortunes that characterize party breakdown. As a result, observers of Latin American party and party-system breakdowns have turned to case-specific explanations of these phenomena.15 These studies identify three factors that may help to explain party breakdown: anti-incumbency, institutional and structural changes, and organizational rigidity in the face of economic crises.

**Anti-Incumbency**

The most common explanation for party breakdown is anti-incumbency.16 Bad performance by the incumbent – whether in the form of corruption scandals or poor economic stewardship – is thought to induce mass voter rejection of the incumbent party, leading to the dramatic voter rejection that accompanies party breakdown (Hagopian

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14 Schofield and his co-authors (Miller and Schofield 2003; Schofield and Miller 2007; Schofield, Miller, and Martin 2003) argue that realignments are caused by the tensions inherent in the fact that political cleavages are unidimensional while voters’ positions are two-dimensional. In these models, the two parties divide either along economic lines or along social ones. Thus some voters (and activists) are always disaffected and, when mobilized by entrepreneurial candidates, can trigger a realignment.

15 The phenomenon of party breakdown in new democracies is itself not limited to the Latin American context; Eastern European parties have disappeared over the course of that region’s democratic period (see e.g., Kreuzer and Pettai 2003). One significant difference between the two regions is that the collapsed parties in Latin America were often very old organizations that survived multiple periods of dictatorship. In Eastern Europe and Africa, the recent period of democracy saw the emergence of most political parties for the first time, making it difficult to conceive of (and identify) established parties whose breakdown is puzzling.

16 This anti-incumbency explanation is consistent with recent work on the US realignments, which shows that poor economic performance in the year before an election explains the mass shifts in voter preferences (Achen and Bartels 2005; Mayhew 2004).
Observers of the breakdown of Venezuela’s established parties suggest that it was precipitated by the perceived failures of market-oriented economic reforms implemented during the 1990s (Buxton 2001, 2005; Hellinger 2003; Molina 2002). Other scholars argue that corruption scandals that emerged during this period also contributed to breakdown by eroding the legitimacy of the traditional parties and exacerbating indignation with the economic decline (Coppedge 2005; Hawkins 2010; Naim 2001; Seawright 2007). Similar circumstances are thought to have afflicted parties in Peru and its Andean neighbors (Dietz and Myers 2007; Kenney 2003, 2004; Lynch 1999; Mainwaring 2006).

We often observe presidents who end their terms with extremely low approval ratings but their parties live to fight another day. The current Republican party in the US illustrates how quickly they can bounce back. Anti-incumbent sentiment is far more prevalent than party breakdown and unpopular incumbents are routinely voted out of office for bad performance without triggering party breakdown. Cases of economic crises and corruption scandals engulfing incumbent administrations and leading to electoral defeat abound in Latin America. In Argentina, the incumbent Radical party lost the 1989 election because of the inflationary crisis that began earlier that year. In Venezuela, the incumbent COPEI lost the 1983 election in part because of corruption scandals engulfing its president. But these electoral losses were nowhere near as dramatic as cases of party breakdown. In both cases, the losing incumbent party came in second, with a sizeable proportion of the vote (32.5 percent for the Radicals in 1989 and 34.5 percent for COPEI in 1983). Poor incumbent performance alone does not seem to be a sufficient condition for party breakdown.

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17 Mainwaring (2006) has in mind something more than poor incumbent performance, instead focusing on “state deficiencies,” which he defines as instances when, “the state does not fulfill some of its basic governing, legal, and security functions” (296). Tanaka (1998, 2006) offers a reverse explanation, arguing that Fujimori’s early economic successes in Peru allowed him to dismantle the party system.

18 The perception of corruption was not limited to the president, who was ineligible to run for reelection. In a national survey conducted in 1983, 66 percent of respondents thought most politicians were dishonest (sinvergüenzas) (see also Rey 1998).
Institutional and Structural Change

A second set of studies posits that exogenous institutional and structural changes during the 1980s and 1990s weakened voter-party linkages and party organizations, leading to breakdown. As a result of the international debt crisis that began in the 1980s, national parties across the region faced the prospect of economic stagnation, debt default, and hyperinflation (Remmer 1990). This led to important socioeconomic changes, including sharp rises in unemployment, inequality, and urbanization (see Hoffman and Centeno 2003; Portes and Roberts 2005). Roberts (2003, 2008) argues that the ensuing decline in union strength and rise of the informal labor market weakened party ties to civil society organizations and eroded parties’ capacity to mobilize supporters through state patronage (see also Cameron 1991, 1994; Sánchez 2008; Schmidt 1996). Along similar lines, Benton (2001, 2007) suggests that dwindling state coffers meant parties could no longer rely on patronage to form intraparty coalitions, increasing factionalism and weakening party organizations.19

A similar structural argument suggests that the emergence of mass media and a wave of anti-system discourse – often referred to in Spanish as anti-politics (antipolítica) – perpetuated voter discontent and accentuated the limitations or perceived deficiencies of political institutions (Dietz and Myers 2007; Levine 2002; Mainwaring 2006; Mayorga 1995; Mocca 2004; Tanaka 1998, 2006). The growth of anti-system rhetoric, it is argued, engendered distrust in the existing political system and its parties, and precipitated the rising popularity of outsider candidates. Mass exposure to this rhetoric through the media

19 Other authors suggest that economic development shifted social cleavages, obviating the class-based cleavages around which traditional parties were organized (Myers 1998; Tanaka 1998). This formulation is consistent with some interpretations of the 1850s realignment in the US (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Sundquist 1983), in which the slavery issue became the salient political cleavage. But economic development is a slow-moving variable while party breakdowns appear to be very sudden. And the level of economic development in most Latin American countries was only marginally higher in the 1990s than it had been in the 1980s (the average change in GDP per capita between the decades was 6.4 percent); in some countries (Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela), it had even declined.
bred a wave of anti-establishment sentiment that was able to sweep aside the parties associated with the established political order.

Finally, scholars also point to institutional changes as the source of subsequent party breakdown. They contend that a wave of decentralizing reforms that swept the region empowered local governments and provided political actors with alternative paths to power, outside traditional party organizations (Penfold-Becerra 2004, 2009; Ramos Jiménez 2002; Sabatini 2003). These explanations build on more general observations that distributing power to local elites hampers the ability of national parties to aggregate across districts (Chhibber and Kollman 2004; Hicken 2009). Benton (2001) further suggests that certain electoral reforms also made party systems more accommodating of small parties, precipitating the emergence of new political forces to challenge established parties.\footnote{In this institutional vein, Tuesta Soldevilla (1996) argues that run-off electoral rules in Peru contributed to the breakdown of its party system in 1990 by making it easier for an unaffiliated (outsider) candidate to reach the second round. But such electoral rules exist in other countries in the region (and existed in Peru prior to collapse) without having such an effect.}

These institutional explanations, however, fail to account for the range of party fortunes in Latin America. Decentralization has been far from consistent across the region (Tulchin and Selee 2004; Willis, da C. B. Garman, and Haggard 1999). For instance, Argentina in fact centralized during the 1990s Spiller and Tommasi (2007), making it difficult to point to decentralization as a cause of the breakdown of the Radical party in 2003. Moreover, the proposed link between decentralization and party breakdown does not seem to be supported by cross-national evidence. In a four-country study, Falleti (2005) shows that decentralization does not necessarily strengthen local elites vis-à-vis national ones, as the decentralization hypothesis would suggest. In a broad regional analysis, O’Neill (2006: 197) notes that “traditional parties tend to do better in subnational than in national elections, suggesting that decentralization is not a cause of eroding support for traditional parties.”

System-level institutional changes, like decentralization and \textit{antipolítica}, fail to
account for within-system variation in the fates of individual parties. Where not all of the
established parties within the same system broke down, one cannot point to systemic
causes. At the very least, such systemic causes would need to be conditioned by some
characteristic of individual parties to explain why some survive while others break
down.21

The economic crisis of the 1980s and subsequent neoliberal reforms undoubtedly
reduced the capacity of patronage-based political parties to mobilize voters through
organizational linkages, as scholars have noted. Those that relied on labor movements or
on the distribution of state rents were perhaps weakened by the decline of labor unions
and the privatization of state resources. But it is difficult to imagine that, prior to the
enactment of neoliberal reforms, nationally competitive parties relied solely on patronage
to appeal to voters. Labor unions in Latin America were far from encompassing, rarely
representing more than half of the labor force (Roberts 2002). Nor can we assume that the
decline of class-based organizations like labor unions necessarily eroded the salience of
class cleavages along which parties were organized and which mobilized voters.22

Some labor-based parties were able to resort to an electoral strategy that relied on
individual vote-buying rather than union-based patronage (Gibson and Calvo 2000;
Levitsky 2003; Schamis 1999), though even this only mobilized low-income constituents
(Auyero 2000; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004). To the extent that party breakdowns
are far more sudden and marked by dramatic shifts in the electoral choices across
socioeconomic strata, they seem difficult to explain solely on the basis of a declining pool
of resources for patronage-based parties. It is similarly difficult to account for breakdowns

21 Anti-system rhetoric may also be less widespread than it appears. A striking example is that of
Argentina, where masses of protesters chanted “kick them all out!” (“¡que se vayan todos!”) during the
2001-2 economic crisis. Despite the apparent rejection of the political establishment, Peronist candidates
garnered over 60 percent of the vote in the subsequent presidential election – including 24.5 percent for the
former president – while the Radical party broke down.

22 In the Argentine case, the old class-based cleavage between Peronists and Radicals appears to have
persisted throughout the period of neoliberal reforms (Lupu and Stokes 2009).
among parties without traditional ties to labor – like the Radicals in Argentina or the PAN in Guatemala – using this framework.

**Organizational Rigidity**

A final set of studies suggest an interactive explanation that combines institutional factors with structural changes. In particular, some authors explain party breakdown as the result of institutional rigidities that prevented established political parties from adapting to an exogenously changing electoral environment. Some have suggested that parties that were highly institutionalized failed to respond to changes in economic conditions and voter demands (Barr 2005; Coppedge 2005).\(^{23}\) Despite their changing environment, these authors claim, the more institutionalized party organizations privileged existing interest groups and failed to incorporate new actors (Coppedge 1994; Crisp 1996, 2000; Crisp and Levine 1998; McCoy 1999).\(^{24}\) Parties with an entrenched bureaucracy and routinized internal organizations, other scholars posit, did not renew the ranks of their leadership with younger members who were more convinced of the need to abandon the statist economic policies that generated the crisis (Burgess and Levitsky 2003; Levitsky 2003; Martz

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\(^{23}\) It should be noted that institutionalization is used by these authors to refer to the lack of fluidity in party organizations, as in Panebianco (1988: Ch. 4). Such arguments have a long pedigree in the study of political parties, beginning with Michels (1959), who argued that the collapse of the German Socialist party in the Weimar Republic was caused by its lack of internal democracy. Of course, the original concept of party institutionalization formulated by Huntington (1968) included adaptability as an important element.

\(^{24}\) Dietz and Myers (2007) in fact argue that either very high or very low levels of party institutionalization contribute to breakdown. In Peru, they argue, support for the party system was so weak that “[n]one of the leaders of the four system-sustaining parties was willing to work for the survival of the system” (73).
Those with traditional links to labor found it particularly difficult to adapt to the new economic and electoral environment (Burgess 1999; Levitsky and Way 1998).

Some Latin American party organizations were certainly rigid and highly institutionalized, particularly the two established Venezuelan parties that motivate this reasoning. But even these parties expended enormous efforts beginning in the late 1980s on institutional reforms intended to make their internal organizations more flexible. More importantly, there are no cross-national correlations between party institutionalization and breakdown in Latin America. Table 1.2 presents the level of institutionalization of the established parties in four Latin American countries. The values are my scoring for the early 1990s following the index developed by Burgess and Levitsky (2003: fn. 17-18). While these values represent but a portion of the established parties in the region, the table suggests no obvious relationship between institutionalization and party breakdown. Within countries, it is not the case that the more institutionalized party is the one to break down. Cross-nationally, we find cases of breakdown at nearly all values of party institutionalization.

Like anti-incumbency, organizational rigidity does not seem to be a sufficient condition for party breakdown. In a related formulation, Seawright (2007) argues that party-system breakdown was caused in part by policy divergence between the activist base of established parties and the electorate. Where party activists had strong ideological convictions, parties found it difficult to adapt to the shifting preferences of a changed electorate. In a similar vein, see Morgan (2007) and Sánchez-Cuenca (2004).

The Burgess and Levitsky (2003) index is a measure of capacity to adapt, as opposed to institutionalization. I invert this score such that higher values indicate greater institutionalization (I also subtract 1 so that the index ranges from 1 to 5). The index has two components: one measuring leadership fluidity or the degree to which leadership renovation is limited and career paths institutionalized, the second measuring office-holding leadership autonomy from party leadership bodies.

Consider also the counterfactual case of the PT in Brazil: a highly institutionalized party that successfully adapted to the electoral environment by moderating its ideological stance (Samuels 2004a).
Table 1.2: Institutionalization of established parties in four Latin American countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Institutionalization</th>
<th>Breakdown?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>PJ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>MNR</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>UCR</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>PB</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>ADN</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s scoring following Burgess and Levitsky (2003).

condition for party breakdown. Although this argument has appeared compelling in explaining the Venezuelan cases, the wide range of party organizations that broke down across the region offers little empirical support for this argument.

In sum, the explanations of party breakdowns derived from previous studies seem limited in a comparative perspective. These studies made important contributions to our understanding of recent events in Latin America and to a host of theoretical questions regarding changes in party systems and public opinion. But when applied comparatively to the puzzle of party breakdowns, they either offer insufficient leverage at the level of individual parties or prove difficult to reconcile with the cross-national variation.

The received scholarship has also largely eschewed behavioral explanations of party breakdown. As a result, they overlooked individual-level patterns in voters’ attachments to established political parties, patterns that are no doubt associated with party breakdown but that are far from consistent with the implications derived from existing theories.29 In this dissertation I offer a behavioral explanation of party breakdown, one that draws on a model of partisanship that also explains the observed variation in partisan

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attachments. In doing so, I also offer a new perspective in the debate over the nature of partisanship and the relationship between partisan attachments and political events.

1.2.2 Theories of Partisanship

What might previous theories of partisanship be able to teach us about the circumstances under which partisanship erodes? Despite a great deal of research on partisanship around the world, scholars continue to debate the nature of individuals’ attachments to parties (Johnston 2006). The classic Michigan-school interpretation holds that partisanship is an affective “standing decision” (Key 1966), inherited like a religious affiliation and tending to persist over the life-course of the individual (Bartels 2002; Campbell et al. 1960; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994; Miller and Shanks 1996). From this perspective, partisan attachments are an “unmoved mover” of voter behavior, *exogenous* to short-term political forces and determined predominantly by parental socialization and the passage of time (Converse 1969, 1976; Sears and Valentino 1997; Shachar 2003).

A second interpretation of partisanship views it more dynamically, as a kind of “running tally” (Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981), the result of individuals’ ongoing assessments of parties and candidates (Brody and Rothenberg 1988; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Jennings and Markus 1984; Meier 1975; Page and Jones 1979). From this perspective, partisan attachments are *endogenous* to political events: voters observe and evaluate political actors, using these evaluations to continually revise their partisan attachments.

More recently, a less dynamic version of the endogenous perspective has emerged that we might place somewhere between the two classic arguments. The Bayesian perspective introduced by Achen (1992) suggests that voters update their partisan

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30 Wolak (2009) finds that a broader set of contextual factors at adolescence beyond familial history also determine partisanship.
attachments, but their tendency to update decreases over time, as their prior attachments become stronger. Voters may use their parents’ partisan attachments as an initial starting point in youth (Achen 2002), but then learn about parties as they mature. Like Achen, Gerber and Green (1998) and Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) suggest that individuals engage in updating. But they argue that voters update their image of parties as social groups: “As people reflect on whether they are Democrats or Republicans (or neither), they call to mind some mental image, or stereotype, of what these sorts of people are like and square these images with their own self-conceptions” (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2005: 8). This interpretation suggests that partisanship is endogenous to short-term political forces when it is weak, becoming increasingly exogenous as it strengthens (see also Alvarez 1997; Grynaviski 2006, 2010; Kroh and Selb 2009).

The endurance of the decades-old debate among these competing perspectives is partly the result of two empirical limitations: untestable modeling assumptions and observational equivalence. Relying on the same set of US survey data, scholars who make one set of identifying restrictions infer exogenous partisanship, while those who make different modeling choices find evidence of endogenous attachments. Moreover, in a stable party system where party reputations are slow to change – both characteristics of the US (Baumer and Gold 1995; Snyder and Ting 2002) – updating models predict stable partisan attachments after a short period of instability early in an individual’s political life. The empirical implications of these models are thus equivalent to those of exogenous theories: in the aggregate and among the majority of US voters, partisanship should appear exceedingly stable and immune to political events.

Taking the study of partisanship to a broader, comparative dataset is one solution

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The important contributions by Achen (1992, 2002) and Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) are typically presented as competing theories, the former grouped with a rationalist school and the latter with the behavioral Michigan school. This seems to me to be a misreading of Achen’s updating model. Although based on a rational process of evaluating parties over time, the Bayesian model does not predict that the resulting partisan attachments are themselves one-shot rational evaluations. Bayesian updating models do not necessarily even predict that individuals confronted with the same information will converge on the same evaluation (Bullock 2009). Instead, I read Achen’s updating model as a resolution of the exogenous and endogenous perspectives.
to this intractability, an approach that I pursue in this dissertation. Recent non-US studies have examined partisanship in a range of political contexts (Baker et al. 2010; Barnes, McDonough, and López Pina 1985; Brader and Tucker 2001, 2008a, b; Lupu and Stokes 2010; Miller and Klobucar 2000). But even these studies have been limited to questions about how partisanship emerges, focusing as they do on contexts in which competitive party politics had only recently emerged. The approach I take is to examine the implications of these theories for contexts in which partisanship is already widespread but erodes precipitously. An unappreciated facet of updating models of partisanship is that they predict circumstances under which such erosion of partisanship will occur.33

The erosion of partisanship – sometimes referred to as dealignment – is itself not an altogether new object of study.34 One prominent explanation is cognitive mobilization theory (Dalton 1984, 2000, 2007; Flanagan and Dalton 1984), which builds upon the functional model of partisanship introduced by Shively (1972, 1979).35 The theory suggests that partisan attachments are a cost-saving device for voters who, being “cognitive misers” (Downs 1957), use party labels as shortcuts. In the context of advanced democracies, cognitive mobilization implies that recent developments – including increased educational attainment, greater political sophistication, and easier access to political information through mass media,36 – reduced voters’ need for party attachments and redefined the role of parties (see also Inglehart 1977). In this way, the cognitive

32 Another alternative is to turn to experimental test (see Cowden and McDermott 2000).
33 An exception is Grynaviski (2006, 2010), who examines some of these implications historically in the US.
34 Classic exogenous theories of partisanship have been difficult to reconcile with the reported erosion of partisanship in the US (Beck 1977; Carmines, McIver, and Stimson 1987; Fiorina 2002; Niemi and Weisberg 1976; Wattenberg 1990) and other advanced democracies (Clarke and Stewart 1998; Dalton 1984, 2000; Wattenberg 2000). Yet the empirical claim that aggregate party attachments have eroded at all in advanced democracies is itself contested (Bartels 2000; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2005; Hetherington 2001; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995).
35 Shively’s (1979) original functional model stressed the importance of individual motivation as a determinant of the utility of partisanship (with those feeling a sense of civic duty more likely to form partisan attachments), a factor that is absent from the cognitive mobilization hypothesis.
36 A similar argument by Ward (1993) suggests a slightly different mechanism: that the introduction of mass media allowed politicians to reach masses of voters without resorting to party organizations.
mobilization hypothesis diverges from psychological notions of partisanship while remaining consistent with the idea that partisanship is exogenous to short-term political events.\textsuperscript{37}

Yet, the emergence of mass media and increased education fail to explain the erosion of partisanship in Latin America. Mass media had already emerged in Latin America by the 1980s, when party attachments with established parties were quite high. And individual-level evidence from the region in fact suggests the exact opposite: individuals with greater exposure to mass media seem in fact to be more partisan (Pérez-Liñán 2002; Seligson 2002).\textsuperscript{38} Although educational attainment increased in some countries over this period, there is a great deal of variation both across countries and within countries over time (see ECLAC 2009: Table 25). Moreover, like other system-level explanations, cognitive mobilization fails to account for variation within countries, where one established party survives while another breaks down. In Latin America, partisan attachments toward some parties in fact increased over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, despite the media’s wide reach (Echegaray 2006; Medina Vidal et al. 2010; Samuels 2006).

We are left, then, with two open and related questions. Why did some parties in Latin America break down while others, even within the same country, did not? And why have partisan attachments for some Latin American parties eroded precipitously in recent years?

\textsuperscript{37} The cognitive mobilization hypothesis has found little empirical support in the advanced democracies. Prior (2005) finds that political knowledge in the US has not changed considerably as a result of the increased availability of information through cable television and the internet. And it has been difficult to find empirical support for the implications of the theory in either aggregate or individual-level data (Albright 2009; Arzheimer 2006; Berglund et al. 2006; Huber, Kernell, and Leoni 2005; Schmitt-Beck, Weick, and Christoph 2006; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995). Even in various new democracies, studies suggests that the more politically informed are more partisan (Miller and Klobucar 2000; Pérez-Liñán 2002), in contrast to this hypothesis.

\textsuperscript{38} Another version of the media-partisanship argument suggests that entire cohorts of voters born after the emergence of mass media have been socialized into a different set of party-voter linkages, and politicians have no incentive to invest in party-building (Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Research by Dalton and Weldon (2007) and Lupu and Stokes (2010) is more sanguine about partisanship in new democracies, suggesting that supply-side factors – the stability of the party system or the regime type – account for the observed weakness of partisanship in new democracies.
decades? This dissertation seeks to answer these two puzzles and addresses the shortcomings of previous theories. Many theories of party change – focusing on anti-incumbency, organizational rigidity, or institutional and socio-structural changes – fail to account for the variation across parties within countries. Others suggest causes that, when applied comparatively, fail to identify sufficient conditions. Updating theories of partisanship also suggest potential answers, though their implications for the types of contexts represented by many Latin American countries have yet to be examined. Deriving these implications will allow me to provide a new explanation of party breakdown and to contribute to debates over the nature of partisanship that have been hampered by their narrow empirical focus.

1.3 The Argument

My explanation of party breakdowns highlights the role of party brands in voter behavior. I argue that party breakdowns occur when two conditions are met: (1) the party’s brand is diluted, leading partisan attachments to erode, and (2) the party performs poorly in office. When a party’s brand is clear, voters form strong attachments to it, attachments that are resistant to retrospective evaluations. Once the brand is diluted, however, voter attachments erode and the party’s performance becomes more determinative of vote choice. Parties become increasingly susceptible to voters’ short-term retrospective evaluations, and when such dilution is accompanied by poor incumbent performance, voters defect en masse from established parties. Scholars are therefore right to point toward poor incumbent performance as a cause of party breakdowns, but poor performance only leads to collapse when it is preceded by brand dilution.

39 I use the terms partisanship, party attachments, and party identification interchangeably to refer to an individual’s self-identification with a political party.
1.3.1 Partisanship and Vote Choice

Group identities are based on individuals’ stereotypes about a group and how well they perceive themselves to fit that stereotype (Hogg, Hardie, and Reynolds 1995; Lakoff 1987; McGarty et al. 1992; Turner et al. 1987). Self-categorization relies, therefore, on the similarity an individual perceives between herself and that stereotype. In other words, individuals self-categorize into social identities like party attachments by constantly shifting back and forth between their individuality and that identity. The more membership in a group maximizes similarities between an individual and other group members as well as differences with outsiders, the more likely she is to identify with the group (Hogg et al. 2004; Turner 1999).

My model of partisanship proceeds from this self-categorization notion of social identity. Over the course of their lives, voters develop perceptions of partisan identities through their observations of the party and its behavior. They learn what to associate with the prototypical Democrat or the prototypical Republican, and they use these prototypes to inform their identity.

These prototypes are what I refer to as a party brand. I define a party’s brand as the perceived prototypical individual or group of individuals thought to affiliate with the party. That is, the Republic party brand consists of some notion of the prototypical Republican. Individuals place each party on some continuum, be it ideological (i.e., economic left to right) or based on some social dimension like class (i.e., poor to affluent). Where individuals perceive each party to lie on the relevant continuum constitutes the party brand.

Voters’ perceptions of party brands are determined by observations of the party’s behavior over time. That is, they observe what party elites say and do, placing relevant statements and actions on the salient ideological dimension. They then use this information to update the party brand. The new perceived party position becomes a weighted average of their prior beliefs about the party and the new information. A strong
party brand is one about which voters feel relatively certain, while a weak one is perceived as ambiguous by voters. As voters become more certain about the party’s position, the brand becomes stronger, more informative, and more useful as a heuristic. As voter uncertainty about the party’s position increases, the brand becomes weaker, or is diluted: knowing a candidate’s party affiliation now provides ambiguous information.

These learned party brands help to determine how voters feel about parties and whether they identify with a particular party. A voter will feel the greatest affinity with the party whose prototypical partisan she thinks she most resembles, relative to all other parties. As with other social identities, partisan identity is determined on the one hand by the resemblance, or fit, between the voter’s self-image and her image of the party prototype. Party attachments are therefore increasing in the voter’s proximity to the party brand. And the more ambiguous the party brand, the weaker that attachment. The degree to which the voter will identify with a party also depends crucially whether she perceives her party’s brand to be distinguished from other parties’ brands. Thus, a voter will also feel most attached to a party closest to her that is also perceived to be far away from other parties.

According to this branding model of partisanship, partisan attachments erode in response to the actions of party elites observed by voters. In particular, two types of party behaviors reduce partisanship. Inconsistency leads voters to become less certain about party brands, eroding their attachments. That inconsistency can take the form of observing party elites support disparate positions, as in times of intraparty conflict, or seeing a party behave in ways that are inconsistent with the voter’s priors. A prominent instance of this latter inconsistency is the well-known Latin American phenomenon of the “policy switch” by traditionally statist political parties to market reforms (Stokes 2001; Weyland 2002). In addition, convergence among parties – that is, voters’ inability to meaningfully distinguish their brands – similarly weakens partisanship. Even when voters are certain about party
brands, they will fail to form strong attachments if they perceive the parties as substitutable.

How do such partisan attachments affect voting decisions and mass rejection of established parties at the polls? In my model, vote choice is determined by partisan attachments on the one hand and valence on the other. Valence issues are those on which all voters hold the same position, as in the case of, for example, economic prosperity or corruption. The difference among parties is the degree to which voters see some as more competent on a particular valence issue than others. Thus, retrospective economic voting is one type of valence-based voting.

Voters evaluate parties both in terms of the strength of their attachment to that party and in terms of valence. Parties can therefore gain votes either by increasing their score on a salient valence issue or by increasing the strength of voters’ attachments to the party. The degree to which valence affects vote choice depends on how strongly the voter feels an attachment with the party. As voters become more attached to a party, they will discount valence. As they become less attached to that party, valence will become an increasingly important determinant of vote choice.

Using this framework, party breakdown occurs when partisan attachments are weak or relatively scarce and party valence is negative, as when an incumbent party performs poorly. The theory thus incorporates an explanation both of the erosion of partisanship over time in the years leading up to party breakdown and the actual timing of the breakdown itself.

1.3.2 Intraparty Bargaining and Brand Dilution

Given this individual-level model of partisanship, parties have incentives to maintain strong party brands and to differentiate themselves from rival parties. If parties have the long time horizons usually ascribed to them, they should avoid inconsistency and
convergence in order to maximize the stable voter base that partisanship provides. Why, then, would parties ever engage in brand-diluting behaviors?

Parties are not unitary actors, so while the long-term incentive for parties is to maintain a strong party brand, individual party actors may have divergent, and at times conflicting, incentives. Although the organization as a whole benefits from avoiding brand dilution, inconsistency and convergence may be the equilibrium outcomes of intraparty bargaining in particular circumstances. Thus, we must turn our attention from the party as a unitary actor – as it is typically seen by voters – to the party as itself a complex organization with multiple actors (see Sartori 1976).

A fuller understanding of the dynamics that lead parties to dilute their brands requires a more nuanced understanding of the intraparty conflicts among party elites. We need to know something about the motivations of the party leaders who dilute their party’s brand. But we also need to know about the preferences of party elites, lower-level career politicians who sometimes allow party leaders to dilute the party brand.

I distinguish party leaders and party elites by their time horizons, that is, the extent to which they prioritize long-term outcomes. I define leaders as actors who hold veto power over party decisions. These individuals are typically the head of the party organization or, in cases when the party controls the executive, the president. Their actions are highly visible to the public and their decisions need not be approved within the party organization before they are taken. Party leaders have short-term electoral interests. Presidents face immediate reelection; if they fail to win the next election they will be forced to retire. When the party is out of power, the party leader looks to the next election for the opportunity to win the presidency. But a party leader who loses a presidential election will be forced to resign the party leadership.

Since party leaders look almost exclusively to the next election for their career ambitions, they have little use for party brands. After all, the number of a party’s partisans never constitutes a majority, but presidents who perform well in office can expect to win
over non-partisan votes. Presidential outcomes are indeed determined by non-partisan voters, for whom the important factor is valence. Thus party leaders prioritize a positive valence over a strong party brand.

Party elites – individuals who participate in the subordinate levels of the party hierarchy – are career politicians working their way up the ranks of the party hierarchy. These actors may be legislators elected on party lists or members of party staffs or committees. Party elites hope to rise to higher offices, working their way up the party list to actual seats in the legislature or to senior positions within the party organization that come with salaries and benefits. They are thus long-term oriented. They prefer to maintain a strong party brand, either to secure a proportion of the electorate for themselves in future elections or to ensure the longevity of the party organization in which they are building a career. In other words, they prioritize a strong party brand to a positive valence. Thus, the strength of a party’s brand is more important to party elites than to party leaders.

On the basis of this distinction, I develop a simple intraparty sequential bargaining game in which party leaders choose whether to pursue a brand-dilution action and party elites collectively choose whether to rebel against the party leader in response. The model yields three principal comparative statics. First, party leaders will choose to pursue brand-diluting actions only when the electoral benefit of doing so is substantial. Most of the time, brand-diluting behaviors are detrimental to the party leader. Existing party brands are the result of strategic party positioning over a long period of time, and leaders of parties that are already nationally competitive typically find policies broadly consistent with the party brand to be electorally advantageous. Still, there are circumstances under which brand-diluting actions – like those that signal party convergence – are electorally beneficial. In the Latin American context, two types of exogenous shocks can produce this kind of conflict between short-term electoral and long-term brand incentives. Political crises like military coups or widespread riots call for party leaders to signal their commitment to the democratic order and their shared convictions with elites from rival
political parties. The search for political legitimacy during crises may call for convergence among political elites, and perhaps even some kind of unity government, weakening the party brand but bolstering democratic institutions. Economic crises may similarly impel party leaders to adopt brand-diluting policies. Party leaders may need to respond to economic pressures by pursuing policies that are inconsistent with their party brand. Doing so may require forging alliances with rival parties or signalling the abandonment of party traditions. Given the enormous electoral payoff from good economic performance, brand-diluting behaviors may be particularly attractive in such situations.

Party leaders will also pursue brand-diluting actions when they are likely to prevail against other members of their party. Leaders who are popular or have many loyalists in the party organization can pursue their agendas despite the preferences of other party actors. If party elites raise public objections, they will incur not only the cost of the brand-diluting actions itself but also the brand-diluting cost of an intraparty conflict. Aware of these costs, party elites will acquiesce to the party leader’s brand-diluting actions, preferring to stand behind their leader than start a costly conflict they are likely to lose.

As a result, intraparty conflict over leaders’ brand-diluting actions should be relatively rare. The costs of intraparty conflict for both the party elites and the party leader are typically quite large, and intraparty conflicts themselves dilute party brands, making them unattractive alternatives for party elites. For party leaders, the eruption of an intraparty conflict will reflect poorly on their leadership and hurt their electoral prospects. In some circumstances, however, party elites may believe that the probability of the leader prevailing is low. And party leaders may overestimate their ability to bring party elites in line. While intraparty conflicts over brand dilution should be rare, party actors may miscalculate their strength and pursue the path of intraparty conflict.

The intraparty brand-dilution game thus suggests that we should observe parties actively diluting their brand when (1) party leaders stand to make short-term electoral
gains from pursuing brand-diluting actions, and (2) party leaders expect to win an intraparty conflict. Thus, party leaders should rarely attempt to dilute their party’s brand. I argue that the circumstances of many Latin American countries following redemocratization and the debt crisis of the 1980s convinced party leaders that certain brand-diluting actions would be electorally advantageous. Moreover, party elites should rarely rebel against these actions, even though they hurt their long-term interests. Only in cases where actors miscalculate their chances of winning an intraparty conflict should we observe these infrequent events.

1.4 Research Design

My theory of party breakdown suggests a causal relationship between brand dilution and breakdown when brand dilution is interacted with bad incumbent performance. This relationship is expected to be mediated by the erosion of partisanship, such that brand dilution affects the degree to which voters identify with a political party, which in turn makes the party susceptible to breakdown. This dissertation employs a multi-method strategy to test the empirical implications of this theory. Individual-level analysis of observational and experimental survey data allow me to uncover the effects of party behavior on partisanship in the aggregate and to test the underlying causal relationship. Through case studies and matched-case comparisons, I also test the key aggregate implication of my theory, that brand dilution and bad incumbent performance are jointly sufficient for party breakdown. These case studies also allow me to also probe the implications of my intraparty bargaining model for the strategic choices of party leaders and party elites.
1.4.1 Survey Experiments

I begin the empirical portion of my dissertation by testing the micro-level implications of the model of individual partisanship for the effects of brand dilution. These implications lend themselves to direct testing with survey data. We could, for instance, test whether the degree to which respondents are able to differentiate among parties is correlated with their partisan attachments. According to the theoretical model, voters who are better able to differentiate parties should perceive clearer party brands and therefore be more partisan, controlling for other factors that predispose voters towards partisanship, such as advanced age or higher education.

The problem with this observational approach is its inability to overcome problems of endogeneity. Partisans are likely to view other parties as being particularly far away from their own party, suggesting the causal relationship between perceived polarization and partisanship is reversed. In other words, this approach suffers from well-known inferential biases and identification problems in demonstrating causality (see e.g., Green and Gerber 2003). In order to isolate and identify the causal mechanism, I turn to survey experiments (see Gilens 2002). By randomly assigning respondents to treatment and control, experiments make treatments exogenous from observed outcomes. Experiments thus allow us to identify causal relationships in situations that are fraught with endogeneity, where disentangling the direction of causation between two variables is all but impossible with observational data (Campbell and Stanley 1963; Druckman et al. 2006). Experiments can also provide some leverage for examining the mechanisms underlying causal relationships (Green, Ha, and Bullock 2010; Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto 2009).

I fielded a face-to-face survey of 1,198 voters in Argentina in 2009 in which I embedded two experiments. The experiments referenced political parties in Argentina, manipulating respondents’ existing partisan attachments by either cuing party labels or providing new information about parties. These experiments, along with additional survey
data, test the hypotheses generated by the individual-level model and adjudicate between the proposed mechanism and potential alternatives. The experimental manipulations are particularly useful because they allow for identification of the causal mechanism in ways that observational studies cannot.

1.4.2 Matched-Case Comparisons

While the survey experiments allow me to identify causal micro-level relationships, like many experiments they abstract from the natural environment and may be difficult to generalize. In order to address these limitations, I turn to the macro-level with six matched-case studies of parties in Argentina and Venezuela. One advantage of case studies is that they allow the researcher to trace causal processes in a manner that is empirically rich and politically relevant. Carefully selected and matched, case studies and their comparison also provide the analytical leverage to probe causal mechanisms and generalize inferences.

I study six cases of party-elections from my sample of party-election observations from 18 Latin American democracies between 1978 and 2007. The selected cases represent the full range of variation within the two key explanatory variables: whether or not brand dilution occurred in the prior electoral cycle, and whether the incumbent party’s performance was perceived to be good or bad. In this sense the method of case selection approximates what Gerring (2007: 97-101) calls the “diverse-case method.” Since the key explanatory variables are dichotomous, the arrangement of the selected cases can be illustrated with a $2 \times 2$ table, as in Table 1.3. The shaded bottom-right cell represents expected cases of party breakdown.

I selected the cases to allow for overlapping within- and cross-country matched comparison. Like Mill’s Joint Method of Agreement and Difference, this combination identifies sufficient causes (Gerring 2007; Mahoney 2007). The cases of AD 1988, AD 1993, and AD/COPEI 1998 in Venezuela were selected because they represent the only
Table 1.3: Cases and key explanatory variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incumbent performance</th>
<th>Brand dilution</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>AD 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>AD 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peronists 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td>Radicals 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AD/COPEI 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radicals 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

within-party set of observations for which both brand dilution and bad performance vary over the time period.\textsuperscript{40} Matching cases within the same party over time provides a kind of matched most-similar case design (Gerring 2007: 131-9), or what George and Bennett (2005) refer to as a “controlled comparison” (c.f. Przeworski and Teune 1970). Such a comparison controls for the institutional factors that do not differ between the cases, providing strong inferential leverage. This also allows for the longitudinal comparison of AD at three time periods, providing “before-and-after” comparisons (see George and Bennett 2005: 166-7) – a particularly powerful most-similar systems design.\textsuperscript{41}

The paired comparisons of AD 1988-1993 and 1993-1998 also provide crucial analytical leverage by comparing on- with off-diagonal cases. Such comparisons can establish that the explanatory variables are not individually sufficient causes. Comparing AD in 1988 and 1993 tests whether brand dilution on its own is a sufficient condition for breakdown in a particularly controlled setting, the same party over time. The Radical party in Argentina also provides such a within-party before-and-after comparison; indeed, it is the only party in the region that faced two economic crises while in power on two separate occasions during the sample period. Comparing the Radicals in 1989 and 2003 allows for a within-party test of whether bad performance on its own is a sufficient

\textsuperscript{40} AD and COPEI entered what was interpreted as a coalition in the late 1990s and are therefore treated here as a single case.

\textsuperscript{41} In these comparisons I pay particular attention to the confounding potential of maturation effects and history (Campbell and Stanley 1963).
condition for breakdown. A useful comparison to the Radicals in 2003 is the Peronists in
1995, a within-country comparison that provides an additional test of whether brand
dilution is a sufficient condition for party breakdown. Similarly, the comparison of AD in
1993 and AD/COPEI in 1998 provides a within-country comparison to test this
sufficiency condition in a different context. Thus the three cases in each country allow for
two types of within-country comparisons: both across parties and within a party over time.

Across the two countries, comparing AD and the Radicals provides a
most-different case design Gerring (2007: 139-44), allowing me to identify whether the
proposed explanatory variables are general causes of party breakdown. Argentina and
Venezuela vary on a range of institutional and sociodemographic variables (see Table 1.4.
Perhaps more importantly, AD and the Radicals also differ significantly. While the
Radical party is a historically middle-class party with few labor ties, AD is a labor-based
and traditionally statist party more comparable to the Peronists.

Table 1.4: Comparison of Argentina and Venezuela, c. 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Venezuela</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource dependence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>34.7 million</td>
<td>22.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic fragmentation</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Decentralization is measured as subnational government expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure. Resource dependence is measured as the proportion of GDP due to oil rents. Poverty rates are expressed as proportions of the total population. Ethnic fragmentation is measured as one minus the Herfindahl index of ethnolinguistic group shares of the population. Sources: Alesina et al. (2003); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; Global Financial Statistics; World Development Indicators.

These cases also represent the range of variation on the key variables in the
intraparty bargaining portion of the theory: whether party leaders’ short-term electoral and
long-term brand incentives conflict and, where these conflicting incentives do emerge,
whether they are strong enough to withstand reprisals by party elites. In two cases (AD 1988 and Radicals 1989), short-term electoral incentives and brand incentives did not appear to conflict for party leaders, while they did in the other four cases. Among these latter cases of conflicting incentives, three (Peronists 1995, AD/COPEI 1998, Radicals 2003) were characterized by popular party leaders who could not easily be forced to change course. One case (AD 1993), on the other hand, is characterized by a relatively weak party leader who overestimated his political capital.

In each case study, analysis proceeds through process tracing (Bennett 2008; George and Bennett 2005). I employ two strategies to account for potential biases in sources for these case studies. The first is to diversify the types of evidence used to make inference. My sources thus include historical polling data, legislative roll-calls, primary and secondary publications (including scholarly work, newspaper reports, and published memoirs), and open-ended interviews with political actors and observers from the relevant period. The second strategy is to use this diversity of evidence to triangulate questions about specific events or actor motivations. I also use these case studies and comparisons to engage with some of the alternative explanations of party breakdown introduced by previous studies.

1.5 Layout of the Dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the theory of party breakdown. I formalize the branding model of partisanship and vote choice and derive its implications for partisanship at the individual and aggregate levels. The model also yields hypotheses about the types of party actions expected to be dilute party brands and the interactive effect of brand dilution and poor performance on party breakdown. I then ask why political parties diluted their brands in Latin America and
develop the model of intraparty bargaining to explain why parties sometimes engage in brand-diluting behaviors.

Chapter 3 presents the first set of empirical tests of these theoretical implications. I analyze two experiments embedded in a 2009 survey of Argentine voters. The experiments help to identify the hypothesized causal mechanisms underlying the branding model of partisanship at the individual level.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the heart of my empirical evidence by analyzing and comparing six party-election cases from Argentina and Venezuela. These case studies rely on a variety of data sources to trace the strategic choices of party actors and the effects of brand maintenance or dilution on aggregate partisanship. The matched comparisons of these cases, within and across both parties and countries, test the sufficiency conditions of my theory of party breakdown.

Finally, Chapter 6 reviews the major findings and discusses their implications for our understanding of partisanship, party competition, the internal dynamics of parties, and the lasting impacts of politicians’ responses to crises. The concluding chapter also briefly outlines the post-breakdown development of party politics in Argentina and Venezuela and discusses questions about partisanship and party breakdown that merit further research.
Chapter 2

Theory of Party Breakdown

“There are periods in which the heat of partisan debate slackens and becomes almost perfunctory, and the positions of the parties become relatively indistinct on basic issues. In times such as these, even the person sensitive to a range of political philosophies may not feel this knowledge to be helpful in an evaluation of current politics.”
– Campbell et al. (1960: 256)

“Political executives pursue substantive policy objectives when they feel secure in office, but at moments of political crisis the balance between survival and substance tips toward survival.”

Between 1978 and 2007, one third of Latin America’s nationally competitive parties broke down, meaning that they suffered a sudden and dramatic electoral defeat that durably relegated them to uncompetitiveness. Some of these parties were over a century old; they had survived cycles of economic boom and bust, violent authoritarian interludes, guerrilla insurgencies, and revolutionary movements. Many of these parties had played leading roles in bringing millions of Latin Americans into politics and had generated such deep loyalties that hundreds of people went to jail in their defense. And yet, in recent years these parties suddenly broke down.
Scholars often attributed these party breakdowns to poor economic performance by incumbent parties, a phenomenon that also frequently plagued the region over the past three decades. But bad incumbent performance is far more widespread than party breakdown. And some parties have survived even major economic crises. Poor incumbent performance is important, but it is not the whole story. My explanation of party breakdown highlights the role of party brands in voter behavior. I argue that party breakdowns occur when two conditions are met: (1) the party’s brand is diluted, leading partisan attachments to erode, and (2) the party performs poorly in office. I define a party’s brand as the perceived prototypical individual or group of individuals thought to affiliate with the party. When a party’s brand is clear, voters form strong attachments to it, attachments that are resistant to retrospective evaluations. Once the brand is diluted, however, voter attachments erode and the party’s performance become more determinative of vote choice. Parties become increasingly susceptible to voters’ short-term retrospective evaluations, and when such dilution is accompanied by poor incumbent performance, voters defect en masse from established parties.

Researchers have long noted that party brands play a crucial role in the determination of vote choice. Voters may use a candidate’s party affiliation to estimate her true preferences, either because they lack information (Downs 1957; Popkin 1991; Shively 1979; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991), because candidates cannot make credible commitments (Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Snyder and Ting 2002), or because candidates have incentives to take ambiguous policy positions (Tomz and Van Houweling 2008). Similarly, parties seem to benefit when they maintain clear (as opposed to ambiguous) party brands (Heller 2001; Heller and Mershon 2005).

These authors employ a different definition of party brands. For Heller (2001: 35), party brands are constructed on the policy successes of a party in office. “In order to claim credit for a policy or an action,” he argues, “a party must be able to convince voters that it alone is responsible for the benefits therefrom.” A party’s ability to take credit for a particular policy is therefore improved (made clearer) when that party can enact the policy on its own. My theory shares with Heller the implication that alliances among parties blur their brands, but the mechanism is different and the types of alliances that blur party brands are more limited in my conception. Moreover, I do not expect party brands to translate directly into vote choice, as Heller does, but rather to be mediated by partisanship and retrospective evaluations.
most studies of partisanship have focused on the US, where party choices and party brands are relatively stable (Baumer and Gold 1995; Snyder and Ting 2002), we have yet to test many of the implications of our theories about the nature of party brands.

This chapter provides theoretical responses to two questions. First, how does the dilution of party brands affect voter behavior? And second, why do parties engage in actions that dilute their brands? To answer the first question, I will argue that party brands affect partisanship and, in turn, vote choice. Answering the second question requires a deeper understanding of the intraparty dynamics that allow the preferences of party actors to diverge under certain circumstances. I will suggest that the key to this understanding is distinguishing the preferences of party leaders and party elites.

2.1 Branding Model of Partisanship and Vote Choice

Social psychologists have long noted that individuals’ group identities are based on their stereotypes about a social category – that is, a category prototype – and how well they perceive themselves to resemble (or “fit”) that prototype (Hogg, Hardie, and Reynolds 1995; Lakoff 1987; McGarty et al. 1992; Turner et al. 1987). As Huddy (2001: 133-4) explains, “A prototype can either be the most typical group member – an actual person – or a fictional member who embodies the most common or most frequent attributes shared among group members. Individuals thus self-categorize into social identities by constantly shifting back and forth between their individuality and that identity. The more membership in a group maximizes similarities between an individual and other group members as well as differences with outsiders (a concept known as “comparative fit”), the more likely she is to identify with the group (Hogg et al. 2004; Turner 1999).

Like the theory proposed by Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005), my branding model of partisanship proceeds from this self-categorization notion of social identity.
Over the course of their lives, voters develop perceptions of partisan identities through their own observations of the party and its behavior (see also Baumer and Gold 1995; Rahn 1993; Sanders 1988). They learn what to associate with the prototypical Democrat or the prototypical Republican, in a learning process that can be approximated as Bayesian updating, and they use these prototypes to inform their identities. These prototypes compose what I refer to as party brands. Individuals identify with a party to the extent that they consider themselves similar to the party brand, considering themselves to be a party of what consumer researchers call a brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

My branding model of partisanship thus builds on the one hand on the theoretical insights of Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) and broader theories of social identity, and on the other hand on the Bayesian formalization employed by Achen (1992) and Grynaviski (2006, 2010). Against exogenous theories of partisanship as a social identity, I argue that voters learn about parties by observing party behavior, that partisanship can, in response to specific kinds of party behaviors, respond to short-term political events. I develop a model that formalizes this intuition and incorporates insights from social-identity theory about self-categorization and the importance of comparative fit.

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2 Although Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) informally describe (and find evidence for) partisanship as a social identity, their model operationalizes partisanship as a retrospective performance evaluation. Unlike these authors, I both theorize and model partisanship as a social identity. More importantly, my model builds in both uncertainty about party brands and differentiation between brands, important elements of social-identity theory.

3 As Aldrich (1995: 290) notes, “With many voters seeing the general outlines of partisan cleavages, and with the typical stances of candidates reinforcing them, the brand name often has meaning and value to the public.”

4 In the developing world, parties are often compared to sports teams and partisans to fans. This analogy is consistent with my theory of partisanship. Residents of a particular city or region identify geographically and see their local team as representing people like themselves, that is, fellow locals. To the extent that they continue to identify with their city or region of origin, this identification may not change even if they themselves relocate, since their place of origin never changes. But these identities do change dramatically in those rare instances when the team itself relocates. No longer the local team, but now representing locals of another city or region, the team no longer “resembles” individuals in its original locale, and they will no longer identify with it. The sports-team analogy, as I see it, thus stands in contrast to one comparing partisanship to religious affiliation, as in Campbell et al. (1960), which suggests an enduring lifelong identity.

5 Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2005) employ a special case of Bayes, the Kalman filter algorithm, in their model of partisan learning.
Against endogenous theories that model partisanship as a “running tally” of performance evaluations (Achen 1992; Fiorina 1981; Grynaviski 2006, 2010), I argue that voters conceive of parties as objects of identity, updating their perceptions of the party brand rather than its performance. The model proceeds in three stages, beginning with voter learning about parties. Next, voters use their perceptions of party brands in determining their partisan attachment, and finally the strength of this partisanship, along with valence, determines vote choice.

2.1.1 Voter Learning

Consider a multiparty democracy with $M$ parties. Voters develop a perception of a party’s brand over time on the basis of observations of party behavior. This brand is the perceived position of the party on the real line. I assume that this continuum is ideological, representing the standard economic left-right dimension. Thus, an individual who perceives the Peronist party brand as statist – that is, that the prototypical Peronist favors state-led developmental policies – would perceive the Peronist party to be on the left of the ideological continuum.

Voters’ perceptions of party brands are determined by observations of the party’s behavior over time. That is, they observe what party elites say and do, placing relevant statements and actions on the salient ideological dimension. For a voter who observes $n$ statements and actions of individual party elites, the party brand is determined based on the collective reputation in Tirole (1996).

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6 In the Latin American context, the economic left-right dimension does seem to be the most salient (Huber and Inglehart 1995; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Rosas 2005; Saiegh 2009). One could also imagine the salient dimension being a social one like class or ethnicity (as in Miller, Wlezien, and Hildreth 1991), but in Latin America (as in many other contexts) these tend to map onto the ideological dimension (Kitschelt et al. 2010: 35-6).

7 I focus on national party brands since party breakdown is defined as a national-level phenomenon. For the sake of simplicity, I assume that national and subnational party brands need not be identical and that voters perceive national and subnational party brands independently. This does not seem wholly implausible – in the US, one could easily imagine a social conservative identifying more strongly with the Georgia Republican party than with the national party – although I do not know of any studies of partisanship that have examined this empirically.

8 I assume here that the actions and statements of individual party elites reflect for voters on the party as a whole. This is akin to the notion of collective reputations in Tirole (1996).

9 There is an implicit assumption here that all individuals interpret a given observation in more or less
actions by a party $m \in M$ – from actual legislative votes to statements by party leaders – denote her $j$th observation by $y_j$, where $j \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$. Voters observe some subset of the actions taken by parties in each electoral cycle – with more attentive voters drawing more observations from this distribution – and use these observations to update their beliefs about party brands. I assume that each observation $y_j$ is a random draw from a distribution of observable party actions with unknown mean $\mu$ and unknown variance $\sigma^2$. For simplicity, I assume a normal distribution of party actions, meaning that $y_j \sim iid \mathcal{N}(\mu, \sigma^2)$ for all $j$. Denote the sample mean of $y_j$ by $\bar{y}$.

Party brands also have some variance around them, which is also updated as individuals observe party behavior. We can think of this variance as the strength of the party brand, the precision with which it signals its position. As the variance decreases, voters become more certain about the party’s position, develop a clearer image of its prototypical partisan, and the brand becomes stronger, more informative, and more useful as a heuristic. As voter uncertainty about the party’s position increases, the party appears to be more heterogeneous, perhaps containing conflicting prototypes, and the brand

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the same way. There is much debate among scholars about the existence of partisan bias, that is, the effect of partisanship on individuals’ interpretations of political events (e.g., Bartels 2002; Carsey and Layman 2006; Converse 1964; Gerber and Green 1999; Zaller 1992). Indeed, the Michigan-School conception of partisanship suggested that partisan identities create a “perceptual screen” through which information is interpreted (Campbell et al. 1960). Still, the assumption of unbiased learning here seems reasonable for two reasons. First, recent studies suggest that these apparent biases may be of less consequence than previously thought. Prior (2007) finds that partisan biases may be an artifact of survey responses, showing that respondents can be induced to provide far more accurate responses. Particularly relevant to my purposes, Van Houweling and Sniderman (2005) find that partisan biases in vote choices are substantially attenuated when the position of the party is discordant with the party reputation. In addition, modeling bias as the discounting of discordant observations would simply slow the updating process, not change the comparative statics. As Franklin and Jackson (1983: 969) note, “Although previous partisan attachment acts to restrain change, it is like a sea anchor, which retards drift rather than arrests it entirely. If the tides of policy evaluation are strong enough, conversions can and will take place.”

10 Since the learning model applies equivalently to each party, all of the parameters should be subscripted for each party. I omit this for the sake of clarity for this portion of the model.

11 Voters’ observations of party behavior are likely determined by prior partisanship or by characteristics (say, membership in a union) that affect partisanship. Such bias might predispose voters toward observations that are consistent with priors (say, if a union touts the actions of a left party on behalf of workers) or, conversely, predispose voters toward inconsistent observations (say, if the union rails against a left party that has betrayed workers). In either case, this kind of bias does not alter the comparative statics derived from the model.
becomes weaker or diluted. During any particular electoral cycle, let \( k_0 \) denote the number of observations on which a voter’s prior beliefs about the party are based, such that at the end of each electoral cycle \( k_n = k_0 + n \). In other words, this is the amount of information the individual starts with \((k_0)\), learns \((n)\), and ends with \((k_n)\). Similarly, let \( v_0 \) denote the degrees of freedom in the uncertainty of the voter’s prior beliefs, such that \( v_n = v_0 + n \).

Voters update the party brand as they observe new information, so that the updated party brand (the posterior) combines prior and new information. The new perceived party position is a weighted average of the prior position and the average party position signalled by the new observations of the party’s behavior. In other words, voters have some conception of a party’s brand based on past experience, but they continually average in new observations of the party. For convenience, I assume that an individual’s prior belief about the mean and variance of a party’s position is represented by the normal-inverse-chi-squared distribution, such that the posterior and prior distributions are drawn from the same family of distributions. As a result, prior beliefs about \( \mu \) and \( \sigma^2 \) are given by \( \mu, \sigma^2 | y \sim N - \chi^2(\mu_n, k_n, v_n, \sigma^2_n) \), where \( k_0, v_0, \sigma^2_0 > 0 \). Decomposing the joint distribution of \( \mu \) and \( \sigma^2 \) into \( m(\mu, \sigma^2) = m(\mu|\sigma^2) m(\sigma^2) \), we see that the true distribution of party actions given its variance \( (\mu|\sigma^2) \) is normally distributed with mean \( \mu_0 \) and variance \( \frac{\sigma^2}{k_0} \). Here \( \hat{\mu}_0 \) represents the voter’s best guess about the position of the party at time 0 – that is, her prior – and \( \frac{\sigma^2}{k_0} \) represents the amount of uncertainty about that best guess. That uncertainty is based on the actual variance in the distribution of party actions \( (\sigma^2) \) and the number of observations on which a voter’s prior beliefs are based \((k_0)\). The uncertainty parameter \( \sigma^2 \) is inverse-chi-squared distributed along a prior scale \( \sigma^2_0 \) with \( v_0 \) degrees of freedom. Formally, \( \mu|\sigma^2 \sim N(\mu_0, \frac{\sigma^2}{k_0}) \) and \( \sigma^2 \sim \chi^{-2}(v_0, \sigma^2_0) \). Thus, the prior uncertainty about the party’s location is given by \( E[\sigma^2_0] = \sigma^2_0 \frac{v_0}{v_0 - 2} \). \(^{12}\)

\(^{12}\) Following Achen (2002), one could set up the model such that voters enter the electorate with no political experience and model their prior belief on the party attachments of their parents, a socialization process for which ample empirical evidence exists in the US and European contexts (e.g., Converse 1969, 1976; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Kroh and Selb 2009). I omit this very
I assume that voters obey the axioms of probability theory and Bayes’ Rule.\textsuperscript{13} Individual voters observe $y_j$ and use this information to update their beliefs about $\mu$ and $\sigma^2$. Given these assumptions, the voter’s updated perception of the party brand combines prior and new information. Formally, the joint posterior distribution of $\mu$ and $\sigma^2$ is given by $\mu, \sigma^2 | y \sim N - \chi^2(\hat{\mu}_n, k_n, v_n, \sigma_n^2)$, where

$$\hat{\mu}_n = \frac{k_0}{k_0 + n} \hat{\mu}_0 + \frac{n}{k_0 + n} \bar{y}$$

$$k_n = k_0 + n$$

$$v_n = v_0 + n$$

$$v_n \sigma_n^2 = v_0 \sigma_0^2 + (n - 1) s_n^2 + \frac{k_0 n}{(k_0 + n)(\bar{y} - \hat{\mu}_0)^2}$$

$$s_n^2 = \sum \frac{(y_i - \bar{y})^2}{n - 1}.$$

The new perceived position of the party ($\hat{\mu}_n$) is a weighted average of the prior mean ($\hat{\mu}_0$) and the average of the new observations ($\bar{y}$). The weights of the prior and new observations are determined by the amount of prior information ($k_0$) and the number of new observations ($n$). And the new estimate of the party’s position has a new estimate of precision ($\sigma_n^2$) determined by the voter’s uncertainty about the prior mean ($\sigma_0^2$), the ambiguity among the new observations ($s_n^2$), and the combination of old and new degrees of freedom ($v_n$).

Since the marginal posterior distribution of $\mu$ now has a student-t distribution, in expectation a voter’s updated perception of the party position is equal to the true party position. That is, $\mu | y \sim t_{vn}(\hat{\mu}_n, \sigma_n^2)$, meaning that $E_n[\mu] = \hat{\mu}_n$. The voter should expect reasonable setup from my model for simplicity, but including it would not affect any of my comparative statics.

\textsuperscript{13} Bayes’ Rule here need not accurately model psychological processes; indeed, psychologists have documented some violations of Bayesian updating, such as “cognitive conservatism,” the over­weighting of prior beliefs (Peffley, Feldman, and Sigelman 1987; Tetlock 2005). Still, as Bullock (2009) notes, the Bayesian ideal need only serve as a benchmark against which to judge empirical processes. And even if individuals do not actually use Bayes’ Rule in their everyday lives, it may be a useful and systematic way in which to model individual behavior and capture an interesting intuition (see Gerber and Green 1999).
that the true party brand \((\mu)\), after having drawn \(n\) new observations, is the weighted average \(\mu_n\). The marginal posterior distribution of \(\sigma^2\) has an inverse-chi-squared distribution, such that a voter’s uncertainty about her estimate of the party brand is, in expectation, a function of the ambiguity among her old and new observations of the party. Formally, \(\sigma^2 | y \sim -\chi^2(\nu_n, \sigma_n^2)\), and thus \(E_n[\sigma^2] = \frac{\sigma_n^2}{\nu_n - 2}\).

How quickly will voters update their perceptions about party positions? In this framework, a voter updates more quickly (1) the greater the amount of new information she observes \((n)\), (2) the greater the proportion of that new information that contradicts her prior beliefs about the party \((\bar{y} - \hat{\mu}_0)\), and (3) the weaker her prior beliefs about the party in the sense of being based on a small number of observations \((k_0)\). Her uncertainty about the party brand will increase (1) the more uncertain she is about her prior beliefs \((\sigma_0^2)\), (2) the weaker that prior uncertainty in the sense of being based on a small number of observations \((v_0)\), and (3) the more inconsistent the new information she observes \((s_n^2)\).\(^{14}\)

Note that this implies that a voter with strong prior beliefs (in the sense that \(v_0\) and \(k_0\) are both large) will be affected in opposing ways by new information that is inconsistent with these priors (Grynaviski 2006, 2010). On the one hand, she will update her uncertainty about the party brand more slowly than an individual with weak priors because her prior uncertainty is based on a large stock of past observations. One the other hand, she will update her uncertainty more quickly than an individual with weak priors the more the new information she observes is inconsistent with her priors. These countervailing forces are far from trivial since Bayesian updating models are often thought to suggest that individuals with strong priors update less quickly (Achen 1992; Bartels 2002). Such an interpretation is appealing in contexts like the US, where parties are typically consistent in their behavior over time. But in a context where new

\(^{14}\) Huber, Kernell, and Leoni (2005) show that these kinds of effects may be mediated by institutional contexts, which affect the degree to which voters are able to observe or distinguish party actions. Since my empirical analysis focuses on within-country change over time (partisan erosion), these institutional interactions are held constant.
observations of a party differ dramatically from past ones, voters with strong priors will update their uncertainty more quickly.

This first stage of the branding model yields two testable empirical implications. These are all-else-equal propositions, isolating the effects of individual features of the model while holding all the other variables constant. A first implication tells us about the rate at which different types of individuals in a population will update their beliefs:

**Proposition 1**: Individuals with weaker prior beliefs will update their perception of the party brand more quickly than individuals with stronger prior beliefs.

Individuals with strong priors base those priors on a larger number of prior observations ($k_0$ is larger). As a result, they weigh new information less heavily than prior information and need a larger number of new observations for their posterior belief to move away from their prior. In other words, individuals with greater political experience will update more slowly than those with little or now political experience. At least two kinds of individuals typically have less political experience – the young and the less politically informed – and might therefore be expected to update their beliefs about parties more quickly.

Since age proxies for political experience, older individuals’ have a larger cache of past observations of a party. This makes their prior beliefs about the party brand stronger and more resistant to change. Given new observations that are inconsistent with prior beliefs, older individuals will therefore update more slowly than younger individuals. This proposition is consistent with a large body of research that finds that party attachments become less flexible over the life course, as voters develop a kind of brand loyalty (e.g., Converse 1969, 1976; Greenstein 1965; Jennings and Markus 1984; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Lupu and Stokes 2010; Miller and Shanks 1996). Moreover, it is similar to the predictions generated by Zaller’s (1992) model of cognition, in which individuals maintain a distribution of considerations about parties from which they draw randomly to form opinions. To the extent that an individual processes new considerations, the
distribution of internal considerations may change, with that of younger individuals changing more slowly because of the smaller number of considerations they already have.

The same logic can be applied to uninformed individuals, with one additional caveat. Uninformed individuals, like younger ones, have weaker priors about party brands because they simply observe politics less frequently. Given a fixed amount of new information, uninformed individuals will therefore update more quickly than more informed individuals. The key here is the condition of fixed amounts of information. We could well imagine that more informed individuals are so because they pay more attention to party politics, meaning they both have stronger priors about party brands ($k_0$ and $v_0$ are larger) and are likely to gather more new observations of parties in the current period ($n$ and $k$ are larger). Bartels (2002) therefore suggests that these effects net out. However, if we control the amount of new information – as in an experimental setting – we should expect age and information to have the same effect of slowing the rate at which individuals update.

A second implication of the branding model pertains to the effects of different distributions of party observations on party brands:

**Proposition 2**: Uncertainty increases as observations of a party are inconsistent.

There are two ways in which party inconsistency can affect voter uncertainty. The first is what I refer to as *contemporaneous inconsistency*. When parties suffer from internal conflicts, individuals may receive inconsistent or conflicting signals from the party. These inconsistent signals will together make for an ambiguous set of observations by increasing the variance around the new observations $s_n^2$. This observed ambiguity will in turn generate a larger estimate of uncertainty, $\sigma_n^2$. Quite intuitively, then, as individuals

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15 This is the case with regard to beliefs about the party position. But, as already noted, the case for individuals’ uncertainty about that position is more complex. Here there are countervailing comparative statics suggesting that inconsistent observations make the more informed more uncertain.

16 I use the term ambiguity to characterize the object being observed – here parties – and the term uncertainty to characterize the individual’s state of mind.
observe conflicting messages from the same political party, they should find themselves more uncertain about the party’s true position.\textsuperscript{17} In contemporaneous inconsistency, then, a voter’s current observations of a party have a wide variance.\textsuperscript{18} 

A second type of inconsistency is \textit{intertemporal inconsistency}, in which the new observations are inconsistent with a voter’s priors about the party but may be consistent with each other in the sense that their variance is small. This would occur when a party attempts to reposition (or \textit{rebrand}) itself. Voters may – to take a well-known Latin American example – observe a party they thought was statist suddenly support free-market economic policies (Stokes 2001; Weyland 2002). The branding model predicts that such intertemporal inconsistency, which increases the distance between an individuals’ prior beliefs about the party and new observations of its behavior, will make voters increasingly uncertain about the party brand.

\subsection*{2.1.2 Partisanship}

Voters update their perceptions of party brands by observing the behavior of parties over time. In turn, party brands help determine how voters feel about parties. I assume that voters have an ideal point along the continuum on which they evaluate all the parties. Let \( x_i \) denote voter \( i \)’s ideal point along the real line representing this continuum. Now assume that voters behave strategically by taking into account the electability of a party (as in, e.g., Brady 1993-94). Put formally, each voter \( i \) has in mind an \( M \times 1 \) vector \( S_i = (S_{i1}, \ldots, S_{im}, \ldots, S_{iM}) \) in which each component takes a value of zero or one – one if

\textsuperscript{17} This result is similar to Grynaviski’s (2010) comparative static with regard to party unity.

\textsuperscript{18} This stylized model suggests that voters do not distinguish among factions within parties; put differently, the assumption here is that factions do not have brands that are independent of the party brand. In some settings (e.g., Uruguay), factions are highly formalized and essentially constitute distinct parties from the perspective of voters (Morgenstern 2001). However, for the purposes of the model I assume that voters do not perceive independent faction brands.
the voter thinks party $m$ could win the election and zero otherwise. I assume that at least one element of $S_i$ is nonzero, so that each voter believes at least one party is electable.

A voter will feel the greatest affinity with the party whose prototypical partisan she thinks she most resembles, relative to all other parties. As with other social identities, partisan identity is determined on the one hand by the resemblance, or fit, between the voter’s self-image and her image of the party prototype (Turner et al. 1987). Party attachments are therefore increasing in the voter’s perceived fit with the party (expressed formally by the distance between her ideal point and the party brand). Moreover, the more heterogeneous, or ambiguous, the party brand, the weaker that attachment since a voter will perceive less fit with the party prototype (Hogg et al. 2004).

Formally, let $y^m$ denote draws of voter types from the distribution of prototypical partisans of party $m \in M$. Let $\mu^m$ denote the expected value of these draws from the posterior distribution for party $m$, and $\sigma^{2m}$ denote the variance of this distribution. Using this setup, we can model resemblance as a function of proximity and uncertainty:

$$ R_i[y^m] = -(x_i - \mu^m)^2 - \sigma^{2m} \text{ for all } m \text{ such that } S_i^m = 1. \tag{2.6} $$

Substituting the voter’s expected values of $\mu$ and $\sigma^2$ from the updating model, we get:

$$ R_i[y^m] = -(x_i - \mu^m_n)^2 - \sigma^{2m}_n \text{ for all } m \text{ such that } S_i^m = 1. \tag{2.7} $$

A voter’s resemblance with a party prototype is a function of her perceived proximity to

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19 Put differently, we could say that a subset of the parties in the system are in an individual’s “consideration set” (Wilson 2008) and that she evaluates the positions of only these parties. Indeed, in multiparty settings many voters are unaware of the existence of the majority of very minor parties. More likely, voters consider some subset of the universe of parties that are particularly visible by virtue of their electability.

20 Recent studies have suggested some genetic predispositions for the strength of attachment (Hatemi et al. 2009; Settle, Dawes, and Fowler 2009), but for the sake of simplicity I do not include these predispositions in the current model. Indeed, the \textit{ceteris paribus} predictions of the model should not be affected by these predispositions as long as they do not interact with individuals’ assessments of resemblance.
the party – the distance between her ideal point and the party brand – as well as her certainty about the party brand. Resemblance is therefore increasing in the voter’s perceived proximity to the party and decreasing in her uncertainty about the brand. And voters do not consider parties they think are unelectable: when a party is thought to have no chance of being elected, \( S_i^m = 0 \).

We can model partisanship in continuous terms, denoted \( \gamma_i^m \). As an identity, partisanship should be an increasing function of a voter’s resemblance with the party prototype. As with other social identities, the strength of identification also depends crucially on comparative fit, the degree to which an individual feels she resembles the prototype of one group and differs from that of another group (Turner 1999). Put formally,

\[
\gamma_i^m = \min_{q \in M} \left( R_i[y^m] - R_i[y^q] \right)^2 \quad \text{for all } q, m \in M \text{ such that } S_i^m = S_i^q = 1. \tag{2.8}
\]

Thus, a voter will also feel most attached to the party closest to her that is also perceived to be far away from other parties. Conversely, if she perceives that she almost equally resembles her party’s prototype and another party’s prototype, her attachment will be very weak.\(^{22}\)

As with the voter learning stage, we can draw two more ceteris paribus empirical implications from the partisanship stage of the branding model. In particular, we should observe changes to partisanship as a result of changes in some of the key parameters of the model:

**Proposition 3**: Increased uncertainty about a party’s brand will weaken partisanship.

As uncertainty about a party (\( \sigma_n^2 \)) increases, voters will be less convinced that a

\(^{21}\) Of course, while we can think of partisanship as continuous in analytic terms, individuals no doubt use some threshold above which they are willing to call themselves partisans in response to survey questions.

\(^{22}\) Since theories of partisanship were generally developed for the US context, the difference between the two parties features in the models for reasons of convenience rather than on these theoretical grounds. I account for the fact that voters may be evaluating multiple parties.
particular party resembles people like them. Since partisanship is a function of resemblance, this will mean that they become less likely to feel affinity for that party. Both at the individual level and in the aggregate, increased uncertainty about a party’s brand will thus decrease partisanship.

Recall that uncertainty can be caused by either contemporaneous or intertemporal inconsistency. With regard to the latter, the model suggests that, given a party shift from its prior brand, voters will update their perceptions of the party’s position and their uncertainty about it. But the aggregate effect of such a shift on overall partisanship will depend on the distribution of voters throughout the political space. Given a uniform distribution of voters, for example, a party shift will lead some voters’ attachments to weaken and others’ to strengthen, since all voters now observe the new party position. Some voters realize that the party is further away from them than before, others that it is now closer. At the same time, all voters will be more uncertain about their new estimate of the party position, so aggregate partisanship will decline in the short term. This means that partisans are unlikely to switch directly from one party to another; rather, they

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23 The relationship between individuals’ policy attitudes and their partisan attachments is a complex one. Scholars have found evidence of both causal relationships: individuals sometimes change their partisanship to fit their policy preference, while at other times they bring those issue positions in line with their existing partisan loyalties (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Dancey and Goren 2010; Highton and Kam 2011; Layman and Carsey 2002; Levendusky 2009; Putz 2002). Carsey and Layman (2006) find that individuals change their issue positions to match their party when the issue is not salient to them. On an issue that is salient to an individual, she will change her partisan attachment to fit her issue position. I model partisanship on a single dimension that is salient to the individual, so I assume that party shifts along this continuum will lead individuals to change their partisanship. Moreover, my concern here is with situations in which party positions become uncertain rather than shifting decisively. In that sense, my theory models a prior condition for the partisanship-policy relationship: that individuals be able to identify the policy position (or brand) of each party.

24 If a party shifts closer to the median of a unimodal voter distribution, this increased uncertainty may be offset by the fact that the new position is closer to a larger segment of voters.

25 The model thus makes no specific predictions about the aggregate effect of intertemporal inconsistency on partisanship in the long run. The present model is simply not designed to predict how voters react to durable shifts in party positions, as when the US parties shifted positions during the New Deal era (see, e.g., Aldrich 1995; Sundquist 1983). Such a change is what Bayesians refer to as “regime change” and would require a more complex model to capture adequately (e.g., Jackson and Kollman 2007; Schofield and Miller 2007).
will detach from their party and become independents for some time before (perhaps) becoming partisans of another party.\textsuperscript{26}

The branding model also predicts that the distance between party brands will affect partisanship:

\textbf{Proposition 4:} Party convergence – that is, parties becoming indistinguishable – will weaken partisanship.

Partisanship is a function of resemblance with a particular party but also resemblance with other parties. That is, even when voters may be relatively certain about two party brands, their substitutability means that voters fail to form a strong attachment with either party.\textsuperscript{27} As major parties converge, voters become unable to distinguish one party brand from another, weakening partisan identities. The differences between their brands shrinks, making it less likely that voters will feel a comparative fit with one over the other. Party convergence thus weakens partisanship while divergence strengthens it; indeed, party divergence is a kind of product differentiation, whereby parties distinguish themselves from their competitors.\textsuperscript{28}

Voters may observe two different types of party convergence. In purely ideological terms, voters may observe that different party brands are indistinguishable because actors from different parties support the same kinds of policies. In more political terms, voters may observe different parties entering into formal or informal alliances, signals that they are willing to agree on some set of policies.\textsuperscript{29} To the extent that the policies in question

\textsuperscript{26}This process is consistent with some empirical evidence on partisan change (e.g., Schmitt-Beck, Weick, and Christoph 2006).

\textsuperscript{27}One could imagine a situation in which voters identify with blocs of indistinguishable parties rather than individual party labels, as has been suggested for the case of the Concertación in Chile (González et al. 2008). Of course, this kind of bloc-based identification is exceptional and may only apply where these blocs are as institutionalized as they are in Chile (Carey and Siavelis 2005).

\textsuperscript{28}Note that Carmines, McIver, and Stimson (1987) argue quite the opposite, that clear party positions – in combination with temporal distance from realignment and the rise of new issues – erode partisan attachments and cause dealignment. This expectation, however, does not seem to be borne out by recent empirical evidence linking elite polariztion in the US with increased partisanship in the electorate.

\textsuperscript{29}This type of convergence has an interesting corollary in studies of consumer brands and marketing.
are relevant to the dimension along which voters evaluate party brands, we would expect either type of convergence to dilute party brands and mute partisan attachments.\textsuperscript{30}

The degree to which inconsistency and convergence weaken partisanship will vary. At the individual level, those with weaker priors about party brands will update more quickly than those with stronger priors. In the aggregate, the degree of inconsistency and convergence as well as their visibility to the public will determine how much, and how quickly, aggregate partisanship erodes. In the Latin American context of the 1980s and 1990s, dramatic and public shifts in party behavior had immediate effects on aggregate partisanship. In more stable party contexts like the US, we expect to see stable party brands accompanied by persistent partisan attachments (Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2005).

Yet, even in more stable party contexts, inconsistency and convergence should, at the margin, affect aggregate partisanship. Recent studies have found that the polarization of US political elites in recent decades has been associated with an increase in partisanship among voters (see Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Brewer 2005; Hetherington 2001; Levendusky 2009). Similar associations have also been found in other advanced democracies (Holmberg 1994; Schmitt and Holmberg 1995). From the perspective of my branding model of partisanship, elite polarization – that is, party divergence – has made it easier for voters to distinguish party brands, strengthening partisanship.

\textsuperscript{30} The notion of party convergence via alliances is akin to the concept of party cartels proposed by Katz and Mair (1995, 2009) for Western Europe, with two notable differences. Katz and Mair see party cartels as the result of a long-term maximization strategy by politicians in mainstream parties. My theory, on the other hand, suggests precisely the opposite: convergence, given its detrimental long-term implications for parties, is the result of short-term strategies. The party cartel thesis also implies that established parties will exclude new parties and outsider politicians, whereas in my theory convergence yields dealignment, party fragmentation, and electoral opportunities for outsiders (for a critique of the party cartel thesis, see Kitschelt 2000).
2.1.3 Vote Choice

Partisan attachments strongly influence the choices individuals make at the ballot box (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2005). But a simple model of vote choice suggests that non-partisans will rely instead on valence issues to determine vote choice. Valence issues are those on which all voters hold the same position, as with, for instance, economic prosperity or corruption. There is no constituency of voters who prefer economic decline or favor increasing corruption. Rather, voters agree about these issues and all parties take the consensus position, in these examples being for economic prosperity and against corruption. The difference among parties is the degree to which some are seen as more competent on a particular valence issue than others. Some parties may be viewed as weaker on fighting corruption, others as more competent stewards of the economy, either because of the particular qualities of their leaders or by the successes and failures of their tenure in government. As Stokes (1992: 148) notes, “in valence politics nothing succeeds like success, or fails like failure.” Importantly, a party’s score with regard to valence is independent of its forward-looking policy proposals.

Let $v^m$ represent party $m$’s score on some valence issue. Recall that $\gamma^m_i$ is a parameter describing the strength of a voter’s identification with party $m$, which we can normalize to be in $[0, 1]$. Then voter $i$ casts her ballot for the party $p \in M$ that satisfies:

$$\gamma^m_i + v^m(1 - \gamma^m_i) \geq \gamma^p_i + v^p(1 - \gamma^p_i) \text{ for all } m, p \in M$$ (2.9)

Voters evaluate parties both in terms of the strength of their attachment to that party and in terms of that party’s score on some valence issue.\(^\text{31}\) Parties can gain votes either by

\(^{\text{31}}\) One could imagine an extension of the model in which valence is also learned over the course of a voter’s political experience. This would certainly be consistent with the issue ownership theory in which party reputations of this kind evolve over time (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). However, the particular valence issue in which I am interested here is economic performance and there is good reason to think that voters base retrospective evaluations of economic performance primarily on the immediate past (Achen and Bartels 2005).
increasing their score \((v^m)\) on a salient valence issue or by increasing the strength of voters’ attachments to the party \((\gamma_i^m)\).\(^{32}\)

In the particular application to Latin America, I focus on economic performance as the salient valence issue that determines voting by non-partisans.\(^{33}\) This is of course a very stylized and simplified model of vote choice that omits a variety of other factors that we know influence voting decisions, including campaign promises, candidate qualities, and strategic voting. This seems reasonable in the interest of parsimony and given that economic performance is particularly salient in Latin America, where boom and bust cycles prevail and economic crises are relatively common. Indeed, the assumption of a tradeoff between partisanship and economic retrospection is consistent with much conventional wisdom about Latin American politics. Scholars often observe that Latin American voters base their decisions on either deep-seated identities or volatile performance evaluations (Gervasoni 1999; Madrid 2005) and there is considerable evidence that good economic performance is rewarded at the polls (Benton 2005; Morgan Kelly 2003; Murillo, Oliveros, and Vaishnav 2010; Remmer 1991; Samuels 2004b).\(^{34}\) Others, concerned with the institutionalization of Latin American party

\(^{32}\) The role of valence here differs somewhat from its use in other studies. Previous scholars have theorized valence issues as having equal weight among all voters in any particular election (e.g., Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000; Aragonès and Palfrey 2002, 2004; Schofield 2003, 2004), whereas my model supposes that valence is weighted in inverse proportion to partisanship. Although both assumptions are stylized abstractions, it seems more reasonable to think of the importance of valence in individual vote choice as varying across the electorate. My use of valence also seems more consistent with its original conception (Stokes 1963, 1992). As Stokes (1992: 158) writes, “The trend towards valence politics is plainly correlated with the weakening of the old-time party loyalties, which were rooted in strong position issues.”

\(^{33}\) As Butler and Stokes (1969: 392) note, “The type of connection that has dominated both academic and more popular views of the electorate’s response to the economy is one under which voters reward the Government for the conditions they welcome and punish the Government for the conditions they dislike. In the simplest of all such models the electorate pays attention only to the party in power and only to conditions during its current tenure of office.”

\(^{34}\) Johnson and Ryu (2010) find that the degree of economic voting in Latin America is conditioned by policy switches. Where presidents broke campaign promises, economic voting plays a greater role in determining vote choice. The authors explain this conditioning effect as the result of policy-switchers more explicitly campaigning on economic performance, raising the salience of economic issues. I would explain their finding as a result of the erosion of partisanship following policy switches.
systems, have pointed to the lack of partisan identification as a source of electoral volatility (e.g., Mainwaring and Scully 1995b).

This, then, provides a final empirical implication of the branding model:

**Proposition 5**: Parties become increasingly susceptible to valence evaluations as their partisan ranks erode. In the Latin American context, the erosion of partisanship will be accompanied by increased economic voting.

The degree to which valence affects vote choice depends on the degree to which the voter identifies with the party. As voters become more attached to a party, they will discount valence. As they become less attached, valence will become an increasingly important determinant of vote choice. To use the terms of Hirschman (1970), partisans will support their party out of loyalty while non-partisans exit. And loyalty “can serve the socially useful purpose of preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative, as it so often does when there is no barrier to exit” (79).

This three-stage branding model of partisanship and vote choice builds on existing conceptions of partisanship and theories of social identity. But formalized as a Bayesian updating process, my model suggests novel empirical implications regarding both the relationship between party behavior partisanship and the erosion of partisanship. Taken together, the model also provides a novel explanation for the breakdown of political parties. In particular, my model posits that diluting a party brand erodes partisan attachments and that a diminished pool of partisans in the electorate makes parties more susceptible to retrospective evaluations. When a party dilutes its brand through

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35 In his interpretation of Stokes (1963), Sartori (1976: 330-331) suggests that a voter’s party identification determines her image of each party and therefore how she scores each party on valence issues. This seems reasonable, although as Stokes (1992) later noted, identification is but one determinant of valence positions. Particularly in contexts of dramatic economic failures, it is difficult to imagine that even the staunchest identifiers with the incumbent party could score their party positively. Thus, one interpretation of my use of valence here is that it refers to those aspects of valence determined by factors exogenous to party identification.

36 Most two-candidate models of voting that include valence terms find that valence becomes more important relative to candidates’ policy positions as these positions get closer together (see e.g., Groseclose 2001; Stokes 1992), an implication that is also consistent with my model.
inconsistency or convergence, attachments in the electorate will erode and the party will lose its stable partisan base. Without the stable support of partisan voters, parties become increasingly susceptible to voters’ short-term retrospective evaluations. The breakdown of established political parties thus occurs when the dilution of the party’s brand increases the ambiguity surrounding voters’ perceptions of what the party stands for. And when such dilution is followed by poor incumbent performance, voters defect en masse from established parties.

2.2 Intraparty Bargaining and Brand Dilution

My branding model suggests two ways in which party brands become diluted: inconsistency and convergence. But if aggregate partisanship in the electorate is linked to the strength of the party brand, parties always have incentives to maintain relatively strong party brands and to differentiate themselves from one another.\textsuperscript{37} If parties have the long time-horizons usually ascribed to them, they prefer to avoid inconsistency and convergence in order to maximize the stable voter base that partisanship provides.

We might therefore ask why parties would ever engage in brand-diluting behaviors.\textsuperscript{38} I argue that the answer lies in the fact that parties are not unitary actors (Laver and Schofield 1990), so while all actors within the party receive a long-term benefit from a strong party brand, some actors may receive a greater short-term electoral benefit from behaviors that dilute the brand.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, under certain circumstances,

\textsuperscript{37} This does not mean that ambiguity about a party’s position is always detrimental. Scholars disagree about whether voters in fact prefer less ambiguity (Alesina and Cukierman 1990; Bartels 1986; Glazer 1990; Page 1976; Shepsle 1972; Tomz and Van Houweling 2009). In my framework, the optimal level of ambiguity for a given party will be a response to the strategic choices of other parties in the system. Developing such a strategic interaction theoretically is beyond the scope of this study but surely merits further attention.

\textsuperscript{38} In some instances, one party’s brand can be diluted by the actions of another party. Convergence among two parties need only be the result of an ideological shift by one of them.

\textsuperscript{39} Like previous scholars, I use a Schumpeterian definition of a political party as an organized group of individuals vying under the same label for public office through contested elections (Downs 1957; Sartori 1976; Strøm 1990).
inconsistency and convergence may become equilibrium outcomes of bargaining between party actors who prefer a strong party brand and those who prefer to dilute it. We must therefore turn our attention from the party as a unitary actor – as it is typically seen by voters – to the party as itself a complex organization with multiple types of actors (see Sartori 1976).

To specify the conditions under which we should expect parties to engage in brand-diluting behaviors, I propose a simple model of intraparty interactions. I distinguish two types of party actors with differing incentives. A simple sequential bargaining game between these two actors illustrates the circumstances in which these differing incentives conflict, and how each actor might be expected to behave. Although the model is simple, it yields predictions that can be tested empirically and is therefore a useful way to approach the question of intraparty bargaining over brand dilution.

2.2.1 Party Leaders and Party Elites

To better understand the dynamics that lead parties to behaviors characterized by inconsistency and convergence we need to distinguish the incentives of different party actors. We need to know something, for example, about the motivations of party leaders who choose to dilute the party brand. But we also need to know about the preferences of party elites, lower-level career politicians who may sometimes allow party leaders to dilute the party brand.

Models of party organization traditionally distinguish between elected party elites and rank-and-file activists (e.g., Duverger 1972; Key 1958; May 1973; Michels 1959; Ostrogorski 1892; Schofield 2008; Tsebelis 1990). The voluntary nature of party activism, many of these models posit, means that it attracts zealots for whom “principles not professional careers are what matter” (Epstein 1960: 385).40 This generates the classic

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40 That party activists – defined as rank-and-file (non-elected) party members – are in fact ideologically extreme has been contested (Kitschelt 1989, 1994; Norris 1995; Rose 1962). I simply build on the insight from these models that different party actors may have diverging incentives.
intraparty conflict between principled activists who control party nominations and party elites who, in order to win elections, must appeal to the more moderate median voter.

In the Latin American context, party activists have far less control over the party to make their ideological commitments particularly important. Parties in Latin America typically do not have dues-paying members or a substantial number of volunteer activists. Instead, those individuals who regularly mobilize on behalf of the party – referred to in Spanish as militantes (militants) – are usually local operatives who receive some kind of remuneration from the party (Calvo and Murillo 2007), like the party brokers engaged in cultivating relationships and buying votes in their neighborhoods (see Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes 2004; Stokes 2005). Although some may have ideological ties to the party, militantes exercise little to no control over the party leadership, a key characteristic of the rank-and-file activists in classic party models.

Moreover, parties in Latin America compete within presidential systems of government. As a result, those parties that are nationally competitive tend to focus on maximizing votes rather than office or policy. This is because the winner-take-all nature of presidential elections means parties must gain the support of a significant proportion of the electorate. The importance of the executive office – both for its coattail electoral effect and its access to resources – provides enormous incentives for parties to be “presidentialized” (Samuels 2002; see also Ames 1987). Within these institutional settings, party actors, particularly the career politicians on which I focus, are primarily concerned with electoral motivations rather than policy agendas.

I distinguish two types of party actors, who I will refer to as party leaders and party elites. I assume that both party leaders and party elites are equally interested in maximizing votes. The difference between them lies instead in their time horizons, that is,

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41 On the distinctions and tradeoffs between parties’ vote, office, and policy objectives, see Strøm (1990).
42 These effects may also be self-reinforcing, as parties in such systems may promote and nominate types of individuals likely to win public support rather than those likely to pursue party objectives, as a prime minister might (Samuels and Shugart 2010).
the extent to which they value electoral consequences in the future. In this way, my theory of intraparty bargaining is akin to overlapping generations models of organizations (e.g., Cremer 1986). In these models, the preferences and strategies of junior and senior members of an organization differ and may, under certain conditions, conflict. With specific application to parties, Alesina and Spear (1988) suggest that younger party actors have longer time-horizons since they seek to compete in future elections, whereas older party actors are nearing the end of their careers. These authors thus develop a model in which junior party actors are able to discipline senior actors even if these latter do not intend to seek reelection.^[43^]

I define party leaders as party actors who hold decision-making veto power. These individuals are typically the head of the party organization or, in cases when the party controls the executive, the president. These are individuals whose actions are highly visible to the public and whose decisions need not be approved within the party organization before they are taken.^[44^] The generational distinction between party leaders and party elites highlights the fact that party leaders have short-term electoral interests. Presidents face immediate reelection; if they fail to win the next election they will likely be forced to retire.^[45^] When the party is out of power, the party leader looks to the next election for the opportunity to win the presidency. But like an incumbent president, a

[^43^]: In Alesina and Spear’s model, senior politicians are at the end of their careers in the sense that they are not seeking reelection. For them, politicians seeking reelection will commit to an electorally optimal platform, whereas senior politicians not seeking reelection will pursue their own ideological preferences. This is starkly at odds with most distinctions between party leaders and party activists, in which the former are seen as electorally motivated, the latter more ideological. My model, however, differs from both conceptions: I distinguish senior and junior party actors not by their motivations but by the rate at which they discount future utility.

[^44^]: As Crisp (1997: 172) notes, “Directly elected presidents are rarely bound by party discipline because their separate origin and survival relative to the legislative branch, method of nomination and election, and frequent restriction on reelection free them from any mechanisms that parties might have for inducing compliance.”

[^45^]: In most Latin American countries, presidents face only consecutive term limits, but are allowed to run in future elections (Carey 2003). Still, beyond the short-term, a president runs the risk of being overshadowed within her party by her successor. Presidents also care about their place in history.
party leader who loses a presidential race will likely be forced to resign the party leadership and retire.

Since presidents and party leaders look almost exclusively to the next election for their career ambitions, they have little use for party brands. As Alesina and Spear (1988: 359) note, “[a] politician at the end of her career may have no incentive to follow policies which are beneficial to her party.” After all, the number of a party’s partisans never constitutes a majority, but presidents who perform well in office can expect to win over non-partisan voters. Indeed, presidential election outcomes are determined by non-partisan voters, for whom the important factor is valence. Thus party leaders prioritize a positive valence over a strong party brand.

I define party elites as those party actors May (1973) calls “sub-leaders,” that is, career politicians working their way up the ranks of the party hierarchy. These actors may be legislators elected on party lists or members of party staffs or committees. Party elites hope to rise through the party hierarchy to higher offices, working their way up the party list to actual seats in the legislature or to senior positions within the party organization that come with salaries and benefits (Mayhew 1974). They achieve this by demonstrating loyalty to particular party leaders or higher-level elites who appoint and promote them. If those party leaders win the presidency, party elites expect to be rewarded with offices within the government or in the state bureaucracy, positions typically better paid than internal party offices. Party elites are thus long-term oriented. They prefer to

46 Under some electoral rules, of course, a plurality of votes will suffice for election and one could imagine circumstances in which a candidate garners only the votes of her party’s partisans and wins. Still, this would be a very unlikely scenario, and anyway most Latin American countries have run-off rules that require majorities.

47 Many Latin American constitutions place limits on presidential reelection, but these limits have been repeatedly changed by popular presidents (Carey 2003), suggesting that even lame-duck presidents are motivated by the potential for reelection.

48 My distinction between party leaders and party elites parallels an older distinction between amateurs and professionals within parties (Hitlin and Jackson 1977; Hofstetter 1971; Roback 1975; Wilson 1962). But both elites and leaders in my model are career politicians.

49 This definition of party elites is consistent with more recent models of party competition (e.g., Aldrich 1995; Schofield and Miller 2007) and, like these models, posits that elites have political career ambitions.
maintain a strong party brand in order either to secure a proportion of the electorate for themselves in future elections or to ensure the longevity of the party organization in which they are building a career. In other words, they prioritize a strong party brand over positive valence.

We can express the utility function of each party actor $i$ as follows:

$$U_i = \delta_i(E + G - L) + (1 - \delta_i)(B - C - I)$$

(2.10)

Here $\delta_i \in [0, 1]$ represents the factor by which the actor discounts the future. $E$ represents the actor’s utility from her party’s current electoral prospects, which are increased by $G$ following some set of actions or events that are positively viewed by the electorate, decreased by $L$ following another set of actions or events that are negatively viewed by the electorate. The actor’s utility from the party brand is denoted $B$ and can be decreased by diluting the brand either through convergence $C$ or intraparty conflict $I$.

The crucial distinction between party leaders and elites is their differing time horizons, $\delta$. Party leaders look to the next election cycle, knowing that if they fail to gain the party nomination or, having attained it, the presidency, they are likely to lose their leadership position. They therefore discount the future almost entirely, meaning that $\delta_{\text{leader}} \approx 1$. Party elites, on the other hand, look to future election cycles, those in which they can compete for office. They therefore have longer time horizons, meaning that for them $\delta_{\text{activists}} \approx 0$.

In order to simplify the model, I assume that the utility costs of intraparty conflict are equivalent for both party leaders and elites, such that $L \equiv I$. This seems reasonable since we have no reason to think a priori that intraparty conflict is more costly for one actor than for the other. We can thus simplify the two actors’ utility functions as follows:

$$U_{\text{leader}} = E + G - I$$

(2.11)
Party leaders gain utility from behaviors that will improve their probability of election and lose utility from intraparty conflicts that signal incompetence. Party elites, on the other hand, discount such short-term calculation. In order to achieve their office ambitions, they prefer a strong party brand that implies some certain partisan votes and positive party valence. Thus, the strength of a party’s brand is more important to party elites than to party leaders.\footnote{A similar distinction is made by Corrales (2000, 2002b) between presidents and parties. Examining market reforms in Argentina and Venezuela, Corrales argues that intraparty conflict over market reforms emerged as a result of the choices of reformist presidents to neglect, rather than accommodate, their parties. My theory instead seeks to apply to a broader set of brand-diluting outcomes (besides intraparty conflict) and actors (opposition as well as ruling parties). Still, with regard to intraparty conflict and ruling party-president interactions, my model differs from Corrales’s in two important ways. First, I take presidential strategy as a choice to be explained rather than an exogenously given random variable. My model also provides parties with a choice of response strategies, rather than treating party behavior as an outcome of presidential strategy.}

### 2.2.2 Intraparty Brand-Dilution Game

Party leaders and party elites have differing utility functions, but when should we expect these differences to translate into party behavior or intraparty conflict? One way to think of the intraparty interaction between these two actors is as a simple sequential bargaining game. Through this exercise we can derive implications for the circumstances under which party leaders and party elites will diverge and conflict.

The branching diagram in Figure 2.1 presents the logic of the intraparty brand-dilution game in extensive form. At the first node, the party leader chooses whether to take a potentially brand-diluting action or not \((D, \sim D)\). As the branding model of partisanship demonstrated, these brand-diluting actions may entail inconsistent behavior, as in taking a position that is inconsistent with the historical party brand, or convergence, as in the formation of an alliance on salient issues with traditional rivals. If the party leader chooses not to pursue the brand-dilution action, the status quo is preserved. Under
the status quo, the payoff to the party leader is $E$, the payoff to the party activists $B$. For simplicity, I standardize these to zero.

If the party leader instead chooses to pursue a brand-diluting action, party elites are forced to choose whether to acquiesce to the leader’s action ($\sim R$) or rebel against the party leader ($R$).\(^{51}\) If party elites choose to acquiesce, the party leader receives the electoral boost $G$ from the brand-diluting action, while the activists incur the cost $C$ to the brand.

If party elites instead choose to rebel against the party leader, then the payoffs of the players are conditioned by a lottery $p \in [0, 1]$ that determines whether the party leader prevails in pursuing the brand-diluting action. If the party leader prevails, the payoff to her is the electoral benefit of the action minus the electoral cost $I$ she incurs as a result of damage to her public image generated by an intraparty conflict. In this scenario, party elites incur both the initial brand-dilution cost of the convergence and the additional brand-dilution cost of the intraparty conflict $I$. If, however, the party leader loses to the

\(^{51}\) Party elites are treated here as a unitary actor, as in many party models of leaders and activists, for the sake of simplicity. This assumes away the potential collective-action problems faced by party elites in confronting a singular party leader. One possible explanation for this practice is that problems of collective action are relatively minor among small groups with high capacity for monitoring and high reputation costs (Olson 1965), a context that perhaps characterizes party organizations.
party elites and is forced to rescind the brand-diluting action, she incurs only the electoral
cost from the damage to her public image. The victorious party elites now avoid the
brand-diluting cost of the convergence, but still incur the brand-diluting cost of the
intraparty conflict itself.

Assuming that information is perfect – meaning that party leaders and activists
know each other’s payoffs, know that they know each other’s payoffs, etc. – we can
readily determine the values of $p$ at which each of the outcomes of the game will obtain.
Party leaders will prefer to dilute if $p > \frac{L}{G}$, while party activists will prefer to rebel if
$p < \frac{C-I}{C}$. Thus we can expect the status quo strategy profile $[\sim D, \cdot]$ to emerge when
$p < \frac{L}{G}$, the intraparty conflict strategy profile $[D, R]$ to emerge when $\frac{L}{G} < p < \frac{C-I}{C}$, and
the elite acquiescence strategy profile $[D, \sim R]$ to emerge when $p > \frac{C-I}{C}$.

This simple game yields two useful comparative statics that can be tested
empirically.

**Proposition 6**: Party leaders will pursue brand-diluting actions when the
short-term electoral benefit of doing so is substantially large.

All else equal, the party leader is more likely to pursue brand-diluting behavior as her
chances $p$ of prevailing in an intraparty conflict increase, the electoral returns to
brand-dilution $G$ increase, and the cost $C$ to the party brand declines. Actions by party
leaders that dilute the party brand only marginally are unlikely to face significant
intraparty rebellion. Indeed, party leaders regularly engage in this kind of brand dilution at
the margins. Party leaders will engage in behaviors that are more costly to the party brand
(higher $C$) only when they entail a substantial electoral gain and are unlikely to be
overturned. Such circumstances should be relatively rare. In general, brand-diluting
behaviors should also be electorally detrimental to the party leader. Existing party brands
are the result of strategic party positioning over a long period of time, and leaders of
parties that are already nationally competitive typically find policies broadly consistent
with the party brand to be electorally advantageous.
Still, there are circumstances under which brand-diluting actions are electorally beneficial. In Latin America, two types of exogenous shocks can produce this kind of conflict between short-term electoral and long-term brand incentives. The first type of shock is political, as in a military coup or widespread rioting. In these situations, party leaders may need to protect democratic institutions by signalling the convergence of a wide variety of political actors. The search for political legitimacy during crises may call for a unified front among political elites, and perhaps even some kind of unity government, weakening the party brand but bolstering democratic institutions.

A second type of shock is economic. Party leaders may need to respond to economic pressures – whether in the midst of economic crises or in their anticipation – by pursuing policies that are inconsistent with their party brand. If they expect such policies to generate good economic outcomes in the short term, they have strong electoral incentives to pursue them (Stokes 2001), regardless of the cost to their party’s brand. Additionally, in many situations of economic crisis, Latin American party leaders – particularly those from traditionally statist parties – face credibility problems in attempting to enact market-oriented economic reforms. International investors may assume that reforms will prove fleeting and discount them, forcing leaders to go “overboard: the government will have to go much further than it would have chosen to in the absence of the credibility problem” (Rodrik 1989: 758). Doing so may require forging alliances with rival parties or signalling the abandonment of party traditions, but the enormous electoral payoff from good economic performance may nevertheless make these brand-diluting behaviors attractive to party leaders.

A second comparative static of the intraparty game predicts the response of party elites to brand dilution by the party leader:

**Proposition 7**: Party elites will rebel against the party leader when they strongly believe they can force the leader to change course.

Intraparty conflict over leaders’ brand-diluting actions should be rare. The costs of
intraparty conflict for both the party elites and the party leader are typically large, and intraparty conflicts themselves dilute party brands, making them unattractive alternatives for party elites. Indeed, party elites in this interaction are bound to incur some cost. For a party leader, the eruption of an intraparty conflict reflects poorly on her leadership skills and stands to hurt her electoral prospects. Yet, party elites may believe that the probability of the leader prevailing in an intraparty conflict is low if she is unpopular. If the cost of the leader’s brand-diluting action is also greater than that of the intraparty conflict, elites will rebel against the leader. This should be a fairly rare occurrence since leaders in these circumstances, anticipating the rebellion, will forego the brand-diluting behavior in the first place. But party actors may at times miscalculate their chances of prevailing in an intraparty conflict and pursue the path of intraparty conflict.

Distinguishing these two types of party actors and modeling their strategic interaction thus provides testable hypotheses about the circumstances under which (1) party leaders will behave in ways that dilute their party’s brand and (2) party elites will rebel against this behavior. In general, we should not expect to see party leaders dilute their party’s brand in significant ways, as short-term electoral incentives and long-term brand incentives do not conflict. Yet, I have suggested two exogenous shocks, economic and political, that could bring these incentives into conflict. These kinds of political and economic shocks were not uncommon in Latin American countries following redemocratization and the debt crisis in the 1980s. As a result, many party leaders in this period found brand-diluting behaviors electorally expedient, and party elites confronted the dilemma of rebelling against their leader or acquiescing to the dilution of the party brand.

52 The clearly inferior position of elites vis-à-vis leaders is consistent with research on political parties in Latin America (e.g., Martz 1992), given the general autonomy of party leaders and the outsized strength of the executive (Mainwaring 1990; O’Donnell 1994).
2.3 Summary and Scope

The theory of party breakdown I proposed consists of two parts. The first proposed a branding model of partisanship and vote choice with implications for the types of behaviors that lead to the dilution of party brands and erosion of partisanship. This model highlights the role of party brands, that is, voters’ beliefs about what a party stands for. Through a learning process that can be approximated using a Bayesian model, voters develop stereotypes about parties, basing their partisan attachments on these stereotypes, or brands. When party brands are clear, voters form strong party attachments that are resistant to negative valence evaluations. The dilution of party brands erodes party attachments and makes party breakdown possible when parties score poorly on valence, as in poor economic performance. In particular, party brands are diluted when parties are inconsistent or when rival parties converge and become difficult for voters to distinguish.

The second part of the theory asked why parties allow their brand to become diluted. In order to answer this question, I offered a model of intraparty bargaining that distinguishes between party leaders and party elites and highlights the circumstances under which we might expect to see party actors dilute their party’s brand. Party leaders have short-term interests, whereas elites focus on longer-term performance. Tensions between these two incentives become greater in times of economic or political crisis. In particular, the crises experienced by many Latin American countries during the 1980s and 1990s gave party leaders the incentives to pursue policy agendas they believed would lead to good performance in the short term, maximizing their chances of gaining political office. When this agenda required taking actions that diluted the party brand – like dramatic policy switching or forming strange-bedfellow alliances with traditional rivals – party leaders put their individual gains ahead of the long-term strength of the party brand.

Although the two models developed in this chapter are general propositions with potential implications for a host of research questions, they combine to generate specific expectations with regard to party breakdown. Combining these expectations, Figure 2.2
graphically presents the overall theory of party breakdown. Brand dilution occurs as a result of the intraparty dynamics generated by exogenous economic and political factors. In turn, brand dilution erodes partisanship in the electorate, making the party more susceptible to valence evaluations. In the context of a diluted brand, if the ruling party has a negative valence because of its poor economic performance, the party will break down. These propositions, derived in this chapter theoretically, serve as the hypotheses to be tested empirically in the next three chapters.

While I apply this framework specifically to the question of party breakdown and the Latin American context, the models themselves should apply far more generally. The branding model of partisanship has implications for the emergence and stable maintenance of partisanship as well as its erosion. These implications can be applied widely and tested in contexts where party brands are relatively stable. For instance, the model implies that partisanship should be associated with an ability to distinguish among competing major parties, a proposition that could be tested at the individual level in stable party systems.

Figure 2.2: Theory of party breakdown
The model also implies that certain institutional arrangements that arise in other contexts, like grand coalitions in parliamentary systems, should have brand-diluting effects.

The intraparty bargaining model proposed one key distinction between party leaders and party elites. This distinction is likely to apply primarily to presidential systems, since party elites in parliamentary systems are far better able to hold their leaders accountable. Similarly, parties in parliamentary systems will be more likely to maximize policy or office over votes, changing somewhat the distinction proposed here between party leaders and party elites on the basis of time horizons. Still, my model highlights the need to examine the differences between types of party actors, even if the salient difference in some contexts is not their time horizons. The model also emphasizes the role of economic and political crises in generating conflicting incentives among party actors. Given the broad range of economic and political crises that confront particularly new and developing democracies, this insight can and should be examined in a broad range of contexts.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{53} In this vein, Lupu and Riedl (2011) offer a theoretical framework for understanding how uncertainty – one aspect of the crisis-prone context facing developing democracies – affects the incentives and behaviors of party elites.
Chapter 3

Evidence from Survey Experiments

In the early 1980s, many Latin American voters identified with established political parties, having inherited these attachments from their parents. But during much of the 1990s Latin Americans gradually became less attached to these parties. In 1985, 64 percent of Argentines identified with either the Peronist or Radical party, that country’s two main rivals, but that number had dwindled to 15 percent by 2002. In Venezuela, a 1973 survey found that over 70 percent of respondents identified with AD or COPEI, but less than 10 percent still did so in 1997. When parties lose their partisans in this way, they become susceptible to breakdown. In order to understand party breakdown, we must consider the factors behind the erosion of partisanship that precedes it and makes it possible.

My theory of party breakdown included model of partisanship focused on the role of voter learning about party brands. The branding model suggests that certain party behaviors should strengthen party attachments while others erode them. In particular, party brands are diluted when parties are inconsistent or when rival parties converge and become difficult for voters to distinguish. Inconsistency and convergence make voters increasingly uncertain about party brands and less likely to identify with a political party.

This chapter examines the individual-level implications of the branding model.
against three sets of alternatives. The first set are what I refer to as exogenous theories of partisanship. According to these theories, partisan attachments are an “unmoved mover” relatively immune from short-term political changes. Partisanship tends to persist, like religious affiliations, rather stably over the course of an individual’s lifespan, through socialization and habituation (Campbell et al. 1960; Goren 2005; Green and Palmquist 1990, 1994; Key 1966; Miller and Shanks 1996). This lies in stark contrast to the implication of my model that observations of party behaviors can dilute party brands and weaken partisan attachments.

My model also differs from the endogenous view of partisanship as a “running tally” of party performance (Brody and Rothenberg 1988; Fiorina 1981; Franklin and Jackson 1983; Jackson 1975; Jennings and Markus 1984; Page and Jones 1979; Weinschenk 2010). From this perspective, partisan attachments are endogenous to political events: voters observe and evaluate party performance, using these evaluations to continually revise their expected payoffs from each party. While my model similarly posits that voters update their partisan attachments, I argue that voters conceive of parties as objects of identity, updating their perceptions of the party brand or stereotype rather than its performance.

A final alternative to my theory distinguishes partisanship in old and new democracies. According to this perspective, partisanship – and consequently vote stability – fails to develop in new democracies because politicians in democracies born after the emergence of mass media have no incentive to invest in party-building and fail to socialize voters into partisan identities (Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). If this perspective is correct, then partisanship in new democracies should be relatively vacuous and matter little to voter behavior (Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Samuels 2006). My theory, on the other hand, suggests that partisan attachments in new democracies – though less widespread and less strongly held – do contain meaning and substantively affect voter behavior. Consistent with prior work by
Dalton and Weldon (2007) and Lupu and Stokes (2010), I argue that partisanship develops in new and old democracies following the same behavioral process, but party behaviors in new democracies explain its observed weakness in these settings.

In this chapter, I test some of the empirical implications of my branding model against these alternatives. In particular, I examine the implications that convergence among parties sends an ambiguous signal to voters and that this ambiguity weakens partisan attachments. To do so, I embedded in a 2009 survey of voters in Argentina two experiments that manipulated respondents’ existing partisan attachments by either cuing party labels or providing new information about parties. Argentina is a useful case in which to investigate the dynamics of partisanship. Given the longevity of some of the existing parties, many Argentine voters have some prior beliefs about party brands. Nevertheless, these priors are generally ambiguous, given the process of brand dilution that took place over the course of the 1990s. Party brands in Argentina thus remain broadly malleable; as a result, if my hypotheses hold, the experimental manipulations employed here can be expected to identify the causal relationships.

3.1 Survey Design and Limitations of Observational Analysis

We typically test the individual-level implications of theoretical models using observational survey data. This allows the researcher to look for theorized associations while controlling for variables relevant to alternative hypotheses. In this context, such a survey analysis might begin by testing whether the degree to which respondents are able to differentiate among parties is correlated with their partisan attachments. According to my theoretical model, voters who are better able to differentiate parties should perceive clearer party brands and therefore be more partisan, controlling for other factors that predispose partisanship, such as age and education.
I conducted a face-to-face survey of voters in 2009 in the provinces of Córdoba and Santa Fe in Argentina (see Appendix 3A for further information about the survey).\(^1\) The survey asked respondents to place the eight major Argentine political parties on a 0-10 left-right scale. Thus we could approximate the degree to which respondents perceive differences between the parties as the distance on this scale between the two parties the respondent perceives to be furthest apart. In other words, we would be measuring the degree of polarization perceived by the respondent to exist in the party system.\(^2\) The question, then, is whether this perceived polarization is associated with partisanship, as predicted by the model.\(^3\)

Table 3.1 presents the results of this analysis, using a probit model with controls for a number of demographic factors typically expected to condition partisanship.\(^4\) Consistent with many prior studies, older individuals are more likely to express a partisan attachment (e.g., Converse 1969, 1976; Jennings and Markus 1984; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Lupu and Stokes 2010). Political information appears to be positively associated with partisanship. This is contrary to cognitive mobilization theory – which is typically cited in explaining the erosion of partisanship in Western Europe (Dalton 1984) – but consistent with studies of the US (Albright 2009; Campbell et al. 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996). Interestingly, santafesinos are significantly more likely to have partisan

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\(^1\) These particular provinces were selected for three reasons. First, both provinces maintain good networks of roads and public transportation for relatively easy access to both urban residents of the provincial capital cities of Córdoba and Rosario, and rural voters in surrounding towns and villages. Second, unlike in the more populous province and city of Buenos Aires, there are no major threats to personal security in Córdoba and Santa Fe, providing a more hospitable environment for interviewers. Third, Córdoba and Rosario are the country’s second and third largest cities, and the provinces’ distributions on demographic characteristics like gender, age, and education are similar to the national distributions (see Table 3.2 in Appendix 3A). Although the goal of the experiments presented below is to improve identification rather than generalize, I also consider this to be a reasonably representative sample.

\(^2\) This type of measure is similar to the one used by Berglund et al. (2006) in a related analysis (see also Schmitt and Holmberg 1995). One alternative could be the average distance between each dyad of parties; using this measure, the results are substantively equivalent.

\(^3\) For this analysis, partisanship is measured using the question, “is there a party you like more than others?” A later question more specifically tapping identification is not used here because it is considered the outcome of the experimental treatments discussed below.

\(^4\) Variable definitions and complete question wording are provided in Appendix 3A.
attachments, possibly due to the strong electoral presence of the Socialist Party in Santa Fe (see Bonvecchi and Giraudy 2008). Most importantly, though, perceived party polarization is significantly associated with partisanship.

The difference in the number of partisans between Córdoba and Santa Fe is almost entirely due to Socialist partisans.

For 74 percent of partisans the largest party-distance dyad was between their preferred party and another party.

Of course, an immediate concern with these results is endogeneity. Partisans may be more likely to view other parties as being particularly far away from their preferred party, suggesting that the causal relationship between perceived polarization and partisanship is reversed. In other words, the analysis suffers from well-known inferential biases and identification problems in demonstrating causality (see e.g., Green and Gerber 2003). These observational data of course also make it difficult to distinguish the hypothesized dilution mechanism underlying the association between perceived polarization and partisanship from potential alternatives.

In order to better identify causality and isolate the mechanism, I turn to survey experiments (see Gilens 2002). By randomly assigning respondents to treatment and

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6 For 74 percent of partisans the largest party-distance dyad was between their preferred party and another party.
control, experiments make treatments exogenous to observed outcomes. They thus allow us to identify causal relationships in situations fraught with endogeneity, where disentangling the direction of causation between two variables is all but intractable with observational data (Campbell and Stanley 1963; Druckman et al. 2006).

I test the behavioral implications of my theory using two experiments embedded in the 2009 survey of Argentine voters. Each survey experiment included four conditions – one control group and three treatments – meaning that four versions of the questionnaire were used. Respondents were randomly assigned to questionnaires, and standard randomization checks find no evidence that random assignment was abrogated. My analysis of the experimental results follows the convention of using difference-of-mean ($t$-tests) and difference-of-proportion tests to measure average treatment effects. These results are, however, corroborated with regression analyses in which the experimental treatment is included as an independent variable along with controls for gender, age, education, political information, and province (results reported in Appendix 3B).

The survey experiments test two important micro-level implications of the brand-dilution model: that convergence among parties sends an ambiguous signal to

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7 Ideally, respondents would be randomly assigned into each experimental condition in order to avoid potential spillover effects (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007; Transue, Lee, and Aldrich 2009). This was logistically impossible with a pen-and-paper questionnaire, but every effort was made to assign conditions so as to minimize such effects.

8 Table 3.3 in Appendix 3A reports the average age, gender, income level, and education of respondents in each condition. The similarity of these averages across conditions suggests that treatments were balanced in terms of observable characteristics and that assignment was random. Indeed, difference-of-means tests suggest no significant differences (at 95 percent confidence) between conditions on these characteristics. Further evidence is provided by using a multinomial logit to regress assignment into each condition on these same characteristics. A likelihood ratio test is statistically insignificant ($\chi^2_{(12)} = 15.18, p < 0.23$), reaffirming the balance among treatment conditions. Finally, an omnibus F-test following Hansen and Bowers (2008) found no imbalance ($\chi^2_{7} = 5.72, p < 0.57$).

9 The difference-of-mean tests reported here are two-tailed $t$-tests using Welch’s approximation to account for unequal variances between treatment groups. An alternative preferred by Keele, McConnaughy, and White (2008) is the Wilcoxon rank-order test, which relies on the median rather than the mean. My results are all robust to this alternative test, as well as to the Fligner-Policello rank-order test, which accounts for unequal variances between treatment groups.

10 There is some debate about the advisability of applying regression analysis to experimental data (see Arceneaux 2005; Freedman 2008a, b, c; Green 2009). In large samples like mine, however, authors agree that there is little concern of bias.
voters and that this ambiguity weakens partisan attachments. I test the first implication by examining the effect of providing partisans with incongruent party cues in an extension of the standard party-cue experiment. To test the second implication, I provide respondents with different types of information about the Argentine political parties – information that distinguishes parties from one another and information that blurs the lines between them – and examine its effect on their party attachments.

3.2 Party Convergence and Ambiguity: Party-Cue Experiment

The brand-dilution model assumes that partisanship in fact plays a role in political behavior in Latin America. Although analyses of individual country surveys show a strong effect of partisanship on reported vote choice in the region (e.g., Canton and Jorrat 2002; McCann and Lawson 2003), some scholars argue that such responses are either restatements of vote choice or completely orthogonal to actual voter behavior (Mainwaring and Scully 1995a; Samuels 2006). Indeed, political parties in Latin America are far less ideologically coherent than US parties, and the informational value of party labels may therefore be comparatively lower (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007).

I test this proposition using an extension of the party-cue experiment, which has been administered in the US (Arceneaux 2008; Bullock 2007; Coan et al. 2008; Cohen 2003; Goren, Federico, and Kittilson 2009; Kam 2005; Levendusky 2010; Rahn 1993) and other contexts (Brader and Tucker 2008b, 2009b; Merolla, Stephenson, and Zechmeister 2005; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). Providing respondents with party cues, these studies have demonstrated, provides information they can use to respond to survey questions (Brader and Tucker 2009a, b; Rahn 1993). Outside the survey context, cues like party affiliation reduce voters’ uncertainty about the candidate’s true preferences (Tessin
2006) and seem to increase turnout (Schaffner and Streb 2002; Schaffner, Streb, and Wright 2001). When presented with an unfamiliar policy initiative and told that Party A supports it, respondents who prefer Party A become more likely to support it (Brader and Tucker 2009a, b).

Prior to this experiment, respondents were asked, “is there a party you like more than others?” Those who answered ‘Yes’ were then presented with a list of eight major parties in Argentina and asked which party that was.11 For the purposes of this experiment, those respondents who said they liked a party are considered partisans.

Respondents were then introduced to a fictitious piece of legislation given the ambiguous-sounding name “Primary Education Restructuring Act.” The name of this fictitious legislation was chosen to ensure that the experimental manipulation did not interact with respondents’ priors: it was not associated with existing legislation or an existing political party, it could plausibly have been proposed by any of the Argentine political parties, and it should not elicit such widespread support as to leave no “room” for the party cue to exert a measurable effect (see Brader and Tucker 2010).12

I randomly assigned partisans to one of four conditions. Respondents in the control condition were simply told that this bill had been proposed in Congress (no cue). Respondents in a first treatment condition were told that their preferred party had proposed the bill (party cue). Respondents in a second treatment condition were told that their preferred party and a party with which it commonly allies both proposed the bill (congruent-alliance cue). Finally, respondents in the third treatment condition were told that their preferred party and a party with which it commonly competes both proposed the bill (incongruent-alliance cue).13 Each respondent was then asked whether they

11 The parties listed were, in order, Justicialist Party, Radical Civil Union, Progressive Democratic Party, Affirmation for a Republic of Equals, Recreate for Growth, Republican Proposal, New Party, and Socialist Party. An experiment in the pilot survey (see Appendix 3A) revealed that the responses using an open-ended format for this latter question yielded similar answers to those with this closed-ended format.

12 The same name for a fictitious legislative proposal was used by Brader and Tucker (2009a, b) in a more traditional party-cue experiment that included only the conditions I call “no cue” and “party cue.”

13 The identification of party allies and competitors was done using secondary sources as well as advice
supported, had no opinion, or opposed the Primary Education Restructuring Act.\textsuperscript{14} Respondents who did not have a preferred party were given the Peronist party cues under the assumption that this label would be most familiar to Argentines.\textsuperscript{15} However, following previous scholars, these non-partisan respondents are not included in my analysis. This is because in order to test the effect of cuing an individual’s preferred party, that individual must indeed have a preferred party.\textsuperscript{16}

These treatments tested two implications of the brand-dilution model. The party-cue condition tested whether partisan labels in fact serve as heuristics in a new democracy with considerable party fragmentation. If partisanship in new democracies is weak and qualitatively distinct from partisanship in developed democracies, party cues should have no effect on support for the policy; if partisanship in such contexts instead plays a similar role in political behavior in new and old democracies, then we should find that respondents in the party-cue condition were significantly more likely to support the fictitious legislation than those who received no cue.

The congruent and incongruent alliance-cue conditions tested the effect of party convergence. That is, does the inclusion of a second party label, specifically one that is typically at odds with the respondent’s preferred party, dilute the effect of the preferred

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\textsuperscript{14} In particular, respondents were asked, “Please tell me whether you personally support the Primary Education Restructuring Act. Do you support it, have no opinion, or oppose it?” Those who said they “support” or “oppose” were then asked whether they did so “strongly” or “not so strongly.” These questions thus yield a 5-point scale of support.

\textsuperscript{15} One could imagine randomly assigning these non-partisan respondents to parties (Brader and Tucker 2010), but this was not possible in a pen-and-paper interview.

\textsuperscript{16} A possible alternative is to use an individual’s parents’ partisan attachments to identify likely Peronists among those who do not claim a preferred party. Likely Peronists received the Peronist cues since they were classified together with all non-partisans. We could thus consider the Peronist cues given to likely Peronists as being a treatment. The survey did include items about parental partisanship, which is a well-known, strong predictor of partisanship (Greenstein 1965; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009; Jennings and Niemi 1981). Identifying likely Peronists as those respondents whose fathers and mothers both identified as Peronists, this alternative approach yields results that are substantively equivalent to those reported here. Note, finally, that among non-partisans who were not likely Peronists, the Peronist cues had no significant effects.
party cue? If so, this would show that contradictory party cues send ambiguous signals and generate uncertainty, as suggested by my theoretical model. Thus I expect the incongruent alliance cue to generate no effect.

Two alternative hypotheses seem plausible for the effect of the incongruent-alliance cue – a consensus/bipartisanship effect and a betrayal effect. First, voters may interpret incongruent alliances as a signal of policy consensus. A wide range of parties supporting a particular policy may be seen as an indication of consensus around that policy and a signal of its merits, an interpretation that should increase, rather than decrease, support. Similarly, voters may have a normative preference for bipartisanship – or the working out of partisan differences – and may therefore support the policy on this principle. Such effects should lead the incongruent-alliance cue to increase support for the policy. A second hypothesis might be that partisans become angry with their party for forming an alliance with a traditional rival. This hypothesis would expect the incongruent alliance cue to significantly increase opposition to the policy, as voters seek to punish the party for its betrayal. We should therefore see a negative effect of the incongruent-alliance cue.

A potential concern with this experiment is that the ambiguous and uninformative label used to refer to the fictitious legislation could generate responses that are particularly noisy or a particularly high proportion of missingness, either of which might hamper or bias causal inference. Consistent with prior research (Bishop, Tuchfarber, and Oldendick 1986), however, respondents were in fact very likely to stake a position on the fictitious and uninformative Primary Education Restructuring Act. Still, to mitigate this concern, I also conducted a second version of this experiment, one in which the fictitious piece of legislation was described rather than simply named, and some pros and cons made explicit. In this case, respondents were told about a proposal that “the government regulate underground landfills in order to avoid contamination of the water supply. Although the

\[17\] In the control (no-cue) condition, 82 percent of respondents provided an opinion about the Primary Education Restructuring Act.
program would protect the water we drink, the government would have to create a new tax in order to finance it.”

The results from the two versions of the experiment were substantively equivalent, suggesting that the ambiguity of the label did not bias the results.

### 3.2.1 Results and Discussion

Of the survey sample, 31 percent said there was a political party they preferred. By advanced-democracy standards this is a small proportion, but as already noted partisanship has declined significantly in Argentina in recent years. Indeed, when asked about their parents’ partisan attachments, 67 percent of all respondents said at least one of their parents identified with a political party (64 percent said at least one of their parents identified with either the Peronist or Radical parties).\(^{19}\) Of course, this erosion of partisanship forms part of the motivation behind the present study.

Figure 3.1 displays the results of the experiment. The lefthand panel displays the mean level of support for the fictitious legislation among respondents in each of the conditions. The righthand panel displays the more theoretically interesting results, the difference in mean level of support between each of the treatment conditions and the control (no-cue) condition.

The results of the party-cue condition show that party labels indeed significantly increased support relative to the control (no-cue) condition \((p < 0.018)\). This result is consistent with studies of partisanship in other contexts and lends no support to the contention that partisanship is qualitatively different in new democracies. Substantively, the effect of the partisan cue is quite striking. Simply being told that one’s preferred party supports a piece of legislation increased respondents’ support by nearly 0.5 on the 0-4

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\(^{18}\) As in the first version of the experiment, this fictitious proposal was designed to meet the same selection criteria already mentioned. As expected, a somewhat larger proportion of respondents in the control condition (94 percent) provided an opinion about the fictitious landfill proposal. Results from this second version of the experiment are available from the author.

\(^{19}\) The question wording was, “As far as you can remember, when you were young, did your father/mother identify with a political party?”
Figure 3.1: Results of party-cue experiment. In the left panel, values represent the average level of support for the legislation by treatment condition. Responses range from 0 (“oppose strongly”) to 4 (“support strongly”). In the right panel, values represent the differences in average support for the legislation between each treatment condition and the control (no-cue) condition. Black bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

scale – half the distance from “weakly supporting” to “strongly supporting” – a strong effect for a simple party cue. Even in the context of Argentina’s fragmented party system, party cues still serve as strong signals for partisans.

One could imagine that simply being given two party labels is confusing to respondents, perhaps because they do not know very much about parties other than the one they prefer. We could imagine that cuing any party in addition to the respondent’s preferred party – whether that additional party is a traditional ally or rival – will dilute the party-cue effect. The congruent alliance-cue condition tested for this possibility. If cuing any two-party combination dampens the party-cue effect, then we should see no effect of the congruent alliance cue. But the congruent alliance cue in fact had the same effect as the party cue ($p < 0.031$), and indeed the difference in support between these two conditions was not statistically significant ($p < 0.848$).\footnote{Moreover, the average treatment effects of the party-cue and congruent alliance cues were not statistically different from each other ($p < 0.882$). This is a difference of differences, such that}
generated by the party cue was not diluted by the presence of a congruent second party label. By itself, the presence of two party labels did not send respondents an ambiguous signal.

On the other hand, receiving the incongruent alliance cue did seem to generate uncertainty. Unlike the party-cue and congruent alliance cue, this treatment had no effect on support for the legislation relative to the control condition \((p < 0.857)\). Relative to the party-cue condition, the incongruent alliance cue significantly reduced support for the legislation \((p < 0.028)\). That is, the addition of an incongruent party label in this condition eliminated the party-cue effect, returning it to the control level. As expected, the convergence of parties typically considered rivals provided an ambiguous signal to respondents and eliminated the positive party-cue effect.\(^{21}\)

That the incongruent alliance cue proved uninformative to respondents is consistent with my expectation that such alliances among rival parties send ambiguous signals. This result also raises doubts about the two alternative hypotheses – that incongruent alliances would signal consensus or bipartisanship and lead to support (consensus effect) or that it would signal betrayal and lead to opposition (betrayal effect).\(^{22}\) Given that the incongruent alliance cue showed no significant effect, neither of these plausible hypotheses find support.\(^{23}\)

\[ M = |C_1 - C_2| - |C_3 - C_4| \]

where \(C_i\) is the mean for condition \(i\). Since the conditions are independent (by random assignment), the standard error is given by \(\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{4} SE_i^2}\).

\(^{21}\) This result differs from those of Goren, Federico, and Kittilson (2009), who find that out-party cues have a bigger net effect than in-party cues. Of course, the notion of in- and out-party is somewhat more difficult to define in a multiparty context, though there is a parallel between my incongruent party cue and their out-party cue. Moreover, Goren et al. examine how party cues interact with values like equal opportunity and tolerance, whereas my experiment isolates the unconditioned effect of party cues by referencing a fictitious piece of legislation.

\(^{22}\) One could imagine that the consensus effect is more likely among non-partisans than partisans. But that does not seem to be the case. Among non-partisans (who received the Peronist party cues), those in the incongruent alliance-cue condition did not significantly differ in their support for the legislation from those in the no-cue condition \((p < 0.213)\).

\(^{23}\) It is possible that the betrayal and consensus effects cancel each other out in this condition. Such a result would occur if the individuals who feel betrayed by the incongruent alliance and those who interpret it as a signal of consensus are roughly equally distributed, a rather implausible scenario. I examined this possibility by dividing the respondents in this condition according to the degree to which they liked the
Overall, then, the party-cue experiment supported two initial implications of the brand-dilution model. First, I found that partisanship in a new democracy with a fragmented party system functions much like partisanship in established democracies. In particular, party cues affect the behavior of partisans in predictable ways. Moreover, as hypothesized, cuing an incongruent alliance between a preferred party and its rival sends a confusing signal, contrary to the plausible alternatives of consensus or betrayal effects. The results of this experiment suggest that party convergence sends ambiguous signals that make individuals uncertain and indifferent.

3.3 Party Convergence and Partisanship: Information Experiment

The party-cue experiment supports a first implication of the theoretical model, that convergence among rival parties sends an ambiguous signal, generating uncertainty. My brand-dilution model further implies that this uncertainty will lead individuals to update their perceptions of parties, weakening their partisan attachments. A second survey experiment tests this implication by exploring whether information about party behavior affects actual partisanship.

In this experiment, respondents were provided with information about major parties in Argentina and then asked a series of questions about their attitudes toward the parties. Respondents were provided with a page with references to the eight major parties in Argentina at the time of the survey. They were then told the following:

This page contains some information about some political parties in today’s Argentina. Please look over the information and I will then ask you some

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political party they identified. This question was asked on a scale from 0 to 10, and I divided the sample by those who placed themselves below and above 5. One could imagine that those individuals who most liked their political party will be most likely to feel betrayed by an incongruent alliance. Still, among this sub-sample of individuals, I do not find a significant effect of the incongruent alliance cue \( p < 0.715 \).
questions about these political parties. Please take your time and let me know when you have finished reading the information.24

Those in the control condition were provided with a mostly blank page that listed only the party symbols along with the names of the party leaders, but no additional information (no information).25

Like the experiment conducted by Brader and Tucker (2008b) in a number of post-communist countries, a first treatment entailed providing respondents with information about each party’s platform on economic, security, and federalism issues (platform information). The expectation from my model is that the platform information will enhance a respondent’s certainty about party brands and, in turn, her ability to identify with a party. This is because greater clarity about party platforms and a greater ability to distinguish between parties is expected to make voters more certain of party brands. The more certain they are of party brands, and the more readily they can distinguish the parties, the more likely they are to choose one party with which to identify.26

Respondents in the second treatment condition received a page that contained information about inter-party alliances and party switching rather than platform information (alliance/switching information). This manipulation tests directly the convergence implication of the theory. Alliance/switching information should make parties seem less distinct, which should decrease partisanship.27

24 Literacy rates are very high in Argentina so there was little concern that a respondent would not be able to read the information card. Indeed, the survey yielded no cases of respondents who were unable to perform this task.

25 By providing respondents in the no-information condition a page physically identical to the one received by respondents in the treatment conditions, I am able to rule out any potential effects of actually holding a page with party names and to isolate the information effects.

26 Brader and Tucker (2008b) hypothesize a similar effect (see also Franklin and Jackson 1983), although for them the underlying mechanism is that voters need to reach a certain threshold of information to be confident in choosing a partisan allegiance.

27 An alternative second treatment might have provided respondents with platform information that did not distinguish parties. The problem with this is that the issues on which Argentine parties agree are largely those that are not politically salient, such as abortion. Moreover, I argue that it was alliances among rival parties and switching by party elites that eroded partisanship in Latin America, making this treatment a better test of that specific mechanism.
condition showed respondents a page containing both types of information (all information).²⁸

After reviewing the page, respondents were asked a standard question about their partisan attachments: “Independent of which party you usually vote for, is there a political party with which you identify?”²⁹ Respondents who answered positively were then asked with which party they identified and the strength of that identification on a 0-10 scale.

The expectation from my model is that respondents in the platform-information condition will be more likely to identify with a party and report having stronger partisan attachments.³⁰ Conversely, respondents presented with the alliance/switching information should exhibit opposite tendencies, with fewer respondents identifying with a party and weaker attachments among those who do identify.

The mechanism underlying this causal effect is theorized to be the perceived indistinguishability of the parties. To check for this mechanism, I included a post-treatment item that asked respondents to place all eight parties on a 0-10 ideological scale. I approximate the degree to which respondents perceive differences between the parties as the distance on this scale between the two parties the respondent perceives to be furthest apart. In other words, I measure the degree of polarization perceived by the respondent to exist in the party system.³¹ If the mechanism underlying the treatment effects is consistent with the theoretical model, then the treatment effects should also be apparent in post-treatment perceptions of party polarization.³²

²⁸ A sample of the information page is provided in Appendix 3A.
²⁹ There is much debate among comparative scholars of partisanship about the best way to elicit partisan attachments (e.g., Barnes et al. 1988; Blais et al. 2001; Johnston 1992). For my purposes, however, it seems reasonable to assume that whatever measurement error exists as a result of the question used should be distributed equally across the treatment conditions. At worst, poor question wording should induce measurement error and make finding significant average treatment effects less likely.
³⁰ As Brader and Tucker (2008b) note, it is possible that the platform information might make respondents who previously saw a difference between the parties indifferent between them. Such a situation is likely to be rare, but at worst this biases the experiment against finding the hypothesized effect.
³¹ This type of measure is similar to the one used by Berglund et al. (2006) in a related analysis (see also Schmitt and Holmberg 1995).
³² Note that while I treat these survey items as constituting causal mechanisms, or mediating variables,
The branding model also implies that individuals with weaker priors about party brands – namely, younger individuals and those with less political information – should update party brands more quickly than those with stronger priors. Given their weaker priors, these individuals should give greater weight to the new information.\footnote{Brader and Tucker (2008b) examine the degree to which political information conditions the treatment effects in their studies, but they suggest that this interactive effect will vary by country context – specifically, the relative stability of parties and their political importance. By their rubric, Argentina in 2009 should be a case with relatively high party stability (at least given the long legacy of Peronism) and low party relevance (given presidentialism), a combination these authors expect to yield no effect of political information.} This experiment provides an opportunity to test these implications as heterogeneous treatment effects, with age and political information conditioning the average effects of the two information treatments. Unfortunately, the available measure of political information is blunt, relying on only two survey items. While sample size and measurement error thus present challenges, my results can at least be taken as suggestive on this score.

### 3.3.1 Main Results

Figure 3.2 shows the results of the information experiment. The two top panels show the proportion of respondents in each condition who said they identified with a political party, the bottom panels the self-reported strength of that identification. As in the prior experimental results, the lefthand panels display the proportion of identifiers and strength of identities in each of the experimental conditions. The righthand panels display the average treatment effects – measured as the difference between each of the treatment conditions and the no-information (control) condition – with respect to the the proportion of identifiers and strength of identities.

Provided with no information, 35.8 percent of respondents in the control condition said they identified with a political party, and the strength of that attachment averaged 7.1 on the 0-10 scale. Among respondents who received the platform information, 44.6 percent said they identified with one of the parties, and the average strength of their identification was higher, as expected.
attachment was 7.8. The differences between these conditions were both statistically significant ($p < 0.029, p < 0.026$), suggesting that the platform information had a positive average effect on partisanship. Consistent with expectations, respondents provided with

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34 Strength of attachment is of course measured only among identifiers. This means that the control and treatment samples are not quite identical, so these results should be considered suggestive.
information that distinguished parties from one another were more likely to identify with a party.\textsuperscript{35}

Respondents who received the alliance/switching information, on the other hand, were on average less likely than those in the no-information (control) condition to assert a partisan attachment, and those party attachments they did have were weaker. In this condition, only 24.2 percent of respondents said they identified with a political party, and the strength of this attachment averaged 6.1, values that were statistically different from those for the no-information condition \((p < 0.002, p < 0.003)\). Again, these results are consistent with the empirical implications of the theory. The information about convergence among the parties made respondents’ perceptions of party brands more ambiguous, weakening attachments. Moreover, these results stand in marked contrast to the predictions of the exogenous perspective of partisanship, suggesting instead that short-term forces can significantly affect partisanship.\textsuperscript{36}

When both types of information were provided simultaneously, the results were indistinguishable from the no-information condition. In the all-information condition, 32.5 percent of respondents said they had a partisan attachment and the strength of those attachments was on average 7.0. These results were not statistically different from the no-information condition \((p < 0.405, p < 0.756)\), suggesting that the effects of the platform and alliance/switching information treatments canceled each other out.\textsuperscript{37}

The magnitudes of the effects of the platform and alliance/switching information were substantial. The platform information increased the proportion of respondents saying

\textsuperscript{35} These results are also broadly consistent with Brader and Tucker’s (2008b) findings in Russia and Hungary, though they find no effect of platform information in Poland.

\textsuperscript{36} There is a potential in this experiment for non-compliance among respondents assigned to treatment, which could generate inferential problems (Freedman 2006; Horiuchi, Imai, and Taniguchi 2007). This would occur if respondents handed pages with a particular kind of information simply failed to read it. Appendix 3C examines this issue in further detail and shows that my substantive results remain unchanged once I account for non-compliance.

\textsuperscript{37} An alternative measure of the outcome variable is whether respondents said a particular political party represented people like them. The same effects can be seen using this item as a measure of partisan attachment.
they identified with a party by nearly nine percent. And the alliance/switching information decreased that proportion by over 11 percent. On their own, these are sizable proportions of the population, particularly for nationally competitive parties that typically win or lose by single-digit margins. Moreover, the manipulation used here – that is, the information provided – is minimal relative to the political information with which voters are bombarded during the course of political events (and even more so during electoral campaigns). If anything, the effects of convergence information in the natural world of Latin American political campaigns are likely even larger than the sizeable differences observed in this experiment (Prentice and Miller 1992).38

3.3.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

To determine whether individuals with weaker priors about party brands – namely, younger and less-informed individuals – update their perceptions of parties and partisan attachments more quickly in response to a set amount of information,39 I examine heterogeneity in the treatment effects within this experiment by estimating conditional average treatment effects (CATEs). A simple approach to estimating CATEs is to estimate causal effects separately for different subgroups of respondents. Of course, this becomes inefficient with continuous variables or ordinal variables with a large number of categories (e.g., age) since subgroup samples will end up being quite small. Instead, I estimate

38 Scholars have justifiably criticized survey experiments of this kind for their inattention to the duration of treatment effects. The implications of these experiments, they note, “depend crucially on how long the effects last, with relevant periods measured in weeks, or months, not minutes” (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007: 6). Although the limitations of this survey did not allow me to measure the duration of the treatment effect, I would argue that the sizeable effect of such a minimal manipulation at least suggests a durable effect in the natural world.

39 In the natural environment we would expect more informed individuals to also receive more new information than less-informed individuals. However, since the amount of new information is fixed in this experiment, the expectation is simply conditioned by the amount of prior information.
regressions with interactions between the pretreatment characteristic of interest – here, age and political information – with treatment assignment.\textsuperscript{40} 

Figure 3.3 displays the average treatment effects of the platform and alliance/switching information on partisanship and the strength of attachment conditioned on age.\textsuperscript{41} The theoretical model predicted that updating would slow down over the life-course, suggesting that the positive effects of the platform information and negative effects of the alliance/switching information should both become attenuated and approach zero.

Indeed, the panels in Figure 3.3 show that age conditions the average treatment effects in the predicted direction. In the lefthand panels for the platform-information treatment, the positive treatment effect on both partisanship and the strength of attachment was statistically significant among most of the the younger respondents, but the effect declined progressively with respondent age. In the righthand panels for the alliance/switching-information treatment, the average effect on both partisanship and the strength of attachment was significantly negative among the younger respondents, but the effect approached zero with respondent age.

Although more weakly, the same general patterns can be seen with regard to political information. The theoretical expectation, as with age, was that political information would attenuate the information treatment effects. As noted earlier, the measure of political information employed here is somewhat blunt, such that there are only three respondent categories to compare: those with low, medium, or high levels of political information. The result is that the sample is not evenly distributed among these three groups.

Still, the panels in Figure 3.4 are broadly consistent with the predictions, although

\textsuperscript{40}Crump et al. (2008) suggest a nonparametric test to look for the existence of heterogeneous treatment effects, although the nature of these effects remains undetermined. The results of this test indeed suggest heterogeneous treatment effects in my data.

\textsuperscript{41}The conditional average treatment effects were simulated using the \texttt{Zelig} package for \texttt{R} (Imai, King, and Lau 2007) and are based on a female Córdoba resident with the remaining variables at their means.
Figure 3.3: Results of information experiment, by age. Values represent the difference between the treatment and control (no information) conditions in the proportion of respondents who said they identified with a political party, by age. In the top panels, values represent the proportion of respondents who said they identified with a political party. In the bottom panels, values represent the average strength of respondents’ partisan attachments on a 0-10 scale. The left panels present the effect of the platform-information treatment; the right panels the effect of the alliance/switching treatment. Shaded regions represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

standard errors are quite large in some cases. The figure presents the same average treatment effects as before, now conditioned by the level of political information of the respondent. In the lefthand panels for the platform-information treatment, the average
Figure 3.4: Results of information experiment, by level of political information. Values represent the difference between the treatment and control (no information) conditions in the proportion of respondents who said they identified with a political party, by level of political information. In the top panels, values represent the proportion of respondents who said they identified with a political party. In the bottom panels, values represent the average strength of respondents’ partisan attachments on a 0-10 scale. The left panels present the effect of the platform-information treatment; the right panels present the effect of the alliance/switching treatment. Shaded regions represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Treatment effects on both partisanship and the strength of attachments is decreasing with political information and is not significant among the high-information group. In the
righthand panels for the alliance/switching information treatments, the average treatment effects on partisanship and strength of attachment are both increasing with political information and again not statistically significant among the high-information group. Of course, and the weakness of the measure itself makes these results merely suggestive.

In short, age and political information indeed appear to attenuate the average treatment effects, as predicted. The general pattern of CATEs is thus consistent with the expectations of the Bayesian framework used here, whereby individuals with weaker priors update more quickly.

### 3.3.3 Causal Mechanisms

What about the causal mechanisms underlying these effects? Do respondents who received the platform information perceive more differences between the parties, as suggested by the branding model? Do those who received the alliance/switching information perceive fewer differences? There is some debate among experimentalists as to the appropriate means for uncovering the mechanisms behind experimental treatments, what in other contexts is thought of as identifying mediating variables (see Bullock, Green, and Ha 2010; Green, Ha, and Bullock 2010; Imai et al. 2010b). The present survey experiment is an instance of what Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto (2009) refer to as the single-experiment approach, a method common in psychology.

In order to examine whether the mechanism behind the observed treatment effects resulted from a perception of party convergence/divergence, respondents were asked

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42 The major limitation of this approach is that it requires the untestable assumption of sequential ignorability of the mediator: we have to assume that pre-treatment characteristics of the respondent are uncorrelated with the individual’s value on the mediating variable (conditional on treatment status). An alternative design might have used the causal chain approach suggested by Green, Ha, and Bullock (2010) or the crossover design preferred by Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto (2009). Both alternatives require different assumptions and rely on the ability of the researcher to directly manipulate the mediating variable. Yet it seems difficult to directly manipulate respondents’ sense of whether or not they feel represented by their political parties. As Green, Ha, and Bullock (2010) suggest, an exploratory analysis may instead proceed by “introducing survey measures to check whether these inducements produce an intervening psychological effect consistent with the posited mediator” (208).
(post-treatment) to place the eight major Argentine political parties on a 0-10 left-right scale. We can approximate the degree to which respondents perceive differences between the parties as the distance on this scale between the two parties the respondent perceives to be furthest apart. As in the observational analysis above, we can measure the degree of polarization perceived by the respondent to exist in the party system.

One alternative mechanism of the information treatments should also be considered. I expect the alliance/switching information to erode partisan attachments by reducing in respondents’ minds the differences between the positions of the parties. However, it is plausible that this information could instead prime respondents to think about whether parties are responsive. Thinking about mandate-responsiveness might generate a negative reaction if respondents have normative preferences for parties that fulfill their electoral platforms. That is, respondents may interpret the alliance/switching information as an indication that party elites do not fulfill their policy mandates.

The survey included a post-treatment item on mandate-responsiveness (asked and while the respondent was still holding the information page). The precise wording of the question was, “Some people say that political parties in Argentina generally implement the policies they promise during the election campaigns. Do you disagree strongly, disagree somewhat, neither disagree nor agree, agree somewhat, or strongly agree with this?” In order to investigate whether norms of mandate-responsiveness or closeness are driving the results, I examine whether the information treatments affected responses to the representation and mandate-responsiveness questions. If the alliance/switching-information treatment affects partisanship but not responses to the mandate-responsiveness question, that would seem to provide compelling evidence that the proposed mechanism – rather than a rejection of parties for mandate-unresponsiveness – is driving the results.

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43 It is not clear how this mechanism would explain the positive effect of the platform information on partisanship, but it nevertheless seems important to address this potential alternative at least with regard to the effect of the alliance/switching information.
Figure 3.5 shows the effects of the information treatments on these questions. The confidence intervals here use a 90 percent confidence interval since many respondents failed to answer the ideology questions and the polarization measure is thus quite noisy (only 62 percent of respondents placed at least two parties). The left panel focuses on polarization. Respondents in the platform-information condition were more likely to perceive party polarization than those in the control condition, though this effect was close to the 90 percent threshold of statistical significance ($p < 0.092$). Conversely, those in the alliance/switching information condition were significantly less likely to think that parties were distinct ($p < 0.022$). This suggests that the mechanism underlying the average treatment effects is indeed the one implied by the theoretical model, that alliance/switching information makes respondents less likely to be partisan by making them less able to differentiate among party brands.

**Figure 3.5: Results of information experiment – causal mechanisms.** Average treatment effects calculated as the difference between each treatment condition and the control (no information) condition. Values in the left panel refer to the overall degree of polarization between respondents’ placement of parties on a 0-10 ideological scale. Values in the right panel refer to the degree of agreement with the notion that parties fulfill their campaign promises once elected. Responses range from 0 (“strongly disagree”) to 4 (“strongly agree”). Black bars represent 90 percent confidence intervals.
The results in the right panel of Figure 3.5, on the other hand, offer no reason to think that the mandate-responsiveness mechanism is driving the association between convergence and partisan attachments. Respondents in the alliance/switching-information condition were not significantly more likely than those in the control condition to agree with the statement that parties are unresponsive \( (p < 0.564) \).44

In sum, the information experiment, which manipulated respondents’ exposure to different types of actual information about Argentine parties, provided a clear test of the micro-level foundations of the branding model. The two information treatments proved to have significant effects consistent with expectations. Providing respondents with distinguishing information about the parties increased partisanship and the strength of attachments. Conversely, providing respondents instead with information about alliances and switching among the parties decreased partisanship and the strength of partisan attachments. The treatment effects seemed to be attenuated by age and political information, as predicted since older and more informed individuals are expected to have stronger priors about parties. Moreover, the mechanism underlying the observed treatment effects appears to be consistent with the theory. Although further experiments are needed to accurately identify this mechanism, there is suggestive evidence that information about alliances and switching made respondents less able to distinguish parties and, in turn, less likely to identify with one.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In order to understand party breakdowns, we must explain the erosion of partisan attachments that preceded them. Once parties lost the electoral stability provided by their partisans, they became susceptible to breakdown. The learning model developed to

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44 An alternative test for these causal mechanisms is the mediation analysis proposed by Imai et al. (2010b) and implemented in the mediation package for R (Imai et al. 2010a). My results are consistent using this method.
explain the weakening of individual partisanship performed well in experiments embedded in a 2009 survey of voters in Argentina. The micro-foundations of party breakdown are clearly on display in these analyses; when survey respondents are given diluted information about party brands, they are less likely to use parties as policy evaluation heuristics and less likely to identify with a party.

Contrary to some scholars’ expectations, partisanship in a new democracy with a fragmented party system like Argentina’s behaves like partisanship in established democracies. Party cues send informative signals to partisans. Convergence among rival parties sends a confusing signal that makes voters uncertain and indifferent.

Party convergence also exhibited expected effects on partisanship. Providing respondents with distinguishing platform information about the parties increased and strengthened partisanship, whereas providing them with information about alliances among parties and party switching by elites decreased and weakened partisanship. Thus, short-term political forces do have predictable effects on partisan attachments, contrary to theories that view partisanship as largely exogenous to political events. At the same time, the effect of new information on partisanship was conditioned by prior information, as expected by theory.

This analysis offers compelling evidence that partisanship is neither the “unmoved mover” of exogenous theories nor the performance-based “running tally” of the revisionist endogenous perspective. My branding model posited that partisanship is both a social identity based on perceptions of party brands rather than performance and that these perceptions are continually updated in response to party behavior. In the US context, where party brands are stable because parties change little and slowly, it is not surprising that we see stable partisanship. In contexts where party brands instead change, and change dramatically, we should see no such stability.

Survey experiments provided a useful tool for testing these implications. By making treatment assignment exogenous, experiments allowed me to more rigorously
identify the causal relationships suggested by my theory. The experiments also provided some leverage for examining the mechanisms underlying these relationships. Still, survey experiments raise questions about external validity (McDermott 2009). To what extent can we generalize the findings from a single country context? And does the controlled setting of the survey experiment capture a causal process that has meaningful political effects in the natural world? These questions can be addressed by turning to observational data to test further implications of my theory of party breakdown.
Appendix 3A. 2009 Argentina Voter Survey

Survey Methodology

The 2009 Argentina survey was conducted in collaboration with Valeria Brusco, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Susan Stokes. The survey consisted of face-to-face interviews in Spanish of 1,199 eligible voters in the Argentine provinces of Córdoba and Santa Fe (600 respondents per province). On average, the survey interview lasted 51 minutes. The survey was administered by the Córdoba-based polling firm Consultores en Políticas Públicas between August 28 and October 2, 2009.45

A two-stage clustered random sample based on the 2001 national census was generated within each province. Sixty radios censales, the smallest available geographic unit in the census, were selected as the primary sampling units (PSUs) in each province, with ten cases conducted in each PSU. PSUs in localities with a population under 1,000 were replaced with the corresponding PSU in a second sample. Interviewers began from a randomly selected corner in the PSU and proceeded in a clockwise direction selecting every fourth household. Within each household, the adult Argentine citizen with the most recent birthday was selected. In cases where no one responded or the selected individual was not home, interviewers either made an appointment to return to the household when the individual would be home or returned later in the same day. If an effective interview could not be conducted upon the second attempt, or if the household/individual refused to complete the survey, the household was replaced. Household were replaced with the adjacent household. Interviewers used the four different questionnaires in sequential order.

Interviewers were recruited from Córdoba universities and were mostly advanced undergraduate and graduate students. Extensive training was conducted for interviewers on selection methodology, the logistics of the survey instrument, and issues of respondent

45 The survey design and draft instrument were approved under Princeton University IRB protocol 0000004395.
protection such as anonymity and privacy. On a separate sheet from the questionnaire, interviewers recorded the first name only and phone number of each respondent for the purposes of later supervision. Post-sampling verification was conducted on a randomly-selected 30 percent of the sample by telephone, after which this information was destroyed. If mistakes or omissions were found in one case, further verification was conducted on the interviews conducted by that interviewer. If a second mistake or omission was then found by the same interviewer, the full set of interviews conducted by that individual was conducted anew by a different interviewer. The response rate for the survey was 19.3 percent, the cooperation rate 30.7 percent, the refusal rate 43.5 percent, and the contact rate 62.9 percent. The margin of error was 6.7 percent.

The survey was preceded by a pilot consisting of 100 cases each in the provincial capital cities of Córdoba and Santa Fe. The pilot was administered between August 1 and August 9 using an identical selection methodology. Its goal was to test the survey instrument and to elicit feedback from respondents and interviewers regarding question wording and order.

**Question Wording**

**Party cue experiment**

*Condition 1*: “The Primary Education Restructuring Act was recently proposed in Congress”

*Condition 2*: “The [RESPONDENT’S PARTY] recently proposed the Primary Education Restructuring Act in Congress”

*Condition 3*: “The [RESPONDENT’S PARTY] and [CONGRUENT PARTY] recently proposed the Primary Education Restructuring Act in Congress”

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46 These rates are calculated using the standard definitions published by the American Association for Public Opinion Research.
Table 3.2: Survey sample representativeness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>2001 census</th>
<th>Córdoba &amp; Santa Fe</th>
<th>National</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39.17</td>
<td>48.54</td>
<td>48.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60.83</td>
<td>51.46</td>
<td>51.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>13.26</td>
<td>18.43</td>
<td>18.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>20.69</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>21.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>17.55</td>
<td>18.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>15.81</td>
<td>15.87</td>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>12.51</td>
<td>11.57</td>
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<td>65+</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>14.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>37.32</td>
<td>38.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary only</td>
<td>39.67</td>
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<td>37.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary only</td>
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<td>17.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>15.82</td>
<td>11.74</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>50.46</td>
<td>8.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>49.54</td>
<td>8.29</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 3.3: Comparison of treatment conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Condition 1</th>
<th>Condition 2</th>
<th>Condition 3</th>
<th>Condition 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations$^{a}$</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0.522</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>45.33</td>
<td>44.00</td>
<td>45.03</td>
<td>44.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.627</td>
<td>4.865</td>
<td>4.800</td>
<td>4.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>4.795</td>
<td>5.010</td>
<td>5.041</td>
<td>5.086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition 4: “The [RESPONDENT’S PARTY] and [INCONGRUENT PARTY] recently proposed the Primary Education Restructuring Act in Congress”

In conditions 3 and 4, party labels were inserted according to Table 3.4.
Table 3.4: Party matching for cue experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent’s party</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Congruent party</th>
<th>Incongruent party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justicialist Party</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>New Party</td>
<td>Radical Civic Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Civic Union</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>Aff. for a Republic of Equals</td>
<td>Justicialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Democratic Party</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>Radical Civic Union</td>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Af. for a Republic of Equals</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>Radical Civic Union</td>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreate for Growth</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>Recreate for Growth</td>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Party</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>Radical Civic Union</td>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>Af. for a Republic of Equals</td>
<td>Republican Proposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Party ideology is the mean of respondent placements on a 0-10 left-right ideological scale

Information experiment

All conditions: “This card contains some information about some political parties in today’s Argentina. Please look over the information and I will then ask you some questions about these political parties. Please take your time and let me know when you have finished reading the information.”

Interviewers handed respondents one of four party information cards, containing either only party labels (Condition 1), party labels plus platform information (Condition 2), party labels plus alliance/switching information (Condition 3), or all information (Condition 4). The card with the complete set of information is shown in Figure 3.6.

Partisanship: “Independent of what party you generally vote for, do you identify with any political party?”

Strength of partisanship: “Using a scale from 0 to 10 in which 0 means that you weakly identify with this party and 10 means you strongly identify with this party, how strongly do you identify with this party?”

Polarization: “In politics, people sometimes talk about left and right. Imagine a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 represents left and 10 represents right. Using this scale, where would you position the following political parties?”
Mandate-responsiveness: “Some people say that political parties in Argentina generally implement the policies they promise during the election campaigns. Do you disagree strongly, disagree somewhat, neither disagree nor agree, agree somewhat, or strongly agree with this?”

Variable Coding

Political information. Measured as the number (from 0 to 2) of factual questions about contemporary Argentine politics a respondent answered correctly. Respondents were told the following: “I am going to name a couple of political leaders. Please tell me the position they hold in the current government.” They were asked about two political figures, Aníbal Fernández, the Chief of Staff, and Julio Cobos, the Vice President. 22.3 percent of respondents correctly identified Fernández’s position and 72.4 percent correctly identified Cobos’s.

Education. Measured as a categorical variable as follows: (1) less than primary schooling completed, (2) primary schooling completed, (3) secondary schooling completed, (4) tertiary schooling completed.

Age. Calculated from birth dates provided by respondents.

Gender. (0) Male, (1) Female.
Justicialist Party (PJ)  
Leader: Daniel Scioli

- Party that implemented the economic reforms of the 1990s with the support of the UCR
- Formed a pact with the UCR in 1993 to support the constitutional reforms
- Supports government intervention in the economy
- Supports increasing the powers of the provinces
- Proposes an electoral reform for obligatory primary elections

Radical Civic Union (UCR)  
Leader: Gerardo Morales

- Formed an alliance with FREPASO in the 1990s
- Signed a pact with the PJ in 1993 to support the constitutional reforms
- Currently forms part of an Alliance with ARI and several other parties
- Believes in a market-based economy, with the state ensuring equality of opportunity
- Supports reducing taxes on small and medium-sized businesses
- Supports strengthening the police

Affirmation for a Republic of Equals (ARI)  
Leader: Elisa Carrió

- Made up primarily of former Radicals
- Maintains alliances with the UCR and Socialist Party
- Emphasizes a more equal distribution of income
- Supports increasing the powers of the Congress
- Supports limiting the powers of the president and of the provinces

Socialist Party  
Leader: Rubén Giustiniani

- Forms alliances with ARI, the UCR, and the PDP
- In 2007 allied with Southern Project to support filmmaker Pino Solanas for president
- Believes in a socialist economy
- Emphasizes the redistribution of income for a society without classes
- Opposes international financial institutions
- Emphasizes municipal autonomy
- Believes in a right to employment

Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)  
Leader: Alberto Natale

- In 2009, formed alliances with ARI, the UCR, and the Socialist Party
- Supported the Radical candidate for president in 2007
- Proposes declaring a state of agricultural emergency
- Believes in a market-based economy, with the state ensuring equality of opportunity

Recreate for Growth  
Leader: Esteban Bullrich

- Maintains alliances with factions of the PJ and PRO
- Believes in an economy based on the free market and competition
- Supports ensuring the autonomy of the INDEC and the Central Bank
- Emphasizes fiscal discipline and reducing government spending
- Supports strengthening judicial security

New Party  
Leader: Luis Alfredo Juez

- Composed primarily of former members of the PJ and UCR
- In 2009, formed alliances with the Socialist Party and ARI
- Supports increasing the powers of the provinces
- Supports ensuring the autonomy of the INDEC
- Believes in a market-based economy, with the state ensuring equality of opportunity

Republican Proposal (PRO)  
Leader: Mauricio Macri

- Maintains alliances with factions of the PJ and Recreate
- Believes in an economy based on the free market and competition
- Emphasizes the fight against crime and supports strengthening the security forces
- Proposes limiting the use of public funds for electoral campaigns

Figure 3.6: Complete party information card. Text in gray was included in the alliance/switching information treatment.
### Appendix 3B. Regression Analyses of Treatment Effects

**Table 3.5**: Ordered probit analyses of party cue experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust std. error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party cue</td>
<td>0.459**</td>
<td>0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruent cue</td>
<td>0.596***</td>
<td>0.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruent cue</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political information</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>0.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu_{01}$</td>
<td>-1.271***</td>
<td>0.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu_{12}$</td>
<td>-0.816*</td>
<td>0.352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu_{23}$</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu_{34}$</td>
<td>0.940**</td>
<td>0.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R$^2$</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald $\chi^2_{(8)}$</td>
<td>19.803*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Table 3.6: Probit/OLS analyses of information experiment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Partisanship</th>
<th>Strength†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform information</td>
<td>0.262**</td>
<td>0.763***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
<td>(0.292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance/switching information</td>
<td>-0.355***</td>
<td>-1.089***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.109)</td>
<td>(0.319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All information</td>
<td>-0.073</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.108)</td>
<td>(0.325)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political information</td>
<td>0.102*</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.158)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>(0.145)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.006**</td>
<td>0.015**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
<td>0.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
<td>(0.223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>-0.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.076)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.635***</td>
<td>6.736***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.204)</td>
<td>(0.669)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1176</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-R²</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald $\chi^2_{(8)}$</td>
<td>45.021***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
† An alternative specification for these models would be an ordered probit since the strength of partisan attachment is measured on an ordinal 0-10 scale, but the results are substantively equivalent using either estimator.
Appendix 3C. Average Treatment Effects on the Treated

The information experiment presented in this chapter potentially suffers from inferential problems related to compliance. The average treatment effects presented above are in fact what experimentalists refer to as intention-to-treat (ITT) effects, since they compare responses among individuals assigned to treatment and control. This analysis overlooks the potential for non-compliance, in which subjects assigned to treatment do not comply or do not actually receive the treatment. In this particular experiment, it may be that respondents in any of the three treatment conditions failed to read the information page are therefore did not receive the treatment.

One way to account for non-compliance is to calculate the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), that is, the effect of the treatment only on those who actually received the treatment, or complied (Freedman 2006; Imbens and Angrist 1994). In the information experiment, interviewers were instructed to record the amount of time a respondent spent reading the information page. One way to measure compliance in this experiment is thus to exclude respondents who spent less than one minute reading the information page since these individuals likely did not receive the treatment. Figure 3.7 presents the results of such an analysis, which are substantively equivalent to the ITT effects. In fact, as might be expected, the ATT results are somewhat larger.

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48 Freedman (2006) refers to this type of non-compliance, in which some subjects assigned to treatment essentially cross over to control, as single crossover.
Figure 3.7: **Average treatment effects on the treated in information experiment.** The lefthand panel displays the mean observed values proportion of partisans among those individuals assigned to the treatment conditions who complied with the treatment (spent more than one minute reading the information page). The righthand panel shows the average treatment effect calculated as the difference between each treatment condition and the control (no information) condition, again limited to compliers among individuals assigned to treatment. Black bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.
“In Argentine politics there were three phases... Monogamy is the first phase, the strong parties of 1983, one center-left, one center-right, attachments, identities; the second I would call polygamy and here began the alliances... [By 2003] we got to the orgy, which cannot be described sociologically because there are no behavioral regularities, just anything goes.”
– Eduardo Fidanza, personal interview, November 19, 2009

My theory of party breakdown suggests a causal relationship between party brands and breakdown when brand dilution is interacted with bad incumbent performance. This relationship is mediated by the erosion of partisanship, such that brand dilution affects the degree to which voters identify with a political party, which in turn makes the party susceptible to breakdown. In order to further test this expectation, I turn to case studies and matched-case comparisons.

Using case studies, I test the key aggregate implication of my theory, that brand dilution and bad incumbent performance are jointly sufficient for party breakdown. I begin with three cases from Argentina: the Radicals in 1989, the Peronists in 1995, and
I also make two matched comparisons, one within-party comparison of the Radicals in 1989 and 2003, and one within-country comparison of the Peronists in 1995 and Radicals in 2003, both controlling for the potential confounds that do not vary within the same party or country context. These two comparisons will juxtapose on- and off-diagonal cases, allowing me to test the theorized sufficiency conditions.

I have already tested the behavioral causal mechanism underlying the branding model of partisanship. Survey experiments conducted in Argentina offered a unique opportunity to identify the hypothesized causal relationship between party brands and party attachments. Case studies allow researchers to probe causal mechanisms by leveraging context-specific data (Collier, Brady, and Seawright 2004). They also offer opportunities to test the individual-level implications of my theory using observational data. These analyses thus serve to offer additional support for the theory and bolster the external validity of the experimental results.

My theory of party breakdown also includes an intraparty bargaining model with implications for the strategic choices of party leaders and party elites. Case studies and case comparisons allow me to also probe these intraparty implications. I begin with studies of the three cases from Argentina before turning to another three cases from Venezuela. Cross-country comparisons juxtaposing Argentine and Venezuelan cases will provide still additional analytical leverage.

4.1 Political Parties and Partisanship in Argentina

The return of democracy to Argentina in 1983 brought with it the return of the two political parties that had contested elections in prior periods of democracy. The Radical Civic Union (Union Cívica Radical, UCR), founded in 1891, emerged as a party of middle-class sharecroppers and small farmers threatened by the influx of European
immigrants (Persello 2004, 2007; Rock 1975).\textsuperscript{1} Argentina’s first mass party, the Radicals won the presidency in 1912 and instituted a series of electoral reforms that extended the franchise and ensured a secret ballot. It became the victim of electoral fraud by conservative elites during the Infamous Decade of the 1930s (Cantu and Saiegh 2010), but with the rise of Peronism in the 1940s formed the basis of the middle- and upper-class opposition to Juan Domingo Perón.

The Peronist party – officially called the Justicialist Party (\textit{Partido Justicialista}, PJ) – was the electoral vehicle founded by Perón in the 1940s (Levitsky 2003: Ch. 2). Proscribed on and off from openly competing in elections in the intervening decades, the party drew its electoral support from the rural poor and urban working classes (Lupu and Stokes 2009), developing corporatist and patronage ties to the Argentine labor movement. Its elites often relied on a nationalist rhetoric promoting statist economic development, a “revolution in production,” and redistributive social justice (McGuire 1997).\textsuperscript{2}

Both the Radical and Peronist parties relied on patronage to maintain internal discipline and to mobilize particular segments of the Argentine population (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Snow 1971). But the two parties also worked assiduously to build and maintain partisan attachments (Lupu and Stokes 2010). According to a 1965 voter survey, 35 percent of respondents identified with a political party, of which 35 percent identified with the Radicals and 43 percent identified with the Peronists.\textsuperscript{3} A larger national survey conducted in 1965 by Kirkpatrick (1971: 87) found that 46 percent of Argentines identified with a party, of which 35 percent identified with the Radicals and 30 percent with the Peronists.\textsuperscript{4} In other words, between a third and a half of Argentines identified

\textsuperscript{1} Alonso (2000) offers a somewhat different account of the initial support base of the Radicals.
\textsuperscript{2} Mora y Araujo (1995) distinguishes between Peronism and Radicalism as respectively representing corporativist and anticorporativist economic stances.
\textsuperscript{3} Author’s calculations from José Miguens survey of 365 adults in Buenos Aires province. For the Radical figures, I combine identification with the Intransigent Radicals (\textit{Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente}, UCRI) and the People’s Radicals (\textit{Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo}, UCRP) since the party had split in 1963 over the proscription of the Peronists (Snow 1965).
\textsuperscript{4} In my own 2009 survey in Argentina, we asked respondents about their parents’ party attachments.
with a political party despite the fact that the Radical party had split in 1958, the Peronist party had emerged less than 20 years before and had been proscribed in most elections since 1955, and democracy had only reemerged two years earlier.

It is no surprise, then, that when democracy again resumed in 1983, party identities reemerged and strengthened. There is in fact evidence that local party organizations remained clandestinely active during the 1976-83 dictatorship (Levitsky 2003: 49), and the proscription of party activity was lifted as early as 1981 (Romero 2002). The 1983 electoral campaign focused on reaffirming old party identities and the antipathies between the two parties (Palermo and Novaro 1996; Waisbord 1995). In an October 1984 national survey, 58 percent of Argentines identified with a party, of which 52 percent identified with the Peronists and 33 percent with the Radicals (Catterberg 1989: 63).

In electoral terms, the Radical and Peronist parties together accounted for an average of 81 percent of votes between 1946 and 1999 (see Figure 4.1). But after the resignation of Radical president Fernando de la Rúa amidst economic crisis, riots, and looting, the Radicals received a shocking two percent of the national vote in the presidential elections of 2003. While the Peronist party emerged from the crisis victorious and continues to dominate national elections, the UCR has become one of many small opposition parties unable to field competitive presidential candidates. A party that had survived over a century of political and economic turmoil, and that only four years earlier had won the presidency, dramatically collapsed.

The collapse of the Radicals is particularly puzzling for at least two reasons. The conventional wisdom about party breakdown in Latin America is that it results from bad incumbent performance, of which the Radical administration of De la Rúa is certainly an example. But the Argentine case raises a problem with this as the sole explanation for

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Sixty-three percent of respondents recalled their father having a partisan attachment and 54 percent recalled their mother having a partisan attachment (in both cases, almost all recalled them identifying as either Peronist or Radical). Given the contrasting low levels of partisanship in 2009, respondents may be overestimating their parents’ partisanship. But like the surveys of the 1960s, these figures suggest that partisanship was quite widespread prior to redemocratization in 1983.
breakdown. The prior Radical administration of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-89) had also ended in economic crisis, but did not result in the party’s collapse. An explanation of the 2003 Radical collapse must therefore be able to account for the party’s survival in 1989.

Another prominent explanation for the transformation of Latin American party systems suggests that the class cleavage along which parties had organized became obsolete with the economic reforms of the 1990s (Roberts 2008). These reforms dramatically weakened the labor unions that had served as the basis for labor mobilization and class-based voting (Roberts 2002). With the class cleavage no longer salient, parties that had organized around class issues would either adapt to a new cleavage or be replaced by new parties.

The case of the Radicals should fit this explanation well. Social class strongly shaped Argentine parties and labor unions were dramatically weakened during the period
of neoliberal reform. But despite union decline, there is no evidence that class became a
less salient cleavage in Argentina. Indeed, class-based voting persisted through the 1990s
and into the 2000s (Jorrat 2010; Lupu and Stokes 2009). And unions, however weakened,
still play an important mobilizational role in Argentina (Etchemendy and Collier 2007).
Moreover, even if unions and class cleavages had weakened, we would expect the
Peronists, not the Radicals, to break down. After all, it was the Peronists who relied on
union ties to mobilize labor support. Cleavage-based explanations thus seem limited in
explaining the dramatic breakdown of Argentina’s Radicals.

A close examination of three party-election cases in Argentina will test my
alternative theory of party breakdown. Using a wide variety of data sources, I will
demonstrate that the absence of brand dilution and maintenance of partisan attachments
allowed the Radicals in 1989 to survive the disastrous economic performance of the
Alfonsín administration. Conversely, the first term of Carlos Menem’s Peronist
administration was characterized by dramatic dilution of the party brand, through both
inconsistency and convergence, eroding partisan attachments. But the short-term
successes of Menem’s economic policies led to his reelection in 1995. The Radical
administration of Fernando de la Rúa was similarly characterized by brand dilution,
continuing the process of partisan erosion that had begun in the 1990s. That, along with
the economic crisis of 2001-2 and the president’s resignation sealed the collapse of the
Radical party at the 2003 election.

4.2 Brand Maintenance with Bad Performance: Radical

Party, 1989

The Argentine Radical party in 1989 is a case in which a party survived despite
abysmal performance in office. Although its presidential candidate in 1989 lost, the party
remained Argentina’s second-largest political force and the main opposition bloc.
Argentine politics in the 1980s featured programmatic consistency by both major parties. The 1989 Radical case is thus one in which no brand dilution took place and incumbent performance was poor.

The victory of the Radical candidate, Raúl Alfonsín, in the 1983 presidential elections represented the first time a Radical had defeated a Peronist in a free and fair election in Argentina. Alfonsín’s opponent, Italo Luder, was seen as too close to the Peronist administration of Isabel Perón, which had ended in hyperinflation in 1976. His close ties to labor unions and their perceived links to the military regime also turned middle-class voters toward Alfonsín, an outspoken critic of the regime’s human rights abuses (Catterberg 1985).

Upon taking office, Alfonsín faced the delicate question of civil-military relations as well as a growing economic crisis. Argentina was already suffering from the economic effects of the regional debt crisis. Annual inflation had reached over 300 percent during the final year of the military regime and rose above 600 percent in 1984. Argentina’s external debt had grown to 80 percent of GDP and foreign capital had begun to flee the country in 1982, placing an enormous burden on state coffers. The administration pursued a variety of economic policies that became increasingly neoliberal over time, all the while seeking and gaining IMF support (Manzetti and Dell’Aquila 1988; Smith 1990, 1992). Despite some fleeting successes, however, these economic policies all failed.

Alfonsín also faced a divided government. The PJ controlled the Senate throughout his term. Meanwhile, the Radicals held a majority in the Chamber of Deputies until 1987. From then on, the PJ and its minor-party allies formed a majority bloc. The opposition PJ and the Peronist labor confederation, Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT), staunchly opposed – and often blocked – Alfonsín’s reforms. Instead, they called for more state-oriented economic policies. Despite Alfonsín’s varied attempts – some conciliatory, others confrontational – the administration failed to find a

---

5 For instance, Luder promised to respect the amnesty law passed by the military regime before stepping down, while Alfonsín promised to repeal it.
compromise with labor and business sectors about its economic plans (de Riz, Cavarozzi, and Feldman 1987; Epstein 1992; Gaudio and Thompson 1990; Smith 1990). By early 1989, inflation was again soaring and a run on the dollar in February forced the government to cease debt payments (see Figure 4.7 in Appendix 4B). The inflationary crisis reached hyperinflationary levels just after the May 1989 general elections; between August 1988 and July 1989 consumer prices had risen 3,610 percent (Smith 1990: 29).

4.2.1 Party Discipline: Radical Consistency

Despite facing enormous challenges from the military and the deteriorating economic situation, Alfonsín did manage to maintain a remarkably high degree of discipline within the Radical party. Among the most controversial of the administration’s initiatives were two bills dealing with the crimes of the military regime. The military regime had become infamous for its secret kidnapping, torture, and killing of suspected dissidents, including students, journalists, and party activists. Alfonsín himself had gained national popularity in the 1970s for his open criticism of the regime and its abuses of human rights. And both Radical and Peronist party leaders had been imprisoned or killed by the regime.

Indeed, one of Alfonsín’s first legislative achievements was a law nullifying the amnesty for all military personnel that had been decreed by the military regime just before its departure. The law was passed with the unanimous support of Radicals and Peronists amid widespread public support (Mustapic and Goretti 1992: 265).

But in late 1986, with the investigations of military officers still ongoing and with

---

6 Instead, labor and some business sectors formed a fleeting alliance to oppose the government’s economic agenda. The country’s largest business conglomerates – often called the “captains of industry” – formed the Grupo María through which they subsequently negotiated with the administration directly (Ostiguy 1990).

7 These were both watershed bills for Alfonsín, who would forever be confronted with criticism for their passage; indeed, many of his obituaries in 2009 mentioned these laws (e.g., New York Times, March 31, 2009, p. A29). His extended justification of the laws is offered in Alfonsín (2004).

8 Menem, the Peronist president who succeeded Alfonsín, was himself imprisoned by the regime from 1976 to 1981.
dwindling public enthusiasm for more trials, the Alfonsín administration proposed the so-called End Point (Punto Final) Law. It would limit new indictments of military personnel to a period of sixty days, an attempt to limit investigations of the regime’s crimes. The law instead backfired, generating a rush of subpoenas and provoking a military uprising during the 1987 Holy Week (Norden 1996a, b). Alfonsín subsequently agreed to propose the Due Obedience (Obediencia Debida) Law, which would exonerate all military personnel below the rank of colonel.¹⁹

Despite going against the personal convictions and personal experiences of many Radicals, the End Point and Due Obedience Laws achieved a surprising level of consensus within the Radical party. The End Point Law passed with the near unanimous support of the Radicals in both chambers of Congress. And from then on, the Radicals no longer participated in demonstrations or marches in support of the military trials (Novaro 2009: 211). The Due Obedience Law passed in the Chamber of Deputies with the defection of only three of 122 Radical members; not a single Radical Senator opposed it (Mustapic and Goretti 1992: 266).

The UCR also proved remarkably accepting of the administration’s economic policies, which gradually became more market-oriented. Distinguishing its economic agenda from the neoliberal policies of the military regime (Epstein 1987), the administration attempted to both negotiate support from the IMF and pump government spending into the economy. Several small public enterprises (SIAM, Opalinas Hurlingham, Sol Jet, and Austral Airlines) were set to be privatized, though the objective was to roll back the nationalizations implemented by the military regime (Llanos 2002: 48-51). Still, inflation remained chronically high. As a result, in February 1988, Minister of the Economy Bernardo Grinspun resigned.¹⁰

In his place, Alfonsín appointed the technocrat Juan Sourrouille. With US and

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¹⁹ The legislation was already being negotiated by Alfonsín and other military leaders prior to the Holy Week uprising, but became widely seen as a capitulation.
¹⁰ Claroín, February 19, 1985, p. 2.
IMF backing, in June 1985, Sourrouille unveiled a heterodox economic reform agenda, the Austral Plan. The new plan gained broad support from the Radical party and achieved short-term success in controlling inflation and generating economic growth. These initial successes paved the way for a Radical victory in the 1985 legislative elections. But growing labor disputes and creeping inflation made the economic plan unsustainable. By mid-1987, the Alfonsín administration had embarked on a more market-oriented reform agenda. With IMF backing, the administration proposed large cuts in government spending. It also proposed privatizing state-owned companies, such as the telephone company ENTel and the airline Aerolíneas Argentinas.

The 1988 Spring Plan (*Plan Primavera*) was the administration’s most reformist program, the culmination of its gradual move in a market-oriented direction. Although the plan went against the preferences of the left wing of the party, internal party dissent was minimal. Indeed, the UCR bloc in Congress expressed its support for the plan (Cavarozzi and Grossi 1992; de Riz 1994). But none of the administration’s policies were able to overcome the opposition of the Peronists and their labor allies. As Alfonsín later noted, “the general direction [of the economic policies] was good... but we could not overcome a permanent opposition that put up obstacles in the hopes that the failure of the administration meant the possibility of replacing it.”

### 4.2.2 Failed Reforms: Interparty Conflict

While the Radicals achieved remarkable party unity even in the face of controversial policy stances and some marginal policy shifts, the PJ also demonstrated a

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12 Internally, the administration also debated, but eventually rejected, privatizing the steel conglomerate, SOMISA (Machinea 1990).

13 In his May 1, 1989 speech before Congress, Alfonsín said of this gradualism, “I do not believe that in this case we should speak of errors, but rather of situations that by force led us on occasion to decrease the velocity of our march toward the structural transformations that the country needs.”

14 Oral History Archive of Contemporary Argentina, interview, September 8, 2005.
great deal of programmatic discipline in its opposition to the administration’s agenda. Indeed, agreements with the UCR were seen by the Peronists as “illicit unions” (Mustapic and Goretti 1992: 268).

The PJ rebuffed Alfonsín’s attempts to reduce the power of labor unions. Early on, the administration attempted to regulate and democratize Peronist-controlled unions with the Mucci Law, named for Minister of Labor Antonio Mucci. But the bill faced unanimous Peronist opposition in both chambers of Congress. Peronist-backed unions led a remarkable 13 general strikes during Alfonsín administration, all with the public support and participation of the Peronist leadership (Epstein 1992; McGuire 1992).

The Peronist party mounted the same solid opposition to Alfonsín’s handling of civil-military relations. It supported the administration’s 1983 repeal of military amnesty, but voiced tremendous opposition to the End Point and Due Obedience Laws. The PJ nearly unanimously abstained from voting on the End Point Law in Congress. And the party voted unanimously against the Due Obedience Law in the Chamber of Deputies, while three PJ Senators voted for it (Mustapic and Goretti 1992: 266).

In the realm of economic policy, the traditionally statist Peronist party also opposed the administration’s economic agenda. Peronists repeatedly opposed the

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15 As Torre (1993: 76) notes, “Afraid of losing their identity, in opposition the Peronists were also driven to confrontational politics... the Radicals and Peronists entered the post-authoritarian period in open competition.”

16 Clarín, February 8, 1984. The bill passed the Chamber of Deputies, where the UCR held a majority, and was set to pass the Senate with the support of several provincial parties but for the last-minute defection of one Senator (Novaro 2009: 88-9).

17 In March 1987, Alfonsín temporarily convinced a faction of the CGT to back his reforms and named the labor leader Carlos Alderete as Minister of Labor (Gaudio and Thompson 1990: 165-74). But that alliance was short-lived, lasting a mere six months (Clarín, July 7, 1988, p. 6; September 4, 1987, p. 21). When asked about this temporary alliance, Alfonsín said, “I did things I wouldn’t have done had it not been for the fear of instability, and I didn’t do things I would [otherwise] have done, because I had the obligation to consolidate democracy” (quoted in McGuire [1997: 203]).

18 I do not wish to suggest that the UCR and PJ did not vote together in the Congress during this period. Indeed, as is common in most legislatures, the vast majority of bills passed with unanimous approval in Congress. Of course, bills passed with unanimous approval tend to be those that are relatively trivial politically (see Mustapic and Goretti 1992).

19 Clarín, December 24, 1986.
administration’s negotiations with the IMF as a capitulation.\textsuperscript{20} The PJ sent a delegation to an anti-debt conference in Cuba in August 1985 to voice its opposition to the Alfonsín administration’s debt repayments.\textsuperscript{21} So shrill was the partisan tenor of opposition that in 1986 the PJ presented its own budget proposal, even though only the executive has the constitutional authority to make such a proposal (Mustapic and Goretti 1992: 266). The PJ rejected both Alfonsín’s more heterodox Austral Plan of June 1986 and his more neoliberal 1988 Spring Plan.\textsuperscript{22} Particularly vehement was Peronist opposition to the proposed privatization of ENTEL and Aerolíneas Argentinas (Llanos 2002: 60-2).\textsuperscript{23}

The unanimous opposition of the PJ extended beyond the salient realms of economic and civil-military policies. In November 1984, the administration held a referendum on a treaty to resolve a longstanding territorial dispute with Chile. Opposing the treaty, the PJ chose to boycott the referendum altogether.\textsuperscript{24} It also staunchly opposed the administration’s legalization of divorce in May 1987, though the measure passed with some notable Peronist defections.\textsuperscript{25} Summarizing the partisan stalemate, Mario Bordersohn, a close advisor to Alfonsín, noted that “the Peronism of the 80s was totally oppositional; whatever proposal the government made, they would vote against.”\textsuperscript{26}

Despite its very clear and unified position in opposition to the Alfonsín

\textsuperscript{20} Clarín, August 14, 1985, p. 6; September 9, 1985, p. 2; July 30, 1985, p. 8; February 25, 1986, p. 6; October 17, 1986, p.16.

\textsuperscript{21} Clarín, July 30, 1985, p. 8; August 14, 1985, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{22} Clarín, March 17, 1986, p. 11; July 20, 1986; July 1, 1987, p. 10; July 21, 1987, pp. 2-3; August 24, 1988, p. 4; September 23, 1988, p. 3; November 6, 1988, pp. 16-17. The CGT staged a general strike just 15 days after the Austral Plan was announced.

\textsuperscript{23} PJ leaders even organized anti-privatization marches in the summer of 1988 (Clarín, August 18, 1988, p. 6). Senator Eduardo Menem, who would go on to support privatization under his brother’s administration, told one newspaper: “Justicialism has never placed, and never will place, an auction flag [on these companies] because the sovereignty of the state is at stake” (La Nación, April 28, 1988). Labor unions and the private sector also staunchly opposed the privatization efforts (Corrales 1998; McGuire 1992).


\textsuperscript{26} Mario Brodersohn, personal interview, November 16, 2009.
administration, the PJ in the 1980s did suffer an important internal conflict. Reeling from
the party’s electoral losses in 1983 and 1985, one faction began to call for changes to the
party organization (Levitsky 2003: 108-23). The Renovation faction, as it came to be
called, sought to democratize the PJ internally, strengthen its local reach, and loosen its
ties to labor.\textsuperscript{27} By late 1987, the Renovators had gained control of the party leadership.
But while the emergence of the Renovators within the PJ entailed a kind of intraparty
conflict, it did not represent an instance of inconsistency by the Peronists. Unlike the
intraparty Peronist conflicts that would emerge in the early 1990s, the conflict with the
Renovation faction centered on organizational, rather than ideological, issues. As Levitsky
(2003: 119) notes, “the Renovation’s middle-class appeal was not accompanied by a
substantial shift on the left-right axis.”

Faced with economic crisis and legislative gridlock, Alfonsín made attempts to
reach out to the Peronist opposition and its labor allies. In a 2005 interview, he said, “I had
hoped for a programmatic agreement that would be basic, democratic, and with all sectors,
to get out of political competition toward what I considered statesmanship... But these
agreements never materialized... I had to act within the solitude of my party.”\textsuperscript{28} In June
1984, for instance, Alfonsín attempted to construct a governance pact with the PJ and
some smaller political parties (de Riz, Cavarozzi, and Feldman 1987). His idea was to
garner extraordinary powers of legislation to use in making the economic reforms needed
to stop the economic crisis. But the Peronists, having just defeated the administration’s
proposed labor law, saw no reason to provide Alfonsín with a blank check.

Alfonsín also made various rhetorical gestures toward interparty cooperation. In
his famous speech at Parque Norte in December 1985, he spoke repeatedly of
“governability pacts.” But the rhetoric rarely translated into action. Even when it did, the
administration’s attempts at coalition-building focused (un successfully) on incorporating

\textsuperscript{27} On the Renovation, see Levitsky (2003: 108-23), McGuire (1992: Ch. 7), and Mustapic (2002).
\textsuperscript{28} Oral History Archive of Contemporary Argentina, interview, August 29, 2005.
the labor movement into the Radical party. Amid the euphoria of the Radical’s electoral successes of 1983-5, Alfonsín in fact had populist pretensions of forming a “third historical movement” that would guarantee Radical political hegemony for decades to come (Novaro 2009: 173-83).\(^{29}\) His few attempts at interparty cooperation in the first years of his administration were half-hearted.

During the political crisis of the 1987 Holy Week military uprising, Alfonsín is said to have approached PJ leader Antonio Cafiero about forming a unity government in support of democracy.\(^{30}\) While Cafiero and the leaders of other parties appeared publicly with Alfonsín to defend the democratic order,\(^{31}\) Cafiero rejected any formal pact with the administration, calling it “electoral suicide.”\(^{32}\) By then, the president was too unpopular and the party primaries for the 1989 election too close for Peronist party elites to want to associate themselves with the administration.\(^{33}\)

Despite the rhetorical lip service paid to interparty cooperation, or crisis-induced attempts to constitute formal alliances, the Alfonsín administration witnessed remarkable intraparty unity and consistency as well as heated – even obstructionist – interparty conflict. Although the UCR marginally shifted its approach to economic policy in response to the persistent crisis, the party repeatedly united around its president in the face of united opposition by the Peronists.

\(^{29}\) The reference was to the hegemonic Radicalism of Hipólito Yrigoyen in the 1910s-30s as the first such movement and Peronism in the 1940s-70s as the second.

\(^{30}\) The discussion was rumored to have surrounded either a coalition government with an agreed-upon distribution of cabinet positions among the two parties or a constitutional reform that would create the position of Prime Minister, to which Cafiero would be appointed (Clarín, September 7, 1989). Alfonsín has denied that such discussions ever took place (Oral History Archive of Contemporary Argentina, interview, August 29, 2005), though Cafiero confirms that they did (personal interview, June 9, 2010).

\(^{31}\) This marked a notable contrast with the past behavior of the PJ when confronting threats to democracy. Amid rumors of a military coup in April 1985, Alfonsín organized a March for Democracy that PJ leaders refused to attend (Clarín, April 26, 1985, p. 8).

\(^{32}\) Cafiero in fact attributes his defeat in the 1988 Peronist primary to his statements of support for the administration during the uprising (personal interview, June 9, 2010).

\(^{33}\) Alfonsín again floated the idea of a pact among the parties in late 1987, with no success (Clarín, October 15, 1987).
4.2.3 Partisanship and the 1989 Election

As the 1989 presidential election approached, Alfonsín threw his support behind the primary candidacy of Córdoba governor Eduardo Angeloz and his calls for market-oriented economic reform. Despite plummeting approval ratings, Alfonsín was still the undisputed leader of the Radicals, and Angeloz handily won the party’s nomination in May 1988. On the Peronist side, Cafiero, whose Renovation faction had called for party primaries, scheduled his party’s first such primary for July. Yet, La Rioja governor Carlos Menem and his charismatic populism appealed to the Peronist rank and file, and Menem became the party’s candidate.

The choice between the UCR and PJ in 1989 was a stark one. The Radical Angeloz defended his party’s economic reform proposals while the Peronist Menem called for massive wage increases and price controls.34 The worsening economic situation on his party’s watch made this an uphill battle for Angeloz. The Radical candidate tried relentlessly to distance himself from Alfonsín (de Riz 1990; Waisbord 1995). Although the peak of the hyperinflationary crisis would not hit until after the May election,35 it was clear well before May that inflation was out of the Alfonsín government’s control. Inflation for the month of April reached 33 percent. As Rodolfo Díaz, who worked on Menem’s campaign, told me, “the campaign was overshadowed by the hyperinflation; you could not talk about anything else.”36 Real wages had been in decline since 1987.

Argentine survey respondents clearly had a negative view of economic performance. Already in March 1989, two thirds of respondents to one survey said their economic situation had worsened since the previous month.37 The administration’s approval rating had fallen to nine percent by April 1989 (Catterberg and Braun 1989: 363).

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34 Clarín, April 28, 1989.
35 In early 1988, Alfonsín moved the date of the elections from October to May in an attempt to forestall some of the negative retrospective vote since he expected the economic situation to worsen.
36 Personal interview, November 18, 2009.
37 Author’s calculations from Kolsky survey of 405 adult residents of metropolitan Buenos Aires. The question asked, “Has your economic situation changed in the last month? Is it better, worse, or the same?”
Still, both parties had, broadly speaking, remained true to their party brands throughout the Alfonsín administration, and the distance between them was as wide as ever. The Radicals’ gradual move toward a more neoliberal economic position represented some inconsistency, but only marginally so. From the perspective of my theory of party breakdown, there is little reason to expect that partisan attachments eroded during the 1980s even while opinions about the administration’s performance plummeted.

Figure 4.2 plots aggregate partisan attachments to the UCR and PJ over the period 1983-2003. The figure combines 80 surveys I collected from a variety of sources (see details in Appendix 4A). These surveys were conducted by a variety of polling firms, sampling different geographic regions and using slightly different wording of questions, meaning that there is considerable noise in this measure. To deal with this measurement error, I include as many surveys as possible and use locally weighted (loess) regression to smooth away idiosyncratic differences (Jacoby 2000). I also assign weights to the individual survey observations based on the question wording and geographic coverage.

The figure bares out my theoretical expectation for the context of party consistency and interparty divergence during the 1980s. We see no large change in the aggregate levels of partisan attachments to either party during the Alfonsín administration. There is some erosion of attachment with the Radicals in 1988-9, perhaps attributable to the party’s marginal rightward shift in economic policy. But the overall picture, consistent with the theory, is one of stable partisanship during a period of party consistency.

It is no surprise, then, that Angeloz managed to garner 37 percent of the vote in May 1989. That remarkable feat for the candidate of a party that had unequivocally failed in its economic stewardship attests to the strength of Radical partisanship. Indeed, a simple analysis of Angeloz support in 1989 demonstrates that strength. Table 4.1 examines the determinants of vote choice in 1989 on the basis of a survey conducted the

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38 Green, Gerber, and De Boef (1999) and Jackman (2005) offer alternative methods for smoothing public-opinion data (see also Pickup and Wlezien 2009), but both methods assume an underlying equilibrium value whereas I am interested in observing changes to the equilibrium level of partisanship.
Figure 4.2: Partisan attachments with Peronist and Radical parties in Argentina, 1983-2003. Closed and open circles represent proportion of respondents from each survey (see Appendix 4A for survey details) who identify with the Peronist and Radical parties, respectively. Their size is proportional to the sample size of the survey. Lines are moving averages generated by locally weighted (loess) regressions ($\alpha = 0.2, \lambda = 2$). Dotted vertical lines separate presidential administrations.

The model includes some demographic variables, party identification, a measure of statist economic policy preferences, and a measure of retrospective
For ease of comparison, all the variables are standardized to vary from 0 to 1.

The analysis in Table 4.1 bears out the strength of partisanship in determining vote choice in 1989. Partisanship is the only significant predictor of voting for Angeloz. Its effect is also larger than that of other predictors by orders of magnitude. As expected by my theory, Radical partisans in 1989 chose to vote for their party’s candidate despite their party’s poor performance in office.

### Table 4.1: Determinants of Angeloz vote, 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Angeloz vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective Evaluation</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.495)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statist</td>
<td>0.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radical Identifier</td>
<td>2.303***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.453)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.344)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.380)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.680***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.344)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-98.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>0.209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

42 The question asked, “How would you evaluate, in terms of good, neither good nor bad, or bad – the following political parties?” The variable is coded as 1 for respondents who chose “good” and 0 for all others. A better measure would use a standard survey item on retrospective economic evaluations, but the timing of the survey used here precludes this. I am therefore assuming that the evaluation of the UCR is essentially a measure of its performance in office prior to the election.

43 Given the multiparty nature of the election, a multinomial probit might be more appropriate (Borooah 2002). However, the small number of observations in the third category of voters who chose neither Angeloz nor Menem rules out such a specification.
Taken together, the case of the Radicals in 1989 is consistent with theoretical expectations. We do not see party breakdown result in 1989 from bad incumbent performance in the absence of brand dilution. This runs counter to the conventional wisdom that posits bad incumbent performance as a sufficient condition for breakdown. The theoretical counterfactual is that had the Radicals significantly diluted their brand (and had this dilution not resulted in better performance), the party would have broken down in 1989.

4.3 Brand Dilution with Good Performance: Peronist Party, 1995

Unlike the Alfonsín years, Menem’s first term witnessed dramatic inconsistency by the Peronist party as the president abandoned its historic ideology and provoked intraparty conflicts. The period also saw significant convergence between the Peronists and Radicals. The result was that both parties’ brands were diluted, eroding partisan attachments. But Menem’s positive economic performance mitigated the potential electoral effects of brand dilution, securing his reelection in 1995.

4.3.1 Policy Switch: Inconsistencies and Convergence

Menem had been elected on a statist economic platform, promising to reverse the decline of the Argentine economy with the campaign slogan “Follow Me” (Síganme). But upon taking office, he shocked Argentine voters by pursuing both a staunchly neoliberal set of economic policies and a series of alliances with anti-Peronist elites and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{44} Stokes (2001) and many others have classified the Menem campaign this way. Others argue that Menem was deliberately ambiguous about his economic policy preferences prior to taking office, perhaps to ease the expected transition toward neoliberal policies. Either way, given Angeloz’s unambiguously neoliberal platform, Menem was clearly seen as the candidate of the economic left in the election (see, e.g., Clarín, April 28, 1989).}\]
former opponents (Gerchunoff and Torre 1996). His first cabinet included Miguel Roig, a former vice-president of the notoriously right-wing conglomerate Bunge & Born. When Roig died of a heart attack days later, Menem appointed another vice-president of the firm, Néstor Rapanelli. His first package of economic policies (the Bunge & Born Plan) included a sharp devaluation of the currency and deep cuts in government spending.

Menem also announced a legislative alliance with the right-wing Union of the Democratic Center (Unión del Centro Democrático, UCD) and its leader and presidential candidate, Álvaro Alsogaray. An economist, Alsogaray had served in the military regime that overthrew Perón in 1955 and was a staunch anti-Peronist. But he not only endorsed Menem’s economic policy agenda and secured UCD votes for the administration in Congress, he also became a key Menem advisor and his chief debt negotiator in Washington.

As Menem himself told one newspaper, “what the electoral platforms say is of no use.”

The reasons for Menem’s policy switch are disputed. While Stokes (2001: 74-77) maintains that Menem intended to pursue a neoliberal economic agenda and dissembled during the campaign for electoral purposes (see also Nun 1995), others have suggested that the deteriorating economic situation in the weeks following the election forced Menem to change course (e.g., Acuña 1995). The hyperinflationary crisis simply made his promised wage hikes certain to induce further inflationary pressures. Either way, it is

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45 The corporation was so clearly associated with anti-Peronism that two Born siblings were kidnapped by Peronist guerrillas in 1974.

46 Clarín, June 29, 1990, p. 13; February 28, 1992, p. 15; March 5, 1992, p. 24. Menem also appointed Alsogaray’s daughter, María Julia, to head the state-owned telephone company EN Tel. She immediately stated she would begin a study on privatizing the company (Latin American Weekly Report, July 6, 1989). On the UCD, see Gibson (1990).

47 Alsogaray also went on to endorse Menem in his 1995 reelection bid.

48 La Prensa, September 24, 1989, p.4.

49 In favor of this perspective, Menem advisor Carlos Corach told interviewers, “What he said was what he believed. I don’t think he could have had any other idea. And no one else within Peronism had any other idea” (Oral History Archive of Contemporary Argentina, interview, November 11, 2005).

50 On crisis-driven reform, see Corrales (1997-98); Haggard and Kaufman (1995); Pop-Eleches (2008); Remmer (1998). Building on prospect theory, Weyland (2002) argues that the economic crisis increased public support for risky economic reforms, providing Menem with the political space to pursue a neoliberal
clear that Menem reneged on his electoral platform because he expected his economic reform agenda would improve the economy and in turn public assessments of his performance in office. Members of his administration all told me that the economic policies were thought to be the only way to get out of the crisis.\(^{51}\)

**Peronist Inconsistency**

In order to contain the economic emergency, Menem secured emergency powers and an initial set of austerity measures from Congress. In August, Congress approved the Economic Emergency Act and State Reform Act with wide support from both the PJ and UCR.\(^{52}\) But legislators from both parties made clear the temporary nature of their support for the administration. PJ leaders, shocked by the president’s zealous pursuit of neoliberalism, offered grudging support of the stabilization program despite voicing ideological opposition. PJ Deputy and chamber president Alberto Pierri told one newspaper, “The PJ is far from abandoning its historic model of effective protection of national production and the regional economies... the emergency project is a temporary concession that is made to the stabilization program.”\(^{53}\)

Although inflation began to decline, hyperinflation returned in late 1989 and the agenda. I find little evidence in public-opinion polls that such support materialized for the reforms (see Figure 4.4). Although voters appeared optimistic about Menem’s policies in the early months of the administration, a second hyperinflationary crisis in late 1989 generated skepticism and opposition, rather than increased support, for the president’s reform agenda (see also Corrales 1997-98; Echegaray and Elordi 2001). Another dissenting view suggests that Menem was at worst ambiguous about his plans, a view expressed to me by Rodolfo Díaz, coordinator of the PJ Platform Commission in 1989 and subsequently labor minister under Menem (personal interview, November 18, 2009) (see also Díaz 2002; Stokes 2001: 76).

\(^{51}\) Personal interviews with Carlos Corach (November 11, 2009), Rodolfo Díaz (November 18, 2009), and Alberto Kohan (November 19, 2009).

\(^{52}\) Menem was not expected to take office until December 1989. But the hyperinflationary crisis, along with the riots and looting that broke out on May 19, convinced Alfonsín that a prolonged lame-duck administration would worsen the economic situation. In negotiations with the Menem transition team, Alfonsín arranged to transfer power in July, assuring Menem that the UCR would provide congressional support for emergency legislation during its lame-duck session.

economic crisis persisted throughout 1990 (see Figures 4.7 and 4.8 in Appendix 4B). The Menem administration tried repeatedly to stabilize inflation while at the same time pushing forward with structural reforms, including the privatization of various public enterprises, including those whose privatization the PJ had blocked in 1988. The privatization programs meant massive worker layoffs, a point of enormous contention with the labor movement. The Peronist-backed CGT faced the difficult choice of opposing a Peronist president or abandoning its rank and file. The confederation splintered, its leader Saúl Ubaldini founding an opposition (CGT-Azopardo) wing in October 1989. Although the divided labor movement did not have the political capital to reverse the administration’s agenda (Murillo 2001), some sectors expressed their opposition to the reforms and staged numerous strikes. CGT leader Lorenzo Miguel expressed the ambivalence of the movement in late 1990 by bemoaning labor’s unsuccessful attempts to “Peronize the administration.”

Menem refused to give in to labor demands: indeed, he was often openly defiant of them. In April 1990, he announced legislation to prohibit strikes in essential public services. The following year, he told one reporter that the unions “can stage a thousand and one marches, because that does not worry me; they will not accomplish their goal of detaining our progress toward a greater Argentina.”

Given that he was a Peronist, Menem faced a “credibility gap” in signalling his commitment to reform to international investors (Corrales 1997-98; Gerchunoff and Torre 1996; Palermo and Novaro 1996; Rodrik 1989). He therefore had to demonstrate his

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54 On the legislation of these privatization policies, see Llanos (1998, 2001, 2002). Corrales (1998) examines the role of the private sector in these, and previous, privatization programs.
57 Página 12, November 14, 1990.
58 Clarín, April 22, 1990. Menem failed to convince the PJ to approve the prohibition in Congress and finally legislated it by presidential decree in October (Epstein 1992).
59 Página 12, June 20, 1991.
commitment by adopting a more extreme agenda and taking positions against traditional Peronism. As part of a broad effort to make his economic program credible to international investors, Menem also abandoned his party’s traditionally nationalist stance on international issues.\(^60\) To the amazement of his PJ colleagues, the administration immediately normalized relations with the UK\(^61\) and continued the Alfonsín administration’s friendly relations with the US.\(^62\) In 1990, Menem sent Argentine troops to support US efforts in the first Gulf War.\(^63\) In 1991, he withdrew Argentina from the Non-Aligned Movement, drawing condemnation from the PJ National Council.\(^64\) Moreover, Menem appeared to continue Alfonsín’s leniency toward the military despite its anti-Peronist leanings. In December 1990, he pardoned eight leaders of the 1976-83 military regime who were serving sentences for human-rights violations.\(^65\)

That Menem had abandoned the traditional ideology of Peronism was clear to the Argentine public. In an October 1990 survey, 59.6 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “Menem is betraying the historical banners of Peronism.”\(^66\) Sixty-three percent of respondents who had voted for Menem the previous year agreed with this statement.

\(^{60}\) On the Menem administration’s foreign policies, see Russell and Zuvanic (1991) and Vacs (1995).

\(^{61}\) Clarín, August 2-3, 1989; August 17-18, 1989; October 18-20, 1989; November 26, 1990; December 2, 1990. To this day, Argentina maintains territorial claims to several UK-controlled islands in the south Atlantic, including the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, over which the two countries fought a war in 1982.

\(^{62}\) Menem called for “carnal relations” with the US (Clarín, November 9, 1991, p. 7). Some faction of the PJ opposed to Argentine-US rapprochement was apparently responsible for leaking documents in January 1991 alleging that administration officials had sought bribes from US firms for participation in the privatization schemes (Clarín, January 9, 1991, pp. 4-6). The so-called Swiftgate scandal became a major embarrassment for Menem and provoked a financial panic in February 1991.

\(^{63}\) Clarín, September 19, 1990, pp. 2-3; September 20, 1990, pp. 4-5.

\(^{64}\) Clarín, May 2, 1991, p. 13.

\(^{65}\) Ambito Financiero, December 28, 1990, pp. 7-11; December 31, 1990, p. 10. Menem had already pardoned 200 other military officers three months after taking office (La Nación, October 8, 1989).

\(^{66}\) This includes respondents who said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement. Author’s calculations from Equas survey of 400 adult residents of Greater Buenos Aires.
Intraparty Conflicts

Menem’s surprising policy switch generated enormous conflict within his own party. PJ legislators found it difficult to support a neoliberal reform program and many considered that the administration had betrayed Peronist principles. PJ Senator Oraldo Britos called Menem’s reform program “un-Peronist”, a sentiment repeated by many other party elites (Palermo and Novaro 1996). Yet, Menem was very popular at the outset. This, along with the economic crisis, made supporting the administration the only politically viable option. But while the PJ bloc in Congress had grudgingly supported the administration’s emergency economic measures, once Menem’s popularity began to sink it turned to opposing the reforms. When hyperinflation returned in late 1989, the administration proposed a new economic plan, the Bonex Plan. But the PJ majority in Congress refused to ratify the plan. The PJ also rejected the administration’s proposal to institute a value-added tax in December 1989, a failure that forced Minister of the Economy Rapanelli to resign. Roberto Dromi, the Minister of Public Works in charge of the privatization plans, repeatedly faced harsh questioning by the PJ-led Congress and even came close to being censured. As late as February 1991, PJ leaders shouted Menem’s Minister of the Economy, Domingo Cavallo, out of Congress, calling for Menem’s resignation.

The intraparty conflict went beyond the halls of Congress. A December 1989 party congress in Buenos Aires had to be suspended after Menem supporters and critics began throwing chairs at one another. In early 1990, Cafiero himself became increasingly critical of the administration, calling on Menem to “return to the doctrinal sources of Justicialism.” Another important source of internal dissent came from Ramón Saadi, the

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67 La Prensa, December 18, 1989, p. 4.
68 See also Clarín, February 24, 1990, p. 4; February 26, 1990, p. 4.
governor of Catamarca, whose family had controlled the province for decades. Saadi formed an outspoken PJ faction to oppose the administration’s reforms, particularly its cuts to federal revenue sharing.\textsuperscript{71}

With Menem’s popularity sinking, PJ elites had good reason to think they could force the president to abandon his economic agenda and return to Peronist ideology. In late 1990, gubernatorial candidates backed by Menem were defeated in party primaries in the provinces of Entre Ríos, Formosa, and Mendoza\textsuperscript{72} Menem himself considered abandoning his reform agenda, but was persuaded by Cavallo to stay the course.\textsuperscript{73}.

Menem acknowledged the possibility of a division of the PJ, noting “I don’t want a split... but if it happens, too bad.”\textsuperscript{74} Indeed, two prominent defections from the Peronist ranks did occur. Twenty prominent PJ legislators defected from the PJ in early 1990 in protest over both the neoliberal economic agenda and the military amnesty laws.\textsuperscript{75} Known as the Group of Eight, they eventually formed a coalition with small leftist parties that became known as the Big Front (\textit{Frente Grande}, FG). The second prominent defection from the PJ was that of Mendoza Senator José Octavio Bordón in September 1994. Bordón had been a vocal critic of Menem’s economic agenda for years,\textsuperscript{76} leading an internal opposition faction. But he was eventually sidelined within the party and

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Clarín}, February 11, 1990, p. 4; February 13, p. 11; February 21, p. 4; February 22, p. 4. Following the implication of members of Saadi’s administration in a murder, the federal government intervened in the province in April and deposed the governor (\textit{Clarín}, July 20, 1991).

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Ámbito Financiero}, December 11, 1990, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Clarín}, January 12, 1991. See also Cavallo (1995).

\textsuperscript{74}\textit{Clarín}, April 1, 1990. Some of his supporters even spoke of splitting from the PJ and creating a Menemist party (\textit{Clarín}, July 8, 1990, p.14). PJ party elites were not unwarranted in their concern about the electoral implications of the administration’s policy agenda. In November 1989, the PJ lost two regional elections in the provinces of Santa Fe and Rosario.


decided to form a new party, Open Politics for Social Integrity (*Política Abierta para la Integridad Social*, PAIS).

The conflicts within the PJ also forced Menem to veto legislation proposed by his own party. Table 4.2 compares presidential vetoes during the Alfonsín and (first-term) Menem administrations. The table identifies whether the vetoed legislation was proposed by opposition parties, by the president’s own party, or by the president’s party in cooperation with other parties. The contrast between the two administrations is immediately apparent: while the majority of Alfonsín’s vetoes were aimed at legislation proposed by opposition parties, the vast majority of Menem’s overturned legislation proposed by his own party, either alone or with its allies.

**Table 4.2: Presidential vetoes, by party of origin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition parties</td>
<td>27 (60%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s party alone</td>
<td>10 (22%)</td>
<td>22 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President’s party with others</td>
<td>8 (18%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Mustapic (2000). Only legislation initiated by Congress is included. Values do not include laws covered in more than one legislative initiative proposed by different legislators or laws initiated by the Bicameral Commission.*

The Menem administration’s response to this intraparty feuding was to circumvent the PJ and Congress. Granted emergency powers by Congress, Menem resorted to legislating much of his reform package by decree. While Alfonsín had issued only 11 decrees during his term, Menem issued 162 during his first term alone (Negretto 2004).77 Menem also attempted to forestall an electoral backlash, postponing the 1991 midterm elections and then separating the legislative and gubernatorial elections in an effort to

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77 Cavallo later noted that “without the decrees of necessity and urgency we would not have been able to implement more than 20 percent of the economic reforms” (*La Nación*, August 31, 1993). In 1990, Menem packed the Supreme Court (Helmke 2004, 2005), which later upheld the constitutionality of the president’s decree authority (Ferreira Rubio and Goretti 1998; Larkins 1998).
avoid a negative coattails effect. A final alternative was to resort to cobbling together congressional support from opposition parties.

**Peronist-Radical Convergence**

Like the PJ, the UCR also found itself unprepared for the Peronist president’s policy switch. At first, confronted with a deteriorating economic crisis and a set of policy prescriptions nearly identical to those prescribed by Angeloz, the party’s own presidential candidate, the cost of obstructionism seemed extraordinarily high. For Alfonsín – still his party’s leader – it was a matter of protecting the fledgling Argentine democracy. After all, the country’s prior economic crisis, in 1976 (also under a Peronist president), had resulted in a military coup. Other Radical leaders believed that the party faced an enormous credibility problem if it failed to support many of the same policies it had attempted to pass only months earlier under Alfonsín (Novaro and Palermo 1998: 63). As Palermo (1999: 202) notes, the Radicals “could not do anything else.”

Almost as soon as Menem took office he began talks with UCR leaders about forming a unity government or governability pact. Although a formal pact never materialized, the repeated attempts and negotiations received widespread media coverage and were far more serious than Alfonsín’s half-hearted attempts. Of particular note were two nearly-successful rounds of negotiation with Angeloz aimed at persuading the former UCR presidential candidate to formally join the Menem administration. As late as November 1991 Menem made serious public overtures for a governance pact among

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78 *Clarín*, June 26, 1991; July 5, 1991. The separation of elections required congressional legislation that was agreed upon by the PJ and UCR, with the expectation that each stood to benefit in particular provinces.

79 Mario Brodersohn, personal interview, November 16, 2009.


political parties.\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, Menem spoke often of forming a cross-party coalition in support of his economic agenda, calling it the League of Winners.\textsuperscript{83}

Having proposed an economic platform similar to the policies Menem was pursuing, some UCR leaders – like Angeloz and other governors – expressed outright support for the Peronist administration.\textsuperscript{84} Alfonsín himself oscillated between criticizing the speed of the economic reforms and offering his party’s support. But in what would become a recurring trope for critics of both the parties, Alfonsín and Menem began to be seen as two sides of the same coin. Figure 4.3 shows one such instance, in a political cartoon published in early 1991, depicting Alfonsín with Menem’s trademark sideburns.

\textbf{Figure 4.3: Cartoon of Radical-Peronist Convergence, 1991.} This political cartoon appeared in the Argentine daily \textit{Clarín} on February 9, 1991. The Radical former president Alfonsín is depicted with his distinctive moustache but also with Peronist president Menem’s trademark sideburns. One of the men in the back is saying to the other, “Didn’t I tell you there’s a Radical-Peronist convergence?”

In Congress, the UCR proved far less obstructionist than the PJ had been during its time in opposition in the 1980s. Although some in the party recommended taking a strong

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Clarín}, November 8, 1991, pp. 2-3.

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Clarín}, November 5, 1990, p. 5. In many ways, Menem’s League of Winners presaged the “transversality” project espoused by Néstor Kirchner at the beginning of his presidential term in 2003 (Levitsky and Murillo 2008).

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Clarín}, March 6, 1990, p. 14.
oppositional stance, the party leadership attempted to maintain the nuanced position of criticizing administration proposals, voting against some, but asserting its support for the broad thrust of the economic program (Llanos 2002; Palermo and Novaro 1996). When asked about the position of the UCR toward the privatization policies, Rodolfo Barra, then a Menem advisor working on the privatization programs, told interviewers, “[t]here was no serious political opposition.”

An examination of PJ and UCR voting records in Congress shows further evidence of this convergence. Table 4.3 presents a first cut at measuring congressional bipartisanship by measuring the proportion of roll-calls that garnered support from at least one Peronist and one Radical. The figures clearly illustrate a dramatic increase in bipartisanship during Menem’s first term in office. It peaked during the 1989-91 session, which spanned the economic crisis and the bulk of the economic reforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>% Bipartisan</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-89</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-91</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations

The well-known limitation of these roll-call data is that a small number of votes are recorded, as the third column of Table 4.3 makes clear. At least during the 1989-2003 period, there is reason to think that roll-call votes represent the most salient pieces of legislation (Molinelli, Palanza, and Sin 1999). But the possibility of nonrandom

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85 UCR deputy Federico Storani, personal interview, November 24, 2009.
87 In both this and the next measure, I include all members of the PJ bloc as Peronist.
missingness in these data still poses a potential limitation (Jones 2002; Jones and Hwang 2005a).

As an alternative to roll-call votes, scholars of Latin American legislatures have recently turned to cosponsorship data (Alemán et al. 2009; Crisp, Kanthak, and Leijonhufvud 2004). While bipartisan cosponsorship of legislation is far more rare than bipartisan voting, the over-time trends may still give an indication of the rises and falls in bipartisan legislative behavior. Using these alternative data, Table 4.4 measures bipartisanship in Argentine Chamber of Deputies as the proportion of bills sponsored by at least one legislator from each party.\(^{88}\) While the overall proportions are relatively small, there is a clear upward trend during the beginning of the Menem administration that peaks in 1992 when fully 10 percent of bills are sponsored by both a Peronist and a Radical.

### Table 4.4: Legislative bipartisanship in Argentina (cosponsorships)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Bipartisan</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>3,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>5,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>4,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>4,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>4,734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5,048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s calculations using data from Alemán et al. (2009)*

Of course, voters probably did not pay much attention to the legislative processes and convergence reflected in these data. But legislators do use their votes – even more so

\(^{88}\) A similar analysis can be conducted with cosponsorship data in the Senate. The overall trends are similar in that chamber, although the uninterrupted Peronist control of that chamber (see Appendix 4C) means the changes are somewhat smaller.
their cosponsorships – to send signals to constituents (Mayhew 1974). And the trends in these data parallel a convergence among the parties that was more directly visible to voters, through the public statements and actions of party leaders.\textsuperscript{89}

4.3.2 Economic Success: Dampening Intraparty Conflict

While the early years of Menem’s first term were characterized by intraparty conflict and convergence with the Radicals, in late 1991 the PJ began to cooperate more fully with the administration. The administration – and particularly Cavallo, its reform czar – developed much closer ties to the party apparatus. The PJ leadership did not criticize Menem’s massive deregulatory decree of late October 1991.\textsuperscript{90} Cavallo ensured that all privatization programs went through congressional approval rather than being legislated by decree. Menem also developed working relationships with most of the country’s governors, whether or not they supported the economic program. Revenues from the privatization of public enterprises gave the administration leeway to disburse funds to the provinces and win the backing of dissenting PJ and UCR governors (Gibson 1997; Gibson and Calvo 2000).

The dramatic decline in Peronist intraparty conflict is attributed by some authors to a shift in strategy by the Menem administration, exemplified by a speech the president made at a March 1991 PJ Congress (Corrales 2002b; Ostiguy 2009a).\textsuperscript{91} Others note that

\textsuperscript{89} Ostiguy (2009a) argues that the salient political cleavage in Argentina is not an economic-left right one, but one between what he calls “high” and “low” political appeals (Ostiguy 2009b). Such an approach would suggest that cooperation between Radicals and Peronists on economic policies would not signal convergence to voters. Although Ostiguy raises important distinctions between Peronism and anti-Peronism in terms of their rhetorical strategies, it seems difficult to consider this dimension to be independent of the economic left-right. And while both the PJ and UCR were mass parties with significant internal heterogeneity, it seems undeniable that the Peronist party, with its close links to labor and statist economic agenda was in relative terms positioned to the left of the Radical party prior to 1989. It is telling that while PJ party elites were stunned by the inconsistency of Menem’s economic policies with what they considered to be Peronist ideology, there was no such reaction by Radical party elites to the neoliberal agenda espoused by Angeloz.

\textsuperscript{90} The decree, announced in a televised speech, included 122 articles repealing a wide range of regulations.

\textsuperscript{91} Menem certainly became more “party-accommodating,” as Corrales (2002b) notes, in 1992, and both his rhetoric and his public appearances made greater use of Peronist symbols. In 1994, for instance, Menem
Menem began to “colonize” the ranks of the PJ, edging out Cafiero as party leader in August 1990 and imposing party outsiders – like racecar driver Carlos Reutemann and pop singer Ramon “Palito” Ortega – for the 1991 gubernatorial candidacies (Levitsky 2003). I agree with Levitsky that too much emphasis has been placed on the poorly attended and publicly inconsequential party congress of March 1991. But Menem was able to install loyalists in the party leadership because of a broader set of forces. His power within the PJ grew along with setbacks for his opponents – Cafiero’s electoral defeat in August 1990 and Saadi’s downfall in 1991 – and the success of his new economic plan notable by the middle of 1991 (see Figure 4.7 and 4.8 in Appendix 4B). Peronist victories in the 1991 midterm elections also cemented Menem’s leadership of the party by demonstrating his ability to deliver votes. As Figure 4.4 demonstrates, the president’s approval, and that of his economic program, increased significantly during 1991.

As Menem’s popularity increased with economic resurgence and his critics within the PJ became weaker politically, his stature within the party increased. The chances of party elites to force Menem to abandon his economic plans were diminishing. As Miguel Ángel Toma, then a PJ Deputy, told me, “Economic success makes up for any switch... Once everyone saw Menem succeeding, they closed ranks behind him.” Peronists abandoned their opposition to Menem and decided instead to united behind the president.

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attended his first rally in homage to Perón since taking office (Palermo and Novaro 1996: 443). But I differ with Corrales’s view of the causality here. Unlike Corrales, I view this not as an exogenously-determined change in strategy chosen by Menem. By that logic, Menem could have chosen that strategy at any time and it is not clear why he did not do so sooner. My interpretation is that Menem was able to become party-accommodating because of other political and economic factors that obviated the president’s prior need to distinguish himself from Peronism and its ideology.

92 Cafiero, who was also the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, had been weakened by the referendum defeat of his proposed amendment to the provincial constitution that would have allowed him to run for reelection. Saúl Ubaldini, leader of the dissident anti-reform CGT faction also faced an embarrassing defeat in his bid for the governorship of the province of Buenos Aires in 1991.

93 The new plan was the Convertibility Plan introduced by Cavallo, which pegged the Argentine peso to the US dollar at parity.

94 Personal interview, November 24, 2009.
4.3.3 **Constitutional Reform: Convergence Redux**

The Radicals found themselves in a difficult situation throughout Menem’s first term, torn between trying to distinguish themselves from the administration and supporting the administration’s economic program. The attempt at a nuanced “constructive opposition” – one that supported the thrust of the reform agenda but opposed its implementation – proved difficult to convey to voters and to sustain internally. After suffering a second blistering electoral defeat in the 1993 legislative elections (Cabrera and Murillo 1994), the Radical party became internally divided. The left wing of
the party argued for a more confrontational opposition from the left to the administration’s neoliberalism. Indeed, some of these party elites had already begun discussing abandoning the UCR with the Peronist defectors who formed the FG.

In the early months of 1992, Menem made clear his intention to be reelected in 1995. Although the Argentine federal constitution did not allow for consecutive reelection, Menem began exploring ways to change that provision. Similar efforts were being put forward by governors across the country who were interested in easing term limits in their provincial constitutions. As the reelection issue gained prominence, the UCR found itself again divided. Radical provincial governors seeking their own reelection publicly endorsed making similar changes to the federal term limits and discussed possibilities for a pact between the parties. Other Radicals, fearful of a second Menem term, spoke out against reelection as a power grab.

With the reelection debate appearing almost daily in the national press, in late 1993 Alfonsín and Menem emerged from the presidential residence in Olivos to announce their secret agreement to a pact for the general framework of a constitutional reform. The agreement provided Menem UCR support of presidential reelection in return for a series of institutional changes favored by the UCR. These included increasing the number of senators per province to three, with the third Senate seat going to the party that comes in second in the election. Some limits on the powers granted to the president were also added. Both party leaders then secured the support of their congressional blocs to

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95 Clarín, June 4, 1993, pp. 12-13; October 6, 1993, pp. 2-3; October 7, 1993, pp. 6-7; October 28, 1993, p. 5. Indeed, Menem considered attempting to split the Radical vote in Congress by negotiating directly with these supportive Radical governors.

96 Clarín, October 8, 1993, pp. 2-3; October 19, 1993, p. 8; November 3, 1993, pp. 6-7; November 4, 1993, pp. 8-9.

97 Clarín, November 13, 1993, pp. 6-7; November 14, 1993, pp. 10-11; November 16, 1993, p. 7; December 14, 1993, pp. 2-3. Página 12, November 14, 1993, pp. 2-3; December 14, 1993, pp. 2-5.

98 Alfonsín had begun discussions for a constitutional reform in 1986 that included many of these institutional changes (including presidential reelection), but the economic crisis and Alfonsín’s plummeting popularity doomed that effort (Alfonsín 2004: 166-89; Quiroga 2005: 45-9).

approve the framework. Elections for a constituent assembly in April 1994 then paved the way for ratification of a new constitution and Menem’s campaign for reelection.

The Menem-Alfonsín Pact of Olivos represented renewed convergence by the two parties, with the Radicals effectively conceding Menem’s reelection. Discussions of the pact and televised footage of the two leaders promoted the public perception that the two parties were indistinguishable. Figure 4.5 shows that political cartoons repeated the trope of Alfonsín and Menem’s indistinguishability: as in 1991, the Radical leader is depicted with Menem’s trademark sideburns.\(^{100}\)

Both party leaders faced opposition to the pact from some members of their parties. Peronists did not see the need to make concessions to the Radicals,\(^{101}\) while Radicals feared being associated with the administration.\(^{102}\) For Menem, the pact provided a guarantee of the legality and – more importantly – legitimacy of the reform and his reelection bid.\(^{103}\) Analysts dispute Alfonsín’s motives. He repeatedly justified the pact

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100 A conventional interpretation of public response to the Pact is that Radicals considered it a capitulation by Alfonsín and Peronists considered it a victory for Menem. Although this was likely part of the response, it cannot explain the fact that partisanship declined for both parties following the Pact (see Figure 4.2). Moreover, there is some reason to think that Radicals and Peronists did not interpret the Pact very differently. In a December 1993 survey, 67 percent of Radicals and 64 percent of Peronists approved of the Pact. We might think that these identities have already taken into account the facts of the Pact (that is, that Radicals who felt betrayed no longer identified with the party), so prior vote choice might be a better, if noisier, measure of a respondent’s partisanship at the time of the Pact. But even here there is little difference between Radicals and Peronists: 61.2 percent of those who said they had voted for Angeloz in 1989 approved of the Pact, while 62.8 percent of those who said they had voted for Menem approved of the Pact. These figures are the author’s calculations from a survey of 492 adults in Greater Buenos Aires conducted by Romer & Associates. The approval question asked, “In general, do you approve or disapprove of the fact that Menem and Alfonsín made an agreement on the issue of constitutional reform?”

101 The administration and PJ had been in discussion for months about ways to amend the constitutional term limit without Radical support. The administration began talking about a plebiscite on the reform in July 1993, one that would not be binding but would severely limit the possibilities for legislative opposition were it to pass. In November 1993 a PJ Deputy had introduced legislation to reinterpret the requirements for such an amendment to two-thirds of legislators present, a move of dubious legality that would have allowed the Peronist majority to overcome Radical opposition.

102 Clarín, December 9, 1993, p. 8. In the end, an oppositional faction of the UCR abstained from the congressional vote and from participating in the elections for a constituent assembly. Another sector, led by Fernando de la Rúa, opposed the reform because of de la Rúa’s own ambitions for the presidency.

103 The concern about legitimacy was emphasized to me by members of the administration, including Carlos Corach (personal interview, November 11, 2009) and Alberto Kohan (personal interview, November 19, 2009). Corach also denied that there was any possibility for a term-limit reform without Radical support.
as a lesser evil, arguing that Menem would have managed anyway to secure a change to presidential term limits; the pact at least ensured some limits on presidential power (Alfonsín 2004). ¹⁰⁴ Alfonsín may have seen provisions that were electorally favorable to the UCR – like the third senator and presidential run-offs – as ways to mitigate his party’s electoral decline (Acuña 1995). But the pact also had political advantages for Alfonsín over alternative forms of securing an agreement. He had stepped down as party leader following the party’s embarrassing showing in the 1991 legislative elections. By early 1992, his former collaborators within the party had begun distancing themselves from him.¹⁰⁵ Having recaptured the party presidency in a contentious internal vote during the

¹⁰⁴ This is also the motivation cited to me by Alfonsín advisor Mario Brodersohn (personal interview, November 16, 2009). See also Smulovitz (1995).

secret negotiations with Menem, the pact became an opportunity for Alfonsín to reestablish his role as undisputed leader of the UCR. Either way, the pact clearly benefited both party leaders in their own short-term ambitions. And both leaders knew that if they came away with at least some of their party’s goals achieved, it would be difficult for party elites to mount a successful opposition.

4.3.4 Partisanship and the 1995 Election

With the possibility of consecutive reelection secured, Menem focused his 1995 campaign on his success in stabilizing inflation and restarting Argentina’s economic growth. His economic policies had been the very opposite of Peronist ideology. My theory suggests that that programmatic inconsistency, the resulting intraparty conflicts, and the convergence with major opposition parties (in this case, the Radicals) would erode voters’ partisan attachments. Consistent with these expectations, Figure 4.2 shows that partisanship indeed declined dramatically for both parties in the 1989-92 period of inconsistency and convergence. As one Peronist voter put it, “Peronism is declining because the current government says it’s Peronist but is lying. So young people now say, ‘This is Peronism? No. I don’t like it’” (quoted in Martuccelli and Svampa 1997: 352). Although Peronist partisanship experienced some subsequent resurgence as Menem unified the party behind his reform agenda, the convergence on the Pact of Olivos caused a second decline for both parties in 1994.

Both parties thus entered the 1995 election with a diminished constituency of partisans. For Menem, the allegations of corruption and abuse of power surrounding

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106 Clarín, November 13, 1993, pp. 2-5.

107 Alfonsín may have also expected that positive public reaction to the pact would pave the way for his reelection as president in 1999. He indeed began an internal campaign to seek the party’s nomination for that election.

108 For fascinating ethnographic accounts of mass Peronist identity in this period, reaching quite different conclusions, see Martuccelli and Svampa (1997: Ch. 6) and Ostiguy (1998: Ch. 7).
members of his administration also became recurring campaign themes. But Menem was also widely credited with turning the economy around and leading Argentina out of its hyperinflationary crisis. A survey taken two weeks before the election found that only 35 percent of respondents had a negative view of Menem’s performance in office. Unemployment growth in 1995 offered the first signs of economic trouble (Pastor and Wise 1999), but Menem’s campaign used this hint of a downturn to suggest that the country was still not out of the woods and continued to need Menem’s leadership (Palermo and Novaro 1996: 456).

Menem faced two opponents in the 1995 race. The candidate of the UCR was Horacio Massaccesi, the governor of Río Negro, who agreed with many of Menem’s neoliberal reforms and found it difficult to meaningfully differentiate himself from the president. The Peronist dissident Bordón became the candidate of the Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frente por un País Solidario, FREPASO), a coalition between his PAIS and the FG. Bordón criticized not only the manner in which the economic reforms were passed and the allegations of corruption surrounding the Menem administration, but also the reforms themselves and the neoliberal economic agenda.

The context of Menem’s economic successes made him difficult to beat. He was the obvious choice for voters who supported his economic policies and for non-partisans who simply rewarded his good performance (Stokes 2001). Indeed, Menem won reelection with nearly 50 percent of the vote, surpassing the 45-percent threshold and hence avoiding a run-off. Voters who had a more social-democratic economic perspective – urban, middle-class voters who might in the past have identified as Radicals – cast their ballots for Bordón (Gervasoni 1998; Seligson 2003; Torre 2003), who came in second,
with 29 percent. In one of its worst electoral defeats in history, the UCR garnered a mere 17 percent of the vote, coming in third place for the first time since the birth of Peronism.

Good incumbent performance thus allowed Menem and the PJ to win reelection and to avoid the detrimental electoral effects of the party brand’s dilution, consistent with the interactive nature of my theory of party breakdown. But even if the theory predicts no observable aggregate electoral effects in this instance, it does have implications for individual-level effects. In particular, in cases of brand dilution combined with good incumbent performance, we should see partisanship become a relatively weak predictor of vote choice and retrospective evaluations become relatively strong.

One way to test this hypothesis is to compare the relative effects of partisanship and retrospective evaluations on vote choice in 1995 with those in 1989. In the 1989 election, when party brands were strong but incumbent performance bad, we would expect partisan attachments with the incumbent Radical party to have a stronger effect on vote choice than retrospective evaluations. In that election, Radical partisans continued to vote for their party even though the incumbent Radical administration had performed dismally. Conversely, in the 1995 election, when party brands were diluted but incumbent performance was good, we would expect partisan attachment with the incumbent Peronists to have a weaker effect on vote choice than retrospective evaluations. In other words, the bulk of the incumbent’s (Menem) vote came from voters who approved of his performance in office rather than from voters who identified with his party.

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112 Following his defeat, Bordón left FREPASO and rejoined the PJ.

113 Schofield and Cataife (2007) offer a somewhat different interpretation of the 1995 elections. Relying on a voter survey conducted in 1998, they argue that a second dimension of political had emerged over the currency. I see little reason to believe that the currency had become a salient source of political debate or that it was independent of the left-right dimension. Indeed, none of the 1995 candidates advocated abandoning the fixed exchange rate.

114 Ostiguy (1998) and Canton and Jorrat (2002) argue that the key to Menem’s electoral success in 1995 was his capacity to remain “Peronist” and to attract Peronist partisans. Indeed, Canton and Jorrat (2002) find strong effects of partisanship on vote choice in that election. However, their models never include both partisanship and retrospective evaluations.
A simple descriptive probit analysis can be used to compare these hypothesized relative effects across the two elections. I expect that partisanship had a larger effect than retrospective performance evaluations on vote choice in 1989. I also expect that the relationship reversed in 1995, with retrospective evaluations having a larger effect than partisanship in that election. For 1989, I use the survey data employed above with the same variable codings. For 1995, I use data from a national survey conducted by Romer & Associates two weeks before the May 14 election. To make the magnitudes of the coefficients comparable, I standardize the variables to vary between 0 and 1. I am interested here in examining the total relationship between each variable and vote choice, so I do not include control variables.

Table 4.5 presents the results of this analysis. In the 1989 election, partisanship had a much stronger effect on voting for the incumbent party’s candidate, Angeloz, than did retrospective evaluations. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, that ranking was reversed in 1995 for the new incumbent, Menem. Indeed, as the third column in Table 4.5 shows, the effect of retrospective evaluations on incumbent voting increased significantly and by orders of magnitude between 1989 and 1995, while the effect of partisanship declined significantly. This finding lends considerable support to my theory of party breakdown. Even though the dilution of the Peronist party brand during Menem’s first term did not reduce his aggregate vote share, it had significant and substantial effects on the bases of his support.

Consistent with my theory of party breakdown, the dramatic dilution of the Peronist party brand during the early 1990s did not lead to party breakdown. To be sure, there were major inconsistencies in Peronist program and behavior in the first Menem

\[115^1\] The retrospective evaluation question asked, “How would you characterize the general economic situation of the country?” Respondents were given the options “very bad,” “bad,” “average,” “good,” and “very good.” The variable here is coded so that higher values imply a more positive evaluation. The partisanship question asked, “With which party or political orientation do you most identify? Which best represents your way of thinking?”

\[116^1\] In a similar analysis, Gervasoni (1998) compares Menem’s electoral coalitions in 1989 and 1995, although he does not include a measure of partisanship.
Table 4.5: Partisanship, economic evaluations, and incumbent vote in 1989 and 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective Evaluation</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>4.613***</td>
<td>4.528***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.487)</td>
<td>(0.348)</td>
<td>(0.598)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Party Identifier</td>
<td>2.276***</td>
<td>1.200***</td>
<td>-1.076**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.462)</td>
<td>(0.127)</td>
<td>(0.478)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>1,113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-103.831</td>
<td>-356.363</td>
<td>-460.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.397</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant terms not shown.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

term. These were both intertemporal – the administration’s abandonment of the party’s ideological commitments – and contemporaneous – the intraparty conflicts this about-face engendered. Moreover, the Peronist and Radical brands converged considerably both in the first years of the Menem administration and with the two parties’ confluence over the constitutional reform. As expected by my theory, these inconsistencies and convergence diluted both parties’ brands and eroded voters’ partisan attachments.

My theory also suggests that such brand dilution and eroded partisanship will only affect aggregate electoral outcomes in the context of bad incumbent performance. And that was certainly not the case for Menem in 1995. We have seen evidence of partisan erosion during Menem’s first term as well as a decline in the relative importance of partisanship for vote choice vis-à-vis retrospective evaluations between 1989 and 1995. But Menem’s reelection demonstrates that brand dilution alone is not a sufficient condition for party breakdown. Had Menem’s policies not improved the country’s economic situation in time for the 1995 vote, the outcome for Peronism would have been significantly different.

Why did Menem dilute the Peronist party brand? With the country in the midst of economic crisis, Menem faced conflicting incentives between the types of economic policies likely to generate positive outcomes and electoral support in the short term and
those policies that would remain consistent with Peronism. Hoping to secure reelection, Menem opted for the former and pursued a dramatic policy switch, one that had to be radical enough to credibly signal his commitment to the reform agenda. Activists in the president’s party then faced the costly option of challenging the president’s choices or supporting the reforms. Consistent with my expectations, they chose to challenge Menem while his position seemed weak, but became supportive of the reforms as the economy improved and Menem’s position became noticeably stronger.

4.4 Brand Dilution with Bad Performance: Radical Party, 2003

The Radical party regained the presidency in 1999 through an electoral coalition. But the administration was riddled with intraparty conflict. The party’s inconsistencies in attempting to forestall an economic crisis and its renewed convergence with Peronism severely diluted the party’s brand. The unprecedented crisis of 2001-2 also made the party’s performance a dismal failure. The combination of having lost its stalwart partisan base and the party’s poor performance in office led to its breakdown in 2003.

Following Menem’s reelection and the Radicals’ poor showing in the 1995 election, the Radicals began exploring the possibility of an electoral alliance with FREPASO. Although FREPASO was ideologically to the left of the UCR and had far more clearly rejected the Menem administration’s economic agenda, both the UCR and FREPASO saw an alliance as the only way to be competitive in the 1999 presidential race. In August 1997, the two parties formed an alliance to present joint lists in

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117 Indeed, it was the left wing of the UCR that led the move toward an alliance. The same left wing had discussed an alliance prior to the election, but failed to reach an agreement (Federico Storani, personal interview, November 24, 2009).

118 Although FREPASO’s Bordón had come in second in the 1995 presidential race, its votes were concentrated in the urban centers, while the UCR had far more organization presence in rural provinces. Indeed, FREPASO won only 3 Senate seats in 1995, compared to the UCR’s 20. In an early test of such an
legislative elections that year. The Alliance for Work, Justice, and Education (Alianza por el Trabajo, la Justicia, y la Educación, or Alianza) promised to make “corrections” to the economic model – particularly to address social issues and unemployment – but said it would respect the pegged exchange rate and the privatizations. In the October election, it garnered a plurality of the votes (though not a plurality of congressional seats), setting the stage for an Alianza victory in 1999 (Cheresky 2003).

Such a victory, though, would require some arduous reconciliation among the two parties. The UCR had required that the alliance agreement stipulate open primaries for president, knowing it would have an advantage when it came to mobilizing primary voters. In a hard fought primary battle, Fernando de la Rúa, the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires, won out; but the two parties agreed to make FREPASO leader Carlos “Chacho” Álvarez his running mate (Novaro and Palermo 1998).

With unemployment a growing voter concern, De la Rúa handily won the 1999 presidency, beating Eduardo Duhalde, Menem’s 1989 running mate and later governor of the province of Buenos Aires.

The Alianza proved to be a useful electoral vehicle for the opposition to the Menem administration. But governing with this alliance would prove far more difficult. The negotiated De la Rúa-Álvarez ticket gave the two party leaders the national clout with which to tamp down internal dissent on the campaign trail. But in office the two leaders

119 Clarín, July 25, 1997; August 4, 1997. In 7 of 24 districts, the UCR and FREPASO continued to present separate party lists (Leiras 2006: 145-6).

120 Although I am not concerned here with the FREPASO party brand, given how new the party was, it is still worth noting that Álvarez was concerned with the effects of the alliance on his party’s burgeoning “identity” (Álvarez and Morales Solá 2002: 69).


122 The Alianza leaders had publicly discussed finding a Peronist running mate but finally abandoned that idea (La Nación, June 25, 1998).

123 Duhalde was himself somewhat critical of Menem’s second-term policies and tried to distance himself from the administration. But he clearly maintained ties Menem, backing Menem’s second vice president, Carlos Ruckauf, in the 1999 gubernatorial elections in the province of Buenos Aires and Cavallo, Menem’s Minister of the Economy, in the 2000 elections for the Chief of Government of the city of Buenos Aires.
conflicted frequently over their relative influence, and De la Rúa all but refused to respond to the demands of FREPASO legislators.\footnote{The Alianza presents a complicated case since there is technically no single party brand that is affected by the actions of the administration or other Alianza elites. But there is good reason to think that the De la Rúa administration was seen primarily as a Radical one. One reporter noted during the 1998 Alianza primary that FREPASO’s Graciela Fernández Meijide was seen as “the candidate of Alianza” while De la Rúa was seen as “the candidate of Radicalism” (Clarín, February 22, 1998). In her memoir, Fernández Meijide notes that many of the 1999 campaign’s rallies used UCR symbols in addition to – or instead of – Alianza symbols (Fernández Meijide 2007: 145-6). Indeed, various officials from the administration affirmed that it was viewed as a Radical administration (Andrés Delich, personal interview, November 11, 2009; José Luis Machinea, personal interview, November 20, 2009; Graciela Fernández Meijide, personal interview, November 23, 2009). I therefore treat the De la Rúa administration as a Radical administration.}

4.4.1 Alianza: Intraparty Conflict

Economic policy had been one of the primary sources of conflict between De la Rúa’s UCR and Álvarez’s FREPASO on the campaign trail. While the FREPASO had called for greater emphasis on social issues throughout the Menem administration, the UCR was far more sympathetic to many of the reforms, particularly those enacted during Menem’s first term. Upon taking office, Minister of the Economy José Luis Machinea announced tax increases and austerity measures, including cuts in education and social services, the very areas the Alianza had promised to reinforce.\footnote{The justification offered by the administration was that the federal government’s fiscal situation was worse than previously thought. Clarín, May 12, 2000.} The cuts were deeply criticized by FREPASO legislators and cabinet members.\footnote{La Nación, May 31, 2000; June 30, 2000.} Although the Alianza held a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, the dissent of some of the FREPASO legislators made it difficult for the De la Rúa administration to gain support for its legislative agenda (Jones and Hwang 2005b). In a telling sign of the conflicts within the Alianza, De la Rúa resorted to legislating by presidential decree (Mustapic 2005); in fact, he issued more decrees in his first five months in office (28) than Menem had in his first five months (18).\footnote{La Nación, June 16, 2000. One of the few accomplishments of the administration that did pass through Congress was a labor reform law that sought to make the labor market more flexible and limit the power of unions. The law garnered the support of nearly the entire Alianza bloc and some PJ legislators. But}
De la Rúa also resorted to making decisions without consulting Álvarez or the rest of FREPASO. During the course of 2000, the conflict between the president and vice president became increasingly heated and public.\textsuperscript{128} On June 25, a columnist for the daily *La Nación* reported that some Senators – both Peronist and Radical – had been paid bribes by the administration in return for their support of the labor reform bill. Despite weeks of public and congressional calls for an investigation, De la Rúa denied the accusations and refused to investigate the matter.\textsuperscript{129} Álvarez and FREPASO had spent years accusing the Menem administration of corruption and demanded that the Alianza hold itself to a higher standard.\textsuperscript{130} Instead, De la Rúa announced some changes to his cabinet, but promoted Minister of Labor Alberto Flamarique – who had played a leading role in the alleged bribery – to Secretary of the Presidency. In protest, Álvarez announced his resignation during the swearing-in ceremony for the new cabinet members.\textsuperscript{131} Although FREPASO remained in the Alianza, Álvarez denounced the administration and days later discussed “forming a new social movement independent of FREPASO and the parties.”\textsuperscript{132}

While FREPASO congressional leaders assured the public that the Alianza remained intact, the conflicts between the two parties continued to escalate, and new conflicts within the UCR began to emerge.\textsuperscript{133} By early 2001, the economic situation was worsening and Argentina could not meet the conditions set in its agreements with the IMF. After a brief conflict between De la Rúa and Machinea in March, the Minister of the Economy resigned. Without consulting his Alianza partners, De la Rúa appointed Ricardo

\textsuperscript{128} *La Nación*, October 1, 2000.
\textsuperscript{129} *La Nación*, September 2, 2000; September 5, 2000; September 28, 2000.
\textsuperscript{130} The administration had in fact implemented several anti-corruption measures in its early days (Charosky 2002).
\textsuperscript{131} *La Nación*, October 7, 2000; October 12, 2000. *Página 12*, August 6, 2000. Álvarez’s resignation was apparently celebrated within the administration (Novaro 2009: 587). A few months later, in May 2001, Alvarez also resigned from FREPASO.
\textsuperscript{132} *La Nación*, October 19, 2000.
\textsuperscript{133} *La Nación*, October 15, 2000.
López Murphy, who had been serving as Minister of Defense, to replace Machinea. López Murphy, a longtime Radical and staunch neoliberal, immediately announced a new and deeper set of austerity measures, including deep cuts in education, a pillar of the Alianza’s electoral platform. López Murphy’s plan precipitated criticism not only from FREPASO but from De la Rúa’s own UCR; three Radical cabinet members resigned from the administration in protest. Soon Alfonsín, who had returned to the leadership of the UCR, added his criticism, announcing the Radical party’s rejection of the López Murphy’s appointment.

De la Rúa was forced to reshuffle his cabinet yet again. Hoping to shore up his economic policy with international prestige, De la Rúa appointed Cavallo, the architect of Menem’s economic reforms, to replace López Murphy. The president had apparently decided that he could not govern with FREPASO and decided to rely instead on Cavallo and his backers in the PJ.

Again the reaction from FREPASO and the UCR was swift. Party leaders spoke out against the administration with unrestrained vehemence. To contain the fiscal and debt crisis, Cavallo sought emergency powers from Congress, just as he had in the 1990s. The powers were conferred with Peronist support; the administration’s own coalition parties opposed them. One prominent UCR Deputy, Elisa Carrió, denounced fellow Radicals who voted for the bill as “traitors,” and more than half of the FREPASO legislators voted against the measure. Days later, Carrió announced she was leaving the UCR to form a new party, the Alternative for a Republic of Equals (Alternativa por una

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By August 2001, a newspaper column headline read, “An Administration Without a Party and With Few Friends.”

The Radical party brand had become so diluted that politicians now preferred to form their own parties. As Fernando Melillo, at the time a FREPASO Deputy, told me, “What did it mean to be Radical? Radical like De la Rúa? Like Alfonsín? Like López Murphy, who was saying the exact opposite of Alfonsín?” In the ensuing months, other FREPASO and UCR politicians, including Melillo, followed Carrió’s lead, some joining the ARI. The infighting among UCR party leaders led to the headline “Everyone against everyone.” Following the Alianza’s major defeats in the October 2001 legislative elections (Bavastro and Szusterman 2003; Escolar et al. 2002), the last FREPASO cabinet member tendered his resignation. In March 2002, López Murphy also defected from the UCR to form his own party, Recreate for Growth. The effective number of parties in voting for the Chamber of Deputies jumped from 2.8 in 1999 to 4.0 in 2001.

With the credibility of the De la Rúa administration in decline, economic uncertainty soared. International creditors began to speculate that the pegged exchange rate was unsustainable and massive withdrawals in late November 2001 led to a liquidity crisis. In response, De la Rúa froze bank deposits and imposed exchange controls by

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143 Personal interview, November 18, 2009.

144 *La Nación*, October 5, 2001; October 18, 2001; October 25, 2001.


146 The Alianza received five million fewer votes than in 1999, a 24 percentage-point decline.

147 *La Nación*, October 21, 2001. This was Juan Pablo Cafiero, the PJ leader’s son who had defected from that party as part of the Group of Eight.

148 *La Nación*, March 27, 2002. López Murphy noted that his decision was based in part on the failure of the UCR to support the De la Rúa administration.

149 Many scholars have examined the reasons behind the economic crisis. While many point to a confluence of economic factors – including the budget deficit, foreign debt, and inflexibility of the pegged exchange rate Bleaney (2004); Mussa (2002); Pastor and Wise (2001) – others emphasize political factors,
presidential decree. Now unable to access their bank accounts, Argentines took to the streets. After days of riots and looting, De la Rúa declared a state of siege on December 19. The next day, Cavallo and the rest of the administration’s cabinet resigned. De la Rúa himself resigned on December 21, boarding a helicopter on the roof of the presidential residence in Olivos.

4.4.2 Crisis and Convergence

The appointment of Cavallo, a figure so closely associated with the Menem administration and a longtime Peronist, to the cabinet of a Radical president signalled the return of Peronist-Radical convergence. Cavallo’s appointment was the result of both the conflicts within the ruling Alianza and the deepening economic crisis. For the remainder of 2001, the De la Rúa administration governed with some Radical and some Peronist support, relying increasingly on Peronist governors. Figure 4.6 reproduces a political cartoon that appeared soon after Cavallo’s appointment, illustrating both the sense of disarray among the political leadership and the lack of distinction between the Alianza administration and its Peronist predecessor.

The De la Rúa administration’s reliance on Cavallo and Peronist support lasted only nine months. After the Alianza’s devastating losses in the October legislative election, few elites from any party wished to be associated with the deeply unpopular administration. With De la Rúa’s resignation, the PJ-controlled Congress was forced to choose his successor (Mustapic 2005). After some false starts, Congress selected Duhalde, the former vice president who had lost the 1999 election to De la Rúa. His selection received the support of the PJ, UCR, and FREPASO.

including De la Rúa’s ineffectual leadership (Llanos and Margheritis 2006) and the weakness of the Alianza coalition (Corrales 2002a; Ollier 2003; Schamis 2002).

150 The vice president would have been first in the line of succession, but De la Rúa had not replaced Álvarez.

Upon taking office, Duhalde called for a government of national unity and
negotiated with both Peronist and Radical governors, promising not to run in the 2003
elections. Two Radicals and one FREPASO leader joined Duhalde’s cabinet. And both the
UCR and FREPASO supported granting Duhalde emergency decree powers.\(^\text{152}\) During
his 17 months in office, Duhalde also relied on Radical and FREPASO support in
Congress. The remaining FREPASO Deputies went so far as to join the administration’s
majority legislative bloc.\(^\text{153}\) In January 2002, Duhalde unpegged the exchange rate,
plunging Argentina into an economic depression. Protests continued for weeks and a
weakened Duhalde finally called for early elections.

\(^{152}\) *La Nación*, January 5, 2002.

\(^{153}\) *La Nación*, January 2, 2002. A further faction of FREPASO, led by Aníbal Ibarra, the Chief of
Government of the city of Buenos Aires, opposed the party’s support for the administration and broke away
(Abal Medina 2009).
4.4.3 Partisanship and the 2003 Election

Although the economy began to recover in late 2002, Argentina’s political parties were in disarray. The PJ was due to hold primary elections when former president Menem declared his candidacy. Fearful that Menem might capture the nomination, Duhalde convinced the party to run multiple candidates in the general election. In addition to Menem, former interim president Adolfo Rodríguez Saá and Duhalde-backed Santa Cruz governor Néstor Kirchner also ran as Peronist candidates.154 FREPASO, much diminished by the defection of many of its officials, chose neither to contest the 2003 election nor to support any candidate in the presidential race.155 The UCR, itself severely weakened by prominent defections, nominated one of its older party leaders, Leopoldo Moreau. Former Radicals Carrió and López Murphy both entered the presidential race under their newly minted parties.

This fragmentation of the Argentine party system resulted in part from the dilution of the brands of the traditional parties.156 As Figure 4.2 shows, the inconsistencies and conflicts within the Alianza administration diluted the Radical brand dramatically. Party elites like Carrió, López Murphy, and their followers, anticipated the party’s collapse and preferred to compete outside the party. The Peronist party was forced to take control of the presidency amid the worst economic crisis in Argentine history. Its crisis-driven convergence also resulted in the dilution of its brand, although not nearly to the extent of

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154 Saá, who had been governor of San Luis, was appointed president by Congress on December 23, 2001, but resigned seven days later.

155 The party all but dissolved after 2003. Following the election, many of its members joined the Kirchnerist wing of the Peronist party. The last nominal FREPASO legislator lost her seat in 2007.

156 Calvo and Escolar (2005) highlight the important role that changes to electoral rules had in fragmenting the Argentine party system, particularly at the provincial level. At the national level there are certainly theoretical reasons to expect run-off presidential elections to increase the number of first-round candidates. But this makes it all the more striking that the UCR and FREPASO were able to form the Alianza rather than compete for second place in the 1999 presidential race. Indeed, the party system did not significantly fragment at the national level (in both presidential and legislative elections) until 2001, making it difficult to link solely to the change of rules enacted in 1994.
the Radicals. This may explain why Peronist candidates like Menem, Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá still preferred to compete as Peronists.

At the same time that partisan attachments to the Radicals had all but disappeared completely, perceptions of incumbent performance were also dismal. By 2003, the party of the incumbent was the Peronist party, although voters almost unanimously blamed the Radicals for the economic crisis. In a November 2001 survey, less than three percent of respondents said the De la Rúa administration was managing things “well” or “very well,” 20 percent responded “neither well nor poorly,” and 77 percent said the the administration was managing things poorly.157 At the same time, the performance of Duhalde was mixed. While the economy had begun to improve in the months leading up to the election, and the administration had managed to enact some social policies to help the unemployed, evaluations of his performance were understandably more ambivalent (Levitsky and Murillo 2003). In a March 2003 survey, 32 percent of respondents thought Duhalde’s performance had been good, 43 percent thought it was neither good nor bad, and 22 percent thought it was bad.158

Table 4.6 presents the results of the 2003 presidential election. Menem attracted nearly a quarter of the vote, with Kirchner closely following in second place. Since no candidate passed the 45-percent threshold, the two were set to face each other in a second round of voting. But polls predicted a landslide victory for Kirchner and Menem’s supporters quickly began to distance themselves from the former president. Two weeks after the first round of voting, Menem decided to save face and drop out of the second round, making Kirchner the winner by default.159

157 Author’s calculations from a national survey of 1,200 adults conducted by Mora y Araujo & Associates. The question asked, “How do you believe the national government is managing things?” One might prefer a similar question asked closer to the 2003 election, but polls by that time no longer included such evaluations. Polling experts expected responses at that time to be almost unanimous since, if anything, opinions of the De la Rúa administration could only have worsened after the president’s resignation and the subsequent deepening of the economic crisis (Eduardo Fidanza, personal interview, November 19, 2009).

158 Author’s calculations from a national survey of 1,000 adults conducted by Carlos Fara & Associates. The question asked, “What is your opinion of the performance of president Duhalde?”

Table 4.6: Results of 2003 presidential election in Argentina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Vote share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Menem</td>
<td>PJ</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Néstor Kirchner</td>
<td>PJ</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo López Murphy</td>
<td>Federal Recreate Movement</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolfo Rodríguez Saá</td>
<td>PJ</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisa Carrió</td>
<td>ARI</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leopoldo Moreau</td>
<td>UCR</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Walsh</td>
<td>United Left</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Levitsky and Murillo (2003)

The striking result in Table 4.6 is the dismal showing by Moreau, the Radical candidate. With his party blamed for disastrous performance in office and with no partisan base, his candidacy was doomed. A party that only four years earlier had garnered 48 percent of the vote had been reduced to a mere two percent. The 2003 election thus dealt the death blow to the Radical party, which has remained uncompetitive at the national level since then.

The other striking facet of the 2003 election is the lack of an anti-establishment vote. Several million Argentines had cast blank or null ballots in the 2001 legislative elections (Escolar et al. 2002), and chants of “kick them all out!” (“¡que se vayan todos!”) echoed through the 2001-2 street protests. One might have expected these events to signal widespread anti-establishment sentiment, a phenomenon that some scholars have suggested as an alternative explanation for party breakdown. But in fact none of the six top candidates in 2003 were anti-establishment candidates. The top two were a former president and a three-term governor. It seems implausible, therefore, that anti-establishment sentiment can account for the massive abandonment of the Radical party.

160 For this to plausibly explain the breakdown of the Radicals, of course, one would also need to explain why the Peronist party was exempt from the anti-establishment deluge.

161 Political apathy – and at particular moments even hostility to the political sphere – certainly did increase in Argentina since the 1980s (Szusterman 2007; but see Adrogué and Armesto 2001). But this
It should also be noted that while the breakdown of the Radicals was clearly associated with factionalism and elite conflict, it seems likely that these disputes anticipated voter behavior rather than caused it. By the time De la Rúa resigned, the fate of the Radical party was sealed, even if the presidential election would wait for another 16 months. This precipitated the departure of Radical elites like Carrió, López Murphy, and their supporters, who anticipated that being associated with the Radical party brand brought negative valence associations with no stable partisan support. After all, the defection of PJ elites during Menem’s first term did not lead that party to breakdown. Moreover, as I will show in the next chapter, the breakdown of the Venezuelan parties was not preceded by major elite defections.

In sum, the Alianza administration was a dismal failure, ending in economic crisis and the ignominious resignation of president De la Rúa. As a consequence of the crisis and the fragility of the coalition government, it was also an administration riddled with intraparty conflict. The result was an erosion of the Radical party brand and the breakdown of the party. The combination of having lost its stalwart partisan base and the party’s poor performance in office led to its mass rejection by voters at the polls. And the anticipated rejection by voters led to defections by party elites.

Voters who had previously cast their ballots for Radical candidates split their vote among the various 2003 candidates (Calvo and Escolar 2005: 222). The Argentine party system had gone from being one of the few stable two-party systems in Latin America to a fragmented system of competing personalities with no clear party brands. Even the Peronist party, which muddled through its own brand’s dilution during the economic crisis, would need to reconstruct its brand to recover the level of partisan attachments and internal cohesion it had once enjoyed.

could be seen as partially a byproduct of public perceptions that party brands are unclear and that the differences between parties are insignificant.
4.5 Comparing the Argentina Cases

Tracing the three party-election cases from Argentina has demonstrated the processes of brand maintenance and brand dilution by the two established parties in Argentine politics. We have seen how Radicals and Peronists maintained their party brands in the 1980s but diluted them in the early 1990s. We have also seen how the Radical party again diluted its brand in the early 2000s. In all three cases, this brand dilution was associated with the erosion of partisan attachments.

My theory of party breakdown posits that this dilution of party brands must interact with bad incumbent performance to lead to party breakdown. And indeed we have seen that the two key variables were both present in the case of the Radicals in 2003, in which the party broke down. The other two cases, the Radicals in 1989 and the Peronists in 1995, offer useful “off-diagonal” comparisons that control for potential confounding factors. Comparing the Radicals in 1989 and 2003 suggests that bad incumbent performance alone is not a sufficient condition for party breakdown. The same party had performed dismally in office and was widely seen to have failed. The institutional features of the party had not changed in that time, nor had the institutional and structural context changed significantly. But party breakdown resulted only in the latter case.

Still, it is plausible that a crucial factor in the demise of the Radicals in 2003 was the memory of the party’s bad performance in 1989. That is, voters punished the Radicals particularly severely because De la Rúa’s economic failure built upon Alfonsín’s. The prior performance of the Radicals no doubt played a role in some voters’ minds in 2003. But there is reason to think that voters’ memories of the Alfonsín administration were not so one-sided: in an April 1999 survey, only 29 percent of respondents felt negatively about Alfonsín.\textsuperscript{162} Perhaps more usefully, in the next chapter I compare the Radicals to AD in Venezuela to provide some leverage on this score.

\textsuperscript{162} In fact, it was the older respondents who felt most positively about him, even though they had lived through the 1989 crisis. Author’s calculations from a national survey of 1,389 adults conducted by Romer & Associates. The question asked, “What is your opinion of the following individuals who have occupied, are
The comparison of the Peronists in 1995 to the Radicals in 2003 suggests that brand dilution alone is not a sufficient condition for party breakdown. The two parties do have some dissimilarities. The Peronists’ constituents are traditionally poorer and it has stronger links to organized labor. One might expect a less-informed constituency and labor ties to dampen the effects of brand dilution on partisan erosion. But this does not seem to be the case. Instead, positive retrospective evaluations become far more determinant of the Peronist vote in 1995 than partisanship. Hence bad incumbent performance is the crucial variable that differentiates the two cases.

Comparing these three cases from Argentina provides useful analytical leverage since we can hold constant most country-level characteristics – like federal institutions and electoral rules – while identifying the differences across the cases. Of course, we also want to ensure that the theory of party breakdown extends beyond the Argentine case. Three additional cases from Venezuela will repeat these types of within-country comparisons, while also making cross-country comparisons with these Argentine cases.
Appendix 4A. Argentina Surveys

Truly national surveys are rarely conducted in Argentina. With 30-40 percent of the population living in greater Buenos Aires, the majority of surveys are limited to that area. Such studies typically survey the adult populations of either the city of Buenos Aires (known as the Federal Capital before 1994 and subsequently as the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires), greater Buenos Aires including the conurbano region surrounding the capital, or the city and province of Buenos Aires, which includes towns outside greater Buenos Aires but within the province of Buenos Aires. Even those surveys that purport to have nationally representative samples typically exclude the sparsely populated provinces of the south like Chubut, Santa Cruz, and Tierra del Fuego. Argentine surveys also typically exclude from their samples affluent gated communities (country) and squatter slums (villa miseria), although this is rarely stipulated in documentation.

Surveys in Argentina typically employ stratified sampling methods within the surveyed region. Within selected households, age and gender quotas are typically used to select respondents (Sudman 1966). Table 4.7 lists information about the sample sizes and regional coverage of the surveys included in the partisanship figures cited in this chapter and plotted in Figure 4.2. Footnotes provide similar information for surveys cited in the text.

Table 4.7: Argentina surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Polling firm</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 1984</td>
<td>Catterberg</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>Various cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1985</td>
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Table 4.7: Argentina surveys (continued)

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Figure 4.7: Monthly inflation in Argentina, 1983-2003. Values represent monthly changes to the consumer price index. Dotted vertical lines separate presidential administrations. Source: International Financial Statistics, IMF.
Figure 4.8: Annual GDP growth in Argentina, 1983-2003. Source: World Development Indicators.
Appendix 4C. Composition of Argentine Congress, 1983-2003

Table 4.8: Composition of Argentine Senate, 1983-2003

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<td>45.7</td>
<td>54.4 / 54.2</td>
<td>62.5</td>
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<td>57.1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15.2 / 16.7</td>
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<td>11.4</td>
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<td>46 / 48</td>
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Source: Jones and Hwang (2005b) with author’s updates

Note: Seat shares are based on election results and do not account for (relatively infrequent) defections during a congressional term. The territory of Tierra del Fuego became a province in 1991, increasing the total number of Senators to 48. The 1994 constitutional reform increased the number of Senators per province from 2 to 3.
Table 4.9: Composition of Argentine Chamber of Deputies, 1983-2003

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</table>

Source: Jones and Hwang (2005b)

Note: Seat shares are based on election results and do not account for (relatively infrequent) defections during a congressional term. PJ and UCR figures include candidates from other parties elected on PJ or UCR lists. The territory of Tierra del Fuego became a province in 1991, increasing the total number of Deputies to 257.
Chapter 5

The Breakdowns of AD and COPEI in Venezuela

Within-country comparisons provide useful analytical leverage by controlling for many potential confounds that do not vary within the same system. Comparing three cases from Argentina, along with tracing the processes of brand maintenance and brand dilution, supported the empirical implications of my theory of party breakdown. Still, cross-country comparisons provide additional leverage. Such comparisons examine whether similar causal processes occur across systems that vary along potential confounds and test whether within-country findings generalize.

I continue the case studies and matched-case comparisons with three party-election cases from Venezuela: AD in 1988, AD in 1993, and AD/COPEI in 1998. These case studies will trace the processes of brand maintenance/dilution and its effects on partisanship as well as test some observable implications of the branding model of partisanship with survey data. They will also test the implication of the intraparty bargaining model of brand dilution. Finally, as with the three Argentina cases, I will also examine two matched comparisons of the same party, AD, over time. These comparisons
test the sufficiency conditions of my theory of party breakdown. I subsequently turn to comparing the cases from Venezuela with those from Argentina.

5.1 Political Parties and Partisanship in Venezuela

Venezuelan democracy reemerged in 1958 following the ouster of military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Leaders of the country’s three major political parties returned from exile to contest the first election. At the head of Venezuela’s oldest political party, Democratic Action (Acción Democrática, AD), was one of its founders, Rómulo Betancourt. AD had been founded in 1941 to mobilize mass opposition to the military regime. AD had by far the broadest popular appeal and geographic penetration. The party always saw itself as a multiclass organization even as it developed close ties with organized labor and, at times, the rural peasantry. Scholars often classify AD, along with Argentina’s Peronists, as a labor-based, populist party (Roberts 2002). Party elites often characterized AD as social-democratic, and one of its leaders, Carlos Andrés Pérez, was a three-term Vice-President of the Socialist International, the global umbrella organization for socialist and social-democratic parties.

AD faced two main competitors. The Independent Political Electoral Organizing Committee (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente, COPEI) was founded in 1946 by outspoken Catholic critics of Betancourt. COPEI’s support was based in the conservative and religious Andean states, the same region that produced the country’s military dictators. Its adherents considered COPEI a Christian-democratic party; indeed, one of its leaders, Eduardo Fernández, served as President of the Christian Democrat International.

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1 On the origins of AD, see Aznar (1990), Ellner (1982), and Martz (1966).
2 In its early years, a party motto was “not a single district, not a single municipality without a party organization” (Martz 1966: 49).
3 On the origins of COPEI, see Álvarez (2004), Combellas Lares (1985), Crisp, Levine, and Molina (2003), and Herman (1980).
The other main opponent of AD was the Republican Democratic Union (Unión Republicana Democrática, URD), a programmatically nebulous party formed in 1945 that served primarily as the political vehicle of Jóvito Villalba, an AD dissident. Both COPEI and URD incorporated elites associated with the various military regimes, although both suffered some repression during the Pérez Jiménez regime.4

With the restoration of democracy, the three parties committed themselves to representative democracy and some informal collaboration in the Pact of Punto Fijo.5 The first cabinet, under AD president Betancourt, included members of all three parties. Electoral competition at this time was structured around regional and class cleavages (Collier and Collier 1991; Martz and Harkins 1973; Myers 1998, 1975). But by the 1970s, those political cleavages became less pronounced even as collaboration between the parties largely faded (Neuhouser 1992). URD was eclipsed, essentially reducing electoral competition to a two-way contest between AD and COPEI (see Figure 5.1). Indeed, between 1973 and 1988, AD and COPEI on average attracted 90 percent of the vote in presidential elections.

The rise of oil prices and nationalization of the oil industry in the 1970s blurred some of the social cleavages that had divided supporters of AD and COPEI until then (Baloyra and Martz 1979; Myers 1998, 1986). Flush with oil rents, the parties incorporated organized interests through systems of patronage, subsuming nearly every aspect of political interaction to the party hierarchy in what Coppedge (1994) critically called partyarchy (see also Gil Yepes 1978). At the same time, the more militant leftist wings of AD joined the Movement Toward Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo, MAS), a party formed in 1971 by former leftist guerrillas.6 Although MAS never became

4 Pérez Jiménez came to power in 1948 by overthrowing the AD government of Rómulo Gallegos. While AD was proscribed by his regime (along with the Venezuelan Communist Party), COPEI and URD continued to be involved in political affairs for some time.

5 The pact was partially a response to the interparty intransigence that characterized the 1945-8 period of democracy (see Levine 1985).

nationally competitive on its own, its emergence moved AD to the ideological center. Coppedge (1994: 42) concluded that, “Because of the programmatic convergence of AD and COPEI, voters [were] now left with little to choose between... In some ways, the choice resembles that between the Republicans and the Democrats – a choice of candidates more than of parties, of style more than substance.”

Still, intense interparty rivalries persisted and the differences between the parties remained salient for many Venezuelans (Ellner 1984). Although both became broad-based parties, AD drew greater support from the rural poor and labor, while COPEI attracted more urban and middle-class voters. Coppedge himself notes that Venezuelans continued to perceive meaningful differences between the parties, even if he did not consider these differences substantive Coppedge (1994: 43). In an October 1983 survey, respondents on average placed AD at 3.59 and COPEI at 4.08 on a 5-point left-right scale, suggesting a meaningful difference for a two-party system.

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7 Scholars of US politics would likely differ with Coppedge’s characterization of the American parties as indistinguishable (see McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006).

8 Author’s calculations from a national survey of 1,789 adults conducted by Enrique Baloyra and Aristides Torres of the Universidad Simón Bolívar in collaboration with Gallup International. The question
Partisan attachments with AD and COPEI only grew from the 1960s to the 1980s. In a fall 1962 survey, 21.2 percent of respondents said they identified with AD and 8.8 percent with COPEI, which at that point had yet to hold executive office. By August 1978, 35.6 percent identified with AD and 29.4 percent with COPEI. In July 1983, aggregate partisanship remained roughly the same, with 44.3 percent identifying with AD and 26.7 percent with COPEI.

The remarkable stability of these attachments over two decades and through the rest of the 1980s makes their subsequent decline all the more puzzling. In the 1998 presidential election, the two parties attracted a mere 3.5 percent of the vote and subsequently became all but irrelevant. Scholars offered various explanations for the breakdown of Venezuela’s established parties. Given the simultaneous collapse of the two parties, many of these explanations focus on systemic factors that, in contexts like Argentina, fail to explain why one party survived while the other broke down. Still, it will be useful to address these notable alternative explanations for the breakdowns of AD and COPEI.

Authors already critical of the institutional or ideological rigidity of AD and COPEI cite their inability to adapt to the changing social and economic circumstances of the 1990s (Coppedge 2005; Crisp 1996, 2000; Crisp and Levine 1998; Morgan 2007; Seawright 2007). As a result, they argue, AD and COPEI were either unable or unwilling to address public grievances, or were beholden to ideological commitments that did not reflect public opinion. Other scholars highlight the institutional changes implemented asked. “In politics, people also say that so-and-so is on the right, in the center, or on the left... Where is AD/COPEI/MAS, in the center, on the left, or on the right?” The difference between these two means is statistically significant ($p < 0.000$).

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9 Author’s calculations from a survey of 1,288 urban adults conducted by International Research Associates between September and December.

10 Author’s calculations from a national survey of 2,304 adults conducted by Gallup International.

11 Author’s calculations from a national survey of 2,298 adults conducted by Gallup International.

12 While the two parties maintain some localized bases of support, they are very far from competitive for national office.

13 Many of these are summarized in Levine (2002).
during the 1990s, in particular changes to electoral rules and decentralization (Benton 2001; Grindle 2000; Penfold-Becerra 2009). These changes, they argue, provided new actors with electoral foundations from which to threaten the established parties. A final perspective emphasizes that vast oil revenues either induced an interventionist state unable to endure the decline of oil prices (Karl 1997), or else promulgated an illusion of affluence that turned voters against democratic institutions when they could no longer deliver (Romero 1997).

In closely examining three party-election cases in Venezuelan, I will address these important alternative explanations as well as test my theory of party breakdown. The cases begin by tracing the maintenance of the AD party brand and stable partisanship during the administration of Jaime Lusinchi in the 1980s. The subsequent administration of Carlos Andrés Pérez in the early 1990s was instead characterized by dramatic dilution of the party brand, through both inconsistency and convergence, eroding partisan attachments. But the relative economic successes of the administration allowed AD to remain competitive despite its defeat in the 1993 elections. However, the subsequent administration of Rafael Caldera, in which COPEI and AD formed what appeared to be a coalition, further diluted both parties’ brands, bringing partisanship to record lows. The administration’s dismal economic performance led to the parties’ collapse in the 1998 elections.

5.1.1 Partisanship in Venezuela

Before turning to the individual party-elections cases, it is useful to examine more closely the nature of partisanship in Venezuela. Surveys available from this period in Venezuela, as in Argentina, were predominantly conducted for commercial or electoral purposes. As a result, they often place little value on items probing party perceptions or attachments. This makes it difficult to test directly the micro-level implications of my

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14 In the same vein, Roberts (2003) focuses more broadly on the decline in corporatist and clientelist linkages associated with the debt crisis and subsequent market reforms.
branding model of partisanship in context. However, an October 1983 national survey includes items that allow for such a test in the Venezuelan context.\footnote{The survey of 1,789 adults was conducted by Enrique Baloyra and Aristides Torres of the Universidad Simón Bolívar in collaboration with Gallup International. It is frequently referred to by the acronym Batoba.}

The survey asked respondents to place both themselves and the political parties on a 5-point left-right continuum.\footnote{The question read, “In politics, people also say that so-and-so is on the right, in the center, or on the left. Where are you in Venezuelan politics? And where is AD/COPEI/MAS, in the center, on the left, or on the right?”} These items allow me to generate a measure of the perceived ideological proximity between the respondent and the major parties, AD and COPEI. My branding model of partisanship suggests that respondents who are ideologically closer to a party will be more likely to identify with it. A second useful survey item is one that asked respondents whether they consider the two parties, AD and COPEI, to be meaningfully different from one another.\footnote{The question read, “Do you think that AD and COPEI have been the same thing in these 25 years?”} This item measures the degree to which respondents distinguish the two parties’ brands, or whether they perceive convergence between the two parties. My branding model of partisanship implies that perceptions of convergence should make respondents less like to identify with these parties.\footnote{To my knowledge, this is the only survey in Venezuela that asked respondents whether they perceive a difference between the parties.}

I test both of these hypotheses using the probit analyses reported in Table 5.1. The dependent variables are binary measures of whether or not the respondent identifies with AD and COPEI, respectively.\footnote{The question read, “These days, in Venezuelan politics, do you consider yourself an independent, a militant of a party, a sympathizer with a party, or someone who is not interested in politics?” Those who said they were militants or sympathizers were then asked which party and are the ones I consider partisans.} The models include controls for other potential determinants of partisanship, including parental partisan identities,\footnote{The questions read, “And regarding your parents, could you tell us with which party your mother does or did sympathize? And with which did your father sympathize?”} political interest,\footnote{The question read, “Do you personally have a lot of interest, some interest, a little interest, or no interest in politics?”}
household income, education, age, and gender, as well as state dummies. In order to make the coefficients comparable, I standardize these variables to range from 0 to 1.

Table 5.1: Determinants of partisanship, 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>COPEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convergence</td>
<td>-0.430</td>
<td>-0.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.113)</td>
<td>(0.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>1.408</td>
<td>1.293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.208)</td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>0.446</td>
<td>0.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.137)</td>
<td>(0.156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political interest</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>0.447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.266)</td>
<td>(0.316)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.234</td>
<td>-1.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.277)</td>
<td>(0.349)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>-0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.172)</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.111)</td>
<td>(0.130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.488</td>
<td>-2.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.300)</td>
<td>(0.309)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-344.461</td>
<td>-234.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>0.243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. State dummies not shown.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

The results are consistent with my theoretical expectations. Respondents who perceived the two main parties to be essentially the same were significantly less likely to identify with either of them. At the same time, respondents who perceived themselves to be ideologically proximate to a party were significantly more likely to identify with it.

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22 The survey data include 28 observations from a pilot study. These are excluded from my analysis.
These results run counter to the notion that Venezuelans perceived the parties as indistinguishable, at least in the early 1980s.

Consistent with studies of partisanship in advanced democracies, respondents whose mother or father identified with one of the parties were significantly more likely to identify with it themselves (e.g., Achen 2002; Jennings and Niemi 1981; Kroh and Selb 2009). I find few direct effects of demographic variables on partisanship, consistent with prior research suggesting that the original social cleavages distinguishing AD and COPEI blurred during the 1970s. Interestingly, however, there is some evidence that household income and education are associated with COPEI partisanship, although their effects run in opposite directions.23

There are perhaps reasons to worry about the endogeneity of the key variables in Table 5.1. It may be that partisans perceive greater divergence between the parties as a result of their partisanship, or that they claim to perceive such a divergence to rationalize their attachment. The survey experiments discussed in Chapter 3 addressed this inferential problem in testing the branding model of partisanship. Still, these observational findings corroborate my experimental findings, both bolstering the external validity of the experiments and providing additional support for my theory.

5.2 Brand Maintenance with Good Performance: AD, 1988

The case of AD in 1988 is one of brand maintenance combined with good performance by the incumbent administration of Jaime Lusinchi. Despite an economic crisis and declining oil prices during his tenure, Lusinchi pursued policies consistent with the AD brand of state intervention in the economy and labor-friendly policies. While AD enjoyed a congressional majority, COPEI opposed the administration’s agenda and

23 These variables are not highly correlated ($r = 0.454$).
distinguished its own preferences in terms of both economic policies and political reforms. With no brand dilution and positive valence associated with AD at the end of Lusinchi’s term, the party both maintained its base of partisans and secured victory for its presidential candidate in 1988.

5.2.1 Muddling Through: AD Consistency

Like Alfonsín in Argentina, Lusinchi inherited an economy in crisis. The debt crisis that began in Mexico put pressure on Venezuelan foreign reserves, increasing inflation. In 1983, GDP fell 5.3 percent and unemployment reached the double digits. Declining oil prices also severely dwindled fiscal resources (see Figure 5.6), exacerbating the foreign debt burden and weakening the currency (Martz and Myers 1986). On February 21, 1983, COPEI president Luis Herrera Campís created a three-tiered exchange rate, effectively devaluing the currency. That day became known in Venezuela as Black Friday and a symbol of the end of the boom years.

Lusinchi responded in a manner consistent with his party’s statist brand. Three months after taking office, Lusinchi announced a largely heterodox economic plan that included price controls, maintaining exchange controls with gradual devaluations, and stimulating the economy through tax incentives and expansionary policies. The administration’s economic plan enjoyed the full support of AD, both in public and in Congress. In order to carry it out, AD’s congressional majority voted in June 1984 to provide Lusinchi with special decree powers through an Enabling Law.24

The president’s relationship with his party was extremely close. In a speech at a party convention shortly after his inauguration, Lusinchi said, “If I am clearly conscious of one thing, it is that I am the expression of a collective effort... I am – and am proud to be – an expression of the will of Democratic Action” (quoted in Rey 2009b: 203). Lusinchi met with AD leaders every Tuesday to consult with them about the

administration’s policy agenda. When, like his predecessors, he was tasked with appointing all of the state governors, Lusinchi took the unusually partisan move of appointing AD’s state secretaries to the posts. So close was the president’s relationship with his party that halfway through his term he could declare, “mine has been the most adecó of AD administrations.”

While AD repeatedly expressed its full support for the president, two of Lusinchi’s signature initiatives could have generated friction with his party. Although the administration’s economic program was largely heterodox, declining oil prices forced Lusinchi to also make some budget cuts. Lusinchi announced some mild austerity measures, including cutting the budgets of state ministries and the salaries of some government workers, as well as dismantling or privatizing some small state-owned enterprises. The AD-controlled labor movement voiced some objections to the administration’s general policy of wage restraint (McCoy 1986), but its criticisms were mild; labor leaders took great pains not to direct their complaints at the administration.

Within the party, AD elites expressed support for the necessary measures. AD’s congressional leader, Gonzalo Barrios, called on his copartisans to, “suffer the consequences and support the measures that the government must implement, which are unpleasant and onerous but indispensable.” And those few AD elites who nevertheless publicly criticized the administration’s economic program were swiftly reprimanded by the party leadership (Coppedge 1994: 89-91).

The other important program initiated by Lusinchi early in his administration...
centered on political reform. The economic decline made many Venezuelans increasingly dissatisfied with their government, and already in 1983 prominent public figures began offering plans to reform state institutions.\textsuperscript{31} Lusinchi expressed initial support for these reforms and in December 1984 appointed by decree prominent figures – both partisan and non-partisan – to a Presidential Commission for State Reform (\textit{Comisión Presidencial para la Reforma del Estado}, COPRE) (Buxton 2001). The eventual recommendations of the COPRE included direct election of governors, decentralization, and changes to the electoral rules (Grindle 2000: Ch. 3).

AD immediately rejected the proposals of the COPRE, viewing them as direct threats to its political power. Barrios predicted that direct gubernatorial elections would “empower regional caudillos” and noted more generally that, “the country is not historically prepared for this type of reform.”\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, AD secretary-general Manuel Peñalver dismissed the reform proposals with the observation, “we are not Swiss.”\textsuperscript{33} In response to his party’s swift rejection, Lusinchi, who had previously supported some of the same reforms, rejected the COPRE recommendations and tabled political reform altogether (Gómez Calcaño and López Maya 1990).

5.2.2 Interparty Conflict

As part of an effort to justify the administration’s economic plans, Lusinchi and AD repeatedly laid the blame for the economic crisis with Herrera Campíns and COPEI.\textsuperscript{34} AD party elites publicly accused various ministers from the prior COPEI administration of corruption and initiated congressional investigations against some of them. Although the AD-controlled Congress eventually chose not to prosecute Herrera Campíns himself,\textsuperscript{35} he

\textsuperscript{31} The most of prominent of these were the proposals of the so-called Roraima Group of business leaders, academics, and activists.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{El Nacional}, June 26, 1986.


\textsuperscript{34} \textit{El Nacional}, March 2, 1984; May 31, 1984; September 13, 1985; October 21, 1985.

nevertheless lambasted the “AD campaign of confusion and moral discrediting” (see also Peña 1987). Lusinchi retorted that, “those who ruined Venezuela have no authority to judge those who are trying to reconstruct her.”

COPEI opposed the heterodox economic policies of the AD administration and the Enabling Law that granted Lusinchi special powers to legislate them. Its leader, Eduardo Fernández, declared that his party expected to capitalize on the failures of Lusinchi’s economic policies. But with AD controlling both the presidency and Congress, COPEI had little ability to affect legislation. Still, the opposition party took efforts to stall the administration. COPEI repeatedly accused members of Lusinchi’s cabinet of corruption and brought motions of censure against two of them, though both were defeated by AD’s congressional majority in party-line votes.  

While Lusinchi and AD came out in opposition to the recommended institutional reforms of the COPRE, the leadership of COPEI (along with that of MAS and other small parties) expressed its support (Gómez Calcaño and López Maya 1990). COPEI of course felt less threatened by some of the reforms, and its leaders in fact expected to benefit electorally from greater minority representation and more decentralized access to state resources. But the conflict between the two parties became acute on this issue just as it was on the economic one.

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38 *El Nacional*, February 18, 1984. Lusinchi called the statement “cynical” and an administration official noted, “Venezuela is tired of the demagogy now offered by COPEI... Before announcing its opposition to the rectifying measures being adopted, COPEI should be held to account for its actions in government” (*El Nacional*, February 19, 1984).  
39 *El Nacional*, May 16, 1984; September 3, 1986. A motion was also made in April 1988 to censure the Minister of Justice but was withdrawn following his resignation.  
5.2.3 Partisanship and the 1988 Election

Despite declining oil prices and its mild budget cuts, the Lusinchi administration persisted in its efforts to use fiscal policy to stimulate economic growth. The economy began to grow significantly in 1986 and unemployment declined. Even as debt payments became an increasing burden on government finances, Lusinchi sought to maintain spending levels and price controls to secure an AD election victory in 1988. The president was clearly concerned to orient his administration toward supporting the party.

Both AD and COPEI had been consistent with their party brands throughout the Lusinchi administration. Although both parties had become increasingly centrist in previous decades, the differences between them remained clear. Lusinchi’s loyalty to his party and antagonism of the COPEI opposition only reinforced those differences, as would the contrast between the two parties’ candidates in the 1988 election. From the perspective of my branding theory of partisanship, this consistency should have led to partisan stability. That is, aggregate levels of partisanship should have remained relatively stable throughout the Lusinchi administration.

Figure 5.2 plots partisan attachments with AD and COPEI during the 1983-1998 period. The points refer to 60 surveys I collected from a variety of sources (see details in Appendix 5A). They contain some measurement error given that the surveys were conducted by different polling firms, sample different geographic regions, and employ different question wording. To account for this noise, I include as many surveys as are available and use locally weighted (loess) regression to smooth away idiosyncratic differences (Jacoby 2000). I also assign weights to the individual survey observations based on question wording and geographic coverage.41

The figure bares out my theoretical expectations. Over the course of the Lusinchi administration, levels of partisanship remained relatively constant, the result of consistent

41 A similar figure was constructed by Morgan (2007: 81), presumably using some of the same surveys. The differences between our figures are minor and are likely attributable either to differences in data sources or to my weighting of surveys.
Figure 5.2: Partisan attachments with AD and COPEI in Venezuela, 1983-1998. Closed and open circles represent proportion of respondents from each survey (see Appendix 5A for survey details) who identify with AD and COPEI, respectively. Their size is proportional to the sample size of the survey. Lines are moving averages generated by locally weighted (loess) regressions ($\alpha = 0.2, \lambda = 2$). Dotted vertical lines separate presidential administrations.

party brands and continued differentiation between the major parties. This differentiation was also borne out by the 1988 campaign.

In the run-up to the election, both AD and COPEI faced contentious primary battles.\footnote{Levine (2002: 256-7) argues that these internal divisions weakened the Venezuelan party system and contributed to the breakdown of AD and COPEI. Within the Venezuelan context, the problem with this explanation is that elite divisions and splits were not new to either AD or COPEI in the late 1980s and 1990s (Coppedge 1994; Martz 2000). More broadly, the emphasis on internal divisions fails to generalize to other cases of party breakdown.} Within AD, Lusinchi’s candidate lost to former president Carlos Andrés
Pérez, COPEI leader Fernández gained his party’s nomination, but only after beating back a primary run by former president Rafael Caldera.

Pérez’s image was marred somewhat by a corruption scandal that emerged after he left office. But the economy dominated the presidential campaign. The charismatic Pérez promised wage increases and continued state protections through exchange controls and tariffs (Ellner 1989). He frequently recalled the statist oil-boom years of his first administration (Maingón and Sonntag 1990). Meanwhile, Fernández advocated reducing the role of the state in the economy, removing exchange controls, and privatizing state-owned enterprises. As Pérez began to pull away in the polls, he began to offer some ground to Fernández’s calls for trade liberalization and endorsed a limited program of privatization. But he clearly advocated continuing AD’s traditional statist economic policies (Maingón and Sonntag 1990). In November, he told reporters, “I am the exact opposite of neoliberalism.”

The distinctions between the two candidates reinforced the differences between AD and COPEI. While Fernández represented the modernizing right wing of COPEI, Pérez represented the statist traditions of AD. Fernández faced a formidable challenge, confronting not only Pérez’s charisma and public approval of his administration, but also

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43 The 1961 Venezuelan constitution prohibited consecutive reelection but allowed presidents to run after sitting out two terms (10 years).

44 Among his promises to labor unions, Pérez pledged to appoint to the Ministry of Finance a party member rather than a business representative, the norm in prior administrations (El Nacional, September 23, 1987).

45 Analysts and many COPEI elites expected Caldera to step aside for Fernández, considered his heir apparent. But Caldera refused and, after losing the nomination, also refused to campaign for Fernández (Maingón and Sonntag 1990). As one COPEI elite told me, “Caldera was like Saturn eating his children” (Gustavo Tarre, personal interview, June 17, 2008).

46 The Herrera Campíns administration and COPEI leaders in Congress accused and eventually reprimanded Pérez for corruption. The case involved overpaying for a cargo ship, the Sierra Nevada, with part of the overpayment allegedly going to Pérez and other administration officials (McCoy and Smith 1995).


the enormous approval of the outgoing Lusinchi administration. Indeed, in an October 1988 survey, 70.6 percent of respondents had a neutral or positive evaluation of Lusinchi’s performance in office. In economic terms, 57 percent told interviewers their economic situation was the same as or had improved since the prior year.\(^{49}\) When he left office, Lusinchi was widely considered to have been Venezuela’s most popular president. The results of the election bore out Pérez’s obvious advantages: the former president secured reelection with 52.9 percent of the vote compared to Fernández’s 40.4 percent.

The 1980s were thus a period of continuity with the brands of the established Venezuelan political parties, despite the country’s economic decline. Lusinchi led an administration characterized by its close ties to AD and its congressional leadership. He pursued economic policies consistent with the party’s tradition of statism and labor protection. Meanwhile, COPEI opposed these policies from the right, arguing for greater market orientation and economic liberalization. As a result, both parties maintained their stable partisan bases. And given Lusinchi’s popularity and the generally positive evaluation of his administration’s performance, 1988 became the first time in Venezuelan history that a president handed power to a successor from his own party.

5.3 Brand Dilution with Good Performance: AD, 1993

The second Pérez administration that began in 1989 diverged sharply from that of Lusinchi. In a major policy switch, Pérez chose to dilute his party’s brand in an effort to improve the Venezuelan economy, now on the brink of renewed crisis. The diluting effects of the president’s inconsistency with his party’s brand was only exacerbated by the party’s

\(^{49}\) Author’s calculations from a national survey of 2,000 adults conducted by Datos. The approval question asked, “How would you characterize how the current administration has performed for you personally?” The response options were “positive,” “more positive than negative,” “neither positive nor negative,” “more negative than positive,” and “negative.” The retrospective economic questions asked, “In general terms, compared to a year ago, would you say your economic situation is better than a year ago, the same as a year ago (good), the same as a year ago (fair), the same as a year ago (bad), or worse than a year ago?”
refusal to accept the new economic agenda and vehement intraparty conflict. As economic concerns generated political instability, AD and COPEI also began to converge in an effort to protect the democratic regime.

The result of such dramatic dilution of the AD party brand was a severe decline in partisanship. But average economic performance by the time of the 1993 election meant that the party valence was not poor enough to cause the party’s breakdown. While AD lost the presidency in 1993, its candidate remained competitive and the party survived what could have been a crushing defeat.

5.3.1 Policy Switch and Inconsistencies

Within days of winning the December 4 election, Pérez began to renege on his campaign promises of continuing the state’s protection of the Venezuelan economy. He reassured business leaders that he would not pursue his promised across-the-board wage increases and gathered neoliberal technocrats into his cabinet to implement a “shock-therapy” program of economic liberalization. He also signed a Letter of Intent with the IMF, despite excoriating the internal financial institution during the campaign and calling for a united Latin American front against it. The so-called Great Turnaround (Gran Viraje) program represented not only an attempt to transform the Venezuelan economy, but also a shocking about-face by a paradigmatic populist leader. It included measures to float the exchange rate, remove price controls, reduce public spending, privatize state-owned enterprises, and liberalize trade.

Over the course of the campaign, Pérez had become convinced that some amount of economic liberalization was necessary to avoid an economic crisis. State coffers were far more depleted than the outgoing administration had let on. As one cabinet member told me, “The country was bankrupt; everything Lusinchi was credited with was a lie.”

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50 Fernando Martínez Mottola, personal interview, January 26, 2010. Pérez’s ministers claim that they did not know the extent of the fiscal problem prior to taking office (Naim 1993). But Rey (2009b: 217) is rightly skeptical of this familiar claim of ignorance: “It is difficult to believe that successful candidates belonging to
And Pérez was concerned to burnish a legacy as a successful president. He told reporters, “I want to go down in history as a man who was capable of overcoming the worst crisis in Venezuela’s contemporary history” (Naim 1993: 46). Pérez also overestimated his own stature and popularity, anticipating that the public, and his party, would follow his lead.\textsuperscript{51} Many of his cabinet members told me he instructed them to concern themselves only with policy and to leave the politics to him.\textsuperscript{52} One of them recalled one such conversation: “I once told him, ‘Mr. President, I am very concerned that the economic policies have no support.’ He told me, ‘You take care of what needs to be done and I will take care of getting you the support you need.’”\textsuperscript{53}

Public reaction to the reform package was swift. Just weeks after Pérez’s inauguration, the administration allowed certain prices to rise, including fuel prices. When buses doubled their fares as a result, hundreds of people took to the streets of Caracas.\textsuperscript{54} The protests led to riots and, after Pérez called in a military response, the death of nearly four hundred people. The episode, dubbed the Caracazo, severely weakened the administration (McCoy and Smith 1995; Ochoa Antich 1992).

\textbf{AD Inconsistency}

Pérez’s policy switch was designed as a shocking volte-face. In order to be credible, Pérez had to distinguish his administration from the statist AD. His appointment the governing party (as was the case of Carlos Andrés Pérez) could allege such ignorance that, were it true, would demonstrate a scandalous failure of political responsibility.”

\textsuperscript{51} For his inauguration, Pérez staged such an unusually opulent ceremony in the historic Teresa Carreño Theater that many observers dubbed it a coronation (Marta Sosa 1994; Tarre Briceño 2007).

\textsuperscript{52} Personal interviews with Carlos Blanco (November 30, 2009), Armando Durán (June 16, 2008), Ricardo Hausmann (November 30, 2009), Fernando Martínez Móttola (January 26, 2010), Miguel Rodríguez (February 26, 2010), and Gerver Torres (March 16, 2010).

\textsuperscript{53} Carlos Blanco, personal interview, November 30, 2009. No doubt, the disastrous hyperinflation that resulted from the heterodox economic policies pursued by Peruvian president Alan García, a friend of Pérez’s, also influenced the president’s choice. Indeed, Pérez later accused his opponents in AD of trying to “Peru-inize” Venezuela (\textit{El Nacional}, May 22, 1991).

\textsuperscript{54} As scholars have noted, the price increases were only the latest in a series of public grievances against a decade-long decline in real wages and living standards (Kornblith 1997; López Maya 2003).
of neoliberal technocrats to his cabinet signalled a break with his own party, particularly since some had clear anti-AD backgrounds. During previous presidential transitions, the outgoing and incoming administrations formed commissions to enable the transition; but no such arrangements were made for the handover between Lusinchi and Pérez.\(^{55}\) Pérez also made overtures to staunchly conservative sectors, appointing Vladimir Gessen, the leader and presidential candidate of the fringe conservative party New Democratic Generation (*Nueva Generación Democrática*), as Minister of Tourism in 1990.

Pérez also made his commitment to economic reform more credible by backing political reforms unpopular within his own party. Following the proposals made by the COPRE, Pérez proposed legislation to allow for direct election of governors. He also backed the transfer of fiscal and administrative responsibilities to states and municipalities.\(^{56}\) Finally, Pérez restaffed the COPRE with non-partisans and made its head a cabinet-level appointment.

Like the PJ, AD elites initially, and temporarily, allowed the reforms and the IMF agreement to pass Congress. In one statement, the party subsecretaries said they “agreed that the measures would be painful, that they would entail a high political cost, but that there was no alternative.”\(^{57}\) But AD party elite’s attitude changed dramatically after the *Caracazo*, when it became clear that the Pérez administration was weaker politically than it had seemed. Previous AD presidents like Lusinchi had been granted special decree powers by Congress (Coppedge 1994). Pérez’s advisers thought that a similar arrangement would help the administration push forward economic reforms, but AD refused to ratify an Enabling Law for Pérez.

Labor unions quickly turned to opposing the president. The very labor leaders who had helped Pérez win the AD nomination vehemently criticized his administration’s

\(^{55}\) Carmelo Lauría. personal interview, January 12, 2010.


economic agenda. Juan José Delpino, the president of the AD-controlled Venezuelan Workers’ Confederation (Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, CTV), told one newspaper, “If AD has any dignity left, it should break completely with this administration.” Historically, AD’s close ties to organized labor had meant that strikes took place only rarely during AD administration and skyrocketed when COPEI controlled the executive (Coppedge 1994: 34). But labor restraint disappeared during the second Pérez administration, reaching levels of strike activity previously only seen under non-AD presidents (Arrieta Álvarez and Iranzo Tacoronte 2009: 65). The CTV organized general strikes in May 1989 and November 1991, the first since the transition to democracy in 1958. Still, Pérez, lamenting the losses in production, remained defiant (Ellner 1989).

Intraparty Conflict

Even before he took office, Pérez’s approval ratings were below 50 percent and never rose into majority territory. His economic agenda was never particularly popular, even when it seemed to be succeeding in 1990. Many AD elites objected to the administration’s policies on ideological grounds, unconvinced that they would succeed, or because they contravened the party’s traditional position. Many were also concerned that the program would destabilize the country and could lead to the breakdown of democracy, particularly after the violent Caracazo. With the administration weak, AD

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59 This was in part because the AD leadership itself gave its affiliated labor organizations the freedom to oppose the administration.

60 El Nacional, May 19, 1989. For further analysis of the Pérez administration’s relations with labor, see Burgess (1999, 2004) and Murillo (2000, 2001).

61 Corrales (2000) argues that AD’s opposition was based on the president’s neglect of the party rather than ideology, citing AD’s tacit support of mild economic reforms during the interim Velásquez presidency. The two motivations are difficult to distinguish since Pérez’s distancing from AD was necessary to bolster his reformist credibility. Still, AD elites – both at the time and in my interviews – expressed clear ideological differences with the president’s economic agenda and the expectation that it would fail and hurt the party.
launched a persistent campaign to force Pérez to change course, becoming what Corrales (2002b: 97) calls a “virtual opposition force.” The calculation of AD party elites was that “the greater damage [to the party] came not from these conflicts but from what the administration was doing.”

The public conflict between the president and his AD copartisans was bitter (see Corrales 2002b; Hernández and Rondón 2005). AD elites like Octavio Lepage, Pérez’s opponent in the primary election, claimed that neoliberal technocrats had “put a spell on Pérez.” AD secretary-general Humberto Celli spent much of the administration telling reporters “this is not an AD government,” that “Pérez must be replaced,” and that the country must “return to price controls.” The party even publicly blamed the administration for the Caracazo, demanding that it acquiesce to popular demands to abandon its economic reforms. As one AD Deputy told me, “the party defended its statutes and ideology while Pérez defended what he thought was necessary.”

AD also opposed the administration’s push for decentralization. While AD elites repeated their skepticism in public, the popular reforms were embraced by COPEI. Although AD proceeded with some reforms, it did not allow any transfer of administrative powers between 1989 and 1992 (Penfold-Becerra 2009). When AD lost a significant number of governorships in the first direct gubernatorial elections December 1989, it again blamed the administration. In October 1991, Celli went so far as to call for Pérez’s resignation.

In response, Pérez blamed the dire economic situation on his predecessor and, by
extension, his own party. The administration’s ministers, and particularly its point man on the economic reforms, Miguel Rodríguez, repeatedly disparaged the party and what they called the “old regime.” In early 1990, the administration began investigating allegations of corruption against members of Lusinchi’s cabinet and eventually Lusinchi himself. In May 1991, Pérez, like Menem, declared that he was willing to break away from the party, and indeed some of his advisers suggested forming a new party. The president also repeatedly threatened AD that he would resign if the party failed to back his reform agenda.

The result of the conflict playing out in the public arena was that many of Pérez’s reforms were stymied by his own party in Congress and within his cabinet. AD shelved or severely weakened many of the president’s reforms in Congress. When the administration proposed a crucial value-added tax in May 1990, AD joined COPEI in voting against the bill. In May 1991, AD voted in favor of Caldera’s labor reform bill, against the demands of the administration. Even those reforms that were approved in Congress, like the privatization of the telephone company, CANTV, faced enormous scrutiny and opposition from AD elites as they were debated. The few AD elites in Pérez’s cabinet also held up crucial reform legislation, including privatization of the industrial conglomerate, CVG. Naim (1993: 49) notes that, “after Congress, the cabinet was the most important source of distortions and delays in the execution of the reforms.”

AD also tried to block the administration’s reforms by targeting Pérez’s advisers individually. On multiple occasions, AD elites discussed bringing formal corruption

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70 The charges involved misuse of influence in the government’s control of the tiered exchange rate as well as the use of governments funds for the 1988 AD campaign (see Pérez Perdomo 1995). A congressional inquiry condemned the former president and when the judiciary took up the case, Lusinchi fled to Miami.


73 These included reforms of public pensions, labor-market and banking reforms, and various privatization plans.

74 Personal interviews with Ricardo Hausmann (November 30, 2009), Fernando Martínez Móttola (January 26, 2010), and Miguel Rodríguez (February 26, 2010).
charges against Pérez’s ministers.\textsuperscript{75} In April 1990, the AD leadership demanded the resignation of Pérez’s Minister of the Central Information Office, Pastor Heydra, for harassing journalists. Three months later, an AD Deputy accused the Minister of Transportation and Communications, Augusto Faria Viso, of accepting bribes. By early 1991, nearly every one of Pérez’s cabinet members had come under verbal attack by AD.\textsuperscript{76} AD Deputies had formally called on members of Pérez’s economic team to resign and two even voted for formal motions of censure against Jonathan Coles, the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, and Ricardo Hausmann, the Minister of Coordination and Planning.\textsuperscript{77}

Although most of the conflict within AD took place prior to actually voting on legislation – and the Venezuelan Congress at the time typically took up only a small number of bills (Crisp 2000) – a brief look at this legislation is instructive. Table 5.2 compares the origins of ordinary legislation passed under Pérez’s second administration to the previous three. Ordinary laws are those that initiate first-time legislation, as opposed to those that reconcile vague or contradictory statutes, those that concern the national budget, and those that approve prior executive actions, usually international treaties. They are therefore the more salient pieces of legislation that represent its legislative accomplishments.

What is striking in Table 5.2 is the reversal of the executive-dominated trend during Pérez’s second administration. Presidents had typically dominated this type of new legislation, with over three-quarters of ordinary laws passed having originated in the executive. But as a result of the second Pérez administration’s conflicts with its own party, that trend reversed: only a third of ordinary legislation was initiated by the executive. This

\textsuperscript{75} Luis Emilio Rondón, personal interview, January 14, 2010.

\textsuperscript{76} *El Nacional*, January 5, 1991.

\textsuperscript{77} *El Nacional*, March 27, 1992. Both Deputies who voted in favor of censure were expelled from the party three days later.
Table 5.2: Ordinary laws passed, by origin

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>33 (79%)</td>
<td>25 (76%)</td>
<td>33 (77%)</td>
<td>15 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative</td>
<td>9 (21%)</td>
<td>8 (24%)</td>
<td>10 (23%)</td>
<td>30 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crisp (2000: 73)

Note: Values for the second Pérez administration include laws passed during the interim presidency of Ramón J. Velásquez.

is not unlike the legislative pattern during Menem’s first term, when the president was much more likely to veto legislation initiated by his own party.\(^78\)

### 5.3.2 Crisis Response: AD-COPEI Convergence

The leadership of COPEI was also stunned by Pérez’s turn toward economic reforms. Like the UCR in Argentina, COPEI faced a difficult situation. Its own leader and presidential candidate had advocated the very reforms the administration was now espousing. On the other hand, it was the ostensible party of the opposition and needed to differentiate itself from the president. At the same time, COPEI did not face the same crisis pressures as the UCR. There was no immediate crisis that needed to be resolved, and despite overtures from the president COPEI did not seriously consider joining the administration until 1992.

In Congress, COPEI’s position was more ambivalent. The party rejected some proposals, joining AD critics of the president. At other times, COPEI supported the administration’s economic proposals, like the 1991 tax reductions and the privatization of CANTV.\(^79\) As Fernández told me, “Nobody voted for me so that I could be in opposition... Our first loyalty is to the country. I told people that if the president from

\(^78\) During this period, the Venezuelan president’s veto powers were far more circumscribed and therefore more infrequent. The president had the power of a suspensive veto, which could return a bill twice to Congress, but needed only a majority to override (Crisp 1997).

other side is proposing something that is good for the country, we have to support it.”

COPEI also endorsed the administration’s political reforms, supporting the 1989 law on
direct gubernatorial elections and joining the president’s 1990 Pact for Reform.

Pérez’s economic reforms enjoyed some initial macroeconomic success (Lander 1996). Economic recession in 1989 gave way to some of Venezuela’s fastest growth rates in 1991 and 1992 (see Figure 5.5), and unemployment declined from its 1989 peak. Private-sector exports grew and foreign investment began to flow into Venezuela. The pace of inflation also slowed beginning in mid-1989, though it remained persistently high throughout 1990 and 1991 (see Figure 5.4). While Pérez’s popularity bounced back somewhat with the increased economic growth in 1991, the public’s concerns about inflation eroded that spike. Rumors began circulating of unease in the military and plans for forcibly removing the president from office. Pérez refused to take the rumors seriously. But by late 1991, Venezuelan politicians and intellectuals like Arturo Uslar Pietri were so concerned that they called for an “emergency government.”

On February 4, 1992, a group of mid-level army officers led by Hugo Chávez attempted a coup on the day Pérez was returning from the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. The coup was swiftly put down and its leaders jailed, but the Pérez administration was severely weakened. It became clear almost immediately that the plot, and Chávez in particular, had the support of large segments of public opinion (Myers and O’Connor 1998; Njaim, Combellas, and Álvarez 1998; Templeton 1995).

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80 Personal interview, January 25, 2010.
81 El Nacional, December 5, 1990.
82 Naim (1993) argues that the reforms’ successes did not generate public enthusiasm because they had averted a hypothetical crisis, rather than responding to a real one (see also Angell and Graham 1995). He also suggests that Pérez did not invest enough resources in a communication strategy for conveying their successes to the public (see also Corrales 2000; Hidalgo 2000; but see Rey 2009a).
85 For further details of the February 4 coup, see Norden (1996b), Ochoa Antich (1992, 2007), Sonntag and Maingón (1992), and Tarre Briceño (2007). Such was the perceived antipathy between the administration and AD that some of the coup’s plotters planned to invite AD politicians into the new government (El Nacional, March 25, 1994).
later, on November 27, a second coup attempt reemphasized the unpopularity of the administration.

Almost unanimously, Venezuelan politicians came to the side of the Pérez administration to demonstrate their support for democracy. On the night of the February 4 coup, Fernández, the COPEI leader, joined a defiant Pérez at a television station for a joint condemnation of the coup. Within weeks, Pérez restructuring his cabinet to form a unity government, bringing in prominent elites from both AD and COPEI.\textsuperscript{86} In an emergency

\textsuperscript{86} COPEI’s participation in the administration ended in June 1992 when Pérez decided to go ahead with a planned international trip, a decision COPEI leaders thought would signal that the democratic crisis – and their reason for joining the government – had concluded.
session of Congress, both parties also supported the president’s request to temporarily suspend constitutional guarantees. For both parties, this show of support was a costly but necessary demonstration of support for democratic institutions. For Pérez, it meant the end of his economic agenda and his capitulation to the many critics who wanted him out of office. As one of his advisers told me, “I am convinced that Pérez lost the presidency because he was a democrat.”

Congressional leaders from both AD and COPEI began to see Pérez’s mere presence in office as a threat to democracy (Bautista Urbaneja 2007). Throughout 1992, COPEI’s congressional leaders discussed holding a national referendum on impeaching the president, a proposal that attracted the support of some AD elites. Eventually, the proposal was dismissed by both parties as a “civilian coup.” At the same time, news reports began circulating about 250 million bolivars (equivalent to US$17 million) having gone missing from the Ministry of the Interior. A congressional investigation began in December and eventually asked the Supreme Court to investigate the president himself (Chitty La Roche 1993). In early 1993, following significant losses in local elections, AD elites again called for Pérez’s resignation. On May 20, 1993, the Court found sufficient grounds for pursuing the investigation further. The next day, the Senate unanimously suspended Pérez from office, a status that was made permanent when Congress met in joint session three months later. The president’s own party had voted to remove him from office.

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87 As Fernández told me, “We had to defend the right of the administration to continue to govern or to leave through constitutional means, not because some sergeants take a tank or war plane...” He also noted that the price he paid for supporting the administration was his party’s nomination for the 1993 presidential election (personal interview, January 25, 2010).

88 Carmelo Lauría, personal interview, January 12, 2010. The cross-party show of support was repeated in the aftermath of the November 27 coup attempt.


office. In his final statement to Congress, Pérez said, “I would have preferred a different death.”

As interim president, Congress elected Ramón J. Velásquez, a prominent independent intellectual who had been president of the COPRE during the Lusinchi administration. With the economy slowing down again, AD and COPEI voted to provide Velásquez with special decree powers in order to address the economic situation. And neither party formally joined the interim government. Velásquez viewed his main task as steering the Venezuelan government toward new presidential elections in 1993.

5.3.3 Partisanship and the 1993 Election

AD entered the presidential 1993 election as the ostensible incumbent party, but having opposed the main emphasis of its own administration’s policy agenda. Pérez’s neoliberal reforms went against traditional AD ideology and generated unprecedented conflicts between the president and his own party. Under the threat of democratic instability following the February 4, 1992 coup attempt, the administration also began to cooperate closely with COPEI. My branding theory of partisanship implies that these inconsistencies and interparty convergence should have eroded voters’ attachments to AD and COPEI. Consistent with these expectations, Figure 5.2 shows that partisanship indeed declined for both during this period. Attachments to AD declined throughout the Pérez administration, with attachments to COPEI remaining relatively steady until the particularly close convergence that began following the February 4 coup.

92 On the impeachment proceedings, see Kada (2003), Kornblith (1997), Pérez-Liñán (2007), and Rey (2009a). A year later, Pérez was expelled from AD. In 1996, he was convicted on corruption charges and jailed. He served part of his sentence under house arrest until gaining judicial immunity upon being elected to the Senate in 1998.

93 Personal interview, June 18, 2008.

94 These trends are notably inconsistent with an alternative, patronage-based explanation for the erosion of partisanship. Scholars have argued that dwindling state revenues threatened AD and COPEI since these parties relied heavily on patronage to mobilize supporters (Benton 2001; Roberts 2003). The implication seems to be that declining resources should be associated with partisan erosion. Yet what is striking about partisanship during the Pérez administration is that attachments to COPEI did not decline prior to that
The one political figure who did not come out in opposition to the coup was Caldera, the former president and COPEI founder. After losing the primary against Fernández in 1988, Caldera had become a vocal critic of both the Pérez administration and his own party’s leadership. While AD and COPEI elites alike were condemning the coup and its perpetrators, Caldera used his position as lifetime Senator to speak in support of the spirit of the coup, calling on Pérez to “rectify” his economic agenda. The speech, televised live, resuscitated Caldera’s political career. In May 1993, he announced he would run for president as the candidate of a new party of COPEI dissidents – National Convergence (Convergencia Nacional) – in coalition with MAS and 17 small parties.95

Fernández had anticipated that Caldera might try to split the COPEI vote, putting his own candidacy in jeopardy (Ellner 1996).96 In 1991, in an attempt to keep the party intact, he announced that COPEI would hold its first open primaries, allowing all Venezuelan voters to participate.97 The gambit failed not only to keep COPEI from splitting, but also to secure Fernández’s candidacy. By then, his post-coup support of the Pérez administration had become a liability. With three million voters casting primary ballots, Zulia governor Oswaldo Álvarez Paz won COPEI’s nomination.98

AD leaders felt they had to respond to COPEI’s overtures toward internal democracy and decided to hold the party’s first primary election, in which all AD members would be allowed to participate. The winner was Claudio Fermín, a youthful former mayor of the Libertador municipality of Caracas who, like many in his party, had been critical of the Pérez administration.99

95 El Nacional, May 1, 1993.
96 Caldera and his supporters within COPEI had formed a faction within Congress called Copeyanos with Caldera (Juan José Caldera, personal interview, January 21, 2010).
98 COPEI officially expelled Caldera from the party on June 8, 1993.
99 Fermín claims that AD offered more support to Caldera’s candidacy than to his (personal interview, January 26, 2010).
A fourth major contender for the presidency was Andrés Velásquez of the fledgling leftwing party, Radical Cause (*La Causa Radical*, LCR). LCR had emerged as a labor party tied to steelworkers’ unions in the Guyana region and gained prominence with the election of Velásquez as governor of Bolívar in 1989 and Aristóbulo Istúriz as mayor of the Libertador municipality of Caracas in 1992.\(^{100}\)

The 1993 presidential race thus represented a partial fragmentation of the Venezuelan party system, with Caldera splitting the COPEI vote and Velásquez potentially representing a new political force. Moreover, the platforms of the various candidates reinforced the brand inconsistencies seen during the the Pérez administration. The most vocal supporter of Pérez’s economic reform agenda was COPEI’s candidate, Álvarez Paz. Fermín, the candidate of the incumbent AD, instead distanced himself from Pérez and called for greater focus on traditional AD policies of social compensation. Meanwhile, Caldera and Velásquez voiced vituperative condemnations of the economic reform package.\(^{101}\)

While Pérez had become deeply unpopular by the time of his impeachment, the interim president Velásquez had far greater approval. In a November 1993 survey, just weeks before the election, 43 percent of respondents had neutral or positive opinions of the administration. At the same time, 35 percent of respondents said their personal

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\(^{100}\) On the origins of LCR, see Buxton (2001: Ch. 6), Hellinger (1996), López Maya (1997, 2005: Ch. 6), and Salamanca (2004). Istúriz had been an AD Deputy before joining LCR in 1986.

\(^{101}\) A series of electoral reforms were approved in mid-1993. In the wake of the 1992 coups, political elites felt such reforms could shore up the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Crisp and Rey 2001). The most significant changes were made to the election of Deputies, which were now to be chosen by a compensatory multi-member system. This system established that roughly half of the Deputies be elected by a traditional closed-list system of proportional representation by state, while the other half are elected by plurality in single-member districts. But a party’s proportion of seats in the Chamber would still be determined by proportionality, even if some of the individuals themselves are selected by the plurality elections. For more on these electoral reforms, see Crisp and Rey (2001), Gutiérrez (2007), Kulisheck and Crisp (2001), Kornblith (1997), and Shugart (1992). It is interesting to note that these changes had only a minimal effect on voter behavior. Although voters now had the option of splitting their vote – voting for an individual from one party and the list of another – very few Venezuelans did so in either 1993 or 1998 while these rules were in effect (Kornblith and Levine 1995; Kulisheck and Crisp 2001; Kulisheck and Canache 1998). A simulation conducted by Gutiérrez (2007: 116-8) found only marginal differences in the outcome of the election applying the prior electoral rules to the 1993 voting patterns.
economic situation was the same as or better than the year before.\textsuperscript{102} AD had become far more susceptible to such valence evaluations following the dilution of its party brand and the erosion of its partisan ranks. But by the end of 1993, its performance appears to have been seen by many voters as middling.\textsuperscript{103}

In the end, a plurality of 30 percent of the votes went to the victorious Caldera, while the other three candidates each attracted roughly 22 percent.\textsuperscript{104} Mediocre incumbent performance – and perhaps also the confusing slate of candidates – allowed AD’s Fermín to come in second despite the dramatic erosion of his party’s partisan base. This is consistent with my aggregate-level theoretical expectations. But we can also look for evidence of the theory’s individual-level implications. In cases of brand dilution, we should see partisanship become a relatively weak predictor of vote choice and valence evaluations become relatively strong, as we did in the case of Menem’s reelection in Argentina.

To test this hypothesis, I compare the relative effects of partisanship and retrospective evaluations on vote choice in 1993 with those in 1988. In the 1988 election, when party brands were strong, I expect partisan attachments with the incumbent AD to have a stronger effect on vote choice than retrospective economic evaluations. Conversely, in the 1993 election, when party brands were diluted but incumbent performance was seen as good or mediocre, we would expect partisan attachments with the incumbent AD to

\textsuperscript{102} Author’s calculations from a national survey of 2,000 adults conducted by Datos.

\textsuperscript{103} While available surveys do not allow us to test this proposition, it may be that some voters did not view Fermín as the incumbent candidate, given his party’s opposition to Pérez.

\textsuperscript{104} Turnout in 1993 was a mere 60 percent, low by Venezuelan standards. Many scholars noted the rise in abstention rates during the early 1990s as a sign of political apathy (Buxton 2001; Njaim, Combellas, and Álvarez 1998; Templeton 1995). Of course, it should be remembered that the higher rates of abstention are not surprising in regional elections, which only began in 1989. Also, compulsory voting was eliminated in 1993, which, even though it had rarely been enforced previously, at least made abstention a more acceptable option. Greater political apathy is not a surprising byproduct of partisan erosion since partisan attachments can motivate voters’ interest in politics. Some politicians and political analysts laid some of the blame for rising apathy with a popular television drama, Through These Streets (\textit{Por Estas Calles}), that depicted political malfeasance and corruption (Levine 2002: 258–9). However, as the show’s producer told me, its popularity more likely suggests it appealed to existing public perceptions rather than created them (Marcel Granier, personal interview, June 13, 2008).
have a weaker effect on vote choice than retrospective evaluations. In other words, the bulk of the 1993 incumbent AD vote should have come from voters who approved of the party’s performance in office rather than from voters who identified with AD.

Table 5.3 presents a simple descriptive probit analysis to compare these hypothesized relative effects. For 1988, I use data from a national survey of 2,000 adults conducted by Datos. For 1993, I use data from a national survey of 1,499 adults conducted by DOXA. These variables are standardized to vary between 0 and 1 in order to make the coefficients comparable.

Table 5.3: Partisanship, economic evaluations, and incumbent voting in 1988 and 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective Evaluation</td>
<td>0.307***</td>
<td>0.472***</td>
<td>0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.093)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.151)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Party Identifier</td>
<td>2.424***</td>
<td>0.285**</td>
<td>-2.139***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
<td>(0.138)</td>
<td>(0.163)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,942</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>2,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-likelihood</td>
<td>-745.054</td>
<td>-378.318</td>
<td>-1123.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Probit coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Constant terms not shown.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

In the 1988 election, partisanship indeed had a much stronger effect on voting for Pérez, the candidate of the incumbent AD, than did retrospective evaluations. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, that ranking was reversed in 1993. In that election, partisanship had a substantially smaller effect on voting for the incumbent party’s...
candidate, Fermín, than did retrospective evaluations. As the third column shows, the
effect of partisanship on incumbent voting declined significantly and by orders of
magnitude between 1988 and 1993. The effect of retrospective evaluations remained
relatively stable, but this may have to do with the somewhat confusing nature of
incumbency in 1993. The results in Table 5.3 thus lend support to my theory of party
breakdown. The dilution of the AD party brand during the Pérez administration meant that
Fermín’s voter base, unlike Pérez’s, leaned more heavily on supporters of the outgoing
administration than on partisans.

The AD administration that ended in early 1994 witnessed a steep decline in
partisanship as a result of dramatically diluting its party brand. Both the inconsistency in
Pérez’s policy switch toward market liberalization and the party’s persistent conflict with
the president diluted the AD brand. Convergence with COPEI following the 1992 coup
attempts further exacerbated the brand dilution, confusing both the party’s position and its
differences with COPEI. The administration’s economic performance, meanwhile, was
mixed. This allowed the party to attract those voters who viewed the AD administration
positively even as it lost the stable support of its partisan base. The case of AD in 1993 is
thus one of partisan erosion with economic performance not bad enough to cause the
party’s breakdown. While the AD’s Fermín lost the presidential election, the party
remained competitive, at least for another electoral cycle.

5.4 Brand Dilution with Bad Performance: AD/COPEI,
1998

By 1998, both AD and COPEI had so thoroughly diluted their brands that very few
Venezuelans identified with these established parties. Renewed economic crises, fear of
new threats to democratic stability, and the necessity of legislative coalition-building led
the parties to converge to the point of near-total indistinguishability. AD lent its support to
the policies of the Caldera administration, itself not formally associated with COPEI but widely viewed as a COPEI administration. As the 1998 presidential election approached, the prospect of a victory for the former coup plotter Chávez became likely. This new threat to Venezuelan democracy led AD and COPEI leaders to again converge in repeated, and ultimately failed, attempts to avoid Chávez’s election.

The result of this convergence was erosion in partisanship for both parties. In addition, the bad performance and unpopularity of the Caldera administration, associated as it was with both parties, led voters to reject both established parties and turn instead to independent candidates. With no significant partisan bases on which to fall back, negative valence led to the breakdown of both AD and COPEI with the 1998 presidential election. Both parties, once praised and then criticized for their stability and dominance of Venezuelan elections, became irrelevant in national politics.

5.4.1 Coalition Government in Crisis: AD-COPEI Convergence

Caldera’s administration, like Pérez’s, faced a crisis immediately upon taking office. On January 7, 1994, Banco Latino, one of the largest commercial banks in Venezuela, declared bankruptcy, sparking a run on the currency and forcing devaluation. Caldera provided government assistance to the bank, but as more banks became vulnerable and required assistance, concern grew about the government’s solvency (de Krivoy 2002). By mid-1994, with inflationary pressures growing, Caldera was forced to impose price and financial controls. The financial crisis and inflation became the central concerns of his administration.

Caldera also began his second term from a weak political position, having won merely a third of the popular vote. His party held a mere 13 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, with his coalition partner MAS holding another 12 percent. No single party held anywhere near a congressional majority. The banking crisis only further weakened the president right out of the gate. At the outset, Caldera opted not to formalize
an alliance with AD or COPEI, but to instead make alliances on an ad hoc basis. In the end, however, the administration formed a quasi-coalition government with AD, although Caldera’s tenure witnessed an overall proliferation of interparty alliances.

The president’s party, Convergencia, was itself a coalition of dissidents from other parties. Caldera’s cabinet thus included prominent elites formerly associated with AD or COPEI. And it was difficult to dissociate Caldera himself from COPEI, the party he founded. Indeed, Caldera spent much of the campaign reminding his supporters that casting the green ballot associated with COPEI would not mean voting for him. And COPEI leaders were concerned throughout the administration to remind voters that the Caldera administration was not associated with their party. As one prominent COPEI Deputy told me, “The people thought it was a COPEI administration and that its problems were internal problems with Caldera.”

In Congress, AD and COPEI made a formal alliance to divide up the leadership positions. Following the Banco Latino crisis, it was AD that proposed delegating decree authority to the president through an Enabling Law, something the party had refused to Perez. At the same time, both AD and COPEI criticized Caldera’s crisis-driven suspension of economic guarantees, triggering a standoff between Congress and the president until AD backed down. In time, AD came to be an unofficial member of Caldera’s coalition administration. In 1995, AD supported a series of laws granting the executive economic

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108 Venezuelan voters were accustomed to using color-coded party ballots to cast their votes for president. White ballots were associated with AD, while green ones were associated with COPEI. News reports after the election suggested that many voters who cast their ballots for Alvarez Paz had intended to vote for Caldera (El Nacional, December 6-7, 1993). Caldera had spent the campaign referring to Alvarez Paz as “the official candidate of COPEI” (El Nacional, November 4, 1993) and calling himself “the true copeyano” (El Nacional, November 20, 1993).

109 Personal interviews with Oswaldo Alvarez Paz (January 20, 2010) and Eduardo Fernández (January 25, 2010).

110 Nelson Chitty La Roche, personal interview, January 19, 2010.

111 The Venezuelan president had the prerogative to suspend certain constitutional guarantees in times of crisis and legislate on activities related to those guarantees by decree. However, Congress had the authority to reinstate those guarantees and did so a month after Caldera suspended them. Caldera again suspended the same guarantees and threatened to dissolve Congress, an unconstitutional option but one that had been successfully used in Peru two years earlier. For further details on the confrontation, see Crisp (1997: 195-7).
powers and then voted against congressional efforts to censure two members of Caldera’s administration. In return, Caldera supported judicial nominations made by AD and preserved the positions of AD-appointees in the bureaucracy (Ellner 1996). As Lepage put it, “[AD secretary-general Luis] Alfaro [Ucero] practically co-governed with Caldera.”

The ever-closer alliance between AD and Caldera became a growing threat to his other coalition partner, MAS. In response, MAS began to form alliances with the other congressional parties, COPEI and LCR. The result, by the midpoint of the Caldera administration, was a dizzying spectrum of interparty alliances. A non-COPEI administration with COPEI’s founder as president had established an informal alliance with AD, while his formal partner MAS was making deals with COPEI. As Corrales (2000) summarizes, “the [Caldera] government spent most of its time forming and undoing alliances with opposition parties.” One AD Deputy characterized the period with a baseball analogy: “One day your jacket says Yankees, but then you see the other guy is winning and suddenly your jacket says Red Sox... That is the signal AD and COPEI sent.”

The growth of these alliances can also be seen at the subnational level. Table 5.4 compares the party affiliations of candidates in gubernatorial elections in 1989, 1992, 1993-5, and 1998. The Table shows a clear increase of alliance-affiliated candidates. In 1993-5, most of these alliances were between Caldera’s Convergencia and MAS, a result of the presidential alliance and formal coalition. Even then, new alliances were emerging between AD and Convergencia, COPEI and MAS, and even AD and COPEI. By

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112 El Nacional, May 23, 1995; March 27, 1996.
113 Personal interview, January 28, 2010. Alfaro Ucero expelled his critics, including Fermín, from AD shortly after the 1993 vote.
116 Seven states held extraordinary gubernatorial elections in 1993 or 1994 because of changes to their state constitutions.
117 Note that many of the candidates listed as having individual party affiliations were in fact backed by alliances with small or regional parties. However, my interest here is in distinguishing the alliances between the major national parties.
1998, the alliance between AD and Caldera’s Convergencia extended substantially, as did the full range of permutations of alliances.

Table 5.4: Party alliances in gubernatorial elections

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPEI</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
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Source: Author’s calculations from official data published by the Supreme Electoral Council.

Note: Values include all candidates who received more than one percent of the statewide vote. Note that two states (Amazonas and Delta Amacuro) were federal territories in 1989 and thus did not hold gubernatorial elections. Vargas became a state in 1998.

Caldera’s need for allies became even more acute as the economic situation deteriorated. By early 1996, annual inflation reached 60 percent and unemployment was at 15 percent. In April, Caldera announced an economic adjustment program, dubbed Agenda Venezuela, that looked like the Pérez economic policies he had so strongly criticized. The program called for liberalizing the exchange rate, lifting price controls, privatizing state-owned enterprises, restarting negotiations with the IMF, and reopening
the oil sector to private investment. The change in economic policy led MAS to abandon the administration, leaving Caldera even weaker politically.

The economic crisis also stoked fears of social unrest and democratic instability. In an April 1996 survey, 64 percent of respondents thought there was imminent danger of rioting on the scale of the Caracazo and 50 percent thought there was imminent danger of a military coup. The fear of unrest and instability also affected party elites, who sought to shore up support for the administration. AD, having ousted its own president for pursuing a similar set of policies, now backed Caldera’s efforts. Its members in Congress voted to allocate resources to a debt-rescue fund and a financial bailout fund, and voted for the privatization of the steel company Sidor. As one AD leader told me, “we sustained the administration in order to save the democratic regime.” COPEI also supported the new economic reform program in Congress, and Caldera reportedly approached Fernández, still a prominent figure in COPEI, about joining his cabinet. In an attempt to form a kind of unity government, the president even sought to incorporate the leaders of the February 4, 1992 coup attempt, including Francisco Arias Cárdenas and Chávez.

118 The new economic program represented a policy switch not unlike Pérez’s, as Caldera himself acknowledged when he noted, “only God knows how much it hurts me to take this measure” (El Nacional, May 13, 1996). This surely demonstrated inconsistency by Caldera, but it would be difficult to classify it as inconsistency by Convergencia, a party whose brand was still very much in its infancy. To the extent that the administration reflected instead on the COPEI party brand, the new economic program was in fact more consistent with its brand than the old policies had been.

119 Two prominent MAS leaders remained in the administration, though they were expelled from the party.

120 Author’s calculations from a survey of 500 adults in Caracas conducted by Consultores 21.

121 Caldera is also said to have promised to back Alfaro Ucero for the 1998 presidential elections.


5.4.2 Partisanship and the 1998 Election

Although the economy bounced back somewhat in 1997, inflation remained persistently high and a drop in global oil prices meant the government had to impose austerity measures (see Figure 5.6). In 1998, the year of the presidential election, the economy contracted again. In April of that year, Chávez announced his candidacy for the presidency and formed a new political party, the Fifth Republic Movement (Movimiento V República, MVR). Elites from both AD and COPEI felt threatened not only by Chávez’s popularity, but also by his anti-democratic credentials as the leader of an attempted coup and his promise to rewrite the Venezuelan constitution. But their attempts to stem a Chávez victory only further demonstrated their convergence.

AD nominated its secretary-general, the aging Alfaro Ucero, who had the endorsement of Caldera.\textsuperscript{125} Attempting to put forward a fresh face, COPEI endorsed Irene Sáez, the popular mayor of the Chacao municipality of Caracas and a former Miss Universe who had formed her own party.\textsuperscript{126} They also faced Henrique Salas Römer, the rightwing governor of Carabobo who had left COPEI in the early 1990s and in 1997 founded a national vehicle, Project Venezuela. As the campaign progressed, it became clear that neither Alfaro Ucero nor Sáez were competitive and party elites worried about negative coattails effects hurting their chances in concurrent presidential, legislative, and gubernatorial elections. In May 1998, Congress approved a measure with AD, COPEI, and Convergencia support to move the presidential election to December, keeping the legislative and gubernatorial vote a month earlier. In the weeks leading up to the November balloting, news media began reporting talks between AD and COPEI about shoring up support by having one party abandon its candidate and support the other’s.


\textsuperscript{126} In fact, Sáez’s party had already negotiated a series of alliances with AD in gubernatorial and mayoral races. Both AD and COPEI considered endorsing her presidential run in early 1998, when she led in the polls.
After suffering significant losses in those elections, both parties abandoned their own candidates and backed Salas Römer in a final gambit to avert a Chávez victory.\textsuperscript{127}

AD and COPEI had consigned themselves to near-total convergence. In a November 1998 survey, respondents on average placed AD at 6.47 and COPEI at 6.51 on a 10-point left-right spectrum.\textsuperscript{128} My theoretical expectation is that this convergence should have led to a dramatic erosion of partisan attachments to AD and COPEI. The two parties seemed to be governing in coalition during the Caldera administration, a tacit alliance that made them seem indistinguishable. Similarly, in the run up to the 1998 election, they overtly cooperated to forestall a Chávez victory they perceived as a threat to democracy. This too suggested to voters that Venezuela’s two traditional parties had converged. Figure 5.2 bears out the expectation that this convergence was associated with declining partisanship for both parties. By the time of the 1998 election, only a small proportion of Venezuelan still identified with AD or COPEI.\textsuperscript{129}

Going into the 1998 election, Venezuela’s economic situation was again precarious. The Caldera administration’s reform package had relied on stable oil prices providing government revenue. But oil prices began to decline in late 1997 (see Figure 5.6). In a survey taken between the November congressional and December presidential elections, only 3.9 percent of respondents thought the state of the country had

\textsuperscript{127} After the November 8 legislative and gubernatorial elections, AD secretary-general Lewis Pérez asked Alfaro Ucero to withdraw from the race. Alfaro Ucero refused in a defiant televised interview, noting that his name could not be removed from the ballot. On November 29, AD voted to expel Alfaro Ucero and back Salas Römer. The next day, COPEI voted to withdraw its support for Sáez, although she retained the backing of several small parties and her own party. Neither candidate could be removed from the ballots, but the National Electoral Commission ruled on December 4 that votes for AD or COPEI would be counted for Salas Römer.

\textsuperscript{128} Author’s calculation based on a national survey of 1,500 adults conducted by Datos. The question asked, “In politics, people talk about ‘left’ and ‘right’... Where is AD, in the center, on the left, or on the right? And COPEI?” The difference between these means is not statistically significant ($p < 0.846$).

\textsuperscript{129} Consistent with these claims, Morgan (2007: 84) finds that, “Lack of meaningful distinctions between the major parties provoked disenchantment with existing parties.” Morgan also argues that, “key determinants of party system collapse were the failure of existing parties to incorporate important ideas and interests in society as well as the emergence of viable alternatives that seemed to fill this void.” Yet, as her analysis shows, policy positions had little to do with partisanship in 1998. Moreover, as Figure 5.2 shows, partisan attachments with AD and COPEI eroded well before alternatives like MVR and Project Venezuela emerged in mid-1997.
improved in the prior year. Only 26.2 percent of respondents had a positive evaluation of the Caldera administration’s performance, and 25.6 percent evaluated positively the administration’s economic policies. 130 Formally, of course, none of the parties that might be considered incumbents – Convergencia, AD, and COPEI – had their own presidential candidates in 1998. But this was because all three parties realized that negative retrospective evaluations and partisan erosion had ruled out anything close to victory for their candidates.

Despite the last-ditch efforts of the parties, Chávez won the December 1998 election with 56 percent of the vote, easily defeating Salas Römer’s 40 percent. 131 Sáez attracted a mere 2.8 percent and Alfaro Ucero a stunning 0.4 percent. 132 The results dealt a fatal blow to AD and COPEI, which never recovered their competitiveness in national elections. The strong established parties of Venezuelan democracy, once seen as examples for the rest of the region, had become irrelevant.

The brands of AD and COPEI had become all but meaningless by 1998. Their partisan ranks had eroded so dramatically as a result that the 1998 election had become primarily valence-based, focused on rejecting established institutions that had performed

130 Author’s calculation based on a national survey of 1,500 adults conducted by Datos. The general evaluation question asked, “In general terms, would you say that the situation in the country is better, the same, or worse than a year ago?” The administration evaluation question was worded, “Please tell us you opinion of the Caldera administration – has it been very bad, bad, good, or very good?” The question evaluating the administration’s economic policies asked, “What do you think of the economic policies of the current administration? Would you see the economic policies have been very good, good, bad, or very bad?”

131 Salas Römer attributes his defeat in part to the last-minute endorsements of the unpopular AD and COPEI (personal interview, January 27, 2010). He attempted to resist a so-called ToConCha pact of Everyone Against Chávez (Todos Contra Chávez), although he eventually accepted the endorsements (El Nacional, November 29, 1998; December 2, 1998).

132 The fact that AD and COPEI withdrew their support from their candidates presents a complication in identifying these as cases of party breakdown. In my calculations, I use the share of the vote received by Alfaro Ucero and Sáez as measures of the vote for AD and COPEI, respectively. This is somewhat misleading since ballots cast for AD and COPEI – with Alfaro Ucero and Sáez’s names still listed – were counted for Salas Römer. We could instead count the votes cast for Salas Römer with AD and COPEI ballots as a more accurate measure of the parties’ votes. This too may be misleading since voters who cast ballots for AD or COPEI likely knew that their ballot was being counted for Salas Römer and may have intended to vote for him anyway. Still, doing this puts AD and COPEI vote shares at 8.9 percent and 2.1 percent, respectively, outcomes that continue to signify the breakdown of both parties.
so poorly. \footnote{Molina (2002: 220) observes that, “the weight of short-term factors has increased steadily due to the erosion of traditional party loyalties.”} The combination of diluted party brands and bad performance led to the simultaneous breakdown of both parties since both were viewed as incumbent. Why had party brands been so diluted? The Caldera administration presented parties with several unavoidable dilemmas. The minority position of the governing party meant that Caldera needed to form alliances in order to govern. Moreover, the economic crisis that materialized even before Caldera took office, along with persistent concerns about democratic stability, forced the parties to converge. That convergence became even more acute in the parties’ final efforts to forestall a Chávez victory. AD and COPEI thus had little choice but to allow the dilution of their brands in the hopes of generating economic gains and protecting democratic institutions. When good economic performance failed to materialize, they were left without party brands and with negative valence, leading to their breakdowns.

5.5 Comparing the Cases

The three Venezuelan cases trace the processes of brand maintenance or dilution by the country’s two established political parties. Using survey data, I showed that partisanship in Venezuela prior to the 1983 economic crisis conformed to the expectations of my branding theory of partisanship. I then traced how AD maintained its party brand in the 1980s, but began a process of severely diluting it in 1989. In the subsequent cases, I showed how inconsistency and convergence diluted the COPEI party brand in the 1990s. In all three cases, brand maintenance or dilution proved to be associated with the maintenance or erosion of partisan attachments, as predicted by my theory.

Comparing the three cases also provides useful leverage for testing the sufficiency conditions of my theory of party breakdown. I posited that the interaction of brand dilution and negative incumbent valence is sufficient for party breakdown, but that
individually these variables do not cause breakdowns. Indeed, we saw that both these variables were present in 1998, when both AD and COPEI broke down. Comparing this case with that of AD in 1993 suggests that brand dilution alone is not a sufficient condition for party breakdown. In both cases, AD had diluted its brand significantly, but breakdown only occurred in 1998. Comparing AD in 1988 and 1993 similarly suggests that brand dilution alone is not a sufficient condition for party breakdown since the AD brand was diluted in 1993 but in neither case did the party breakdown. Both comparisons have the advantage of being across time within the same party, thus controlling for potential confounding factors like institutions or structural conditions that did not change over time.

A number of structural conditions, however, did change in Venezuela over the course of the 1990s and have been cited as causes for the breakdowns of AD and COPEI. These include institutional changes like the direct elections of governors, decentralization of power, and changes in legislative electoral rules in 1993, all of which could have weakened the central authority of the party organizations. Similarly, declines in state revenue resulting from both the regional debt crisis and falling oil prices may have weakened patronage-based parties. Or the resulting social changes required that parties adapt, something the rigid Venezuelan parties were unable to do.

While all of these challenges may well have helped weaken the electoral dominance of AD and COPEI, there are good reasons to doubt their centrality in the dramatic breakdowns of the parties in 1998. Changes to the electoral rules appear to have had little effect on actual voting patterns and decentralization all but stopped, where it was not reversed, after 1992. The direct election of governors may well have affected the types of candidates nominated by the parties, but AD and COPEI elites still dominated the 1993 election even after two rounds of gubernatorial elections. State resources certainly declined in the 1990s and made patronage-based mobilization more difficult. But this fails to explain the erosion of partisanship: if voters’ partisan attachments were driven entirely by patronage, we would expect to see attachments with both parties decline in the early
1990s, but only attachments to AD eroded. It is also striking that AD and COPEI made repeated efforts to adapt their policy positions, institutional arrangements, and internal organizations to public demands, belying the notion that their rigidity made such adaptation impossible.

In addition, the cross-national comparisons of the three Venezuelan cases with those from Argentina rules out these explanations as sufficient for party breakdown. The breakdowns of AD and COPEI in 1998 and the Argentine Radical party in 2003 suggest that differences between these cases cannot be sufficient conditions for party breakdown in general. Unlike Venezuela, Argentina did not decentralize political power during the 1990s. Nor was the Radical party as highly institutionalized as AD and COPEI. This suggests that neither factor was determinative of the breakdowns across both countries. Moreover, system-level variables like institutional change and resource depletion fail to explain the breakdown of the Radicals while the Peronist party survived. While such variation does not exist across the parties within Venezuela, the divergent outcomes of the Argentine parties rules out these alternative explanations.

These cross-country comparisons also allow us to control for potential confounds in the Argentina cases. Recall that one concern about the Argentine case comparisons was that the poor economic performance of the Alfonsín administration might have strengthened the rejection of the Radicals in 2003, following the party’s second economic disaster. In Venezuela, no such repeated economic failure existed and yet AD and COPEI broke down in 1998, suggesting that this factor is not generally a sufficient condition for party breakdown.

The Venezuelan cases also shed new light on the intraparty dynamic between party leaders and party elites. Where partisanship and electoral incentives diverged as a result of economic or political crises, we found party leaders attempting to dilute their party’s brand. This was the case for both Pérez and Caldera, who came to believe that inconsistent economic reforms were necessary for generating economic growth and that
party convergence was needed to strengthen democratic institutions. In Argentina, this was the case for Menem and De la Rúa, who also believed that inconsistent economic reforms would induce an economic recovery. These leaders also found they needed party convergence, either to seem credible in their commitment to reform (Menem, Pérez) or to govern from a minority position (De la Rúa, Caldera). Where party elites believed they could successfully force the party leader to overturn their brand-diluting policies, we found intraparty conflict. This was the case during the Pérez administration and early in Menem’s first term, when both presidents were unpopular and seemed unlikely to persevere in their reform agenda.

The six case studies in Argentina and Venezuela and their comparison broadly confirmed my theoretical expectations. The individual cases allowed me to test for the association hypothesized by my branding theory of partisanship between inconsistency or convergence and aggregate partisan erosion. Individual-level data from the cases also bore out other theoretical expectations about the sources of partisanship and the electoral tradeoffs between partisanship and retrospective evaluations. Matched-case comparisons, both within and across countries, allowed me to further test my theory of party breakdown, and the sufficiency conditions associated with its key interactive hypothesis while holding constant possible confounding factors and variables highlighted by alternative explanations. Finally, the case comparisons also confirmed the hypotheses generated by the intraparty bargaining model regarding conflicts between party leaders and party elites.

These analyses have provided strong support for my theory of party breakdown and its implications at the individual and aggregate levels. Having corroborate my experimental findings, they also lend support to the external validity of those results. Taken together, these multiple tests of my theoretical expectations – individual-level and aggregate, experimental and observational, within and across countries – provide robust and wide-ranging support for my theory of party breakdown.
Appendix 5A. Venezuela Surveys

Although many national surveys are conducted in Venezuela, others are instead limited to some combination of the urban centers or solely the capital, Caracas. Although Caracas is the largest city in the country, only about 10 percent of the Venezuelan population lives in its metropolitan area. On the other hand, Venezuela is one of the most urbanized countries in the world, with 85 percent of the country living in cities.

As in Argentina, surveys in Venezuela typically employ stratified sampling methods within the surveyed region. Within selected households, age and gender quotas are typically used to select respondents (Sudman 1966). Table 5.5 lists information about the sample sizes and regional coverage of the surveys included in the partisanship figures cited in this chapter and plotted in Figure 5.2. Footnotes provide similar information for surveys cited in the text.

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134 Note that in some surveys that combine districts, provinces, or cities, the sample population in each unit is not proportional to the actual population. In such instances, sample averages should be appropriately weighted, but this is not currently done in this study.
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Appendix 5B. Economic Indicators for Venezuela, 1983-1999

Figure 5.4: Monthly inflation in Venezuela, 1983-1998. Values represent monthly changes to the consumer price index. Dotted vertical lines separate presidential administrations. Source: International Financial Statistics, IMF.
Figure 5.5: Annual GDP growth in Venezuela, 1983-1998. *Source:* World Development Indicators.
Appendix 5C. Composition of Venezuelan Congress, 1984-1999

Table 5.6: Composition of Venezuelan Congress, 1984-1999

<table>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCR</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convergencia</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total seats</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rey (2009b)

Note: Seat shares are based on election results. Senate values do not include former presidents who serve as lifetime senators.
Chapter 6

Conclusions

“Partisanship is linked to several aspects of political stability... Partisan identity, with its incorporation of party history and character, however small, is a touchstone and a check on short-term, arrant, political considerations.”
– Rosenblum (2008: 355)

Since the mid-1990s, one third of the established, nationally competitive political parties in Latin America have broken down. Within a single electoral cycle, they became electorally irrelevant for at least the medium term, and often longer. In their wake, these dramatic breakdowns fragmented and weakened political representation, providing an opportunity for outsider and anti-democratic candidates. Surprisingly, party breakdowns in Latin America have not been associated with major shifts in underlying social cleavages or their political salience, nor with changes in electoral rules.

Although the conventional wisdom among observers of Latin American politics has attributed party breakdowns to bad incumbent performance, this explanation overpredicts breakdown. Instead, I have offered a new explanation of party breakdown, one that also seeks to explain the erosion of partisanship that precedes these surprising events. I argued that party breakdown results from the interaction of two key variables: party-brand dilution and negative valence. In response to economic and political crises,
parties across the region engaged in policies and alliances that diluted their brands and eroded the ranks of stable partisans who identified with them. Brand dilution made parties more susceptible to valence-based voting and, when combined with poor performance by the party in office, led to the mass electoral rejection that constituted the party’s breakdown.

### 6.1 Findings and Implications

My theory of party breakdown consisted of two parts – a branding model of partisanship and vote choice and an intraparty bargaining game. The theory generated implications for both individual-level voter behavior and aggregate public-opinion and electoral trends. The branding model of partisanship and vote choice suggested that when parties are inconsistent or converge with other major parties, voters’ attachments to them will weaken. The intraparty bargaining game posited that parties will dilute their brands when party leaders see diluting actions as beneficial for short-term electoral gains. In response, party elites will conflict with their party leader when they believe they can force the leader to abandon such brand-diluting actions. Taken together, my theory of party breakdown implied that the interaction of brand dilution and poor incumbent performance is a sufficient condition for breakdown.

I tested these implications at both the individual and aggregate levels using multiple methods. Survey experiments conducted in Argentina offered support for the individual-level implications and uncovered heterogeneous treatment effects also consistent with the model. Observational survey data from Venezuela also proved consistent with these individual-level implications. In-depth case studies and matched-case comparisons offered strong support for the theory’s aggregate-level implications. Tracing the processes of party inconsistency and convergence in six cases from Argentina and Venezuela, I found evidence of aggregate declines in partisanship as
predicted by the branding model. I also found that the choices of party leaders and party elites were consistent with the expectations of my intraparty bargaining game. Finally, case comparisons demonstrated that bad incumbent performance and brand dilution were not individually sufficient causes of party breakdown, although they were jointly sufficient. They also allowed me to logically rule out prominent alternative hypotheses derived from previous theories and case studies.

This study has thus offered an explanation for the puzzling phenomenon of party breakdown, highlighting previously overlooked dynamics in both voter-party linkages and intraparty interactions. In doing so, this study has contributions to a number of scholarly debates. My theory of party breakdown is the first general explanation of the remarkable pattern of party breakdowns in Latin America. Previous studies have offered case-specific explanations and comparative research has examined related questions about systemic change. But this study is the first comparative explanation of breakdown at the level of individual political parties. The branding model of partisanship has also offered a new way of thinking about partisan attachments, one that conceptualizes them as social identities but also allows for their responsiveness to the actions of party elites. Allowing party elites to foresee the effects of their actions on partisan attachments opens new possibilities for theorizing party preferences in models of party competition. In particular, this raises the possibility that parties have incentives to diverge from the preferences of the median voter. Finally, my intraparty bargaining game contributes to our understanding of the interactions among different party actors by suggesting one way in which their preferences may diverge and even conflict.

**Party Breakdown in Latin America**

Previous studies offered explanations for specific cases of party breakdown in Latin America or examined the related phenomenon of party-system change comparatively. This study shifted to a comparative analysis at the level of individual
parties across Latin America. In doing so, it has offered the first general explanation of the puzzling phenomenon of party breakdown in the region. My theory also accounts for the erosion of partisanship that precedes these instances of breakdown, a behavioral regularity that prior theories overlooked.

Focusing on individual parties rather than party systems as the unit of analysis provided a larger sample from which to generate more reliable inferences. As a result, my theory not only explains the breakdown of particular parties, it also explains variation within countries: why some parties break down while others in the same system survive. At the same time, comparing matched cases allowed me to identify general causal processes. Studies of individual cases of party breakdown have offered deep insights into specific events and multiple potential hypotheses. My theory of party breakdown offered an explanation of party breakdown that is broadly applicable. The comparison of multiple cases allowed me to test this explanation against alternative hypotheses, something difficult to achieve in single case studies.

**Party Brands and Partisanship**

I proposed a branding model of partisanship that highlights the interaction between party behavior and voter perceptions of parties. Building on previous updating theories of partisanship, my model incorporates elements of social-identity theory, including the notion of comparative fit. Unlike previous theories of partisanship, the branding model suggests that party attachments are based not only on learning about party brands, but also on the extent to which voters see parties as distinct from one another. Social identities, after all, are built not only on perceived in-group affinity but also on perceived differences with out-groups. My model suggests that convergence by rival parties, making their brands less distinguishable, should erode party attachments. It also suggests that partisanship erodes when parties are inconsistent, either by shifting from their prior brand or by sending mixed signals to voters.
In proposing and testing the branding model of partisanship, I emphasized a crucial limitation in the current debate over the nature of partisanship, namely, its overwhelming focus on the US context and on observational data. The limitations of observational data are well known, but it seems scholars of partisanship have been reluctant to turn to experiments because of the difficulty of manipulating these stable and strongly-held identities in the US context. One solution is to turn to contexts in which there is a reasonable expectation that such identities can be manipulated, in my case because of the relative weakness of party attachments and the relative lack of information about party brands. Similar experimental studies are being undertaken in other new democracies (e.g., Brader and Tucker 2008b, 2009b); continuing this trend will contribute enormously to our understanding of an important aspect of mass political behavior.

My own analysis offered compelling evidence that partisanship is neither the “unmoved mover” of exogenous theories nor the performance-based “running tally” of the revisionist endogenous perspective. I argued that partisanship is both a social identity based on perceptions of party brands rather than performance and that these perceptions are continually updated in response to party behavior. In the US context, where party brands are stable because parties change little and slowly, it is not surprising that we see stable partisanship. In contexts where party brands instead change, and change dramatically, we should see no such stability.

More broadly, my theory of party breakdown highlighted the importance of partisanship in democratic politics. Among scholars of the US, partisanship is often derided as normatively undesirable.\footnote{Rosenblum (2008) offers a corrective to this negative normative view.} Partisanship is thought to replace a more thoughtful assessment of candidates and to bias voters’ interpretation of new information or perceptions of political events (e.g., Bartels 2002; Carsey and Layman 2006; Converse 1964; Gerber and Green 1999; Zaller 1992). Voters thus fail evaluate parties and candidates rationally at each election, as normative democratic theory might prefer. The
strength and stability of partisanship in the US also makes it difficult for new parties to emerge, freezing a decades-old cleavage that may not be relevant to the present electorate.

It is striking that while scholars of US politics typically disdain widespread partisanship, observers of Latin America – and other developing democracies – bemoan relatively low levels of partisanship (Dalton and Weldon 2007; Mainwaring and Scully 1995a). For these scholars, partisanship indicates the institutionalization of political parties and their relative stability. Partisanship stabilizes the party system by ensuring that a party can survive the ephemeral vicissitudes of public opinion and particular political events. Thus, both politicians and voters can anticipate some amount of political continuity, incentivizing longer time horizons.

No doubt, both perspectives contain some truth. An electorate with too much partisanship may fail to hold its political leaders accountable, while one in which partisanship is too weak may be overly volatile. My theory of party breakdown offers further cause for concern about low levels of partisanship. I argued that low levels of partisanship make parties susceptible to short-term valence evaluations and breakdown. Such breakdowns fragment representation and make polities vulnerable to outsiders with few commitments to preserving democracy. Yet, I also showed that widespread partisanship alone offers no blank check to political parties. Such partisanship can be squandered easily and quickly when parties dilute their brands. This study thus highlights that the extent of partisanship in democratic societies has important implications for the quality and stability of democracy.

**Party Competition and Convergence**

My theory of party breakdown also highlights an important tradeoff for political parties. Spatial theories of party competition tell us that, subject to certain assumptions, parties ought to appeal to the median voter (e.g., Downs 1957; Enelow and Hinich 1984). In doing so, multiple parties will converge on the median voter’s preference and offer
identical platforms. Yet, the prediction of party convergence, while analytically appealing, is often at odds with empirical observation. While parties do appear to converge in particular contexts and times, we typically find that parties diverge from the median; indeed, parties and candidates often expend considerable energy and resources distinguishing themselves from their opponents.

 Scholars offer a variety of explanations for party divergence, many of them based on breaking the assumptions underlying the simple spatial model (e.g., Calvert 1985). My branding model suggests a novel explanation. If parties are able to affect their brands – and, in turn, the degree to which voters identify with them – then they may have incentives to diverge. If they wish to maximize their partisan ranks, parties may prefer to distinguish their brand from those of competing parties. Since previous theories of partisanship left little agency for parties to affect the extent of partisanship in the electorate, this preference has not been explored in theories of party competition. But my branding model of partisanship suggests that parties can affect partisanship and my empirical analysis demonstrated that they indeed do. My conversations with party elites in Argentina and Venezuela suggested that they were indeed cognizant of the effects of their choices on partisan attachments. Parties thus have an interest in fostering and maintaining partisan attachments, and divergence is one way to do this.

I argued that under certain circumstances parties may face a tradeoff between short-term electoral incentives on the one hand and brand-maintenance or partisanship incentives on the other. In these situations, parties may have to choose between maximizing votes and maximizing partisanship. Thus, while spatial models have taught us about the electoral benefits of convergence, the extent to which parties care about partisanship suggests that they may also have a preference for divergence.
Party Organizations and Intraparty Conflict

A final implication of my theory of party breakdown bears on our understanding of party organizations and their internal dynamics. Spatial models of party competition have long been criticized for treating parties as unitary actors, when in fact they are made up of individuals with preferences that may diverge. One prominent distinction between different types of actors within parties has been the strength of their ideological commitments. Party activists, it is often claimed, are likely to hold more extreme ideological positions than candidates or party leaders.

My intraparty bargaining model highlighted another way in which party actors may be distinguished. Building on the notion of overlapping generations within organizations, my essential insight is that different party actors have different time horizons. Applied to the question of whether party actors care about their party’s brand, this means that mid-level party elites looking to future elections will care more about the party brand than party leaders focused primarily on the next election. Party leaders will place greater emphasis on choices that yield short-term electoral returns, even at the expense of diluting the party brand.

Despite decades of research on political parties, and despite their central role in mediating fundamental aspects of voters’ interactions with their elected representatives, we still know little about the internal dynamics of party organizations. My intraparty bargaining model highlighted only one such dynamic, albeit one that seems crucial to understanding why parties engage in behaviors that dilute their brand in particular instances. But this contribution only further emphasizes that a great deal more research must be undertaken to better understand the breadth of intraparty dynamics and their impact on the collective choices of party organizations.
6.2 Broader Debates

This study has contributed to various important areas of research in political science, relevant to our general understanding of political parties and partisanship as well as the specific phenomenon of party breakdown in Latin America. But the theory of party breakdown I introduced also bears on broader scholarly debates about the workings of democracy. In particular, this study offers implications regarding the impact of economic crises on democratic representation and the role of conflict in democratic systems. While scholars have debated whether economic crises damage democracy, this study suggests that one byproduct of such crises – or, more specifically, the response to them by political actors – may be the breakdown of an established political party. These breakdowns weaken democratic representation and accountability, fragmenting party systems and opening political space for outsiders. Similarly, although scholars have differed with regard to the role of political conflict in maintaining or undermining democratic stability, this study suggests that some amount of conflict – specifically, partisan conflict – is necessary for maintaining partisan and electoral stability.

Economic Crises, Policy Switches, and Representation

Party brands are the result of equilibrium electoral strategies by party actors over repeated electoral cycles. Brand-maintaining and short-term electoral incentives diverge dramatically only under specific, and overall rare, circumstances. As in Argentina and Venezuela, such divergence may result from economic or political crises. The actions deemed by party leaders to be necessary for resolving such crises – and thereby securing positive performance evaluations – diluted the party brand.\(^2\) In the Latin American cases, these actions typically entailed policy switches and, along with them, intraparty conflicts and convergence with opposition parties.

\(^2\) A sudden and major shift in public opinion could generate a similar divergence of incentives, although this is a possibility I have not explored in this study.
Across the region, policy switches were common responses to the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s. But their impact on democratic representation has been the subject of debate. Some scholars view these switches as indicative of a broader absence of accountability. In his critical assessment of Latin America’s Third-Wave democracies, O’Donnell (1994) notes that regional electorates seem to delegate power to strong executives subject to little horizontal accountability. Presidents, he argues, are held accountable only during elections, but between elections no other political institution is able to constrain executive behavior. In turn, this absence of accountability weakens democracy and makes presidents susceptible to fluctuations in public opinion (see also Conaghan 1996; Przeworski 1991; Weyland 2004).

Other scholars are less concerned about the lasting effects of policy switches, noting that elections still subject presidents to voters (Domínguez 1998). If voters disapprove of a president for straying from his campaign promises, they can punish him at the polls. In other words, ex post accountability mitigates the effect of presidential policy switching. Moreover, the economic reforms implemented through policy switches should strengthen democratic stability or improve the quality of democracy (Gans-Morse and Nichter 2008; Kurtz 2004; Weyland 2004).

Responding to these perspectives, Stokes (2001) notes that in certain cases in Latin America voters did indeed hold presidents accountable for failed policy switches. But at the same time, she notes, policy switches in and of themselves vitiated mandate representation to the lasting detriment of democracy. “When politicians repeatedly violate mandates,” she writes, “even if they believe they are acting in people’s best interests, they threaten to debase all campaign messages, authentic and disingenuous alike” (182, emphasis in original). Repeated policy switches could thus damage the credibility of campaigns and narrow the scope of elected politicians’ scope of action since they will not be able to claim a policy mandate.

My study provides additional support for Stokes’s concern about the lasting effects
of policy switches for representation. I highlighted that crisis responses in the form of policy switches not only vitiated mandate representation, as she notes, but also contributed to the subsequent breakdown of political parties. Policy switches were instances of intertemporal inconsistency in which voters’ priors about the ruling party proved inconsistent with its administration’s policies. In order to make such switches credible to international markets, presidents typically also pursued additional inconsistent policies, fostering ties with rivals and provoking conflicts with their own parties. These actions further diluted party brands and, when combined with poor performance, caused established parties to break down. Such breakdowns substantially weakened democratic representation by fragmenting party systems, opening political spaces for outsiders, and diminishing voters’ ability to use party labels to predict politicians’ behavior. As democrats, we should therefore be concerned about the lasting impact of crisis responses on Latin American democracies.

Political Conflict and Democracy

A vast body of scholarship extols the virtues of consociationalism (see Andeweg 2000; Lijphart 1994). Such studies note the successes of particular power-sharing institutions and formal consensus-based mechanisms for political decision-making in deeply divided societies. Theories about consociational democracy thus suggest that democratic societies ought to dampen political conflict for the sake of stability.

In a similar vein, many scholars of democratization in Latin America viewed pacted transitions as positive solutions to the region’s historic instability (e.g., O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Pacts between elites – often including the outgoing military regime – were seen to provide a bulwark against the polarization and conflict often blamed for prior democratic breakdowns. Although the antidemocratic and unrepresentative character

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3 This may explain why Kitschelt et al. (2010: 231) find some evidence that the programmatic structuration of party systems in Latin America declined where policy switches occurred.
of elite pacts was highlighted by some observers (Karl 1990), pacted transitions have typically been lauded for moderating the political conflicts that weaken democracy.

The perceived antagonism between political conflict and democracy also extends to partisan conflict more specifically. Partisan conflict is often derided by political pundits and voters for generating gridlock or the tyranny of the majority. During political campaigns in the US and elsewhere, candidates often strike a conciliatory tone of bipartisanship and consensus. Moreover, scholars of US politics have noted with alarm the polarization of the Democratic and Republic parties in recent years.

Yet, my theory of party breakdown suggests that partisan conflict in particular is desirable not only for the survival of political parties but more broadly for democratic representation. I argued that convergence among political parties dilutes party brands, increasing voters’ uncertainty and weakening the party label’s heuristic value. In dramatic cases of convergence, this can lead to the sudden breakdown of established parties, leaving in its wake a fragmented system of unknown and poorly organized parties. Even in less extreme cases, bipartisanship dilutes party brands at the margins and can weaken partisan attachments. Parties therefore have strong incentives to avoid interparty cooperation and to instead heighten partisan differences.

Some voters may prefer interparty cooperation. As a theoretical matter, it is not inconsistent for individuals to have a normative preference for bipartisanship and for such bipartisanship, as my theory suggests, to blur partisan differences and erode partisan attachments. After all, in my branding model, partisanship is unaffected by the kinds of valence evaluations that would include a party’s performance in cooperating with its rivals. Such differing effects of convergence would simply pose a dilemma for parties and politicians who wish to maintain a strong party brand while also appealing to voters’ taste for bipartisanship.4

4 As an empirical matter, however, it is striking that despite the conventional wisdom in the US about bipartisanship, US legislators are in fact overwhelmingly partisan (e.g., McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). As former Democratic leader Dick Gephardt once said, “bipartisanship is abnormal” (quoted in Trubowitz and Mellow 2005: 434). Whether voters outside the US similarly prefer interparty cooperation is
This study suggests that partisan conflict and polarization are integral aspects of democratic competition. Hirschman (1995: Ch. 20) argued that some amount of political conflict is crucial for generating social integration. By resolving conflict through institutional mechanisms, democratic societies built social capital and incorporated stakeholders into the democratic system. Similarly, my theory of party breakdown suggests that partisan conflict is crucial for generating meaningful party brands and the stable partisanship that ensure a stable party system. Some amount of polarization between political parties allows voters to distinguish between them and to form lasting attachments to one over the other.\(^5\) The sharp attenuation of partisan conflict in many Latin American polities in the 1980s and 1990s not only destabilized party systems but did so with a dramatic rapidity devastating to democratic representation.

### 6.3 The Outlook for Political Parties in Latin America

The pattern of party breakdowns in Latin America and its implications raise concerns for the region’s democracies. Parties that have broken down are unlikely to return to electoral competitiveness in the medium term, if at all. In some cases, a party may recover electorally, but typically as a new organization that merely employs the old label.\(^6\) Generally, the breakdown of an established political party led to the fragmentation of the party system, with new parties emerging largely as electoral vehicles for individual, already-prominent politicians. Voters have no priors about these new parties and therefore very little credible information about the kinds of policies they support. An environment an open question deserving further research. But my own results suggest that partisan conflict may be less unseemly in other contexts: my party-cue survey experiment in Argentina revealed no positive effect of bipartisanship on respondents’ attitudes.

\(^5\) This is no doubt why Kitschelt et al. (2010) link their concept of programmatic party structuration with ideological polarization.

\(^6\) This could be the case of APRA in Peru, which managed to reelect a president in 2006. By then, APRA was a completely different party, with most of its elites from the 1980s committed to other parties. It is notable that in the 2011 elections, APRA did not run a presidential candidate and lost most of its legislative representation.
in which party brands are all but meaningless may also be self-reinforcing: if politicians are not at all bound by party labels, they may be freer to regularly change positions or alliances.

Yet, if breakdown is all but irreversible, partisan erosion is not. Partisanship can be recovered by those parties that survive the erosion of their partisan ranks, as it is by new parties. This requires essentially the reverse of the actions on which I have focused in this study – namely, consistency and divergence. By staking out a consistent position and distinguishing itself anew from its rivals, parties can, over time, recover or develop a stable partisan base.

A look at post-breakdown developments in party politics in Argentina and Venezuela illustrates these trajectories. In Argentina, the Peronist party maintains electoral strength and has recovered some base of partisanship, although it remains hampered by internal conflicts and its presidents’ political strategy of building interparty coalitions of convenience. Following the breakdown of the Radical party, the space of opposition to the ruling Peronists fragmented and has seen a dizzying array of alliances. A similar dynamic persists in Venezuela. The political space left open by the breakdowns of AD and COPEI became highly fragmented despite continuing attempts at lasting alliances. Chávez’s political party, though still largely personalist, has benefited from access to state resources and has developed a partisan following, although whether such partisanship would persist in the absence of the president remains an open question.

**Parties in Argentina After 2003**

The breakdown of Argentina’s Radical party in 2003 precipitated a massive fragmentation of the political landscape. Already by that election, political elites formerly associated with the Radicals exited the party to form their own parties as personalist electoral vehicles. At the same time, the collapse of the political space previously
occupied by the Radicals exacerbated tensions within the Peronist party, generating competition between three different Peronist candidates.

The eventual victor, Néstor Kirchner, won with a mere 22% of the vote and a weak mandate. Rather than unify the internal factions of his own party, Kirchner pursued a coalition-building strategy of “transversality,” forming alliances with governors and legislators from across the spectrum of parties (Levitsky and Murillo 2008). By the middle of his term, Kirchner’s economic successes allowed him to consolidate control over much of the PJ organization, although some internal factions persisted in their opposition. For the 2007 presidential race, these anti-Kirchner factions of the PJ and what remained of the UCR supported Kirchner’s former Minister of Economy, Roberto Lavagna. Meanwhile, Kirchner’s Front for Victory (Frente para la Victoria, FPV) faction supported the president’s wife, Cristina Fernández. But Fernández’s runningmate, Julio Cobos, was a Radical governor from Mendoza who temporarily broke with the UCR. In the event, Fernández secured an unsurprising victory on the basis of Kirchner’s enormous popularity and the fragmentation of the opposition (Singer and Fara 2008). Additional interparty alliances of all kinds again emerged in advance of the 2009 legislative elections (De Luca and Malamud 2010; Lupu 2010).

Kirchner and Fernández returned the PJ to its traditions of state intervention in the economy and protectionism. Both administrations used an undervalued exchange rate to stimulate growth while subsidizing public utilities and social assistance programs. In order to combat inflationary pressures, the administrations negotiated price controls with business sectors and unions while also imposing export taxes on commodities like beef and soy (Bonvecchi and Giraudy 2007, 2008). In 2007, Kirchner intervened in the quasi-independent agency that reports inflation figures, now believed to be underestimating inflation.

Lavagna had served as Minister of Economy under Duhalde and was kept in his post by Kirchner. He was widely credited with restraining government spending and successfully renegotiating Argentina’s foreign debts, but fell out with Kirchner over the administration’s expenditures in advance of the 2005 legislative elections.
Despite its internal divisions, the PJ thus continues to dominate Argentine politics, having largely returned to its ideological roots. Partisan attachments to the Peronist party began a slow resurgence in 2005. The breakdown of the Radicals fragmented the party system, making it difficult to maintain any organized opposition to the president. This has also allowed political elites and their fledgling parties to make and break alliances with alarming rapidity and ideological heterogeneity.

**Parties in Venezuela After 1998**

The Venezuelan party system also dramatically fragmented with the breakdowns of AD and COPEI. Chávez’s institutional reforms, along with his popularity, his use of state resources – particularly following the rise in oil prices in 2003 – and his repeated electoral successes have allowed him to consolidate power in the executive (Álvarez 2007; Maingón and Welsch 2009; Penfold 2010). In 2007, he transformed his MVR party into a new organization, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela, PSUV*). Both parties have had little organizational capacity or internal debate, heavily subjugated to the leadership of the president. Instead, Chávez has relied far more on state resources and organizations than on his party, as in his use of targeted benefits to mobilize supporters (Penfold 2007).

With AD and COPEI relegated to uncompetitiveness, a variety of parties have emerged in opposition to the Chávez administration. Many of these new organizations were initially personalist electoral vehicles for particular individuals, although others emerged as political elites fell out with the Chávez administration (López Maya 2004; Pereira Almao 2004). A small number of party organizations also grew out of civil-society associations, like Justice First (*Primero Justicia*) (Pérez Baralt 2004). But the

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8 These include Salas Römer’s Project Venezuela, Manuel Rosales’s A New Era (*Un Nuevo Tiempo*), and Antonio Ledezma’s Fearless People’s Alliance (*Alianza Bravo Pueblo*).

9 These include Fatherland for All (*Patria Para Todos*) and For Social Democracy (*Por la Democracia Social, PODEMOS*).
fragmentation of the system and the weakness of all the party organizations has provided Chávez with enormous electoral advantages (Corrales and Penfold 2007).

The fragmented opposition to Chávez has attempted twice to form an electoral coalition, but its ideological heterogeneity and lack of discipline have hampered these efforts. A first umbrella organization, the Democratic Coordinator (Coordinadora Democrática) was involved in organizing the 2002-3 general strike and campaigned for the 2004 recall referendum. But the organization dissolved following Chávez’s resounding victory (Hellinger 2005). A second coalition, the Coalition for Democratic Unity (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática) was launched in 2008 to coordinate legislative party slates and may back a single candidate in the 2012 presidential race.

The result of these heterogeneous interparty alliances is that new parties have failed to generate meaningful partisan bases. Some, like Justice First, have emphasized a consistent message and garnered partisan support among certain populations. But many of these new parties have been hampered by inconsistency and internal conflicts. At the same time, the relative consistency and singular strength of the MVR/PSUV generated widespread attachments. Whether these are in fact attachments to the party or rather than the figure of the president himself remains an open question.

**Trajectories and Open Questions**

The trajectories of party systems in Argentina and Venezuela following the breakdown of established parties in these countries are exemplary of broader regional trends. Similar fragmentation has resulted from party breakdowns in Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Peru. Where established parties with well-known brands had previously dominated electoral competition, national elections now submit candidates from an ever-changing range of new, and often short-lived, political parties.

One notable exception to the trend of post-breakdown fragmentation is Uruguay.
There, a new party, the Broad Front, had already been emerging for years prior to the breakdown of the Colorado party (Luna 2007). Rather than form new parties as personalist electoral vehicles, politicians from the established party defected instead to the existing Broad Front. The result was that the breakdown of the Colorado party did not fragment the party system. Instead, the Colorado party was replaced by the Broad Front, an outcome more akin to US-style realignments. But the Uruguayan experience is the exception that proves the rule. The suddenness of party breakdowns does not provide enough time for anything more than mere party labels to emerge. Organized parties with mobilization capacity and well-known brands take time to develop, and only where such a party already existed did the party system not fragment.

Among the case of party breakdown, there exists interesting variation. I have focused on national competitiveness as the indicator of an established party, but nationally competitive parties also typically compete in local elections. We could well imagine that local party dynamics can differ from the national dynamic so my focus here on national elections seems reasonable. Yet, some national party breakdowns were accompanied by similar breakdowns to uncompetitiveness at local levels, while others were not. The Argentine Radicals remain competitive in particular provinces, while AD and COPEI have folded into broad opposition coalitions in almost every Venezuelan state and Peru’s APRA and Bolivia’s MIR no longer even contest regional elections.

How to explain this variation across subnational districts remains an open question. Although such inquiry is beyond the scope of this study, my theory of party breakdown suggests one possible direction. While national and local party brands may be different, they are also surely related. This means that partisan erosion at the national level should be accompanied by partisan erosion at the local level, although perhaps not in equal proportion. One difference among local districts is the level of partisanship that exists prior to brand dilution. If some states are populated by more Radicals than Peronists

10 The relationship between local and national party brands, and their relative contributions to individual partisanship, is itself an open question that calls for further study.
– perhaps the result of demographic variation or economic interests – then it would not be surprising that when partisanship declines across the country, a significant base of partisans remains in states where attachments had been more widespread. This would certainly go some way in explaining the persistent competitiveness of the Radical party in the Argentine provinces of Catamarca and Chaco, despite their electoral irrelevance on the national stage.

The potential for variation in prior partisanship across districts also raises another unsettled question. I have treated the brands of established parties as equivalent – or at least comparable – prior to their dilution. But parties may have different starting points. Some established parties may simply have clearer brands that others, the result, perhaps, of the nature of the system in which they compete, their organizations, or their ideological commitments. This possibility, and the degree to which it conditions the effect of brand dilution, surely merit further inquiry.

A related open question is how much brand dilution it takes to sufficiently erode the partisan base of an established political party. This study has treated brand dilution as a dichotomous variable, relying on the relatively extreme instances of brand dilution in recent Latin American party politics to uncover a dynamic previously overlooked. But in order to apply this dynamic to a broader set of cases, it would be useful to know how flexible parties can be with their brands before they become susceptible to breakdown. Understanding where such a threshold lies is a goal I intend to take up in future work.

The breakdown of established political parties in some Latin American countries should not overshadow the altogether different developments in others. In Brazil, for instance, increasing ideological consistency by the two main national contenders seems to have had the opposite effects of inconsistency and party breakdown. Partisanship has spread and parties in an institutional context frequently criticized for weakening them have strengthened and grown increasingly programmatic (Hagopian, Gervasoni, and Moraes 2009). These developments are consistent with my branding model of
partisanship to the extent that party consistency strengthened partisan attachments. More broadly, this suggests that my theoretical propositions can be applied to puzzles beyond the question of party breakdown on which this study has focused.

Party breakdowns in Latin America highlight important lessons for students of democratic politics. My explanation of party breakdowns shed light on various areas of interest to scholars of political parties, including the nature of partisan attachments, the internal dynamics of parties, and the competitive strategies of parties. The theory of party breakdown I proposed and tested also spoke to broader debates about the lasting impact of politicians’ responses to economic crises on democratic representation and the role of political conflict in democratic societies. Perhaps most important, however, this study highlighted that partisanship, political parties, and partisan conflict are fundamental features of democratic politics. It is routine and facile to deride the unseemliness of partisan politics, the clubbiness of organized parties, and the thoughtlessness of mass partisanship. Yet, it is because political parties play crucial roles in facilitating democratic representation and accountability that the erosion of partisanship and party breakdown pose not only a theoretical puzzle for political science but also a threat to the quality of Latin American democracies. The fragmentation of party systems, the emergence of unknown and at times antidemocratic politicians, and the ideological vacuousness that characterizes most post-breakdown democracies in Latin America should serve as a warning. There is surely much for democrats to dislike about political parties that are too strong and partisanship that is too stable; but democrats ought also beware the perverse effects of weak parties and widespread partisan independence.
Appendix A

Elite Interviews

Elite interviews were conducted during research trips to Argentina (August 2009, October-November 2009, June 2010) and Venezuela (June 2008, January 2010) as well as in Washington, D.C., Cambridge, MA, and Boston. Political elites were selected via snowball sampling from the governing presidential administration, the leadership of the governing political party, and the leadership of the opposition party, and included both individuals with formal political and strategic roles and external political consultants. The duration of the interviews was generally 60-90 minutes.

In many cases, the goal of the interviews was to elicit the motivations behind the actions of governments and parties. In order to verify the responses offered, subjects were asked not only about their own actions but also about the actions undertaken by others. Moreover, information gathered from interviews was corroborated, where possible, in subsequent interviews with different subjects. No fixed set of questions was used systematically across all the interviews, although a general framework was developed in advance to ensure that interviews cover the same topics. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and English citations have been translated by the author. A complete list of interview subjects and their relevant political role during the period under examination is provided below.
– Asdrúbal Aguiar, Secretary of the Presidency under Caldera, January 18, 2010, Caracas.
– Carlos Blanco, President of COPRE under Pérez, November 30, 2009, Boston.
– Sergio Omar Calderón, Governor of Táchira (COPEI), January 13, 2010, Caracas.
– Luis Christiansen, political consultant, January 20, 2010, Caracas.
– Carlos Corach, Interior Minister under Menem, November 11, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– William Dávila Barrios, Governor of Mérida (AD), January 12, 2010, Caracas.
– Andrés Delich, Education Minister under De la Rúa, November 11, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– Armando Durán, Minister of Foreign Relations under Pérez, June 16, 2008, Caracas.
– Carlos Fara, political consultant, August 19, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– Claudio Fermín, AD presidential candidate, January 26, 2010, Caracas.
– José Antonio Gil Yepes, political consultant, January 15, 2010, Caracas.
– Hugo Haime, political consultant, August 11, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– Alberto Kohan, Secretary of the Presidency under Menem, November 19, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– Carmelo Lauría, Secretary of the Presidency under Pérez, January 12, 2010, Caracas.
– Octavio Lepage, Interim President of Venezuela (AD), January 28, 2010, Caracas.
– José Luis Machinea, Economy Minister under De la Rúa, November 20, 2009, Buenos Aires.
– Fernando Martínez Móttola, Minister of Transportation and Communications under Pérez, January 26, 2010, Caracas.
– Felipe Mujica, MAS, June 18, 2008, Caracas.
– Pedro Paúl Bello, advisor to Caldera and ambassador to Italy, January 21, 2010, Caracas.
– Lewis Pérez, AD, June 17, 2008, Caracas.
– Fredy Rincón, political consultant, June 18, 2008, Caracas.


– Miguel Rodríguez, Minister of Office of Coordination and Planning (CORDIPLAN) under Pérez, February 26, 2010, via phone.


– Antonio Sánchez García, political commentator, June 11, 2008, Caracas.


– Gustavo Tarre Briceño, COPEI, June 17, 2008, Caracas.


– Ramón J. Velásquez, President of Venezuela (AD), June 18, 2008, Caracas.


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