

# Inside Revolutionary Parties: Coalition-Building and Maintenance in Reformist Bolivia

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## Abstract

This article explores the coalitional success of mass-mobilizing, reformist parties once they achieve power. Why are some of these parties more successful than others at managing the potentially conflicting interests of their diverse social bases? We argue that organizational strategies adopted early on matter greatly. The nature of the party's core constituency, together with the linkage strategies undertaken by party leaders in crafting a coalition of support, shapes a party's ability to maintain that coalition over time. When coalitional partners are intensively rather than extensively integrated, they are more likely to compromise over policy disagreements rather than defect when defection becomes attractive. We develop this theory by comparing the evolution of two Bolivian parties: the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement and the Movement Toward Socialism. Against conventional explanations that are overly dependent upon structural factors, our argument stresses the impact of strategic choices in shaping a party's ability to maintain its coalition.

## Keywords

political parties, Latin American politics, coalitions, Bolivia

Reformist political parties with diverse coalitions of support face major challenges when they capture state power. Perhaps the most difficult of these is

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maintaining the support of coalition partners so they can govern effectively and, ultimately, stay in office. Unlike opposition-built coalitions, which typically share some sort of common grievance against incumbent rulers, governing reformist parties must determine who gets what, when, and how, as well as manage at times intensive clashes of interests among partners. These conflicts can cause the disintegration of the coalition. What explains a party's ability to maintain its coalition when confronted with the challenges of governing? Why are some more successful than others at managing the potentially conflicting interests of their diverse social bases, even in the face of crises that threaten economic and political stability?

We demonstrate that certain organizational choices—the linkage strategies undertaken by party leaders in crafting a coalition of political support—shape a party's ability to maintain that coalition when confronted with the challenges of governing. In making this argument, we build on research that recognizes that parties are often comprised of coalitions of stakeholders with divergent preferences and policy positions, making coalition maintenance difficult (e.g., Gibson, 1996, 1997; Kitschelt, 1989; Levitsky, 2003; Panebianco, 1989). We show that successful coalition maintenance can nonetheless occur when a party integrates at least some of its coalitional partners into the party's organization, creating what we call “intensive linkages.” Integration can take several forms, but we highlight two: the inclusion of external groups into the formal bureaucratic party structure, and their inclusion in lists for elective office. Each type of integration creates strong bonds between the party and its coalitional partners. Where intensive linkages are built, we expect external groups to become deeply invested in the party. We contrast intensive with “extensive” linkages, or loose political ties based largely on an exchange of particularistic goods. Intensive linkages with societal groups, we argue, provide better glue than extensive linkages, because their integration as organizational pillars of the party raises the cost of coalition abandonment. This is true even in times of crisis, when incentives to defect are highest. Coalitional partners that are integrated into the party via intensive ties become dependable allies, promoting the over-time maintenance of the coalition.

Our argument is important for several reasons. Theoretically, despite consensus on the importance of parties for aggregating political interests in representative democracies, it is surprising how little we know about their internal life. We know little about internal party structures, their connections with interest groups, and how parties choose to craft broad societal coalitions that can win power and govern (e.g., Bolleyer, 2007; Martínez-Gallardo, 2012). Yet, the existence of parties with multiple (and diverging) sources of societal support is not uncommon. Populist parties are inherently multi-class in nature (Gibson, 1997). So, too, are nationalist parties (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995),

movement-based parties (Anria, 2015; Madrid, 2008), and parties founded to sustain the support of a single individual, as with the United Socialist Party of Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (Ellner, 2013) and the Italian *Forza Italia* Political Movement under Silvio Berlusconi (McDonnell, 2013). These kinds of parties have emerged in newer and older democracies, and especially where established parties have been rejected as viable electoral options (e.g., Mair, 2013; Morgan, 2011). The arguments advanced here provide insight into the organizational factors that contribute to the ability of parties with diverse social bases to maintain their governing coalition.

Additionally, this study on coalition-building adds to our knowledge of party-building processes more generally. Recent work has postulated that successful new parties tap into the organizational apparatus of existing mass organizations, such as unions, religious organizations, social movements, and organized business (e.g., Barndt, 2014; Levitsky, Loxton, & Van Dyck, 2016; Madrid, 2012). The availability of pre-existing organizational networks helps to explain variation in the emergence and strength of new parties (e.g., Kitschelt, 1989; LeBas, 2011; Van Cott, 2005; Vergara, 2011). Our work adds nuance to these findings by highlighting the different strategies utilized by party leaders to build connections with organized interests, and the long-term impact of such strategies on their ability to retain support. Some parties may incorporate existing networks and organizations via extensive, but ultimately superficial ties. Others, however, may choose to integrate certain coalitional partners more intensively into their party's organizational structure. Where the latter occurs, we find that the coalition will be built on more flexible, and therefore more lasting, foundations.

This finding runs parallel to Levitsky's (2003) work, which underscores the durability of parties with loosely routinized norms and rules. These parties can sidestep internal procedures and rapidly enact policies to respond to exogenous crises. Procedural flexibility gives the party adaptability during times of crisis. We, too, underscore the importance of flexibility. Our focus, however, is on day-to-day governance and, specifically, a party's capacity to negotiate with its coalitional partners on policies that run counter to their interests. We find that parties that have formally integrated at least some of their coalitional partners are better poised to overcome the internal disagreements that stymie everyday policymaking. Once those partners become intensively linked to the party, it becomes more costly for them to defect. This finding is counterintuitive. A more diverse set of coalitional partners tends to portend greater internal conflict. Yet, when those partners are intensively integrated, they are more likely to compromise over policy disagreements rather than exercise their "exit" option. Intensively linked coalitional partners become an important resource (Cyr, forthcoming), rather than a roadblock, for the party when it comes to resolving policy disputes.

Substantively, this study speaks to the unique challenges of mass-based “revolutionary” parties or reformist parties explicitly committed to replacing the status quo political order in a democratic context.<sup>1</sup> These parties typically confront a governance dilemma once in office. They must reconcile their goals with the need to sustain solid bases of support. Yet, their support base typically involves a range of actors spanning socio-economic segments and including popular and non-popular social groups—actors that often have conflicting interests over long-term goals (Przeworski & Sprague, 1986). Coalitional maintenance is therefore particularly challenging.

We demonstrate the cogency of our arguments by comparing the coalition-building and -maintenance trajectories of two revolutionary parties in Bolivia: the historic Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR, 1952-1964) and the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS, 2006-present). As we will see below, the MAS has outperformed the MNR in terms of coalitional maintenance at comparable times in power. The MNR emerged from middle-class groups. It later expanded its reach to include labor and the peasantry, but it did so through the creation of extensive rather than intensive linkages. These superficial ties became problematic when the party faced severe internal conflict over an impending economic crisis. Its base of support eroded well before it was ousted from power by a military coup. By contrast, the MAS emerged from peasant groups. Once in power, pronounced internal conflict encouraged the separation of certain groups that had not been intensively integrated, including indigenous confederations in the lowlands and the highlands. Yet, the MAS was built on comparatively stronger foundations. In addition to the support of the country’s largest peasant movements, the party had integrated other popular and non-popular actors—including the middle classes, urban social movements, and certain economic elites—as organizational pillars. Although both parties were marked by deep internal conflict in power, only the MAS has weathered the conflict and maintained, in great part, its governing coalition.

Our analysis of the diverging experiences of MNR and MAS shows that the initial approach to coalition-building shapes in great part the durability of those coalitions over time. In what follows, we begin by justifying the comparison of the historic MNR with the MAS and consider alternative arguments that might explain differential outcomes with respect to coalition maintenance. We then provide our own theory of coalition maintenance. Finally, we compare the coalition-maintenance experiences of the MNR and the MAS to demonstrate the cogency of our theory. We adopt a comparative-historical approach with insights from the literature on historical institutionalism (e.g., Hall & Taylor, 1996; Mahoney & Thelen, 2015; Thelen, 1999). This approach privileges the temporal dimensions of political explanation and pays close attention to timing and sequence (Cyr & Mahoney, 2011). It allows us to demonstrate

that the establishment of certain linkages early on makes coalitional maintenance more or less probable in the face of internal disputes that the coalition will inevitably face.

## Basis for Comparison and Alternative Arguments

A contextualized comparison (Locke & Thelen, 1995) of the historic MNR with the MAS is particularly well suited for uncovering the nature and sequencing of coalition-building and maintenance. This is for several reasons. First, the MAS is regularly cited as the MNR's revolutionary successor (Dunkerley, 2007), and both parties are seen as political expressions of two periods of mass incorporation in the country (Silva, 2009). Comparing their trajectories is therefore warranted as an empirical exercise. More importantly, the comparison allows us to control for potentially confounding, country-level variables such as the challenges of building and sustaining coalitions across ethnic divisions. Differences in historical context, on the other hand, are tackled head on in the analysis that follows. Overall, by adopting a most-similar research design in which the MNR and the MAS vary on the outcome of interest, we isolate the causal mechanisms that we assert drive coalition maintenance success versus failure (see, for example, Seawright & Gerring, 2008).

To be sure, we could compare the failure of the MNR with other, more successful mass-mobilizing parties that emerged during Latin America's first period of mass incorporation (Collier & Collier, 1991). Perhaps the best example is the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) from Mexico, a reformist party that, like the MNR, first anchored its appeals in the Revolution (1910-1917) from which it emerged. It developed enduring linkages to organized popular constituencies, enabling the party to govern for almost seven decades—a clear example of successful coalition maintenance that contrasts nicely with the MNR's failure. Yet, the PRI formed *well after* the Revolution formally came to a close and once its founders were exercising power (Collier & Collier, 1991, pp. 418-419). Its coalition of support came together over a decades-long process, and from a position of hegemonic power in the state. Therefore, while the timing of the PRI aligns better with the MNR's revolutionary process, the sequencing of key events—in particular, coalition formation versus the assumption of power—was reversed, giving the PRI greater political capital with which to cultivate and coopt its partners.

Contemporary comparisons with the MAS, on the other hand, are much more elusive.<sup>2</sup> The MAS is an example of a new, movement-based party—one sponsored directly by a wide array of rural social movements (Anria, 2015). On many counts, however, the party is remarkable. Successful new parties of any type have been rare in Latin America in the last 20 years

(Levitsky et al., 2016). Electorally competitive, movement-based parties like the MAS are even more rare (Kitschelt, 2006). The MAS' ability to transition from a movement to a party to government has been almost unparalleled in the contemporary political landscape (Goldstone, 2003).<sup>3</sup> Its successful transition, together with its endurance in power even as it sharply changed the country's social and political landscape, make the party particularly puzzling in Latin America today (Roberts, 2015, p. 275). Given these comparative challenges, there are great analytical payoffs in comparing Bolivia's two mass-mobilizing, reformist parties.

And, indeed, the historic MNR and MAS have much in common with respect to their revolutionary origins. In 1952, the MNR came to power on the heels of a National Revolution that unleashed a period of radical political change. In 2005, the MAS won national-level power with an ambitious reformist agenda that, for many, represented a continuation of MNR's "uncompleted" revolution (Malloy, 1970). Like the MNR, the MAS assumed power in a quasi-revolutionary context, with a highly mobilized and aggrieved society. Both parties promised to transform the established social and political order by advancing an agenda for the incorporation of excluded and marginalized groups.

The MNR emerged as a product of the anti-oligarchic mobilization that started in the late 1920s, and which intensified in the aftermath of the Chaco War (1932-1936). The party was formed in 1941 by a small group of middle-class nationalist intellectuals who recognized that to successfully attain power, the party had to expand its social base. It therefore allied with the organized working class and peasant organizations. It also sharpened the party's program, moving it significantly to the left. The diagnosis was simple: no real transformations could occur in Bolivia without eroding the power base of the dominant tin-based oligarchy, dubbed *La Rosca*, which controlled tin mines and also wielded significant political power. By the early 1950s, the MNR was committed, first, to overthrowing *La Rosca*, and, second, to an agenda of tin nationalization, universal suffrage, and mass educational reform—measures through which the party intended to weaken the power base of traditional elites and promote the incorporation of marginalized groups into national political life.

After the successful 1952 revolt, the MNR nationalized tin mines, established universal suffrage, expanded mass education, and implemented agrarian reform—all of which helped incorporate into politics large segments of the predominantly rural population. The MNR followed an "extensive" strategy of coalition-building. It relied on programmatic concessions to external groups—concessions that were secured via particularistic alliances with group leaders. This was the case, for example, with land reform, which was instituted in response to pressures from the peasantry. The MNR used the

reform to amass a network of direct ties between regional party leaders and local peasant union leaders. The reforms allocated land to the landless and freed them from a condition of personal servitude. They also helped the MNR achieve the conditional (i.e., policy contingent) support of the peasantry.

These reforms had lasting legacies. Although the structure of the economy changed little after 1952—mining industries remained the dominant source of foreign exchange—important advances toward the incorporation of indigenous groups were set in motion. Those advances, together with related demographic transformations and other political reforms that empowered peasant and indigenous groups, cemented the emergence of the MNR as a mass party directly representing the interests of the marginalized (Klein, 2011, p. 28).

Half a century later, the MAS emerged as the strongest anti-status quo expression of popular-sector groups since Bolivia's "tumultuous" transition to democracy in the early 1980s (Slater & Simmons, 2013, pp. 10-11). Born in 1995 as the political branch of a social movement of coca producers (*cocaleros*) and other organized peasant groups, its *raison d'être* was to achieve the self-representation of those groups in organized politics, while combating, through mass mobilizations, the advance of neoliberal policies. By the early 2000s—when Bolivia was engulfed in a multifaceted crisis that rendered the country ungovernable—the MAS was the only political force capable of channeling popular discontent into an electorally viable alternative. By that time, the alliances sought by the MAS to win power broadened significantly its ideological program, pushing it further left. In 2005, it was committed to hydrocarbon nationalization, agrarian reform, and the establishment of a constituent assembly tasked with completely restructuring the political system.

Like the MNR, the MAS captured national power roughly 10 years after its emergence. Once in office, moreover, the MAS followed a similar reformist agenda: it nationalized oil and gas, proclaimed land reform, and took steps to regain a greater degree of national economic and political autonomy from international actors. Tapping into a historic demand of indigenous groups, the MAS government established a constituent assembly that, in changing the rules of the game, sought to incorporate the country's indigenous population and embrace "plurinationalism." At the center of this project was the idea of expanding rights and representation to indigenous groups, for example, by establishing institutions of self-governance and prior consultation (e.g., Falleti & Riofrancos, n.d.; Tockman, 2014). In short, although the MAS's policy agenda included themes that were not on the MNR's agenda, both parties shared notable similarities in their commitment to transforming the status quo.

It bears mentioning that, despite similarities in the reformist program, the contexts in which the MNR and MAS ruled differ in at least two ways. First, the world-historical context was very different. The MNR assumed power in the midst of the Cold War, when Latin American governments were under severe pressures from the United States to ensure the containment of leftist forces. Additionally, the threat of a coup followed by military rule was ever-present. Both of these factors conditioned the behavior of reformist governments. By contrast, the MAS came to power years after the end of the Cold War, when democracy was the only game in town, and Latin American governments, leftist or otherwise, could pursue greater governing autonomy.

Differences in Bolivia's economic context also merit reflection. Soon after coming to power, the MNR confronted a contracting tin-based economy followed by a balance-of-payment crisis. Those economic constraints exposed the government to strong pressures from international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which imposed austerity measures. By contrast, the MAS assumed power with a booming economy driven by high commodity prices, and when IFIs were increasingly discredited. This encouraged the MAS to pursue greater independence from IFIs and the United States. Sustained economic growth gave the government greater maneuverability in economic decision making.

Second, the MNR and the MAS differed in the composition of their organizational sponsors—the “core constituency,” or the sectors of society most important to their political agenda and resources (Gibson, 1996, p. 7). The MNR had a structurally small, middle-class core. After leading a failed reformist government in 1943-1946,<sup>4</sup> the MNR expanded its social base by crafting a coalition based on ties with different labor leaders, many of whom were strongly influenced by more radical, socialist forces. The resulting coalition was fraught with ideological conflict. While the middle-class core and labor converged on the primary short-term goal of dethroning *La Rosca*, the former was far less radical in its longer-term political objectives.

By contrast, the MAS emerged from a structurally larger core of peasant and indigenous people's movements. It then crafted an even broader social coalition by reaching out to urban groups, middle classes, and labor. Compared with the MNR, the MAS emerged as a party with a more clearly leftist orientation, even though its precise ideological profile remains poorly defined (Harten, 2011, p. 65). As a result of its organizational growth, it was able to absorb broader political commitments. Still, from the beginning, ideological conflict created rifts between indigenous and peasant groups over longer-term goals.<sup>5</sup> Although these tensions were initially weaker than in the MNR, internal conflicts grew more severe after the MAS gained and consolidated state power. Yet, unlike the MNR, it has demonstrated notable success



in coalition maintenance. It has retained the support of key coalitional partners, even in the face of serious internal crises and defections from some indigenous groups that helped its rise to power.

Given these differences between the historic MNR and the MAS, skeptics might argue that the inability of the MNR to retain its coalition is overdetermined. First, the MNR faced a serious economic crisis that the MAS has not (yet) experienced, and instituted economic austerity policies imposed by the United States and IFIs. These policies impeded the MNR's ability to deliver favorable policies and patronage resources, which had been the glue for its coalition. The economic crisis was a major blow for the party, as it raised the stakes of coalition maintenance. Still, as we show below, the MNR chose to pursue largely *extensive* rather than *intensive* ties with its coalitional partners. With most coalitional partners, it formed alliances that were conditional upon the provision of specific policies and/or patronage. When the economic crisis hit and that provision became problematic, the MNR had little recourse with which to retain the support of those individuals. By contrast, where the party pursued more intensive ties with labor leaders, including bringing them into the party's formal bureaucratic structure, it was able to retain coalitional support even in the face of economic crisis. With these select leaders, the costs of defection increased and surpassed the costs of staying with the MNR. Overall, economic crisis created a context conducive to coalition abandonment. The kind of coalition-building strategy the MNR pursued, however, defined the likelihood that abandonment would occur.

Second, skeptics might argue that the rapid disintegration of the MNR's coalition was due to irreconcilable ideological divisions within the coalition. The structurally small middle-class core of the MNR had a different (and less ambitious) revolutionary project from that of its larger peripheral constituencies. Once the middle class achieved its primary demands of weakening *La Rosca*, it abandoned support for the more radical interests of labor, peasants, and other popular groups. Conflict between the party's middle-class core and its more radical partners created a fragile base of support that crumbled when the economic crisis hit. In our view, this argument overly privileges the self-interest of the middle class. When taken to its logical extreme, it implies that having a middle-class core translates *ipso facto* into an ephemeral coalition. But this perspective ignores the role of leadership in defining ideology and, importantly, negotiating agreements with coalitional partners.<sup>6</sup> The MNR's core wished to dampen the influence of its radical partners, not lose their support altogether. In crafting such weak linkages with those partners, however, the latter become inextricably tied to the former.

A party's core constituency does shape the prospects for coalition-building, insofar as it marks the horizons of the possible. For example, left, labor-based

parties historically relied on union ties. Although they expanded their appeal to other class-based organizations, like peasant and middle-class groups, to win elections, these ties generally kept them afar from social groups like organized business. Similarly, strong links between Christian Democratic Parties and Catholic lay organizations have historically deterred these parties from forming ties with Marxist groups. In short, a party's core constituency can shape *with whom* one might pursue ties to form a governing coalition. It does not, however, determine coalition maintenance. A party's core constituency may also impact the degree of conflict of interest among allies. One issue is especially acute for mass-mobilizing parties with reformist agendas: they are not internally homogeneous, and so they typically must harmonize the diverse interests of socially divided groups. While this can lead to strong ideological disagreements and fundamental internal conflict, it does not fully determine coalition maintenance either. Both the MNR and the MAS faced significant degrees of internal conflict, as we see subsequently. The different linkage strategies that they pursued, however, affected their ability to manage that conflict and maintain their coalitional support. We elaborate this argument in the pages that follow.

Finally, critics may argue that a central difference shaping the diverging experiences of the MNR and the MAS relates to the charismatic leadership of Evo Morales and his role as arbiter of the MAS' coalition and the glue that keeps it together. Charismatic leaders—those that command significant legitimacy and internal authority—are widely regarded as a source of cohesiveness, particularly in a party's formative phase (Van Dyck, 2013, pp. 37–43). We are skeptical that charismatic leaders alone can hold a coalition together. When parties do not outgrow these leaders over time, leadership opportunities for second-tier figures are generally reduced. In the absence of channels to exert “voice” within the party and of options for climbing the organizational ladder, charismatic leadership may actually create incentives for defection from frustrated coalitional partners. In short, while one may associate charismatic leadership with greater levels of cohesion, the effects of charismatic leadership on coalition maintenance are not straightforward. They should be studied rather than assumed.

Evo Morales qualifies as a charismatic leader. Rooted in the struggles for the party's foundation, the centrality of his leadership cannot be overstated. He is the dominant figure who helps bind together a wide array of loosely connected movements and organizations, and he inspires devotion among supporters. Additionally, his centrality contrasts sharply with the more disputed leadership of the historic MNR's founding father, Victor Paz Estenssoro, one of several important and foundational party leaders.<sup>7</sup> Yet, although Morales more often than not assumes the role of arbiter-in-chief to resolve internal tensions, his word within the MAS is not always the last word. Moreover, internal conflict

involves great degrees of negotiation and compromise (Silva, n.d.). The party combines top-down charismatic leadership with bottom-up opportunities for “voice,” partly as a result of its intensive linkage strategies. Strong groups recurrently dispute Morales’ authority from below and display a remarkable capacity for autonomous collective action (Anria, 2015). In sum, Morales’ centrality does not translate easily into reduced internal conflict, or into a lower likelihood of “exit.” The defection and splinter of some prominent indigenous groups from the MAS supports this claim. Thus, while charismatic leadership may increase the prospects for coalition maintenance, its presence is not a sufficient condition. We hold that coalition-building strategies provide a more robust explanation.

### **Building and Maintaining the Coalition: A Theory of Coalition Maintenance**

In his study of party strategy, Gibson (1996) argues that parties typically have two distinctive constituencies: a “core” and a “non-core” constituency.<sup>8</sup> The core constituency can provide financial resources, policymaking support, and mobilizational power. Still, it is generally incapable on its own of making the party a viable electoral force, let alone an electoral winner. To compensate for this deficiency, parties make inroads into non-core constituencies, expanding their electoral base (Przeworski & Sprague, 1986). Conservative parties, for example, generally employ segmented strategies to craft winning coalitions (Gibson, 1996). They extract resources from their “vote-poor but resource-rich” core constituency and use them to pursue the vote of “vote-rich but resource-poor” non-core constituencies (Kitschelt, 2000; Luna, 2014). This literature focuses on the linkages between parties and individuals as *voters*, and on the electoral strategies to craft electoral majorities. It says little, however, about (a) how parties develop different organizational linkages with organized interests, and (b) how parties sustain broad-based *governing* coalitions once power is achieved.

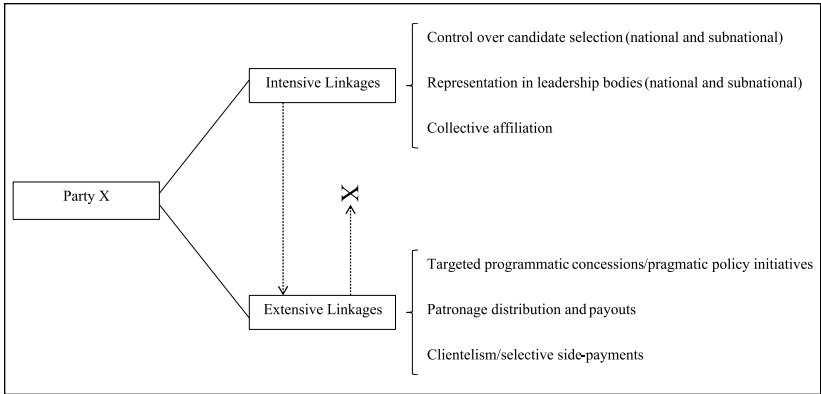
In a different work, Gibson (1997) offers some insight into sustaining governing coalitions by examining the evolution of populist parties in Latin America. He argues that different constituencies perform distinct functions for governing parties. A “central” constituency is important for policymaking purposes, whereas a “peripheral” constituency expands the territorial reach of the party and generates electoral majorities that reproduce power over time (Gibson, 1997, p. 366). This study highlights the territorial component of coalition-building and uncovers the bargaining that occurs to ensure the sustainability of populist coalitions. It tells us less, however, about the political origins of the populist coalition and the attributes of the core constituency,

which might facilitate the sustainability of the coalition. As a result, populist leaders have considerable room to position different constituencies against each other on policy issues while facing few internal constraints. We find that the origins of broad-based coalitions must be taken into account, because they largely condition the strategic choices that leaders can subsequently make.

Indeed, our argument begins with the Weberian-inspired premise that decisions made early on matter in the long run (Panebianco, 1989, p. xiii). Early strategies regarding how to reach out to coalitional partners have an enduring impact on the capacity to maintain that coalition over time. They establish a predominant type of coalition-building that shapes future choices and dynamics. Specifically, two dimensions of the coalition's origins matter: the type of core and the linkage strategies. *Type of core* refers to the ideological and organizational attributes of a party's central group of support. All reformist parties depend disproportionately on the resources of a primary sector of support, be it from specific mass organizations (such as labor unions, social movements, religious associations, or corporations) or specific segments of society (the working or middle classes, or the so-called "popular" sector). The core constituency shapes with whom a party crafts broad-based coalitions. Is the party's core among the working classes? If so, then the party may be limited in terms of its relationship with business.

The core may also shape how coalitions are formed. For example, a core of agro-industrial elites may be hesitant to share decision-making power with peasants. In the interests of attaining power, however, they may be willing to form superficial ties with that sector to mobilize their support. In addition to the party's core, therefore, to understand coalition maintenance it is also important to take into account the distinctive linkage strategies used. *Linkage strategy* refers to how party leaders establish ties with outside groups to mobilize political support and craft a winning coalition. Parties may pursue at least two distinct strategies (Figure 1).

An "extensive" strategy consists of building linkages with independent groups and organizations based on one or more of the following approaches: targeted programmatic concessions, patronage distribution, and/or clientelist exchanges. Programmatic concessions to well-organized groups may foster strong ties with those groups (Roberts, 2015, p. 27); however, those ties can disintegrate quickly if the party is unable to deliver favorable policies. Linkages based on patronage or clientelism entail the distribution of selective payouts or side-payments to particular organizations in exchange for their organizational loyalty (Kitschelt, 2000). As long as targeted benefits are guaranteed, external groups may provide impressive electoral support. But because they are conditional in nature, these linkages are not conducive to developing strong bonds between the party and target social groups. The groups do not have strong



**Figure 1.** Linkage strategies available to reformist parties.

channels of interaction with the party. Their influence is limited. Overall, where “extensive” linkages are predominant, we expect to see shallow coalitional foundations that are highly vulnerable to economic and political constraints. In economically hard times, resources for patronage diminish. Politically, the loss of elections may mean a loss of access to patronage-based resources.

An “intensive” strategy consists of integrating different social actors as organizational pillars of the party. Integration can take place through several mechanisms: the inclusion of external groups into the formal bureaucratic party structure, their inclusion in party lists for elective office at all levels of government (national, departmental, and local), and/or formal, collective affiliation with the party. Integration into the formal party structure implies that the external group has a meaningful voice within the party hierarchy. The group acquires formal inclusion (or representation) into party leadership structures. It also gains *de facto* influence regarding decision-making processes. The inclusion of external groups on the party’s electoral roster involves a systematic effort to include many group members on different lists. This, along with widespread incorporation of civic organizations (and hence their members) as affiliates to the party, also serve as channels for mass political incorporation. Each type of inclusion enhances the group’s leverage in decision making while boosting the party’s support base.

An intensive coalition-building strategy should not be confused with more concerted efforts at party-building. In the latter case, social leaders and their groups become formal *members* of the party. Party membership would, consequently, supersede and subsume ties with the other group. Intensive linkages, on the other hand, create permanent channels of interaction between the party

and its coalitional partners. But these channels, while cementing ties between party and partner, also serve to demarcate the relationship between the two. Intensive linkages forge a deep relationship between the party and the coalitional partner, and even bring the latter into the party's organizational structure. They nonetheless respect the relative autonomy of each. Still, where intensive linkages are forged, we expect to see that external groups become deeply invested in the party, because it is through the party that their influence over policy is maximized. External groups become dependable party allies. Intensive linkages create powerful incentives for the over-time maintenance of the coalition.

In sum, we argue that the characteristics of the party's core, as well as the initial strategies used to build a party's broad-based social coalition, shape the prospects for coalition maintenance over time. Certainly, parties may adopt a mix of coalition-building strategies. On this point, however, we agree with Falletti (2005) that sequencing matters. Parties that adopt intensive strategies first may also deploy extensive strategies with certain social groups, creating a diversified portfolio of coalitional membership. The development of "intensive" linkages is more likely to occur during a party's formative period or in times of deep organizational expansion. In each period, support from heterogeneous, multi-class constituencies is imperative. Intensive linkages bring groups into the coalition, securing their support. Having acquired some degree of voice and influence over party decision making, these groups will likely defend their position of power within the organization. Creating later ties with other groups through more extensive strategies is nonetheless feasible, because they do not threaten to upend the party's internal balance of power. The arrows in Figure 1 reflect this sequential possibility.

Where "extensive" linkages are first established with certain groups, however, it becomes increasingly difficult to re-incorporate those groups via more intensive linkages or to adopt more "intensive" strategies with additional groups. Either approach involves important shifts in the party's internal power distribution. For example, economic crises can make the provision of patronage difficult. Yet, a party will be hard-pressed to strengthen formerly patronage-based ties by integrating those groups more intensively into the party structure. Granting them, for example, greater degrees of control over candidate selection will be difficult, because already-powerful groups within the party apparatus, including the core itself, will resist ceding influence on those points. Once a party adopts extensive linkage strategies, it becomes increasingly difficult to reverse course (see Figure 1).<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, reformist parties confront numerous structural constraints, including economic pressures and potentially disruptive social crises, which can also obstruct coalition maintenance. In our comparative analysis, we do

not discount these factors. Instead, we hold that the different approaches to coalition-building discussed here better explain whether these parties can address such problems in ways that do not break apart the governing coalition. Our comparative analysis of the MNR with the MAS supports the explanatory power of coalitional factors even in the face of analytically similar structural challenges.

The MAS still remains in power at the time of writing. Though it may be early to tell what awaits the MAS in the future, we can assess its progress thus far as indicative of the party's success in coalition maintenance, especially vis-à-vis the MNR. The party has retained the support of many of its coalitional partners into its third administration. At the time of writing, in a context of a deteriorating economy, the MAS still relies on intensively integrated coalitional partners to keep the country governable and advance the party's agenda. Its coalitional partners have privileged access to agenda setting and policymaking more broadly. And most have chosen to retain those privileges rather than abandon the party, despite a decline in the party's electoral strength.<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, the MNR's coalition began to unravel just years after the party attained power. When the economic crisis hit, many (but not all) of the MNR's coalitional partners chose to ally with other parties or groups rather than accept the costs that staying with the MNR implied. By the time the military removed the party from power in 1964, the governing party had been reduced to competing elite factions (Domínguez & Mitchell, 1977, p. 180). These different maintenance outcomes are attributable, we argue, to the coalition-building strategies used by each party to arrive in power.

## **Building the MNR's Coalition**

The MNR's core constituency sat firmly with the fledgling middle class, the party's "political center of gravity" (Mitchell, 1977). The party's past governing experience helped it attract the support of labor and the peasantry (Mitchell, 1977, pp. 23-24). Still, the construction of a multi-class coalition was not easy. For one, labor was suspicious of the MNR's proclaimed revolutionary tendencies (Mitchell, 1977, p. 145). The party's populist message contradicted labor's Marxist and Trotskyist origins. Its more pragmatic, reform-minded core was equally reluctant to ally with labor. Ultimately, labor and party leaders united around their mutual antagonism toward the post-1946 military regime. It cracked down on labor leaders and MNR cadres alike after each protest or disturbance against the government. In so doing, it consolidated their shared hatred of the extant regime (Malloy, 1970, pp. 131-134).

The party's leadership was hesitant to fully integrate the working-class sectors into the party hierarchy. Its National Political Committee (CPN in Spanish) was comprised of middle- and upper-middle-class professionals (Malloy, 1970, p. 137). For these risk-averse but power-hungry cadres, there was no room in the party for union leaders and their affiliates. Consequently, the party decided against crafting more integrative coalitional ties with labor and, eventually, the peasantry (Mitchell, 1977).

Instead, the MNR undertook a more expeditious route to coalition-building. It cultivated labor's support by crafting individual agreements with union leaders. Each leader brought to the party the organizational apparatus he oversaw (Mitchell, 1977, pp. 28-30). These agreements allowed the MNR to shore up support quickly. They also left union leaders with a lot of discretion and negotiating power regarding when or if they would lend their support to the party. Ties with labor, as a result, were highly contingent. By penetrating an extant union structure, the party became an "instrument" of choice by labor leaders (Malloy, 1970, p. 146). Their commitment to the party, however, was never secured.

Extensive ties with labor consolidated before the 1952 revolution. Once the MNR took power, conflicts emerged regarding how much influence labor would have in the new government that emerged. Paz Estenssoro assumed the presidency, and differences between the party's core and labor groups immediately intensified. Just days after the revolution, labor organized a separate, national-level organization under the leadership of Juan Lechín, called the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB). From the outset, the COB rejected the multi-class alliance pursued by the MNR. It believed that such an alliance was impossible given conflicting class interests (Malloy, 1970, p. 175). As the MNR consolidated its predominant place in the political system, the COB consolidated its organizational presence throughout the country.

It bears mentioning that, despite the larger conflict between labor and the party, a few labor leaders, including Lechín himself, viewed the MNR as the best option for securing national political power, especially as the party grew in popularity. They consequently pursued closer ties within the party as a way to promote their individual political ambitions. In contrast to the extensive ties that the MNR sought with labor more generally, these leaders initiated and eventually forged a left-labor faction within the MNR. The faction regularly butted heads with the more reform-minded, middle-class cadres that dominated the CPN. Disagreements between the two groups were mediated by a much smaller group of pragmatists led by Paz Estenssoro (Alexander, 1958).

Once in power, Paz Estenssoro pursued closer ties with the peasantry. There were two reasons for this. First, armed indigenous groups had begun to invade and appropriate unused territory. The MNR instituted land reform to



retroactively legitimate the land-grabs (Mitchell, 1977, p. 46). Second, Paz realized that formal support with peasant federations could offset the influence that Lechín's left-labor faction had begun to wield within the party's hierarchy. He therefore used land reform initiatives to solidify the support of peasants. As with labor groups, Siles chose an extensive approach to coalition-building. Rather than incentivize formal affiliation with the party, the party sent prominent regional MNR figures to sponsor the creation of local, independent *sindicatos*, or peasant unions. Quickly, the party amassed a network of direct, vertical ties between each leader and the *sindicato* heads. Peasant support for the party was therefore a function of the mutually dependent relationship forged between those individuals (Dandler, 1976, pp. 341-352).

The MNR quickly grew from a small, cadre-based party with a middle-class core into a large, multi-class party with an extensive territorial structure based on the individual ties created with labor and the peasants. With the support of labor and peasant leaders, the MNR consolidated its power at the national level, governing hegemonically for 12 years (Cyr, 2015). Still, the factors that enabled the party's rapid ascendancy to power made its sustainability more difficult. For one, the party's middle-class core viewed its coalitional partners with suspicion and unease. Party moderates understood that lower class support was necessary for the MNR to achieve power. They did not, however, want to share power with them. Moreover, the party privileged extensive over intensive ties with labor and the peasantry. This allowed for rapid coalition construction, but it also meant that each sector's commitment to the party was weak and highly contingent.

## **Coalition Maintenance in the Face of Crisis**

Although MNR dominated national politics for three successive terms in executive office, its near hegemonic control obscured serious internal problems. With each presidency, the party's coalitional ties weakened. While relying heavily on labor during Paz Estenssoro's first term, it shifted quickly to the peasantry in the second. By the party's third term in office, links to the peasantry had largely disintegrated and even support from its middle-class core was seriously in question. In 1964, the party was overthrown in a bloodless coup.

The construction of the MNR's coalition happened quickly and extensively. Consequently, the ties that bound local labor branches and peasant *sindicatos* to the party were superficial and conditional upon the provision of patronage or targeted policies of interest to them. From its onset in power, the party induced participation, discipline, and conformity by offering its partners rewards, including money, resources, and jobs (Mitchell, 1977, p. 6). A "vast

system of patronage” sustained the party’s vertical ties with local union and *sindicato* leaders (Dandler, 1976, p. 344). Additionally, as a way to assuage the conflicting interests of its coalitional partners, the party allotted certain policy influence to each in the area that most affected it. Labor leaders acquired influence over infrastructural and economic development. Peasant leaders were granted positions of power in the ministry of peasant affairs and agrarian reform offices (Dandler, 1976, pp. 343-344). Outside of their policy purview, however, each sector had little say. This “parceling out” approach (Mitchell, 1977, p. 49) enabled the MNR to manage its coalition by delimiting the influence of each independently powerful sector. It also meant that coalitional support remained dependent upon the provision of patronage and/or the adoption of measures that reflected a partner’s interests.

During MNR’s first term in office (1952-1956), labor leaders were chosen to preside over three ministries: the Ministry of Mines; the Ministry of Labor; and the Ministry of Public Works. In a practice called *cogobierno* (co-government), the MNR “loaned” governmental authority to the leaders of three powerful labor federations. This governing influence did not, however, translate into lasting influence within the party. Instead, it reflected the MNR’s practice of providing “fragments of governmental power” to its coalitional partners while “supplying the party label” in name only (Mitchell, 1977, pp. 6-7).

The vulnerabilities of this approach to coalition maintenance became apparent when a serious economic crisis hit during the second MNR government (1956-1960), under the leadership of Hernán Siles Suazo. The crisis induced calls from the United States and the IMF for the MNR to reverse its labor-friendly policies (Crabtree, 2013, p. 273)—calls that Siles heeded. The 1956 Stabilization Plan was not entirely unwelcome by the MNR government. Co-government with labor had become problematic for the party’s middle-class core (Hennessy, 1964, p. 198). By implementing the 1956 plan, Siles weakened labor’s problematic grip over certain policy areas while rebuilding ties with its core constituency (Mitchell, 1977, p. 7).

In effect, the 1956 Stabilization Plan represented a “brutal blow” to labor (Ibáñez, 1998, p. 381). The austerity measures therein precluded the provision of patronage. Consequently, the ties that bound many labor groups to the party were abruptly broken. The effect was immediate. Much of labor abandoned the MNR to pursue relationships with other, smaller parties including the Communist Party (PC, in Spanish), the Revolutionary Worker’s Party (POR), and even the more conservative Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB; García, 1966, p. 612).

Siles also replaced Juan Lechín and other labor leaders in the party’s executive committee with union and peasant leaders who were loyal to him (Alexander, 1958, pp. 52-54). Nonetheless, these leaders chose to stay with

the party rather than abandon it along with the rest of labor. The MNR had negotiated a longer-term arrangement with them based on a promise of continued influence in future administrations, and even the presidential candidacy for Lechín in a later term. Given these terms, the “clear preference” for these leaders was to stay with the party (Ibáñez, 1998, p. 382). This was true despite the adoption of an economic plan that stripped them of their immediate positions of power within the party. In all, the adoption of the 1956 Stabilization Plan greatly weakened labor as a factional competitor in the MNR.

To compensate for the loss of labor as a coalitional partner, the MNR tapped into the party’s peasant *sindicato* networks, mobilizing their support for the stabilization plan (Mitchell, 1977, pp. 67-73). This strategy made pragmatic sense: the peasantry was largely unaffected by monetary policy since they existed outside of the money economy (Hennessy, 1964, pp. 199). Yet, the party did not pursue a more integrative strategy for corraling its support. Instead, Siles increased investments in the armed forces. He relied upon the military to mobilize the peasantry while also quelling union protests.

Unfortunately for Siles, the strategies that distanced most labor groups from the party also weakened MNR’s ties with the peasantry. By relying on the military to mobilize peasants, the party unwittingly helped the military strengthen its own ties to the sector at the expense of its relationship with the party. The peasantry eventually consolidated its partnership with the military in the *Pacto Militar-Campesino*, which emerged after the 1964 overthrow of the MNR. Therefore, under Siles, party ties with labor *and* the peasantry were severely weakened. Without more broad-based support, the MNR leadership became mired in intense, elite-based conflicts (Domínguez & Mitchell, 1977, p. 180). The CPN converted into a “council of factions” that rarely met after 1960 (Mitchell, 1977, p. 86).

The MNR’s coalition, based as it was largely on self-interest and rewards provisions, was very fragile. A “borrowed” party structure built on shallow ties was not amenable to exacting sacrifice. Having retained an independent infrastructure throughout the country, labor and the peasantry continued to operate even after breaking from the MNR. They could look for new coalition partners, as labor did with other parties and the peasantry did with the military. Neither group felt any obligation to the party once it broke its patronage-based arrangement (Mitchell, 1977, p. 86). This was true even though the peasantry was only minimally affected by the party’s controversial stabilization plan.

The economic crisis produced a context that was amenable to coalition abandonment. Defection occurred, ultimately, because the ties between coalitional partners and the party were extensive, and therefore fragile, in nature. We can draw this conclusion because certain labor leaders stayed

with the party despite the 1956 Stabilization Plan. Unlike the rest of labor, these leaders were intensively tied to the party. Lechín and others from the mining sector had forged a left-labor faction within the party. They acquired broader policy influence and formal positions in the party's bureaucracy. Although this meant conflict with the party's middle-class core, it also meant that these leaders tied their fates to that of the party. Lechín, as founder of the COB, was prominent enough to form his own political party. Yet, the MNR was able to retain his support thanks to a promise to restore his influence within the party—and even make him a presidential candidate—once the crisis had been contained. Lechín finally left the MNR to form his own political party in 1964, a full 8 years after the Stabilization Plan. He did so only because the MNR failed to fulfill its promise (Ibáñez, 1998, p. 382).

Ultimately, the failure of the MNR to maintain its coalition reflects the theoretical expectations developed above. The MNR lost the support of those partners with which it had developed broadly extensive ties when coalition abandonment became an attractive possibility. Where it had forged more intensive ties, as with Juan Lechín, the party had greater capacity to negotiate and ultimately retain the partner's support. The type of linkages that the party forged largely defined the extent to which the costs of defection outweighed the benefits of staying.

## Building the MAS' Coalition

The MAS stands out for its genesis in a highly organized and disciplined social movement of coca producers (Grisaffi, 2013; Van Cott, 2005). United against the criminalization of coca triggered by the U.S.-sponsored drug war, *cocaleros* hatched the idea of building a “political instrument” through which they could participate in elections without forming alliances with the existing parties.<sup>11</sup> The resulting instrument engaged in electoral politics at the local level, making rapid gains, specifically in the coca-growing Chapare (Ballivián, 2003; Ortuste, 2000, pp. 83-113). Early electoral successes in the Chapare helped to consolidate *cocaleros* as the leading group within the party's core constituency. Having established a base in the Chapare, the challenge for the MAS was to broaden its appeal by making inroads into non-core constituencies (Anria, 2013, p. 27; Madrid, 2012).

The mass mobilizations that started in 2000 with the Water War contributed to this process of organizational growth. The MAS used the upheaval to its advantage and adopted a “supraclass strategy” of electoral recruitment (Przeworski & Sprague, 1986, p. 70). The party turned to non-core constituencies to acquire an electoral majority. Initially, the MAS sought to include left-leaning and nationalist intellectuals, as well as urban indigenous and

non-indigenous middle classes, for example, by naming first José Antonio Quiroga and then Antonio Peredo as vice presidential candidates in 2002.<sup>12</sup> Forging “extensive” linkages with individuals was not, however, the only component of its repertoire.

The MAS also followed strategies that clearly align with what we call “intensive” linkages. It did so, for example, by opening up party lists to local leaders who ran for electoral office under the MAS ticket at three levels of government (national, departmental, and local; Anria, 2016b; Harten, 2011, p. 135). This strategy allowed the MAS to “benefit from specific local dynamics” in the realm of candidate selection (Harten, 2011, p. 131), helping to ensure massive turnout for the party’s candidates. Such a strategy, in turn, led to the large-scale arrival of representatives nominated by popular-sector groups (Zegada & Komadina, 2014, p. 57), and their increased ability to shape party platforms and internal decision-making processes (Anria, 2016a). These groups included indigenous-peasant unions, cooperative miners, transport unions, and urban workers in Bolivia’s large “informal” sector. These intensive linkage strategies promoted the political support of these local organizations and created incentives to develop close ties between local elites and the party, as the latter became the common entity to articulate their interests at the subnational and national levels of political representation (e.g., Anria, 2015, pp. 64-71; Crabtree, 2013, p. 285; Zuazo, 2008, pp. 36-41). Although the MAS did not win the presidency in 2002, it accrued significant institutional positions that served as a power base for future elections.

Mobilizations continued between 2003 and 2005, leading to the overthrow of two presidents (Silva, 2009, pp. 132-41). The MAS used the continued upheaval to further expand support. By incorporating the demands of the mobilized groups, the MAS shifted the prevailing balance of social forces to their advantage (Webber, 2010, pp. 51-70), winning the 2005 presidential election. By then, however, the MAS had undergone major ideological and organizational adjustments. It not only incorporated the demands of mobilized groups into its electoral campaign but also crafted alliances with a wide array of rural and urban popular organizations. Like in the case of the MNR, some of these, particularly urban-popular groups, exchanged loyalty for more particularistic benefits, such as positions of medium and/or low importance within the government. Other groups, predominantly in rural areas, named their leaders as MAS candidates, cementing stronger and more “intensive” linkages with the MAS (Anria, 2015).

Of all the movements and organizations that brought the MAS to power, the party has maintained strongest links to the *cocaleros* in the Chapare

(Grisaffi, 2013), who, by virtue of their role as founders of the party, are at the top of the party's hierarchy. Morales remains the president of the Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba, the overarching union of coca growers. He travels frequently to participate in meetings, reaffirm his leadership, and collect valuable information from the rank and file. Sometimes decisions emanating from the party's central leadership create tensions between the party in office and organizations that have been intensively integrated, in particular when the latter feel that their interests are not sufficiently represented by higher-level authorities. Still, Morales commands overwhelming authority among the rank and file in the Chapare. He and the party enjoy strikingly high levels of support in that region.<sup>13</sup> *Dirigentes*—local leaders who organize communication between party operatives and grassroots activists—play a key role in shielding Morales from criticism. When unpopular policies come from the party's central leadership, *dirigentes* blame ministers and representatives, deflecting responsibility from Morales. Examples of these policies include the *Gasolinazo* of 2010,<sup>14</sup> and, paradoxically, Morales' coca policy (Farthing & Kohl, 2010, p. 205; Grisaffi, 2013, p. 60).<sup>15</sup>

In each case, the *dirigentes* encountered popular resistance. Still, the MAS maintained strong connections to its core constituency, thanks to the permanent interactions and degrees of cooperation that underpin their relationship (Anria, 2015). This is true despite strong pressures from the core to keep the party leadership accountable to its social bases, a pattern that is closely associated with the party's social-movement origins.

Like the MNR, the MAS also built "extensive" linkages. For example, it relied upon some degree of patronage distribution in the executive branch and service provision to urban-popular organizations to cultivate electoral support (Anria, 2013, pp. 33-35). Unlike the MNR, however, the MAS also pursued a predominantly "intensive" linkage strategy based on the inclusion of leaders of external groups on party candidate lists at all three levels of government. This mixed or diversified strategy allowed the MAS to grow its base of support and ensure some degree of governability once in power. It also led to the configuration of a highly heterogeneous governing coalition. Furthermore, it generated internal conflict among coalitional partners, which, as with the MNR, viewed each other with suspicion and unease. As we will see, internal conflict, particularly over control of economic and political resources and policy, would become frequent, especially in Morales' second term (Anria, 2015; UNIR, 2012). Because the MAS developed extensive but also more intensive ties, however, its capacity to manage those tensions and preserve the integrity of its coalition was greater than in the case of the MNR.

## Maintaining the MAS' Coalition

According to Bolivia's Vice President, the MAS in power can best be described as a "flexible and negotiated coalition of grassroots actors."<sup>16</sup> The support of certain groups remains contingent, and the breadth of the coalition might expand and contract as a function of the conjuncture and in response to the policies adopted. The party is backed, however, by a core whose commitment to the party's goals is strong, and by certain, more intensive ties with other strong social groups that, unlike in the case of the MNR, conceived of the MAS as a vehicle to articulate their interests at the national and subnational levels of representation. While to some extent those organizations compromised their autonomy to benefit from the MAS's national success, they have maintained a separate identity and have not been neutralized (Alberti, 2016b, pp. 67-9). This will become evident when we examine the dynamics of policymaking within the MAS.

The MAS' intensively integrated partners play an important policymaking role by introducing new issues, agenda items, and priorities to the public agenda (Silva, n.d.). However, the influence of those groups on national policymaking varies significantly by policy area, and patterns of bottom-up influence can be best described as "contentious bargaining"—a power game between the MAS and organized social groups where in the absence of strong national and local party structures as "transmission belts" results in a highly interactive and negotiated pattern of policymaking, one that is also marked by high degrees of contestation (Anria, 2015, p. 48; 2016a; also Silva, n.d.). Thus, groups with conflicting views over land redistribution struggle to control and shape agrarian policymaking, groups with competing views on mining activity fight to control and shape mining policymaking, and so on. Both the resolution of these disputes and the resulting policy proposals developed in those areas, which involve negotiations and compromise, generally reflect the balance of power between coalitional partners. For example, whereas miners and peasants in the highlands have a lot of weight in shaping policies that they care about, indigenous groups and environmentalist movements in the eastern lowlands receive less attention.

To some extent, the political support from many groups is contingent on the MAS's continued capacity to deliver concrete policies that are aligned with their interests. However, the continued selection of their leaders to the party candidate lists—a result of an early strategy of "intensive" linkages—fostered the creation of strong ties built around mutual dependence, or tying their fates to one another. Unlike the case of the MNR, this created a crucial mechanism for political representation and participation (or "voice") in policymaking for intensively linked social groups, compelling them to articulate their demands within the MAS and raising the costs of coalition abandonment.

This has ensured a more substantive representation of their interests, as is evident in policies that benefit each group directly (for example, representatives nominated by indigenous-peasant unions have brought to the floor and helped shape key agrarian policies, like the 2010 Law of the Rights of Mother Earth and the 2011 Law of Productive Revolution). At times, it has also led to increased internal conflict, as well as challenges to the MAS's ability to survive in office, some of which come from the mobilization of the party's own coalitional partners.

Such challenges are best explained through examples. The *gasolinazo* of December 2010 is relevant because it represented an acute social crisis that, emerging from real fiscal pressures, threatened to undermine the MAS. Specifically, Morales' decision to cancel fuel subsidies caused gasoline prices to skyrocket, provoking general concern among the population about prices and the availability of basic goods, as well as uncertainty about future adjustment policies.<sup>17</sup> Though the MAS' core defended the policy externally,<sup>18</sup> price increases generated sharp tensions between leaders and the rank and file, as the household economies of the latter were hurt.<sup>19</sup> *Dirigentes* were unable to contain these tensions, causing groups in the MAS' coalition to mobilize autonomously, ultimately forcing Morales to reverse the policy.

It would be inaccurate to say that coca growers—the party's core—forced the government to back down on their own. Ending the subsidy also affected the interests of the peasant groups, mine workers' cooperatives, and neighborhood associations that were tied to the party through "intensive" linkages. When these groups mobilized to oppose the policy, it was clear that not reversing it could lead to de-stabilization given that mobilizations called for either the removal of the subsidy or Morales stepping down from power. "Although we opposed the policy we did not want to split with the government," commented an MAS Senator and cooperative mineworker, "for now we are MAS representatives [in Congress], we are full-fledged *masistas*."<sup>20</sup> Leaving the coalition would have been costly. In Villca's words, from the perspective of cooperative miners it would have meant, "losing the ability to shape the agenda from within" Congress. From the perspective of the MAS government, losing key partners would have meant losing a majority in Congress when it was most needed—at the moment of passing key policies imposed by the country's new constitution. In the end, confronted with increasing pressures from coalitional partners in the streets and in Congress, the government reversed the decision and the coalition's make-up remained unaltered. It is true that the policy concession that solved the conflict was possible at least partly due to a favorable economic context, even if by that time fuel subsidies were an onerous burden. But it is also true that the kinds of linkages established by the MAS, or *how* social actors were incorporated



organizationally, provided strong glue and incentives for coalition maintenance in a highly destabilizing moment.<sup>21</sup>

The example also demonstrates the MAS does not rely exclusively on “extensive” linkages. Reversing the *gasolinazo* meant that the government lost an important revenue stream for potential future patronage payouts. If the coalition were based on this kind of tie exclusively, then we would expect certain coalition partners to have bowed out. Yet, strong critics of the policy within the coalition, as in the example above, remained committed to staying with the MAS, even as they mobilized autonomously against the government.

Ultimately, the *gasolinazo* revealed the challenges of governing a country while preserving a broad-based coalition. While the crisis affected the relationship between the MAS and important popular movements in its own camp, internal strain did not threaten the viability of the coalition as a whole. The MAS retained the support of key coalitional partners. This pattern of contestation, negotiation, and compromise has become regularized (e.g., Silva, n.d.). Establishing meaningful channels for participation and representation in decision making—a result of establishing “intensive” ties with a wide array of popular groups—provides strong incentives for those groups to keep supporting the MAS and thereby maintain the coalition.

## Conclusions

The MNR and the MAS are two mass-mobilizing, reformist parties that sought to attain and maintain power via the construction of broad-based coalitions of support. They espoused similar revolutionary projects, faced an entrenched political elite that they sought to replace, and confronted economic and/or social problems that threatened to destabilize their diverse set of coalitional partners. The MAS’ broad-based coalition remains strong after almost 10 years in power. At a similar point in the MNR’s governing trajectory, the party was struggling to retain any of its coalitional partners. By the end of the 1950s, much of labor had left the party to ally with other parties. The peasants formed a new pact with the military. By 1964, even the middle classes—the party’s core constituency—had largely abandoned the party. A military coup culminated the process by which a formerly hegemonic party in power was reduced to inter-elite squabbles. With respect to coalition maintenance, the MAS has clearly outperformed its revolutionary predecessor.

What explains the MAS’ continued success and the historic MNR’s failures in maintaining its coalition of support? This article has argued that the linkage strategies used by the historic MNR and the MAS to establish their broad social coalitions, in combination with the characteristics of the party’s core, shaped how each party negotiated the challenges of exercising power

while also retaining the support of (much of) its broad-based coalition. Coalition-building strategies matter greatly. In the case of the MNR, the party's middle class and more pragmatic core was reluctant to share power with labor or the peasantry in the party; yet, the party needed their support to govern. Consequently, the MNR established largely extensive ties with its coalitional partners—a move that, down the road, severely limited the party's ability to negotiate with them when economic crisis hit and the costs of coalitional abandonment decreased.

The MAS, alternatively, pursued more intensive, power-sharing ties with many of coalitional partners. Unlike the MNR, the MAS' core realized that to attain national power and ensure the support of external groups it needed to meaningfully integrate them. They chose, therefore, to give those groups some degree of organizational recognition including, for instance, influence on internal decision-making processes. The party shaped their options for gaining national-level representation and provided them with important channels for agenda-setting and decision making from within. In sum, the MAS tied their political fates to that of the party. Consequently, the party can negotiate with those coalitional partners, imposing at times high costs without threatening the overall viability of the coalition. In both cases, how the coalition was crafted conditioned the capacity of each party to maintain its coalition over time. Our analysis shows that we can learn a lot about the fates of reformist parties in power by analyzing the strategies they utilized to achieve power in the first place.

Although our focus has been on the more immediate process of coalition-building, our analysis also sheds light on the role that linkage strategies can play in influencing successful party-building more generally, which is high on the agenda of comparative parties (Levitsky et al., 2016). Most existing literature emphasizes the availability of pre-existing organizational networks to explain variation in the emergence and strength of new parties. Our study suggests that having an organizational network to exploit is important for understanding successful party emergence, but it may not be sufficient to explain larger-picture outcomes like their ability to sustain support in office and even their long-term organizational trajectories. The strategies parties use to tap into those resources create enduring legacies. The nature of the linkages pursued at early stages of party development can shape over-time relationships with groups down the road. In short, patterns of integration of existing organizational resources can shape the texture and outcomes of party politics. This is a potentially rewarding area for further research—one that deserves much more systematic analysis moving forward.

Finally, the theoretical argument developed here can help to explain why some mass-mobilizing parties are more effective than others at weathering

the challenges of exercising power. It should travel to other instances of reformist parties, explaining the success (or failure) of a vast range of mass-mobilizing parties in power, from Venezuela's PSUV, to the nationalist parties of Mali (Vengroff, 1993), to the new populist parties of Western Europe, such as Syriza in Greece (Stavrakakis, 2015). The success or failure of these parties after they gain power is not just a function of smart policy decisions made by party leaders in the face of economic or social challenges, or a reflection of responses to contextual conditions. It is also a product of how leaders (and their parties) achieved power to begin with, and of the organizational strategies they use to share power with coalitional partners.

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### Notes

1. We use the terms "revolutionary" and "reformist" interchangeably. We also refer exclusively to "mass-mobilizing" revolutionary parties, that is, those revolutionary parties that mobilize masses rather than smaller, or cadre, revolutionary parties.
2. One might wish to compare the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) to other leftist parties, including Hugo Chávez's party in Venezuela, the *Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* (PSUV), or the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT) of Brazil. Yet, serious differences mark each party's formative phase and experience prior to capturing state power. Chávez formed the PSUV almost 10 years after he became president. It represented the consolidation of his rule. The PT, alternatively, formed 20 years before it won the presidency. Although mass-mobilizing like the MAS, the PT had 20 years to build its coalition before assuming state control, and it only did so after seriously moderating its (originally reformist) stance (Hunter, 2010).

3. PODEMOS, in Spain, is comparable to the MAS in its origins and early electoral success. However, because the party is only a few years old and has not attained national-level power, it is too early to make a valid comparison.
4. The Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR) allied with the military to upset the economic and political dominance of *La Rosca*.
5. For example, conflict was present from the outset over issues of land redistribution, indigenous representation, indigenous autonomies (Schavelzon, 2012), and economic policy, including hydrocarbon nationalizations (Koivumaeki, 2015, pp. 160-65).
6. We thank Evelyne Huber for her insight on this point.
7. These include Hernán Siles Suazo, who was more moderate in his ideological stance, and Juan Lechín, labor leader and head of the party's leftist wing.
8. Although his study focuses on conservative parties, the conceptual distinction between core and non-core constituencies is amenable to the study of other types of parties that must expand their electoral base to successfully contest elections.
9. Many parties adopt more inclusive candidate selection procedures as a way of promoting internal democracy. However, for the most part, those reforms tend to give greater weight to *individual* members rather than organized social constituencies.
10. Morales was re-elected for a third time with an overwhelming majority in October 2014, and the MAS captured a majority in Congress. Quickly thereafter, the electoral strength of the MAS began to decline. In the subnational elections of April 2015, it lost mayoral races in the country's major cities and gubernatorial races in departments generally considered easy wins for the party. In addition, a referendum to decide whether to modify the constitution to extend term limits was held on February 21, 2016, and the "no" vote won by a thin margin (51% vs. 49%). This electoral decline is noteworthy. Still, even in its worst electoral performance, the MAS received 49% percent of the vote. More importantly for our argument, however, the MAS has retained the support of the bulk of the intensively integrated groups.
11. The "political instrument" was created on the idea of achieving the "self-representation" of popular groups (Interview with Filemón Escóbar, founding member of the MAS, 26 March 2013). For a discussion, see (Anria, 2013, p. 23).
12. Quiroga declined Morales' invitation, asserting personal reasons (interview with José A. Quiroga, former MAS candidate for the Office of the Vice Presidency, July 18, 2008). Morales then selected Antonio Peredo, a member of Bolivia's Communist Party (PCB) (interview with Antonio Peredo, August 21, 2008).
13. For example, in the 2009 presidential election the MAS received 96.34% of their vote, and in the 2010 municipal election it received 100% of their vote. See, also, Alberti (2016a).
14. When asked about the increment of fuel prices in 2010, Segundina Orellana commented: "The ministers made a mistake, they fooled the president." Interviews with Orellana, (President, Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba, March 18, 2013). The underlying assumption is that ministers, especially those who do not come from the ranks of a trusted social organization, are not fully committed to the MAS and are instead driven by personal motivations.

15. The policy eliminates forced eradication of coca crops but sets a restriction on the amount of coca that farmers can legally grow. It also replaces the old regime of police and military repression with a community-led form of “social control” (Farthing & Kohl, 2010, p. 205).
16. Interview with Álvaro García Linera, Bolivia’s Vice President, 4 May 2013.
17. Bolivia spends about US\$1 billion per year on fuel subsidies. As Bolivia’s minister of economy, Luis Arce Catacora commented that “removing the subsidy was a completely anti-popular measure, and we knew it, but it was absolutely necessary for the health of our economy. One merit of the government was to put the issue on the political agenda” (Interview, La Paz, May 3, 2013).
18. Interviews with Segundina Orellana (President, Coordinator for the Women of the Tropic [Cocamtrop]; Secretary General, Six Federations of the Tropic of Cochabamba. Villa Tunari, Bolivia, March 18, 2013), Omar Claros (Secretary General, Six Federations of the Tropic of Cochabamba. Villa Tunari, Bolivia, March 18, 2013), and Rodolfo Machaca (Executive Secretary, CSUTCB. La Paz, Bolivia, January 17, 2013).
19. Other interviewees, who requested anonymity, commented that because the policy led to an increase in gasoline prices, a key input for the production of cocaine, groups as central as coca growers had a clear incentive to reject it.
20. Interview with Andrés Vilca, MAS representative from Potosí and former president of FENCOMIN (National Federation of Mining Cooperatives), La Paz, August 30, 2012.
21. Emerging during the 2014 economic slowdown, mass protests in Potosí, a traditional bastion of MAS support, exhibit analytically similar dynamics. Sustained mass mobilizations—which demanded increased government spending in infrastructure and threatened to undermine the MAS—included indigenous groups, neighborhood associations, and both cooperative and unionized miners, which are important actors in the MAS coalition. A poor resolution to this conflict weakened the MAS electorally in Potosí (as is evident by the weak results in the February 2016 referendum), but did not provoke the departure of these groups from the MAS or threaten the coalition. In fact, the MAS performed very strongly in rural areas and mining centers.

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