



STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Coalition Building and Social Movements

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**Social Movement Partyism:
Collective Action and Oppositional Political Parties***Paul Almeida*

This chapter examines coalitions between oppositional political parties and social movements. I draw on evidence from recent trends in Latin American politics from Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Uruguay, emphasizing the forces driving oppositional political parties into alliances with social movements and how the alliances adopt extraparliamentary strategies of seeking political influence. In particular, the region's recent democratization and the ongoing economic threats associated with neoliberal policies forge the movement-party relationship. A sustained and potent coalition between a political party and social movements typically emerges when a majority of public opinion opposes economic liberalization policies and membership overlap occurs between oppositional political parties and social movement-type organizations.

With the third wave of democratization engulfing major portions of Latin America and the developing world between the late 1970s and early 2000s (Diamond 1999; Markoff 1996), the political context has been fundamentally altered for excluded social groups and the potential for political challenge from below (Almeida and Johnston 2006). Scholarly observers in the 1980s and 1990s viewed this initial democratization trend and "recomposition of state-popular sector links" (Chalmers et al. 1997, 554) as making political parties more central to political life while street politics and social movement activity would become less salient as political struggles moved into the formal political system. However, in the past fifteen years, with deepening democratization, Latin America exploded in a wave of protest, with political parties playing an increasingly active and unexpectedly contentious role.

In Colombia, the ascendancy of the Polo Democrático Alternativo oppositional political party eroded the dominance of the Conservative and Liberal parties in national and local politics after the 2006 parliamentary elections. The Polo Democrático Alternativo aligned with social movements on the streets against government plans to privatize social security, petroleum, and telecommunications. In Peru, a renovated nationalist party, Unión por el Perú, appeared on the political scene in 2005. It was backed by peasants and labor unions opposing a free trade agreement with the United States. The Unión por el Perú won in the first round of presidential voting (but lost in the second round) and took nearly 40 percent of oppositional seats in the national Congress (*El Comercio* 2006, 1). In Argentina, the small leftist political parties El Partido Obrero, El Partido Comunista Revolucionario, and the Partido Comunista sponsor part of the unemployed workers' movement (Alcañiz and Scheier 2007; Oviedo 2001), while in Costa Rica, legislative representatives of the Partido Acción Ciudadana oppositional political party actively participate in massive street demonstrations against free trade treaties (*Diario Latino* 2007).

Many other cases of coalitions between social movements and oppositional political parties abound on the continent such as La Causa Я in Venezuela and the Workers' Party in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter identifies the conditions that bring oppositional political parties and social movements together in a sustained coalition and the benefits that each group brings to such an alliance.

Democratization and Neoliberalism: Opportunities and Threats

Popular mobilization can be driven by opportunities (gaining new advantages), threats (losing existing benefits and resources), or a combination of the two (Tilly 1978; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Recent theoretical and empirical work also predicts or demonstrates that opportunities and threats facilitate coalition formation between movement groups (Staggenborg 1986). Political and economic threats of unwanted public policies seem to be an especially powerful force pushing oppositional coalitions together (McCammon and Campbell 2002; Van Dyke 2003a), as are more generalized economic crises (Silver 2003). For the purposes of the present study, I define democratization as the central political opportunity shaping the social infrastructure (McCarthy 1987) in Latin America for popular contention and neoliberal policies as the core set of economic threats encouraging mobilization. Democratization and neoliberalism combined, or what Robinson (2006, 97) calls "market democracy," provide the political-economic setting in which social movement-oppositional political party coalitions comes into existence.

Opportunities of Democratization

Democratization of entire countries or world regions creates systemwide opportunities for collective actors (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). Democratization efforts are critical to civil society because they generate at least three of the core political opportunities repeatedly found in the political process literature, namely institutional access, relaxation in state repression, and influential allies (McAdam 1996). Since the 1980s, Latin America has undergone its most extensive wave of democratization, replacing brutal military governments, bureaucratic authoritarian regimes, and personal dictatorships with a system of competitive multiparty elections (Mainwaring and Hagopian 2005). Tilly (1978, 167) notes that a competitive electoral system allows for the establishment of all kinds of civic associations. This is because episodes of political liberalization provide institutional access to more civil society organizations (Almeida 2008). Under such conditions, the state tolerates the existence of more groups and gives many of them legal recognition to operate inside its territorial boundaries (Yashar 2005). Hence, with democratization there is a rise in the number and variety of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that may be partially appropriated for collective action campaigns.

A relaxation in state repression makes it easier for oppositional groups to forge alliances and participate in joint action. For example, in a study of 281 austerity protest campaigns in Latin America between 1995 and 2001 (under democracy), it was found that over 40 percent of the campaigns involved at least two distinct challengers (Almeida 2007). Most important for the purposes of this study, the democratization process also encourages the emergence of influential allies aligned with popular movements.

Influential allies such as celebrities, lawyers, scientists, foundations, religious institutions, and transnational advocacy networks strengthen movement mobilization (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Bob 2005). Not overlooking the importance of these external groups, one of the most crucial elite allies that state-oriented movements form bonds with is actors inside the state (Banaszak 2005; Goldstone 2003). State actors include municipal governments, the courts, governmental agencies, and political parties (Stearns and Almeida 2004). Among this list, the social movement–political party alliance appears to be especially potent in sustaining mass contention (Schwartz 2006), especially in contemporary Latin America. Regional democratization permitted the formation and expansion of a diversity of political parties, given the increasing credibility of the electoral process. The emerging political parties needed to secure a mass base in civil society to attain success at the ballot box. Threats of mounting austerity, neoliberal policy implementation, and

global economic integration supplied incipient grievances that solidified the relationship of political parties with social movements.

Threats of Deepening Neoliberalism

Over the past 30 years, neoliberal economic policies have acted as one of the principal threats driving collective action in Latin America and the developing world (Almeida 2007; Walton and Seddon 1994). The origins of neoliberal policy making reside in the third world balance of payments crisis that erupted in the early 1980s, referred to as the debt crisis. Nearly all Latin American governments had taken on enormous foreign loans from northern banks in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, when interest rates began to fluctuate upward and third world export commodity prices plummeted, the governments in the region found themselves steeped in financial trouble. In order to “rescue” the indebted Latin American states, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank stepped in and renegotiated the loans with individual countries. In exchange for debt relief, Latin American governments restructured their economies along free market lines. The negotiations resulted in formal agreements between international financial institutions and indebted states outlining specific economic reforms governments would undertake to reschedule past loan repayments, receive new lines of credit, and upgrade the country’s financial risk rating (Walton and Seddon 1994).

By the mid-1980s, these structural adjustment agreements resulted in severe austerity measures throughout Latin America. The economic policies included cuts in public sector spending, employment, wages, and subsidies to education, health, food, and transportation. The measures also included currency devaluations, new sales taxes, and the selling off of government-run enterprises and factories. These actions led to a wave of antiausterity protests across the region in the 1980s (Walton and Shefner 1994). The popular sectors viewed the cutbacks as a threat to the hard-won economic and social benefits that had expanded in the previous period of state-led development (Eckstein and Wickham Crowley 2003; Walton and Seddon 1994). However, democratization was just beginning to take off in Latin America (Almeida and Johnston 2006). In most countries, successive rounds of competitive elections had not yet occurred, allowing durable relationships to form between social movements and political parties. Autonomous political parties were just emerging (or reemerging) in the region, and social movements were making the transition from confronting authoritarian rule to the new political terrain of electoral politics.

In the 1990s, the foreign debt crisis remained unresolved; on average, Latin American countries tripled the level of debt owed since the beginning of the crisis in 1980. Governments in the region implemented a second generation of austerity measures and structural adjustment that combined many of the strategies of the first-generation reforms (especially subsidy cuts and public sector shrinkage) with the privatization of public services, utilities, and natural resources. Since the late 1990s, these second-generation reforms appear to have sparked an even larger wave of threat-induced protest across the continent (Almeida 2007; Auyero 2001; Green 2003; López Maya 1999; Shefner, Pasdirtz, and Blad 2006). This protest wave, though, arose in the context of deeper democratization and in many cases in conjunction with oppositional political parties.

Social Movement Partyism

With the rise of neoliberal democratization (the combination of free market reforms and competitive multiparty elections) in Latin America in the 1990s (Eckstein 2006; Robinson 2006), a new dynamic emerged whereby oppositional political parties are behaving as much like social movements as they are institutionalized political actors. I define this behavior as *social movement partyism*. Analogous to what labor scholars refer to as social movement unionism, whereby union militants rely on noninstitutional tactics and mobilize supporters beyond the labor organization's boundaries (Isaac and Christiansen 2002; Seidman 1994), political parties in several Latin American countries are mobilizing akin to a social movement. Oppositional parties increasingly use combative protests, organize outside strictly electoral campaigns, and mobilize groups beyond their own card-carrying party members. Two defining features of social movement partyism include (1) an electoral opposition political party taking up a social movement cause as its own by coalescing with a movement, and (2) the use of social movement-type strategies (e.g., disruptive actions and street demonstrations) to mobilize party members and other groups to achieve social movement goals.

The movement with which the political party allies is often composed of several coalitions of civic organizations and civil society groups. My analytical focus, however, centers on the coalition between the oppositional political party and the social movement campaign opposing a neoliberal policy. Social movement partyism more likely emerges in the multiparty parliamentary systems that predominate in contemporary Latin America.¹ Below, I discuss the mutual interests that drive oppositional political parties into a relationship with social movements.

How the Oppositional Political Party Benefits

Oppositional political parties (as opposed to dominant parties) are the candidates most likely to take on the social movement partyism form, especially over issues related to free market reforms. The party in power is the main booster of the neoliberal reforms and has less interest in launching a social movement-style campaign.² Nationalist, populist, and left-leaning oppositional political parties maintain an ideological affinity with civil society groups against neoliberal policies. By taking up the issue of neoliberal reform, an oppositional political party may be able to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the dominant party (Williams 2001), especially under conditions of public opposition to a particular liberalization measure (e.g., privatization, new sales tax, or free trade agreement) or an entire structural adjustment program involving a wide array of reforms. The oppositional party also builds a constituency in the near term by adopting issues with widespread appeal.

How the Social Movement Benefits

In order to sustain a nationwide campaign, social movements need allies with organizational resources across a wide geographical space. In the neoliberal age, few civil society associations sustain a national-level organizational reach. Trade unions are weakened by labor flexibility laws and global competition for reduced labor costs. In the rural sector, agricultural cooperatives become less potent as an organizational force with the privatization of communal lands and growing emphasis on individual and private ownership. Although these weakened traditional actors predominated in the social movement sector during the previous period of state-led development, in the neoliberal era, political parties remain one of the only nationally organized entities. Political parties can use their organizational structure to mobilize in the streets by calling on their supporters in multiple locales to participate in collective action campaigns. Political parties may also act inside the polity to push for the retraction of economic liberalization measures. These insider activities provide social movements with an incentive to join with political parties that can work on their behalf inside of parliament. Having an advocate inside the polity also raises success expectations for activists encouraging wider mobilizations (Klandermans 1997).

Public Opinion

The process of public opinion turning against neoliberal policies is often time dependent. Only if austerity policies and structural adjustment are viewed as threatening and making significant portions of the population worse off

will public opinion turn against subsequent rounds of economic reforms. For example, one major finding of Walton and Ragin's (1990) study of more than fifty developing countries and the relationship between structural adjustment and popular discontent was that the more neoliberal policy agreements a country negotiated with the International Monetary Fund, the more widespread was the mass resistance to such measures. Therefore, oppositional political parties will likely be more successful taking up the cause of an antineoliberal social movement when large sectors of society are aware of and stand against such policies. Regional surveys of Latin America carried out by the Latin Barometer indicate that in the late 1990s and early 2000s the general public increasingly opposed privatization policies (McKenzie and Mookherjee 2003), providing an issue ripe for an oppositional political party to tackle. Oppositional political parties take advantage of this public discontent by adopting the cause of social movements combating economic liberalization.

Movement–Party Overlap in Membership

Overlapping membership in social movement organizations and political parties acts as a final dimension shaping the likelihood of social movement partyism. For example, Goldstone (2003, 3) notes, "Since the Republican movement in nineteenth-century France (Aminzade 1995), the same individuals have often been both social movement activists and political candidates." Scholars of Latin American politics refer to these multiple organizational affiliations as *doble militancia* (Luciak 2001, 188). Key individuals and leaders who participate in both oppositional political parties and nongovernmental organizations or social movements act as brokers bringing social movements into closer collaborations with electoral parties (Mische 2008). Such individuals promote the mutual interests of the party and movement in working together on economic policy issues. Such membership overlap promotes the coordination of meetings, protest campaigns, strategies, resource exchange (Diani 2004), and shared goals among movements and oppositional political parties. In the absence of such interpersonal ties, there would be much more distance between these two distinct types of organizational arrangements, making alliances costlier in terms of the time needed to build mutual trust.

Theoretical Summary

Democratization creates the potential for a social movement–party alliance by allowing an expanded civil society organizational infrastructure and granting legal recognition to oppositional political parties. The economic threats associated with neoliberal economic policies provide common interests that may bring parties and movements into an alliance. In such a partnership, social

movements benefit from a party's national organizational reach and its ability to act inside the polity. Oppositional political parties aspire to establish a constituency on issues with widespread public opinion support that eventuates in greater electoral power in future elections. Social movement partyism builds particularly enduring coalitions when substantial organizational membership overlap exists between opposition parties and social movements. Such coalitions can sustain national-level campaigns that influence a state's policy-making trajectory. I next examine five cases of social movement partyism in Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Uruguay.

Case Studies of Social Movement Partyism

Bolivia: The Gas Wars

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, social movements in Bolivia increasingly coalesced with oppositional political parties, especially the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti and the Movement Toward Socialism. The rural farmer unions in the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia served as the mass support base of the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti in the indigenous Aymara-dominated altiplano region in the provinces of La Paz. The Movement Toward Socialism originated in the coca farmers' movement (*los cocaleros*) in the Chapare region of Cochabamba and eventually united with urban and other rural movements against neoliberal policies (Postero 2007). The Movement Toward Socialism and Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti oppositional political parties formed in the late 1990s after changes in the nation's electoral laws (i.e., Ley de Participación Popular and the 1996 Electoral Law) allowed competitive elections at the municipal level and greater representation from the provinces in the national congress (Kohl and Farthing 2006). Hence the deepening democratization allowed systemwide opportunities for a greater variety of political parties (Stefanoni 2003, 60).

By the early 2000s, the Movement Toward Socialism and Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti secured political representation in 80 out of 314 municipal governments, and the Movement Toward Socialism grew to the largest oppositional political party, with deputies and senators in the Bolivian congress and senate. Between 2000 and 2005, both the Movement Toward Socialism and the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti encouraged protests by their party members and supporters against water privatization and natural gas privatization. This led the parties to move beyond their base of Chapare *cocaleros* and altiplano peasants and to take up issues that affected the national population: the distribution of one of the country's most valuable resources, natural gas. In these same years, Bolivian scholars referred to the Movement Toward

Socialism as the antisystemic party because of its role in coordinating extra-parliamentary opposition (Assies and Salman 2003).

Although both oppositional parties (Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti and Movement Toward Socialism) originated from indigenous and rural social movements in the late 1990s (Van Cott 2005), the movement–party alliance manifested itself most forcefully nationally between 2003 and 2005 over the distribution of natural gas. Already in January 2003, the Movement Toward Socialism coordinated a multisectoral coalition with social movements called the Estado Mayor del Pueblo (People’s High Command) in preparation for mass resistance against further neoliberal policy implementation, with natural gas nationalization high on the movement–party coalition’s agenda. After the government violently repressed local protests and uprisings in February 2003 over the implementation of a new income tax (referred to as *febrero negro* in Bolivia), the Catholic Church, national government, and major political parties established a national dialogue, known as the *reencuentro nacional*, to establish a national agreement on several political issues threatening social peace. Included in the agenda of the national dialogue were issues about the distribution, taxation, and exportation of the country’s natural gas deposits, which the neoliberal government partially privatized in the mid-1990s.

In early September 2003, the Movement Toward Socialism and Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti pulled out of talks when it became clear that the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada ignored their principal demands and planned to export natural gas deposits to wealthy countries in the global north. The government’s refusal to change any of its neoliberal economic development strategies during the national dialogue also inflamed the opposition parties (*La Razón* 2003). In the early 2000s, the Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti was led by the Aymaran ruler Felipe Quispe, who served as both a member of parliament (until 2002) and general secretary of the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), the largest organization of indigenous peasants. Evo Morales acted as the principal leader of the Movement Toward Socialism and was an elected legislative representative in the national congress as well as the general secretary of the largest unions of the Confederation of Coca Farmers (Seis Federaciones de Cocaleras del Trópico de Cochabamba). Hence, at the highest levels of leadership in the oppositional political parties, there was organizational overlap with some of the most militant social movement organizations in Bolivia. This made the social movement–party alliance much easier to accomplish.

By mid-September 2003, to show popular discontent with the government’s natural gas policies, Quispe directed his organization to engage in roadblocks in La Paz and a hunger strike in El Alto while the Movement Toward

Socialism organized large street demonstrations and rallies in the major cities of the country. The dominant labor organization in the country, the Central Obrera Boliviana, began an open-ended general strike in late September with the participation of dozens of its individual union affiliates. The government brutally cracked down on the protests, especially the assertive tactic of highway roadblocks, killing an estimated seventy civilians. By mid-October, the crisis reached such explosive levels that President Sánchez de Lozada fled the country while 200,000 people congregated in La Paz to oppose his natural gas policies (Postero 2007). The sitting vice president, Carlos Mesa, assumed the presidency and convoked a national referendum on gas exports and natural gas nationalization in mid-2004—a key demand of the social movements and Movement Toward Socialism and Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti parties during the nationwide protests of September–October 2003. Over 80 percent voted in favor of nationalizing natural gas in the referendum. The strong showing of public support boosted the movement–party alliance in the next round of antineoliberal mobilization.

In May and June 2005, a second gas war erupted when interim president Carlos Mesa failed to tax transnational energy corporations to levels demanded by social movements and oppositional political parties. The national congress approved a new gas law on May 5, 2005, that only taxed transnational energy companies at 32 percent. The Movement Toward Socialism and social movement organizations demanded a tax of 50 percent and/or full nationalization of the strategic economic resource. On May 9, the Movement Toward Socialism political party convoked a meeting of the country's major oppositional movements in the eastern city of Santa Cruz. The civil society organizations present at the meeting included CSUTCB, Central Obrera Boliviana, Movimiento Sin Tierra (a movement of landless peasants), El Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (a national indigenous rights organization), and the Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (a confederation of peasant settlers), as well as several other social movement organizations (*La Razón* 2005). The Movement Toward Socialism and the civic organizations agreed on a *pacto por la unidad* to mobilize nationwide against the new gas law. Movement Toward Socialism mayors, congresspersons, senators, and rank-and-file party members headed many of the demonstrations against the new natural gas legislation.

The protests eventuated in the fall of the Mesa government and the rescheduling of presidential and parliamentary elections for December 2005. At the very end of 2005, Movement Toward Socialism leader and coca farmer union general secretary, Evo Morales, was elected to the presidency with a higher percentage of votes than any president in recent Bolivian history.

One of his first acts as president in early 2006 was to nationalize the nation's natural gas deposits and renegotiate existing contracts with foreign energy corporations.

Ecuador: Trade Liberalization

After passing most of the 1970s with a populist-oriented military regime, the Ecuadorian polity democratized in 1979. The political liberalization process deepened in 1984, when the national government abolished literacy restrictions for voting, greatly expanding suffrage rights for the indigenous peoples of the country (Yashar 2005). At the same time that the Ecuadorian polity was democratizing in the 1980s and 1990s, new neoliberal threats appeared on the political horizon that stimulated new rounds of mass organization throughout the nation, especially in the indigenous communities. In Ecuador, the movement of highland and Amazonian Indians united in the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) in 1986, representing a majority of the country's indigenous population (up to 30 percent of the national populace). CONAIE launched a nonviolent uprising in 1990 for indigenous rights (Zamosc 1994). In 1996, the indigenous movement along with a national coordinating council of social movements formed the Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik–Nuevo País (known simply as Pachakutik) political party. The oppositional party formed out of a successful campaign in 1995 to defeat a referendum on privatization of several public utilities and services (Collins 2004).

The 1995 referendum merged the interests of CONAIE with the secular left. The referendum was the culmination of over four years of intense activism by indigenous and labor groups against privatization and structural adjustment. A broad civil society coalition called the Coordinadora de los Movimientos Sociales formed in 1995 to mobilize the antiprivatization vote in the referendum. This coalition included the largest indigenous people's organizations in the country (e.g., CONAIE and la Confederación de Pueblos de Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador [ECUANARI]) as well as public sector unions and student groups. The referendum also demonstrated that a sizable cross section of Ecuadorians had turned against many neoliberal policies by the mid-1990s. Indeed, over 60 percent of the public voted against privatization in the plebiscite (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina 2003). This impressive turnout signaled that public opinion stood against neoliberal policies and motivated indigenous and labor activists to form the Pachakutik electoral party that could align with the Coordinadora de los Movimientos Sociales (Guerrero Cazar and Ospina 2003). Many of the early leaders in the Pachakutik political party, including legislative representatives and mayors, enjoyed

years of organizational experience in NGOs and social movements such as in CONAIE, ECUANARI, Coordinadora de los Movimientos Sociales, and La Confederación Nacional del Seguro Campesino (Llucu 2004). This dual affiliation by key individuals in political parties and social movement organizations facilitated the alliance of Pachakutik with organized civil society.

The indigenous movement and its political arm (Pachakutik) mobilized simultaneously around indigenous rights issues and against the neoliberal threats associated with Ecuador's \$13 billion foreign debt. In 1996, Pachakutik competed in municipal and parliamentary elections (Collins 2004). In 2000, it increased its local and regional political representation from the 1996 elections and moved from eleven to twenty-one mayors and from zero to five provincial-level councils (Larrea Maldonado 2004). Pachakutik used this new power inside the polity to support social movement claims on the streets and has remained in close alliance with the indigenous movement and other social sectors in the major nonviolent uprisings in 1997, 2000, 2001, and 2006 against neoliberal policies. It was precisely the neoliberal policies that made Pachakutik a national party centered on more than indigenous rights issues. In 2001, a national nonviolent uprising included the participation of Pachakutik mayors and governors (Larrea Maldonado 2004). During the 2001 mobilizations, Pachakutik assisted social movements in avoiding price hikes in basic consumer goods, transportation, and electricity and ensuring greater citizen participation in the formation of the nation's annual budget (Llucu 2004).

In March and April 2006, CONAIE and Pachakutik, along with an amalgamation of nongovernmental organizations (called Ecuador Decide), led a massive nationwide mobilization against a free trade agreement between the United States and Ecuador. The movement paralyzed the country with strategic roadblocks and mass marches. The movement achieved its goals, and the free trade negotiations were canceled. Pachakutik played an instrumental role over several years in supporting the protest movement that led to the national government's failure to sign a free trade agreement. Beginning in 2004, Pachakutik began educational and organizing drives against the trade liberalization measure as a continuation of an earlier struggle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a proposal for a regional free trade block.

The oppositional party endorsed the project of Ecuador Decide to collect one million signatures to force the government to hold a referendum on the free trade agreement before its implementation. Also in 2004, Pachakutik sponsored international conferences and street actions against the impending free trade agreement once its elected representatives in the national and Andean parliaments became aware that the Ecuadorian government had

initiated closed-door negotiations over trade liberalization. In 2005, Pachakutik held several workshops in the provinces to educate its supporters about the potential social and economic consequences of the realization of a free trade accord. All of this preparatory work was critical when in March 2006 indigenous movements and other sectors launched the most successful social movement coalition against a free trade agreement in Latin America. During the nationwide protests, Pachakutik denounced repression and provided insider information on the status of the trade talks until the government decided to table the free trade agreement in April 2006.

El Salvador: Privatization of the Public Health System

In 1980, after experiencing five decades of military rule, El Salvador's oppositional movement, the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation, formed through the unification of several clandestine revolutionary parties. Once state repression reached genocidal levels in the early 1980s, the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation transformed into a guerrilla army and battled the Salvadoran government in a prolonged civil war until early 1992 (Viterna 2006). After a United Nations–brokered peace agreement ended the civil war, the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation morphed once again into an electoral political party. By 1997, the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation (FMLN) firmly established itself as the largest oppositional political party in the country with impressive gains in municipal governments and legislative assembly seats.

In the early to mid-1990s, the FMLN focused on the transition from a revolutionary party to an institutionalized electoral political party. Labor union leaders and other party militants previously active in street politics placed greater emphasis on the electoral process. Other former radical political parties that had influence in social movements during the 1980s broke off from the FMLN in mid-1994 as a result of internal party disputes (Wood 2005). Hence, the movement–party linkage was relatively weak until the late 1990s. Given the disadvantage of social movements and opposition political parties in the early to mid-1990s, the neoliberal party in power, the National Republican Alliance Party (ARENA), after negotiating new state “modernization” loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, launched a string of privatizations and economic reforms between 1995 and 1997. Social and labor movements fighting the privatization of telecommunications, pensions, and electrical power distribution failed to forge a strong enough bond with the FMLN in the mid-1990s. Each of these public entities transferred to private ownership after several unsuccessful protest campaigns.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, from its new foothold in local

and national government, the oppositional FMLN party turned to social movements on the streets to maintain its electoral strength. Between 1999 and 2003, the party aligned with the public health care unions in two massive and prolonged strikes to prevent the partial privatization of the medical system. In comparison to other social struggles in the post-civil war era, the alliance between party members and the health care movement was particularly potent. Public opinion stood against the government's plans to subcontract public health care and health insurance to the private sector, especially after witnessing prices rise with the privatization of telecommunications and electricity as well as the dollarization of the country's currency. According to national public opinion polls, 55 percent of the public opposed health care privatization in 1997 before the antiprivatization campaigns began, while 87 percent of the public was against health care privatization at the height of the second campaign in early 2003 (Almeida 2006). Both anti-health care privatization campaigns erupted in the months before the national parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2003.

Legislative leaders from the FMLN, such as Jorge Schafik Hándal and Humberto Centeno, met with striking doctors and workers and held press conferences publicly labeling the struggle against health care as a just cause. Inside parliament, FMLN representatives on the Health and Environment Commission introduced legislation that would legally prevent the outsourcing of public hospital services and units. The language for this legislation was originally drawn up by two public health care unions (El Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social and El Sindicato de Médicos del Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social) and NGOs constituting the social movement. Because the FMLN lacked a parliamentary majority and the center-right parties (Christian Democrats and the Partido de Conciliación Nacional) vacillated in their support for the health care movement, parliamentary struggle by itself proved insufficient in preventing the privatization process. Consequently, the oppositional party redoubled its efforts by supporting the health campaign on the streets.

Mixing conventional protest with highly assertive actions, health care workers used two major tactics in their antiprivatization crusades—mass marches and roadblocks—and the FMLN played a pivotal role in both. The health care unions and their civil society allies, including students, NGO networks, and other labor unions, utilized the mass march as a central protest strategy in both rounds of contention. Many members of the mobilized civil society organizations also maintained an affiliation in the FMLN political party. The health care workers used symbolic capital by persuading participants in the marches to dress in white or paint themselves white to manifest

solidarity with the medical profession. These organizing efforts resulted on several occasions in a meandering white river of bodies through the streets of downtown San Salvador. The mass street demonstrations immediately became known as *marchas blancas* (white marches) and are referenced as a high mark in mobilization by Salvadoran social movement activists. The *marchas blancas* ranged from 15,000 to 200,000 participants, making them the largest demonstrations in newly democratized El Salvador. In both antiprivatization campaigns, the *marchas blancas* also took place outside the capital in other major towns. Nearly all of the FMLN legislative representatives participated in the *marchas blancas*, and the FMLN used its weekly public gathering (*la tribuna abierta*) to encourage its over 80,000 party members to participate in the health care campaign and the *marchas blancas*.

The road blockade acted as the other major protest tactic in the antiprivatization mobilizations, especially in the 2002–3 strike. The mobilized defenders of public health care would hold national days of protest where they sat down en masse, blocking up to a dozen strategic highways and roads around the country. FMLN mayors and legislators demonstrated their support for such protests by participating in the blockades and protecting participants from police repression. The final outcomes of these campaigns included the suspension of the neoliberal government's public health privatization plans and the maintenance of the FMLN as the country's main oppositional party with relatively successful election results in the 2000 and 2003 municipal and legislative elections on the heels of the privatization protests (Almeida 2008). In the mid-2000s, the FMLN continues an alliance with social movements such as the Bloque Popular Social and the Movimiento Popular de Resistencia 12 de Octubre in battles against free trade and water privatization.

Nicaragua: Austerity, Price Hikes, and Privatization

Between 1990 and 2006, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) acted as the largest oppositional political party in Nicaragua. The FSLN similar to the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation in El Salvador, originates from a clandestine revolutionary party in the 1970s that led an armed struggle against the dynastic dictatorship of the Somoza family. The FSLN overthrew the dictatorship in 1979 and headed a revolutionary government until 1990 when it was defeated in competitive presidential elections. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of electoral defeat, the FSLN remained the largest oppositional political party. Between 1990 and 2006, three successive governments ruling Nicaragua subscribed to neoliberal economic programs as the country suffered from a \$10 billion external debt (Robinson 2003). Social movement organizations and civic associations created during

the revolutionary period and after attempted on several occasions to coalesce with the FSLN party to fight the neoliberal policies of the postrevolutionary governments. Because the FSLN ruled during the 1980s, it maintained close relations with civic organizations that were once part of the party's formal structure. It had lower costs in implementing the social movement partyism strategy because an alliance was already in existence. Hence, in the postrevolutionary period (1990–2006), the FSLN formed movement–party alliances with several social sectors that served as the mass base during the revolutionary government (1979–90). These sectors included public schoolteachers in the Asociación Nacional de Educadores de Nicaragua, health care workers organized in the Federación de Trabajadores de la Salud, state sector employees, the national universities and student associations, and the neighborhood based associations in the Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense. These groups immediately banded together in early 1990 after the first electoral defeat of the FSLN.

The new government of president Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (1990–96) began to enact austerity policies, and pro-Sandinista labor unions left over from the revolutionary period formed a coalition in April 1990 called the Frente Nacional de Trabajadores (FNT). This coalition drew its largest support from state-sector unions in government ministries, education, and health care, as well as farmers and agricultural laborers. The Frente Nacional de Trabajadores (FNT) sponsored massive general strikes in April, May, and July 1990 that forced the government to slow down the pace of austerity measures (Stahler-Sholk 1994). The individual affiliates of the FNT became more autonomous in their organizational decision making from the FSLN political party while maintaining close ties. At times, the FSLN negotiated with the ruling government over workers' issues such as privatization, wage freezes, and layoffs in the public sector without the FNT's input. At other times the FSLN acted in concert with the Frente Nacional de Trabajadores, including the participation of thousands of party members along with workers in street protests. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the FNT maintained its organizational structures and influence on the Nicaraguan polity. However, labor protest was largely defensive in these economically austere times. Tens of thousands of public sector workers lost their jobs between 1988 and the mid-1990s (O'Kane 1995). Other social sectors began to coordinate actions by the late 1990s and early 2000s, including university students and a variety of nongovernmental organizations and consumer protection–based groups.

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, the strongest movement–party alliance occurred between the FSLN and the university community. Beginning

with the Chamorro government and enduring through the neoliberal administrations of Arnoldo Alemán (1997–2001) and Enrique Bolaños (2002–6), the national government continually underfunded the budget for higher education. This led to several massive street demonstrations between 1992 and 2004 in which scores of university students and police were injured (and at times killed). The FSLN sided with the students, workers, and administrators by actively participating in the street protests as well as voting for the complete budgetary allotment to universities in legislative debates inside the parliament (Almeida and Walker 2006). The FSLN also used the party newspaper, *La Barricada*, to inform the public about the university budget and the social movement trying to defend it. The outcomes of these incessant struggles (which broke out almost every year in this period) usually involved winning greater benefits for the university community, but not the full 6 percent of the national budget requested by the students.

Both the labor-based struggles of the early 1990s and the university protests of the late 1990s forged the movement–party relationship in Nicaragua in the neoliberal era. Nonetheless, these were mainly sector-specific struggles (largely state-sector workers on the defensive and the relatively narrow interests of the university community). Throughout the 1990s, the FSLN had fitful starts aligning with social movements on the streets, at times supporting mass mobilization and other times cooling it off as a consequence of a pact made between the FSLN’s top leader, Daniel Ortega, and the Nicaraguan president, Arnoldo Alemán, in 1999. The FSLN political party called off a threatened general strike attempt in 1997 by its affiliated unions once it negotiated concessions from the national government. After the pact of 1999, there was a decrease in social movement activity.

The FSLN would need to align with larger civil society interests to strengthen the coalitions between the oppositional political party and social movements. Indeed, this seems to be the case for the early 2000s when the FSLN supported consumer issues affecting the mass of the impoverished population. In this decade, social movements became more active over several consumer issues, public health care, and a major teachers’ strike. A powerful civic organization that emerged on the political scene in the late 1990s was the Red Nacional de Defensa a los Consumidores, led by two Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional office holders during the revolutionary period (Grigsby 2005), demonstrating movement–party overlaps in organizational affiliations. By the mid-2000s, the consumer-based movements played a pivotal role in the Nicaraguan social movement sector. For example, in 2006 alone, the Red Nacional de Defensa a los Consumidores along with Movimiento Comunal Nicaraguense, the Coordinadora Civil (a group of NGOs),

and the Unión Nacional de Asociaciones de Consumidores y Usuarios, convoked mass mobilizations in Managua, Ocotal, León, Bluefields, Bilwe, Jui-galpa, Granada, Esteli, and Masaya against electricity price hikes (issued by a recently privatized energy distributor and Spanish transnational corporation) and poor water services (Serra 2006).

At the same time, the FSLN began to increase its electoral fortunes at the municipal level. The oppositional party won over the city government in the capital Managua in 2001 and then over half of the country's 152 municipal governments, including fifteen of seventeen provincial capital cities, in the elections of 2004. The newly elected FSLN mayors and city councils aligned with consumer groups, students, and pro-FSLN bus driver cooperatives to oppose price hikes in public transportation in 2005, the most contentious episodes of collective action of the year (*La Prensa* 2005a, 2005b). Finally, between 2005 and 2006, after major national strikes in the health care and public education sectors (where labor leaders also serve as parliamentary representatives for the FSLN) as well as nationwide protests against bus fare increases, the FSLN won back the presidency in the elections of November 2006.

Uruguay: Water Privatization

From 1973 to 1985, a repressive military government dominated the Uruguayan polity and suppressed an active civil society (Loveman 1998). With democratization, the traditional two political parties, Colorado and the Partido Nacional, returned to dominate the political landscape. However, a formerly outlawed socialist political party, the Frente Amplio (Broad Front Party) allied with other political factions and transitioned once again into a legal opposition party and won control of the capital, Montevideo, in 1990. The Frente Amplio also continued to receive more votes for parliamentary and presidential elections throughout the 1990s, becoming a major national oppositional political party. The leftist party also managed relationships with social movements on the streets. Many of the neighborhood associations that emerged after the economic crisis in 1999 had leaders also participating as militants in the Frente Amplio (Falero 2003), a social dynamic that would assist them in the construction of social movement partyism.

In 2003 and 2004, the Frente Amplio joined a massive national campaign against water privatization. The state's institution for water administration, Obras Sanitarias del Estado, created in 1952 during the epoch of state-led development (Santos et al. 2006), seemed to be constantly under threat of the neoliberal state disassembling its subdivisions and regional branches and outsourcing them to transnational water and energy companies

under multidecade contracts. The Frente Amplio did not enter a formal alliance with the environmental groups and labor unions fighting water privatization until January 2003. At this time, it appeared clear that public opinion was turning against privatization when the social movement had already collected 100,000 signatures disapproving of the private outsourcing of state water and sanitation administration to multinational corporations (Valdomir 2006). The Frente Amplio oppositional party used its various factions (e.g., legislative, neighborhood, and youth chapters) in alliance with environmentalists and the state water workers' union the *Federación de Funcionarios de Obras Sanitarias del Estado* (FFOSE) to launch mobilizations and petition drives to hold a popular referendum on state control of water administration. The referendum system in Uruguay provides a major institutional avenue for social movements to channel their grievances, unlike in most other Latin American countries. Frente Amplio legislative representatives released statements publicly supporting the referendum. Between late 2002 and late 2003, the campaign succeeded in gaining enough signatures to force a popular referendum on whether water administration should be exclusively the jurisdiction of the government or permitted to be outsourced to transnational firms. On the same day as presidential elections in October 2004, the population also voted on the water privatization referendum. The Frente Amplio won the presidency, and the water privatization efforts were defeated. During the 2004 election campaign, the Frente Amplio included the water privatization issue in its election platform and simultaneously handed out leaflets on the negative consequences of water privatization as it passed out propaganda on its party's slate of candidates for office.

The anti-water privatization campaign began at the regional level in the 1990s after the Uruguayan government began to outsource water administration to international corporations in Maldonado. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, more conflicts erupted in Corrientes, Colonia, and Montevideo as other experiments with water privatization and outsourcing were implemented and consumers claimed unfair price inflation and/or loss of access to water and sewer services. In 1999, the World Bank encouraged more contracting out of sewer and drinking water services to private sector firms. In 2002, the government signed a letter of intent with the International Monetary Fund in which greater participation of private water companies was one of the conditions of the structural adjustment agreement in order for Uruguay to receive a new loan (Santos et al. 2006). This particular act galvanized a wide variety of civil society organizations to form the *Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida* in October 2002—a coalition of environmentalists (Friends of the Earth–Uruguay), state water administration

workers (FFOSE), chapters of the Frente Amplio oppositional political party, labor unions, university student associations, and several neighborhood and regional citizens' committees against water privatization (e.g., Liga de Fomento de Manantiales). Between late 2002 and October 2003, the Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida organized petition tables nationally to obtain the necessary number of signatures (10 percent of registered voters) to hold the referendum on public water administration. This commission sponsored a mass street march in Montevideo in October 2003 to hand over the petition with over 280,000 signatures to the national legislature.³ The demonstrators carried hundreds of boxes full of signed petitions from the headquarters of the state water administration institute to the legislative palace.

Figure 8.1 provides information on the relationship between the campaign against water privatization in Uruguay and the electoral success of the Frente Amplio oppositional political party. The figure provides correlation coefficients for (1) the association between where the water distribution conflicts took place and the percentage of departmental votes for the Frente Amplio in the 2004 elections, and (2) the association between the level of departmental support for the water nationalization referendum and the percentage of votes achieved by the Frente Amplio in the presidential elections. Both covariates (social conflict over water privatization and departmental vote in favor of state control of water administration) are positively correlated with voting for the Frente Amplio's presidential candidate. Those departments that maintained social movement activity over water privatization and high voting participation rates in support of the referendum to uphold public control over water administration were positively associated with voting for

Water Privatization Variables	Departmental Vote for Frente Amplio (2004)
Reported conflict over water distribution in department, 1998–2002	0.69***
% votes for nationalization of water referendum in department	0.53*
N (No. of departments)	19

* $p < .05$;

*** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed tests).

Figure 8.1. Correlations of water distribution conflicts and votes for Uruguay's nationalization of water administration with percentage of departmental votes for Frente Amplio.

the political party that most supported the antiprivatization campaign and subsequently won the presidential elections: the Frente Amplio.

Conclusions

In contemporary Latin America, the social movement partyism coalition is forged by the combination of deepening democratization and economic liberalization. Oppositional political parties that take up the cause of a particular neoliberal measure and enter into coalitions with social movement campaigns expand their base of support. The finding that *economic* threats produced by neoliberalism support the marriage of parties with movements is consistent with other studies that find *political* threats as conducive to coalitional formation in social movements (McCammon and Campbell 2002; Staggenborg 1986; Van Dyke 2003a). The political party movement coalition more likely endures when a majority of public opinion also stands against the economic reforms such as in the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Uruguay discussed above. In addition to favorable public opinion, the social movement partyism coalition is strengthened by preexisting organizational membership overlaps between social movements and oppositional political parties.

This chapter also asserts that for state-oriented movements, not all external allies are equal. Out of the universe of potential collaborators and coalitional partners potentially available to social movements, previous studies contend that actors inside the state appear more crucial to policy-oriented collective action (Banaszak 2005; Goldstone 2003; Stearns and Almeida 2004; Van Dyke 2003b). Oppositional political parties maintain a mass base of members and supporters (often at the national level) that can be used for social movement mobilization outside electoral campaigns, providing a unique resource to social movements. At the same time, oppositional political parties need social movements to build their electoral constituency.

In these five country cases, the most enduring forms of social movement partyism occurred once the oppositional political party achieved a moderate level of electoral success. The major social movement partyism campaigns in Bolivia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Uruguay all took place once the oppositional party in question ascended to the status of the second or third largest electoral force in the country. Stronger oppositional parties may provide a greater sense of hope for success among social movements that enter a coalition with the party. Strong parties appear able to stop unfavorable legislation inside the parliament, or at least stall it until more mass mobilization occurs. In addition, larger opposition parties have more members. The membership lists and organizational structure can be used to coordinate mass collective action beyond just voting.

More analytical weight should also be given to the idea of *doble militancia* in the construction of social movement partyism. Opposition party members who simultaneously participate in social movements as members and/or leaders of civic organizations (such as Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe in the peasant organizations of Bolivia and Luis Macas in the indigenous movement of Ecuador) likely provide the rudimentary network structure for launching a campaign led by a movement–party coalition. The degree of overlap existing between individuals/civic organizations and oppositional political parties may help determine the likelihood of a social movement partyism alliance emerging as well as its strength and endurance. One would also expect to observe a higher frequency of social movement partyism where long histories of movement–party overlap exist such as linkages forged in Nicaragua during the revolutionary period of the 1980s that were tapped decades later. Finally, a more explicitly comparative method would be useful in future studies that examine cases where the social movement partyism coalition both succeeds and fails in materializing.

Notes

1. The social movement–oppositional political party alliance is also more likely found in other historical and political contexts characterized by multiparty electoral systems such as Green parties in Western Europe (Maguire 1995) and labor parties in nineteenth-century France (Aminzade 1995)

2. An important caveat is the recent rise to power of leftist politicians and political parties in Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela. Once in executive power, these leftist governments have encouraged mass demonstrations in support of their policies, such as holding constitutional assemblies.

3. The 280,000 signatures on the anti–water privatization petition represent over 8 percent of the entire Uruguayan population.

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