

# Reconsidering the Conceptualization of New Parties

## Break-in-Parties in South America

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**ABSTRACT:** Latin American party systems are characterized by a proliferation of new parties of very different sizes, backgrounds, and developmental trajectories, which poses a conceptual challenge. Historically, conceptualizations of new parties have often prioritized data accessibility over methodological and theoretical rigor. As a result, they have produced a plethora of highly heterogeneous cases that are ill-suited for theory testing. To address this problem, we propose the development of a conceptual tool aimed at identifying a subset of relevant new parties, termed “break-in parties” (BIP) because of their potential impact on prevailing patterns of representation and party competition. We have identified a corpus of 24 such parties founded between 1960 and 2002 in South America. These parties exhibit sufficient similarity to facilitate meaningful attributions, while also providing variability in relevant independent and dependent variables for testing theories of party system change through the emergence and success of new parties, a topic that has received considerable attention in recent years.

*Keywords:* new parties, conceptualization, South America, party systems, break-in parties.

*Reconsiderando la conceptualización de los partidos nuevos: Los Break-in-Parties en Sudamérica*

**RESUMEN:** Los sistemas de partidos latinoamericanos se caracterizan por la proliferación de partidos nuevos, de tamaño, trayectoria y desarrollo muy diversos, lo que plantea el problema de la conceptualización. Hasta ahora, las conceptualizaciones de los nuevos partidos a menudo han favorecido la accesibilidad a los datos por encima de los requisitos metodológicos y teóricos. El resultado es un gran número de casos muy heterogéneos, inadecuados para la comprobación de teorías. Por ello, desarrollamos una herramienta conceptual para identificar un subconjunto de nuevos partidos re-

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levantes, a los que denominamos “break-in parties” (BIP) debido a su impacto potencial en su entorno político. Identificamos un universo de 24 partidos de este tipo fundados entre 1960 y 2002 en América del Sur. Estos partidos son lo suficientemente similares como para permitir atribuciones significativas, al tiempo que proporcionan variación en las variables independientes y dependientes pertinentes para poner a prueba las teorías sobre el cambio de los sistemas partidarios a través del surgimiento y éxito de nuevos partidos, un tema que ha recibido considerable atención en los últimos años.

*Palabras clave:* nuevos partidos, conceptualización, América del Sur, sistemas de partidos, break-in parties.

## INTRODUCTION

Party system change is an important topic in the literature because of its implications for democratic representation and accountability. There are different theoretical approaches, but as a general proposition, party system change can be attributed either to established parties or to the entry of new parties into the party system (Harmel, 1997; Kitschelt, 1997; Mair, 2006; Tavits, 2006). When the former lose support, new parties emerge to fill the representative void. This, at least, is what market models of party competition suggest (*cf. e.g.*, De Vries and Hobolt, 2020).

However, party system change resulting from the emergence and success of new parties does not occur automatically in response to electoral demands and representational gaps. Numerous additional factors influence the development of new parties. Regarding European party systems, Harmel (1997) observes that most of new parties fail to establish themselves (*cf.* also Krouwel and Lucardie, 2008). This trend is even more pronounced in volatile political environments, as seen in most Latin American countries. Levitsky and Loxton (2016) identify 307 new parties in Latin America between 1978 and 2005. Out of these 307 cases, only eleven new parties have been successful and can be considered relevant factors in party system change. Thus, there is a significant empirical and conceptual gap between the categories of “new parties” and “successful new parties”, suggesting a conceptual challenge in terms of case selection and potential selection bias.

There is a lively debate about the definition of new parties. While some authors propose restrictive definitions, others are more inclusive in drawing the line between new and established parties. For example, Sikk (2005: 399) refers to genuinely new parties as “parties that are not successors of any previous parliamentary parties, have a novel name as well as structure, and do not have any important figures from past democratic politics among its major members”. More permissively, Bolleyer (2013: 26) classifies parties as new “if they are built from scratch (‘newly born’), and if they originate from minor splits of established parties”. Depending on how the attribute “new” is defined and where the threshold for newness is set, the resulting pool of cases can vary considerably in terms of its size<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> An overview of existing definitions is provided by Emanuele and Chiaramonte (2016).

Still, newness says little about the relevance of a new party and its potential impact on the party system. While a party's novelty in terms of its program and personnel is a crucial factor in party-system change, it alone is insufficient to delineate an adequate set of cases, given that most new parties fail to secure parliamentary representation, and many survive for only one or two electoral cycles. Thus, while the term "new party" may function as a classification concept, its utility for formulating theoretical propositions about party system change is inherently limited. To address this limitation, it is imperative not only to delineate the concept along the dimension of newness, but also to consider its relevance. Only when a new party succeeds in achieving a certain level of visibility and political influence can it be considered a potential factor in party-system change.

In this research note, we present an approach aimed at identifying a subset of new parties based on the dimensions of newness and relevance, which we call break-in-parties (BIPs) due to their potential to "break into" the party system and instigate significant changes in established patterns of representation and party competition. Unlike the term "challenger parties", which is vaguely or inconsistently defined,<sup>2</sup> the concept of BIP is deduced from the stages or thresholds that a new party must pass in order to become a relevant factor of innovation and party-system change. BIPs thus represent a subset of new parties that are sufficiently novel and have achieved a certain level of relevance. Moreover, we argue that both measures, newness and relevance, depend in part on the institutional environment and patterns of party competition. Thus, the concrete definitional limits of the concept are a matter of context.

We will elaborate on the concept of BIPs by looking at cases from South America. This region is particularly conducive to such an inquiry because of the institutional similarities among its member countries and the far-reaching changes that have taken place in many party systems in recent decades, marked by the emergence of a variety of new parties from different party families. In the following section, we address the issue of conceptualizing new parties in a broader perspective. Recognizing that there is no single standard for conceptualization in the case of new parties, but rather a series of trade-offs among criteria of conceptual goodness (Gerring, 1999), we will show that different concepts are needed for purposes of explication, classification, or theory building/testing. In section three, we present an approach to

<sup>2</sup> De Vries and Hobolt (2020: 17) define challenger parties as "those parties that have not yet held the reins of power: the parties without government experience". Rochon (1985: 421) sees challenger parties not as an innovative political force but rather as attempting "to win support based on established cleavages. These parties challenge the legitimacy of existing parties on their own turf by claiming that they no longer properly represent the interests of their support base. Such parties are generally formed by a split in one of the established parties". Hino (2012: 8), in turn, uses this same term largely synonymous with "niche party" asserting that these parties "add a new dimension of conflict to the arena of party politics".

conceptualizing and identifying BIPs based on a stage model of new party development. In section four, we use this model to identify BIPs in South America that were founded between 1960 and 2002. In section five, we discuss the utility of this classificatory approach for studying party-system change. We conclude with a summary of our approach.

#### **EXPLICATION, CLASSIFICATION, AND THEORY TESTING IN THE STUDY OF NEW PARTIES**

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on questions related to the success and institutionalization of new parties (Harmel and Svåsand, 2019). For instance, van Dyck (2017) examines why many new parties in Latin America collapsed after an initial electoral surge, pointing to their founding conditions as an explanatory factor. Similarly, Bolleyer (2013) asks why new parties in European party systems fail to institutionalize after an initial electoral success. Tavits (2012) examines the impact of party organizational strength on party success and survival in post-communist countries. Bolleyer and Bytzeck (2013) focus on the determinants of the sustainability of new parties after their parliamentary breakthrough, specifically examining their institutionalization at the national level. Similarly, Beyens *et al.* (2016) pose questions about the survival and disappearance of new parties in the Netherlands.

In this kind of study, case selection largely follows the Aristotelian logic of concept formation through the definition of necessary attributes. After establishing a base concept of party newness, additional qualifying attributes are introduced to delineate a subset of appropriate size and content. The base concept of “new party” is often defined by either organizational criteria (*e.g.*, Hug, 2001) or programmatic criteria (Lowery *et al.*, 2013; Lucardie, 2000). The attributes are primarily determined by empirical considerations and convenience. For instance, the subset of interest may be specified through geographic or temporal criteria, or by limiting the analysis to a particular party family. This approach, however, often fails to meet theoretical requirements by generating one-sided and reduced sets of cases.

There is no universally applicable standard for constructing concepts. Instead, the goodness and usefulness of a concept depend on the specific task it is intended to fulfill (Gerring, 1999). In particular, the goals of explication, categorization, and theory building/testing require different conceptual approaches. In this context, there is a discernible imbalance in the treatment of the concept of a new party, which has been predominantly used for explication and categorization purposes, while its potential theoretical utility remains limited.

Explicatory concepts are typically multidimensional and often constructed as ideal types based on one or more prototypical cases. Explicatory concepts aim to capture the distinctive characteristics of new parties and their systemic interconnectedness or “logic”. However, their theoretical utility is limited. Their complex-

ity makes them difficult to apply on a broad scale, and they are susceptible to endogeneity once causal claims are attached to them. Moreover, ideal types and multidimensional concepts allow only for an approximate assessment of empirical cases, either by measuring them on a continuous scale or by constructing reduced subtypes by removing attributes (*cf.* Luna *et al.*, 2021).

For theoretical purposes, it is more convenient to identify relevant subsets of cases using regular subtypes by adding attributes to a broader base concept and thus descending the ladder of abstraction (*cf.* Goertz, 2006: 75-88). Barnea and Rahat propose an inclusive base concept for identifying new parties. Starting from a minimum definition of political parties as groups that aim to win office (Barnea and Rahat, 2011: 310; see also Luna *et al.*, 2021), a party's newness is defined in terms of its label and candidates, with the latter operationalized by a threshold: "We define a new party as a party that has a new label and that no more than half of its top candidates (top of candidate list or safe districts) originate from a single former party" (Barnea and Rahat, 2011: 311). This form of conceptualization is well suited for distinguishing new parties from established ones. It is unambiguous and allows almost all parties to be clearly assigned to one of two mutually exclusive categories, in line with Sartori's (1991) classification rule. However, while such a conceptualization can serve as a starting point for theoretical analysis, it requires further specification.

Both explicatory and classificatory concepts of new parties often lack the necessary properties for theory building and testing, particularly in small-N research designs. Explicatory concepts tend to be too narrow and complex to facilitate the study of new parties beyond individual cases or specific party types, such as entrepreneurial parties (Hloušek *et al.*, 2020), new left parties (*e.g.*, Van Dyck, 2017), or new right-wing populist parties (*e.g.*, Art, 2008). Conversely, classificatory concepts often lack crucial attributes "that prove relevant for hypotheses, explanations, and causal mechanisms", as Goertz (2006: 4) puts it. Regarding the question of party-system change through the emergence and success of new parties, classificatory concepts tend to generate a highly uneven distribution of positive versus negative cases. Moreover, they are not sufficiently differentiated to exclude irrelevant cases or to focus an investigation on potential explanatory variables. Therefore, to develop a theoretically relevant conceptualization, the overarching category of new parties must be narrowed and refined to a subset that both excludes irrelevant cases and is parsimonious enough to mitigate endogeneity and provide adequate variation on relevant variables.

One of the closest approximations to these conditions is López's (2005) concept of "new challenger parties", which he defines in terms of their impact on the party system and a set of theoretically relevant attributes. However, by including programmatic innovation along with organizational strength and internal discipline, the concept becomes overly restrictive and partially endogenous, as organizational

strength must be considered an important factor in new party success (*e.g.*, Tavits, 2012). Nevertheless, López highlights a crucial attribute for theorizing party system change: a “challenge to the *statu quo*” posed by these parties, which is consistent with our conceptualization of BIPs. Indeed, a primary motivation for studying new parties is their potential to disrupt the *statu quo* of established structures of representation and party competition.

We draw on López’s concept of challenger parties and other aforementioned conceptualizations, but we go beyond these approaches by introducing a systematic procedure for identifying BIPs as a relevant subset of new parties for studying party system change. This subset is expansive enough to cover a wide range of party types and to provide ample variation in relevant variables yet focused enough to allow for meaningful attribution.

### RECONCEPTUALIZING NEW PARTIES IN SOUTH AMERICA

Theoretical questions about new parties focus primarily on the causes and conditions of new party emergence, institutionalization, and success. Explanatory approaches encompass factors at the party level such as leadership and organization (Bolleyer, 2013; Bolleyer and Bytzek, 2013; Harmel and Svåsand, 1993; Wieringa and Meijers, 2022), as well as system-level factors related to the political, societal, and institutional environment (Haus and Rayside, 1978; Tavits, 2006). Some authors emphasize the varying importance of these factors depending on a new party’s stage of development (*e.g.*, Harmel and Robertson, 1985). Moreover, Kestler *et al.* (2019) argue that the sequence in which these factors come into play also influences the success or failure of a new party. Thus, a theoretically meaningful concept of new parties must consider not only party characteristics but also the stages of new party development.

The concept of BIPs is designed to meet these criteria. It aims to address the question of why some new parties succeed while others fail after achieving a significant level of relevance. We define BIPs as new parties able to “break into” the party system and to become a potential factor in changing the patterns of competition, elite composition, and representational structure. While previous research has focused on the causes (Kestler *et al.*, 2013) and consequences of BIP success (Kestler *et al.*, 2016), we propose a general toolkit for identifying this subset of new parties. To do so, we included parties founded between 1960 and 2002 in ten South American countries, taking a long-term perspective on new party emergence and success. We selected this time frame to capture different trajectories or “life cycles” of new parties (Mustillo, 2009; Pedersen, 1982). While some new parties rise rapidly, such as Alberto Fujimori’s *Cambio 90*, others, such as the Venezuelan *La Causa R*, remain insignificant for decades until they experience electoral growth and become a potential factor in party system change. To account for this latter type of “late



**TABLE 1.** Stages of new party development and South American cases, 1960-2002

	1	2	3	Success /Institutionalization
Criterion	Foundation	Gaining electoral relevance	Challenging the statu quo through personnel and programmatic innovation	
Indicator(s)	Electoral participation on the national level	At least 5 percent in any parliamentary election (lower chamber)	Political outsiders in the party leadership Popular mobilization	
Number of cases (1960-2002)	624*	95	24	

*Source:* Own elaboration based on Nohlen (2005); Szajkowski (2005) and Expert Survey. \*This number is a mere approximation because it is based on Nohlen's (2005) inventory, which for some countries and periods required parties to have reached a minimum vote share of 1 percent.

bloomer” and to observe longer spans of party development, we set the cutoff year for case selection at 2002 and refrained from including younger parties, recognizing that the more recent a party's founding, the more difficult it becomes to conclusively assess it.

Empirically, a large number of new parties emerged in South America during the period of interest. Based on data from Nohlen (2005), supplemented by the data from Pérez-Liñán *et al.* (2023) and Szajkowski (2005), we have identified a total of 624 new parties. While many of these parties never got off the ground, others became significant actors in their respective countries. There is also considerable variation in party newness. On the one hand, conflicts and divisions within established parties led to the formation of many parties by established politicians. On the other hand, there were several newcomers to the political arena representing novel issues and previously marginalized societal groups. For instance, Hugo Chávez's *Movimiento Quinta República* (MVR) addressed the needs of marginalized classes, the Chilean *Partido por la Democracia* (PPD) advocated for post-materialist issues, and parties like *Movimiento de Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik-Nuevo País* (MUPP-NP, Ecuador) and *Conciencia de Patria* (Condepa, Bolivia) represented the indigenous populations of their respective countries.

In terms of a new party's path to becoming a BIP, we delineate three levels or filters of development. These stages include, first, formal foundation; second, attaining a relevant position in the party system; and third, challenging the political status quo through programmatic and personnel innovation (see Table 1). The first level is straightforward and includes all parties that appear on the ballot at any given time. The second level aims to narrow the pool of potential BIPs by excluding

splinter parties that lack notable relevance. While examining parliamentary representation could be an option, it is insufficient due to the low threshold for entering the legislature in some countries (Wills-Otero, 2009). Moreover, party splits often yield insignificant parliamentary factions that lack the influence to emerge as meaningful partisan contenders. As a result, such parties should be excluded due to their empirical and theoretical insignificance.

However, setting the threshold too high would risk excluding potentially valuable cases from the sample. Therefore, we have opted for a moderate threshold, defining parties as relevant if they have received at least five percent of the vote in any parliamentary election. In addition, we exclude short-term electoral alliances, which are still included at stage one.<sup>3</sup> Implementing this filter has significantly reduced the number of cases under consideration to less than 100 or by more than 80 percent compared to stage one. Nevertheless, the universe of cases remains broad and highly heterogeneous. To achieve a theoretically meaningful category, further specifications beyond electoral performance are necessary. This is why we propose a third level to identify a subset of new parties that can be considered potentially relevant for party system change.

By moving through the different stages of party development, we are able to reduce the number of potential independent variables and focus on a relevant set of cases. Achieving the first stage primarily involves meeting formal registration requirements, which may have some influence on the composition of the party systems. In most cases, however, party registration requirements are minimal and do not pose significant barriers to the emergence of new parties (Su 2015). As a result, progressing through the first stage depends on factors that are largely constant and homogeneous and can therefore be disregarded.

An examination of the second stage reveals a more complex scenario. The factors that facilitate a party's entry into parliament and the ability to reach the 5 percent threshold are multifaceted, stemming from both the systemic and party-specific levels. These factors include electoral barriers, cleavage structures, societal support, regional strongholds, leadership, issue salience, resource availability, and, more generally, political opportunity structures. All these elements influence a new party's electoral performance and, consequently, its potential for party system change. However, some of these factors are circumstantial and can be expected to vary unsystematically across a larger number of cases and countries.

<sup>3</sup> The distinction between parties and electoral alliances was challenging in some cases, especially in cases such as the Uruguayan *Frente Amplio*, which began as a loose association of smaller parties but evolved over time into an integrated party. Hence, we have chosen to retain those new formations that have achieved a certain level of organizational integration, such as Argentina's Alianza TJE, while excluding mere electoral alliances such as the Venezuelan MAS/MIR alliance. In the case of Colombia, we included in the sample those variants of the traditional parties that emerged as new parties after 1960, using as criteria the data from Nohlen (2005) and the assessment of country experts.



Moreover, factors such as electoral thresholds only affect parliamentary entry and do not necessarily determine a party's subsequent trajectory towards success. Only a limited subset of factors remains relevant for the final step to success and must be considered at the subsequent stage. Therefore, there is not necessarily a selection bias associated with stage two, as suggested by Harmel (1985: 407), as long as the entry of new parties is seen as a necessary but insufficient condition for success.

Progressing through stages one and two not only reduces the number of cases to a more relevant and manageable subset of new parties but also reduces the number of factors to be considered in theorizing party system change. As a result, theoretical investigations can focus on stage three, as variation in relevant characteristics is still preserved.

### THE CONCEPT OF BREAK-IN-PARTIES

Among the large number of new parties that entered the second stage, we observed a striking trend: a significant number of these parties experienced rapid success and attained significant vote shares at some point. After that, however, their trajectories diverged. While some became institutionalized or even gained control of the national executive, others turned out to be “flash parties” (Mustillo, 2009). In essence, numerous parties emerged as serious challengers to the *statu quo*, but not all were able to overcome the final hurdle to success and institutionalization. In order to construct and evaluate theories that explain this divergence, it is not enough to examine only successful cases. Instead, what is needed is a category that bridges the gap between the outcome of interest on the one hand and the broad category of relevant new parties identified in stage two. To delineate such a third category, we apply two additional criteria: organizational and programmatic novelty, both of which are context-dependent and require further elaboration.

Organizational newness means that a party is new not only in name but also in substance, which implies that it is organized and sustained to a significant degree by political outsiders or individuals who have not previously been affiliated with established parties, the legislature, or the executive branch. Pertinent questions about new parties primarily concern parties that emerge from outside the established elite, especially those related to resources and organization: How does a new party organize its base and mobilize its supporters during election campaigns? Parties founded by insiders typically have access to organizational and communication resources and thus do not meet the criteria for addressing such questions. Only parties that are at least partially products of counter-elites can be expected to provide theoretically relevant insights.

The presence of outsiders is also important in terms of a new party's impact on the party system and the dynamics of party competition. While parties founded by insiders typically have minimal impact on the overall structure of representation,

especially on cleavage dynamics, genuinely new parties have the potential to induce substantial change. This requires not only the involvement of political outsiders, but also a degree of programmatic innovation. Parties that focus primarily on patronage or that are founded by business leaders to advance personal interests do not qualify in this context, even if they are founded by political outsiders. Thus, we define novelty not only in terms of personnel but also in terms of program.

Programmatic innovation, however, is difficult to capture and highly context dependent. Lucardie (2000) outlines three categories of programmatic innovators: those who advocate for marginalized groups or issues, those who seek to restore ideological orthodoxy, and those who introduce a new ideology altogether. But “to distinguish new issues and ideologies from old ones is more straightforward in theory than in practice”, he notes (Lucardie, 2000: 177). The extent of programmatic innovation depends on the positions of established parties as well as the expectations and perceptions of the electorate, which are difficult to discern. Moreover, electoral platforms may encompass different policy dimensions, and a new party may propose innovative policies in one dimension while adhering to conventional approaches in others.

To address these challenges, we adopt a broader definition of programmatic innovation as challenging the *statu quo*, whether by introducing a new policy dimension or by representing new groups within the electorate. Such a challenge typically involves some form of direct action, a common strategy among political outsiders. This is true not only for parties that emerge directly from social movements (*cf. e.g.*, Anria, 2019) but also for conservative elite parties such as Argentina’s *UCeDe*, which relied on student activists to expand its support base (Gibson *et al.*, 1990; Lucca *et al.*, 2024). We expect BIPS to attempt, at least occasionally, to bolster their electoral efforts through popular mobilization, which can be seen as an indicator of programmatic novelty. They are not necessarily populist or anti-establishment parties, but they often employ anti-establishment discourse.

In some cases, however, challenging the *statu quo* may go too far. Innovation is different from disruption. Anti-system parties, for instance, challenge not only established policies and actors, but also challenge the institutional and societal framework as a whole (Capoccia, 2002). Such parties exhibit a disregard for the established rules of democratic competition and may resort to violent tactics to attain influence and power. A notable example of an anti-system party is the *Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti* (MIP) in Bolivia, which openly advocated for the dismantling of the state itself (DeLaFuente, 2002). The impact of anti-system parties on the party system, as well as their prospects for institutionalization, differ markedly from those of moderate parties operating within established institutional frameworks. By opposing the very foundations of democratic participation and competition, they represent a qualitatively distinct phenomenon. While moderate

new parties have the potential to reshape the dynamics of competition and representation, anti-system parties generate intense polarization between defenders of the system and those seeking its overthrow or destruction. Consequently, the implications of the emergence of anti-system parties are highly unique and warrant a separate consideration from that of BIPs.

In light of these considerations, we adopted a two-dimensional framework for assessing party newness. One dimension examines a new party's stance towards the established political order, while the other evaluates the extent of outsider representation in the party leadership. Both dimensions are scored on a five-point ordinal scale, ranging from established/traditional to entirely new. Within the first dimension, a party qualifies as a BIP if it falls within the range of two to four, indicating programmatic positions that span from moderate to strong opposition towards the political *statu quo*. A score of one on this scale signifies complete alignment with the *statu quo*, while a score of five indicates radical anti-system tendencies, often accompanied by occasional violent activity. Parties scoring one or five are excluded, with the BIP category falling between these extremes (see Table 2).

Regarding the second dimension, we have refrained from purist definitions of genuinely new parties, which are not very helpful for the study of new parties in Latin America. Empirically, the factual conditions of party formation are such that there are very few relevant parties that were founded exclusively by political outsiders. Therefore, we chose a threshold of 50 percent, following Barnea and Rahat's (2011) approach, to avoid an overly restrictive definition that yields very few cases, which would be unsatisfactory from a methodological perspective. A party is considered sufficiently new when it occupies positions three through five on the scale

**TABLE 2.** Criteria for differentiating break-in parties from traditional parties

	Origin of party elites, political insiders vs. outsiders (1: traditional; 5 completely new)					
	1	2	3	4	5	
Relation to the <i>statu quo</i> (1: traditional/ accommodationist; 5: antisystem)	1	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional	Traditional
	2	Traditional	Traditional	BIP	BIP	BIP
	3	Traditional	Traditional	BIP	BIP	BIP
	4	Traditional	Traditional	BIP	BIP	BIP
	5			Antisystem		

*Source:* Own elaboration.

ranging from half (three) to completely new (five). This framework allows for the inclusion of a certain proportion of insiders, approximately up to 50 percent, while also mandating the participation of an equal or greater proportion of outsiders. The categorization scheme is shown in Table 2.

These criteria were applied to the 95 parties identified at stage two, encompassing parties founded between 1960 and 2002 that had received at least 5 percent of the vote in a general election and thus had achieved a certain level of importance within the party system. We subjected these parties to an expert survey conducted by 40 specialists in parties and party systems in Latin America, with each party being evaluated by at least three experts. This method is particularly well suited for assessing latent concepts that are not directly observable and require a high degree of contextualization (Benoit and Wiesehomeier, 2009). The use of a relatively coarse scaling system with clearly defined endpoints allows for the assessment of different party types within the same framework, while the homogeneous nature of the South American context ensures consistency in assessments across countries and cases<sup>4</sup>. Together with the universe of relevant parties from stage two, the resulting 24 cases of BIPs are shown in Table 3.

**TABLE 3.** Relevant new parties and break-in parties (by country), 1960-2002

Country	Relevant new parties	BIPs (STAGE 3)	Fundation	Electoral participation	Maximum vote share (%)
Argentina	Alianza de Centro; Alianza Popular Federal; Alianza TJE; Frepaso; MID; PI; UCEde; Unión del Pueblo Argentino; Unión Popular	Alianza TJE	1997	1997-2001	43.8
		Frepaso-Frente para um país solidário	1994	1995-2001	20.7
		UCeDe-Unión del Centro Democrático	1982	1983-2004	6.0
Bolivia	ADN; ADN/NFR/PDC; ADRN; AP (ADN-MIR)-Acuerdo Patriótico; CDC-Comunidad Democrática Cristiana; Condepa; Condepa-MP; FRB; IU; MBL; MIR; MNRI; MRP; PS-1; UCS; UDP; MAS	UCS-Unidad Cívica Solidaridad	1989	1993-2005	16.1
		Condepa-Conciencia de Patria	1988	1989-2002	14.3
		MNRI-Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda	1971	1978-1985	5.5
		PS/PS-1-Partido Socialista/ Partido Socialista Uno	1971/1978	1978-2002	8.7
		MAS-Movimiento al Socialismo	1995	2002-	54.0

<sup>4</sup> Determining the degree of programmatic and personnel innovation can be challenging, especially for older parties where competent experts and conclusive sources may not be available. In such cases, the secondary literature has been used to determine the proportion of outsiders in a new party.

**TABLE 3.** Relevant new parties and break-in parties (by country), 1960-2002 (continuation)

Country	Relevant new parties	BIPs (STAGE 3)	Foundation	Electoral participation	Maximum vote share (%)
Brazil	Arena; MDB; PDS; PDT; PFL; PMDB; PPR/PPB; PRN; PSDB; PT	PT-Partidos dos Trabalhadores	1980	1982-	18.4
Chile	Padena; PDC; PN; PPD; RN; UDI	PPD-Partido por la Democracia*	1987	1989-	14.7
Colombia	PL-Oficialistas (1960); MRL; PC-Unionistas (1960); PC-Alzaospinistas (1960); Anapo (1962); PL-MRL (Línea Dura); PL-Oficialistas Disidentes (1968); Lauro-Alzatistas; Liberales Pastrinistas; Liberales Rojistas (Anapo); Conservadores Rojistas (Anapo); Conservadores Pastranistas; Conservadores Belisaristas; Sourdistas; AD/M-19; Anapo (1974); MSN; NL; PSC	MRL-Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal	1960	1960-1966	19.4
		Alianza Democrática/M-19	1990	1990-2002	10.3
		Anapo-Alianza Nacional Popular	1961	1962-1982; 1990	14.4
Ecuador	ACC; Alianza PLRE/FRA; CID; DP/UDC; FADI; FDN; FLR; FVP; ID; MPD; MUPP-NP; PD; PRE; PSC; PUR; PEN	ID-Izquierda Democrática	1978	1978-2009	21.8
		MPD-Movimiento Popular Democrático	1979	1978-2009	6.1
		MUPP-NP-Movimiento Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutic	1995	1996-	10.8
		PRE-Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano	1982	1984-2013	20.4
Peru	C90; Code; Fredemo; IS; IU; PPC	C90-Cambio 90	1990	1990-2011	51.1
		IU-Izquierda Unida	1980	1985-1995	24.4
Paraguay	PLR	None			
Uruguay	FA; FldeL; NE	FA-Partido Frente Amplio	1971	1971; 1984-	40.1
Venezuela	FDP; IPFN; LCR; MAS; MAS/MIR; MEP; MVR; PV	LCR o La Causa R-La Causa Radical	1971	1983-2010	20.7
		MAS-Movimiento al Socialismo	1971	1973-2010	10.8
		MVR-Movimiento V República**	1997	1997-2006	44.4
		PV-Proyecto Venezuela	1988	1998-2000	10.4

*Source:* Own elaboration based on Nohlen (2005), Szajkowski (2005), Pérez-Liñán *et al.* (2023), Expert Survey. \*The Chilean PPD is a borderline case in regard to personnel innovation, but as it emerged still during the Pinochet dictatorship, its founders, many of whom stemmed from the Socialist Party, can be regarded as political outsiders. \*\*The MVR is a borderline case, too. On the one hand, its leader, Hugo Chávez, had tried to overturn the existing system by force in 1992, but by the time when he founded the MVR, he respected constitutional rules.

**BREAK-IN PARTIES IN SOUTH AMERICA: CHARACTERISTICS AND THEORETICAL RELEVANCE**

The subset of 24 parties identified as BIPs and listed in Table 3 represents a significantly more diverse and comprehensive sample compared to previous studies on new party success and party system change in Latin America (*e.g.*, López, 2005; Van Dyck, 2017). It includes movement parties such as the Bolivian MAS or the Brazilian PT, as well as parties representing the middle class and elite, such as *Proyecto Venezuela* or the Argentine *UCeDE*. The spectrum of programmatic positions within this category ranges from moderate to radical opposition to the status quo, and from conservative to left-wing ideologies. Moreover, the BIP category offers a wide variation not only in terms of success but also in terms of the institutionalization of new parties.

Within this category, there are parties such as the Venezuelan *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) or the Bolivian Condepa, which, despite never gaining power, have maintained relevance over several electoral cycles and solidified their organizational and ideological presence within the party system. Conversely, parties such as Anapo in Colombia struggled to develop a clear ideological identity and failed to stabilize their electoral base. Moreover, electoral trajectories varied significantly, with some parties experiencing continuous growth in their vote share over time, while others, such as Frepaso in Argentina, experienced a rapid rise followed by an equally rapid decline. The primary rationale for focusing on this subset of new parties, however, is their importance in driving party-system change, a point that will be elucidated through examples of both successful and failed BIPs.

The term BIP implies that these parties not only gain significant vote shares but also represent new actors, social groups, and issues. As such, they are potential agents of party-system change, which Peter Mair defines as “a change in the prevailing structure of competition. That is, a party system changes when there is a change in the pattern of government alternation, when a new governing alternative emerges, and/or when a new party or alliance of parties gains access to office for the first time” (Mair, 2006: 66). Thus, party-system change in this sense is related to, but conceptually independent from the definition of BIPs. On the one hand, party systems can change for reasons other than BIPs, such as the formation of new alliances or shifts in electoral weight among established parties. On the other hand, new parties crossing the definitional threshold of BIPs do not necessarily imply a change in the prevailing patterns of party competition. Indeed, among the 24 cases listed in Table 3, there are several examples of largely insignificant BIPs. A closer look at some of these cases reveals that party-system change occurs when BIPs transform from challengers and potential innovators into stable and viable partisan alternatives.

Particularly in cases where BIPs have come to power, such as the FA in Uruguay, the MAS in Bolivia, the MVR in Venezuela, or the PT in Brazil, they have profoundly



changed the political landscape of their respective countries, for better or for worse. In Uruguay, for example, the FA fundamentally transformed the country's long-standing two-party system, electorally integrating the lower strata of society and enacting far-reaching reforms in areas ranging from social policy to health care (Fuentes 2010; Luna 2008). Similarly, Brazil's PT emerged as an entirely new type of party with a well-defined, ideologically distinct membership and support base (Amaral and Power, 2016; Keck, 1992). After two decades of steady electoral growth, the PT took power in 2002 and governed for 13 years, overseeing a period of robust economic expansion and significant poverty reduction. Despite losing power in 2016, the PT remained a key force in Brazilian politics and was able to regain the presidency in 2022 (Borges and Vidigal, 2018; Summa, 2022).

A fundamental change in the patterns of government alternation occurred in Venezuela, where a diverse and volatile partisan landscape gave way to a bipolar party system after the emergence of Chavismo in the late 1990s (Pastor and Dalmau, 2000). Hugo Chávez's highly personalized rule and expansive economic policies garnered him a devoted following and created an enduring myth that has outlasted his death in 2013 (Kestler and Latouche, 2022). Similar to Chávez, the Bolivian MAS led by Evo Morales changed not only the pattern of government alternation, but also the cleavage structures underlying party competition (Bonifaz and Faguet, 2022). Yet another example of radical change is Alberto Fujimori's tenure in Peru, which resulted in a shift towards authoritarianism. While Fujimori successfully quelled a violent leftist guerrilla movement and stabilized the economy, he also dissolved the legislature and undermined institutional checks and balances (Crabtree, 2001).

A notable impact of BIPS can also be observed in cases where these parties did not gain the presidency but managed to establish themselves as relevant partisan forces. For example, according to Plumb (1998: 103), the Chilean PPD "successfully challenged traditional party politics in Chile by developing an alternative political culture and electoral strategy". In Bolivia, Condepa catalyzed significant impulses for reform when it "broke into the political scene" (Romero Ballivián, 2003: 68) in the late 1980s, garnering vote shares between 11 and almost 20 percent from 1989 through 1997. Mayorga (2001: 305) notes that Condepa facilitated an "amplification of the social support base of representative democracy" and introduced "new cultural, social, and political codes" as well as "new demands and identities into the political discourse". Similarly, in Ecuador, the MUPP-NP has contributed to putting indigenous interests on the political agenda.

Nonetheless, party-system change does not necessarily involve BIPS. For example, Carlos Menem, a Peronist who succeeded Raúl Alfonsín of the UCR in the Argentine presidency in 1989, reshaped patterns of party competition by forming a populist coalition that included the export sector and the middle class. In Venezu-


ela, President Carlos Andrés Pérez from the traditional *Acción Democrática* produced large-scale partisan de-alignment by reversing the economic course by 180 degrees soon after taking office in 1989. What followed was the collapse of the traditional two-party system and the rise of Hugo Chávez. Conversely, there are examples of BIPs that faltered shortly after their electoral rise and failed to exert a significant influence on the party system. In these cases, the evolution of the party system took a distinct turn, often reverting to established patterns. This was the case in Argentina, where the setbacks of *UCeDe* in the 1980s and *Alianza TJE* in the early 2000s led to the re-emergence of new variants of Peronism. In other cases, the failure of BIPs cleared the way for the emergence of more radical, populist parties. Peru's *Izquierda Unida*, for example, achieved significant vote shares in the mid-1980s but failed to clear the final hurdle to success or institutionalization, which helped create the conditions for the rise of Alberto Fujimori, who inherited the IU's electoral base among the urban poor after the party's dissolution at the end of the decade (Sanborn, 1991). Similarly, the Venezuelan *La Causa R* failed to fill the representational void that existed in the mid-1990s. Instead, the traditional politician Rafael Caldera returned to the presidency.

Thus, the fortunes of BIPs vary widely, with profound implications for the party system and broader democratic development in their respective countries. While the emergence of BIPs has important innovative potential, only their success and institutionalization bring about significant changes in the party system.

## CONCLUSION

Conceptualizations of new parties have often prioritized parsimony or convenience over theoretical rigor, resulting in large numbers of highly diverse cases. While such approaches are suitable for quantitative analyses of new party development, they are of limited use for answering more nuanced questions about new party success and institutionalization. Limiting the number of cases by choosing specific party types or countries, on the other hand, increases the risk of selection bias and reduces variation in crucial variables.

To address these challenges, we developed an intermediate category called "break-in-parties" (BIPs) and identified a subset of 24 such parties founded between 1960 and 2002. What these parties have in common is their potential to disrupt established patterns of representation and party competition, while at the same time exhibiting variation in critical independent and dependent variables. The concept of BIP is intended to narrow the focus of analysis to potentially relevant cases and to facilitate the testing of theoretical assumptions about party-system change. By striking a balance between relevance and innovative potential, on the one hand, and inclusiveness on the other, the concept helps to eliminate irrelevant factors and to focus on theoretically meaningful differences across countries and cases.

In the Latin American context, we chose a low threshold of relevance and moderate levels of programmatic and personnel innovation to obtain a sufficiently inclusive subset of cases. For other regions and time periods, the thresholds may be moderately adjusted in one or the other direction to account for contextual variations. In addition, the territorial and temporal scope may be adjusted either to control for additional factors or to include cases of more recent origin. Thus, the universe of 24 BIPs does not serve as a definitive inventory or closed category but rather as a starting point and conceptual foundation for the study of new parties in Latin America and other regions. 

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