

Adrián Albala *Editor*

# Civil Society and Political Representation in Latin America (2010–2015)

Towards a Divorce Between Social Move-  
ments and Political Parties?

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# Citizenship and Political Parties in Ecuador

Santiago Basabe-Serrano

## Introduction

When democracy returned to Ecuador, a new constitutional design was approved, and its main purpose was to encourage political representation through party-backed organizations. The main intent behind such reform was to channel the demands originated within social organizations to the political arena through parties. It started with two main ideas: First, the association capacity of citizens would increase as the democratic regime consolidates. Second, political parties would be able to collect social demands and transform them in public policy.

However, some decades after neither citizens gather around organizations with specific proposals nor parties became transmission devices for social demands. From a causal chain perspective, what really happened was that in the absence of well-organized social organizations, political parties took over a very different role to the one originally proposed. Since every party's final objective is the accumulation of power, the described political stage forced the parties to obtain votes by using very different links, like the use of *caudillos* and clientelism (Menéndez-Carrión 1986, 1990). Summarizing, political parties were unable to strengthen themselves due to the lack of social organizations with the capacity to establish specific demands.

Weakness in social organizations became more evident as new constitutional reforms allowed popular participation in elections without the condition of membership to a political party. The idea behind such reform was that there was some sort of civil association capacity and that, as a result, the so called “independents”

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would represent the interest of social organizations while in office. Thus, during the presidency of Sixto Durán-Ballén, on August 28, a referendum was called in which the electorate decided to allow nonmembers of political parties to run for office.<sup>1</sup> Such constitutional reform was observed by the very few existing social organizations who considered that it could be the ideal mechanism to get rid of the constraints of party membership. The real issue was the absence of strong civic organizations with a consolidated platform and structure (Conaghan and Espinal 1990; Menéndez-Carrión 1988).<sup>2</sup>

During the subsequent electoral processes in which some social movements managed to gain some positions within the legislature, what happened was that provincial or local *caudillos* organized their government agenda using social movements name tags. I define *caudillismo* as a personality-focused and semi-militarized regime whose party mechanisms, administrative procedures, and legislative functions are under direct control from the charismatic leader and his cohort of mediating officers (Silvert 1976). Considering a cost-benefit logic, it was more convenient for local *caudillos* to create an ad hoc social movement, free of party pressures, to present themselves in elections while making it “look like” such movement had a genuine social root. In fact, apart from the indigenous organization *Pachakutik* (PCK), no political or social movement had any representation more than one term between 1979 and 2014. Beyond electoral positions, every single political movement was related to the figure of local or provincial *caudillos*. Thus, once the *caudillos* left to a different political party or lose its electoral momentum, the social movements they represented disappeared.

Starting at the given empirical description, I state that the absence of organized citizens around some sort of civil association complicates the creation of organized and institutionalized political parties and, consequently, renders them unable of dealing with demands coming from society. Hence, political organizations look for different ways of reaching citizens. Local and national *caudillos* have become one of the most efficient ways of getting successful electoral results. Empirically, the Ecuadorian case is particularly interesting since after the victory of Rafael Correa in 2007 and what has come to be known as the end of the old party system (Pachano 2011; Machado Puertas 2007, 2008); the absence of social organizations has persisted; therefore, local and national *caudillos* remain as the sole linkage between electors and the political arena.

Much of the structure of Ecuadorian political life changed in 2007. This, however, did not translate into profound changes. Old practices and players are still in force. Although traditional political parties have almost disappeared, the dynamics of the governing *Alianza País* (AP) are evidence that proves that in a society without

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<sup>1</sup>During local elections – provincial deputies and counselors and municipal city council members – on June 1, 1986, a question which mentioned the possibility of allowing nonmembers of political parties to run for office was included. The result of the referendum favored the NO.

<sup>2</sup>What Menéndez-Carrión means is the absence of subaltern groups that represent the interest of the “common folk.” She tries to differentiate between those and the ones she calls oligarchic and bourgeois.

association capacity, any party-like organization can turn into an electoral machine whose *caudillo* becomes the main link between society and those in charge of political representation (Menéndez-Carrión 1986).

Thus, facing the absence of consolidated social organizations, parties transform into what researchers have come to call “catch all” parties, electoral machinery lacking any political or ideological project whose electoral bastion is solely based in *caudillos* and different forms of clientelism (Dix 1989; Kirchheimer 1966). Unlike studies that analyze endogenous variables to political organization as cause for the lack of popular support (Norris 2005), the main argument I present is that the absence of social organizations with the capacity to appropriately articulate their demands creates poorly institutionalized political parties. On the other hand, although I recognized that the strengthening or weakening of parties can depend largely on variables of institutional nature (Carreras 2012), my argument is that the starting point for an effective and lasting party system is the social capacity for association. Thus, my hypothesis is that as the citizens’ capacity for association weakens, so will the probabilities for institutionalized party organizations that effectively represent the citizens’ demands (Basabe-Serrano 2016). Consequently, societies with a strong conception on the importance of civic association tend to have strong political parties, well linked to the demands coming from different groups of the population.

This chapter is made of four parts. First, a review of the related literature which includes different explanations for the collapse and weakening of political parties. Second, a theoretical framework based on Tocqueville’s ideas on citizens’ association and its effects on politics, especially political parties. In the third part, I will analyze diachronically the performance of Ecuadorian political parties with the intention of verifying the hypothesis presented in the previous theoretical discussion. The fourth part includes some conclusions and main ideas that could support an agenda for future research on the relation between citizens’ association capacity and political groups’ behavior.

## **On the Weakening of Parties: Classical Approaches**

One of the most traditional explanations on the collapse of parties and party systems is their weak relations with different social groups (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). A political elite analysis as the one previously mentioned or other following the same tradition is quite intuitive although it is based on the reification of social sectors. From this perspective, the existence of social organizations is considered “given”; thus, the creation of political platforms by parties is also given in function of a preset body of social demands. Hence, the weakening of parties is explained by endogenous reasons to political organizations. Likewise, such theoretic proposals assume that parties can pick up social demands even when citizens are not organized.

On the other hand, there is research that identifies ecological and endogenous variables as the main cause for the incipient grow or fall of political parties. From this perspective, a country's socioeconomic problems and the parties' inability to solve the incumbent conflicts are the main reason for the weakening of political organizations (Seawright 2012; Morgan 2011; Levitsky and Cameron 2003; Tanaka 1998). Roberts (2007) follows the same framework when he indicates that economic crisis and the incumbent economic adjustment reforms weakened parties and union organization which led to the emergence of "outsiders." In addition to the presented explanations, some authors would add corruption scandals to the main reasons for the collapse of political parties (Dietz and Myers 2007; Coppedge 2005; Kenney 2004).

Although corruption scandals and poor effectiveness in dealing with complicated economic and social scenarios could influence the parties' performance, a historical approach shows us that there is no correlation between such phenomena and the downfall of party organization. In the Ecuadorian case, for example, the severe economic crisis which started by the fall of oil prices during President Febres-Cordero's term did not have any direct effect on the president's own party: the center right *Partido Social Cristiano* (PSC). In fact, after Febres-Cordero's term (1984–1988), PSC became the largest electoral force in Ecuador. *Izquierda democrática* (ID) and *Democracia Popular* (DP) are two other parties that went through similar situations.

Regarding corruption scandals, the variable does not seem to be very valid for the Ecuadorian case since there is no direct correlation between such variable and the weakening of party organizations. In 1997, President Bucaram was impeached due to mismanagement of public funds by some of his closest collaborators in the government. Nevertheless, the capacity of *Partido Roldocista Ecuatoriano* (PRE) to get positions in the legislature did not fall. In fact, during the 1998 elections, PRE became the third partisan force in congress with 20% of the seats. The same happened with *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* (PSC). After a series of corruption scandals led to the ousting of President Guitierrez in April 2005, his party kept its electoral life. In 2006, for example, PSP became the second partisan force in congress with 23% of the seats.

There is an additional proposal indicating that the weakening of Latin-American political parties took place in the 1980s and 1990s, and it was a consequence of the contradictions between policies implemented by parties and their ideological principles. Such behavior could have had a weakening effect on the parties' reputation and credibility within the electorate. Hence, the diminishing legitimacy and poor performance in the administration of the state could explain the collapse of political organizations (Lupu 2014: 564). In this perspective both endogenous variables related to the parties and attitudinal variables, related to the electorate, are considered as explanation for the weakening of political parties.

As has been described, when it comes to explaining the different causes for the fall of political parties in Latin-American, the most common theories appeal to variables related to the inner workings of parties or other factors like the economic and social environments. However, such perspectives are missing the role played by

citizen organizations around professional, craftsmen associations, student movements, or any other kind of collective action started “from below.” Considering this gap, I propose a theoretical framework in which the capacity for civic association in different fields and organizational structures are highlighted as the starting point for the emergence and strengthening of party organizations.

## **Citizens’ Organization and Political Parties: A Theoretical Perspective Coming from Civic Association**

The main idea of this chapter is that the creation of spaces for citizens’ association allows the emergence not only of a more egalitarian society but also of strong political parties with the ability to connect to their electors’ demands. As previously mentioned, what explains the weakening or lack of endurance of political parties in the region – like in the Ecuadorian case – is the limited capacity of citizens to organize around civic associations. By civic association I mean any kind of organization with clear political objectives and goals; thus, within this description we can find professional or craftsmen associations, small entrepreneurs, different kind of clubs (literary, cinematographic, artistic), and students associations, among others.

The causal logic linking the strengthening of different forms of citizens’ associations and the strength or weakness of parties is as follows: Once citizens have decided to undertake some form of specific organization a group with common interests is established. These aggregated demands, present in an isolated manner in each of the members of the group, not only allow to guide the dynamics of organizations toward common objectives but also give information to the electoral market on the voters’ demands. In other words, the reduction of the diverse individual demands around a small collective platform allows political parties to identify more clearly the topics that should have a direct and punctual political response with the objective of getting electoral support.

Once parties can pick up groups of demands from citizens’ associations, a medium to long-term cooperation relation emerges. Such linkage can be understood as an interactive game of the prisoner’s dilemma – a super game – which facilitates what has come to be known as party “rooting.” Therefore, the longer the relationship stretches in time the stronger the parties become. Unlike clientelism, in this case we found an ideological platform from the parties which coincide with specific social organizations. Since social demands come from different ideological backgrounds, the number of political parties is determined by the heterogeneity in a given society. From this perspective, parties are aware of the demands made by certain parts of civic associations and take them as market information which will allow them to elaborate their program for the electoral campaign.

As a logical effect of the electoral market, when the links between the social organization and its political party deteriorate, new political groups would emerge with an interest in connecting with such demands. Therefore, the fall of some parties

comes with the emergence of new ones. This makes a total collapse of the system very unlikely. Besides, when social demands are previously established, it is very unlikely for a party with specific links to certain social organizations to simply take new positions. Radical ideological change of a political group could be one of the few possible causes for the migration of social groups from one party to another. In Ecuador, the ideological transition of *Democracia Popular*, from center left in the 1980s to center right in the mid-1990s, could be an empirical case that allows us to observe not only a party's ideological twist but also the electoral effects that come from such change.

In the opposite scenario, when there are little to none civic associations within the population, the information received by the parties tends to be ambiguous. Thus, political groups will try to fulfill their institutional morale through other means.<sup>3</sup> In such scenario, the use of *caudillos* and clientelism emerge as a logical result of partisan need of accomplishing their main goal: to stay valid in the political arena. Hence, the very existence of party organization will be contingent on the performance of *caudillos* and the emergence of new organizations operating under the same logic. It should be noted that in this case party weakness has nothing to do with their performance but with the presence or absence of different forms of civic associations.

The idea of the effects of social organization on party consolidation is an argument originated in the theses that Alexis de Tocqueville presents in his seminal work "Democracy in America." In fact, one of the main theses presented by him while analyzing the American democracy is that equality seems to be reflected in the strength of social organizations, which, at the same time, also have a direct consequence on political institutions such as parties. Hence, in more egalitarian societies, in which the citizens gather around common ventures, political parties can find specific and organized demands. Besides, parties can pick up such demands with well-defined platforms. In time, the established links become stronger.

Therefore, my theoretical proposal must not be taken as the possibility of social organizations replacing political parties. On the contrary, my main thesis is that as long as there is some level of civic association capacity, political parties can focus their efforts in capturing specific segments of the population through a defined ideological position. Thus, while the social organization strengthens itself and citizens commence to realize the capacity for political action, parties constitute the ideal mechanism for the communication of demands from citizens to the political system (Tocqueville 2005: 728). From this perspective, the possibility of civic association serving as a restraint on possible excesses from those who govern and their political parties is not a contradiction (Tocqueville 2005: 729). Hence, while social organization facilitates the strengthening of parties, it can also serve as an actor of accountability and social control over the activities of those who are elected.

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<sup>3</sup>According to Hardin (2003: 164–165), institutional morale is the definition of objectives and probable effects.



## Ecuador: Weak Civil Association and Poorly Institutionalized Political Parties

The return to democracy came with the birth of a new cohort of political parties. Unfortunately, citizen organization did not follow. Very few new organizations emerged. Some that already existed during the dictatorship used the friendly environment to strengthen themselves. Nevertheless, civic organizations did not flourish (Hurtado and Herudek 1974). In some cases, social organizations weakened, and the parties that represented their interest were affected in the electoral field. Some even disappeared. However, other parties, facing the absence of social organizations to link with, turn into electoral machines deeply dependent on a temporary *caudillo* and his image. The political behavior of both types of parties was accentuated with the passing of time until the links between the political actors and the electorate collapsed. This led to a reconfiguration of the political system. This breaking point came at the end of 2006 right after Rafael Correa's victory.

There are several parties that were born with links with citizen associations and that were eventually weakened. Consequently, such political organizations lost electoral seats. Parties like *Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano* (PSE), *Movimiento Popular Democrático* (MPD), *Pachacutick* (PCK), *Izquierda Democrática* (ID), and *Democracia Popular* (DP) are good examples. The first three parties were born from workers' and teachers' unions and indigenous organizations. The two remaining parties had links with professional guilds and associations (Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001). In every case, the weakening of the associations forced the parties to survive through diverse means. In the end, except for PCK and PSE, the parties collapsed, and the political system acquires a new rationality.

During the 1980s, *Frente Unitario de Trabajadores* (FUT) was one of the most influential groups in the political spectrum. It was composed by second level union organizations. FUT had an active political life through permanent demands in the interest of workers and union activity. Although its mobilization capacity was autonomous, as demonstrated by the overwhelming strikes organized during president Hurtado and Febres-Cordero's presidencies (Conaghan and Espinal 1990: 25), FUT's demands were transferred to the political arena by *Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano* (PSE).<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, union organizations were significantly weakened. Internal conflicts within FUT and the labor reform during president Borja's term, which introduced institutional restrictions for the creation of company committees, were lethal blows for union associations.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, political parties connected to such organizations lost electoral space rapidly. This is reflected in PSE's legislative representation numbers. Between 1988

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<sup>4</sup>Back in the 1980s, *Partido Frente Amplio de Izquierda* (FADI) was another receptor of union organizations demands. The passing of time brought FADI and PSE close until they merge into what is nowadays known as *Partido Socialista-Frente Amplio* (PS-FA).

<sup>5</sup>The mentioned labor reform was presented in bill 133 and turned into law on November 1991.

and 1992, the PSE won 11 seats (8.39% of the total). This meant an increase from the 1984–1988 period in which the PSE got seven seats (8.39% of the total). However, during the 1992–1996 period, his legislative seats fell to just two seats (1.40% of the total). The weakening of union organizations, especially FUT, had a direct effect in the pressure capacity of such groups. Consequently, the political influence of their parties wane considerably. In fact, starting in 1996, PSE strength fell to the marginal level we see today. Unlike other parties, which draw upon *caudillos* and clientelism when the civil associations that sustained them weakened, the PSE has tried to maintain their electoral registry using local alliances with related political groups.

Another example of a social organization with strong partisan links was the case of the Unión Nacional de Educadores (UNE), a teacher's union, and MPD, a Maoist party. Since the late 1970s and during the democratization process, UNE became the largest guild of primary and secondary education teachers. Provided with a strong, leftist, and radical ideological foundation and a solid relationship with student's associations, UNE turned into the perfect hotbed for MPD's political leaders. In the same way as FUT, UNE had its own mobilization capacity through rallies and popular demonstrations; but, at the same time, MPD was its main communication line with the political system.

Although MPD's legislative bench was never larger than 10% of congress, it had the best distribution of votes around the country (Pachano 2004). Unlike other partisan organizations based in regional cleavages, the fact that UNE was disseminated around the country gave MPD access to areas that were considered inaccessible by other parties. Thus, both UNE and MPD's radical leftist discourse was successfully positioned in a very small but quite loyal electoral niche. In fact, during the 1992–1996 term, which coincided with president Duran-Ballen's government and the enforcement of some structural reforms passed into law (Lora and Panizza 2002), MPD reached the highest number of congressional seats in its history (10 Seats or 7.04% of the total).

After maintaining some electoral agreements with president Rafael Correa, the relation between UNE, MPD, and the executive power turn into confrontation after the approval of the 2008 constitution. Apart from an ironhard ideological discipline, UNE's strength was also heavily dependent on the association capacity and mandatory economic contribution from each of its members. The government acted to weaken UNE by establishing that membership to any organization must be voluntary. On the other hand, as an externality of reforms to the higher education system, many UNE's and MPD's political frames lost influence and power and saw their resource management capacity greatly reduced. Finally, the government's persecution policies targeted several social actors, including several UNE leaders, like its president, Mery Zamora, who was accused of sabotage and terrorism.

Consequently, UNE lost much of its power and legitimacy among its popular based with the corresponding loss of power for its political arm: MPD. In fact, during the 2009–2013 legislative term, MPD only gained four seats by itself and two more using alliances (4.83% of the total). In the next election, it fell further with just four seats using alliances (2.91% of the total). As a corollary, after two elections

without reaching the electoral threshold, MPD has lost his legal status as a political entity at Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), the electoral authority.<sup>6</sup> Thus, this represents a new case of the weakening of a social organization followed by the fall of its political arm and its subsequent disappearance of the political arena.

Undoubtedly, the citizen association with the greatest capacity of articulation, presence, and strength in the national stage is *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE). This entity emerged from an agreement between the Amazonian leaders organized under *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía* (CONFENAIE) and the leaders of the highlands indigenous groups associated under the *Ecuadorunari* flag (Chiriboga 2004). As for the political field, CONAIE's demands were transferred to the political system through PCK. Despite CONAIE's influence in the public sphere, it was just in the 1996–1998 legislative term that PCK gained its first and largest representation in congress with eight seats (9.75% of the total).

The strength of the indigenous organization was stable during the coming years and hit its highest point in 2003, when an electoral alliance with *Partido Sociedad Patriótica* (PSP) and its leader, Lucio Gutierrez, won the presidency. In the legislative field, PCK won 14 seats in the 2003–2007 legislative term, 8 of them, as a result of electoral alliances (14% of the total).

However, the breakdown of the agreements with PSP not only implied PCK's exit of the government but also the exteriorization of a series of problems within CONAIE and its subsidiaries. Following the theoretical reasoning I have presented in this chapter, CONAIE's weakening created a series of fractures in its relations with PCK. In fact, during the subsequent elections, PCK's legislative representation fell to four and six seats between those gained on its own and through alliances (3.22% and 4.37% of the total, respectively). In addition to the palpable CONAIE's internal problems, we can also add the current persecution policies directed toward all those outside the government's project. CONAIE started crumbling due to specific policies directed at weakening the organization; the case is very similar to UNE's. For example, we can mention the criminal prosecution of Cléber Jiménez (a PCK's congressman) related to the September 30 events, or the government's decision of canceling the loan contract of the property serving as CONAIE's headquarters.<sup>7</sup> Thus, although PCK remains registered as a political group, the weakening of its linked social organization, CONAIE, has caused the waning of its influence and legislative representation.

On the other hand, a review of the institutional performance of the ID and DP parties also proves that the weakening of the citizen organization related to the parties led to the weakening and extinction of the political organization. Unlike MPD, PSE, or PCK, whose strength came from specific groups, the social base of ID and DP was disseminated among professional guilds and group of all kinds of nature

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<sup>6</sup>Currently, MPD has recovered as a political party although under a new nametag: Unidad Popular.

<sup>7</sup>During president Correa's visit to a police station on September 30, 2010, a group of police officers started a revolt that ended in the death of several people. According to the government, it was a failed coup in which the rebels tried to murder the president.

(Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001). In fact, during the 1980s both groups were the two largest parties in congress, although showing a large unbalanced electoral legitimacy. Most of their electoral strength was concentrated in the highlands, while they held very few power in the coastal region (Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001).

Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, the professional guilds and associations that formed ID's social bases dissolved. The beginning of a failed restructuring economic process and the depoliticization of society, combined with the poor conditions of civic associations in the country at that moment led to the weakening of the organizations represented by ID. We can also add the significant political weakening of the party during Rodrigo Borja's presidency (1988–1992) and internal conflicts due to the presence on competing leaderships. ID's poor electoral performance during the 1990s can be ascribed to all these facts. Although during the following decade we can observe an improvement in ID's legislative performance, such results were not related to social organizations but to temporary electoral alliances.

Thus, the 2007–2010 term, which had an early ending in 2008 because of the constituent assembly organized that year, ID gained 12 seats in the legislature, but 11 of them were a result of alliances (12% of the total). In the 2009–2013 term, the legislative representation was lower, with two congressmen from the party and three from alliances (4.03% of the total). Once again, we can observe how the weakening of social organizations causes its party downfall. Regarding DP, its relationship with civic associations had a similar fate. During its first years, DP's strength came from professional guilds, catholic worker's unions, and other social organizations (Freidenberg and Alcántara 2001). The links to such organizations allowed an ample legislative influence during the 1980s and even the early 1990s (Hurtado 1989). During the 1984–1988 term DP gained eight seats (6.15% of the total), while in the following two terms (1988–1992 and 1992–1996), the representation was stable (9.92% and 7.74% of the total, respectively). Nevertheless, the organizations on which DP was based never consolidated and started to lose influence. That and DP's ideological twist during the mid-1990s caused the weakening of the civic associations and the party itself. Although in the 1998–2003 term, DP gained its largest legislative representation it had ever obtained since the return to democracy (32 seats, 2 of them with alliances); its power was not coming from social organizations but from temporary alliances with different economic groups.

DP's accomplishments were temporary, the fact that all subsequent legislative representations after president Mahuad's ouster were some of the worst in party history is evidence enough (6% of the legislature in the 2003–2007 and 2007–2010 terms). Finally, in the 2009–2013 term, DP did not gain any seats and was eliminated from the electoral registry in the next elections. Thus, DP and ID are examples of parties that were born linked to civic associations that lost political influence with the passing of time. Consequently, the organizational structure of these parties and their capacity to transfer their social organizations' interest into the political arena were deeply affected.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, there is another pattern in party behavior. There are parties that never developed strong relationships with any social organizations or those that never developed such link whatsoever. These

parties always made use of *caudillos* and were active if their leader stayed in power or had some sort of political influence. In some cases, the *caudillo* disappears because of the end of the political cycle, like Abdalá Bucaram, Lucio Gutiérrez, or Alvaro Noboa. In other cases, the hegemony came to an end with the death of the *caudillo*, like Assad Bucaram and former president León Febres-Cordero. Hence, all the political actors I have mentioned share some basic characteristics: The use of a *caudillo* leadership, weak party organization, and, consequently, the absence of new political frames that would allow the party to continue existing once the *caudillo* disappears. President Correa and his party, AP, are included within this classification.

During the first post-dictatorial legislative term (1979–1984), Assad Bucaram was the *caudillo* of Concentración de Fuerzas Populares (CFP) and led this organization to win 29 seats in the now nonexistent house of representatives (42.02% of the total). Such victory made CFP the largest political force in congress during most of the democratic period.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the death of Bucaram at the end of 1981 marked the beginning of the end of the political party. Thus, during the 1984–1988 term, CFP's representation fell to seven congressmen (5.38% of the total) and in the subsequent elections (1988–1990 and 1990–1992) to six and three seats (4.58% and 2.29% of the total, respectively).

During posterior electoral processes, CFP's representation was even lower (0.70% and 1.40% in the 1992–1994 and 1994–1996 electoral terms, respectively) until it finally disappeared from the electoral registry.

The PSC is another case of a political group without any real link to social organizations that runs on a party-enterprise logic (Panebianco 1990). Although PSC represented the chambers of commerce and industry's demands in the political spectrum, it was an organization led by a *caudillo* and experimented its best political moment from the rise to power of former president Febres-Cordero until his demise. Consequently, his death brought about the rapid weakening of the party. In fact, during the 2013 elections, PSC only gained eight seats (5.83% of the total), the lowest representation the party has had during the entire democratic period.<sup>9</sup>

Following my theoretical proposal, those parties that do not represent previously established organizations can only keep their influence as long as the *caudillo* is present. In PSC's case, its legislative representation continuously grew during the 1990s until it reached its peak in the 1996–1998 term in which it gained 30.40% of the total seats in dispute (25 seats).<sup>10</sup> However, during the 1998–2003, there is an important drop in PSC's influence, and this coincides with the return of former president

<sup>8</sup> During the 2013–2017 term, Alianza País (AP) gained 100 seats, which represents 52.30% of the National Assembly.

<sup>9</sup> Only two out of the eight seats gained by PSC in 2013 actually came from the party. The remaining six were the result of alliances. Although four of those come from Movimiento Ciudadano Madera de Guerrero, which is a part of PSC based in Guayaquil. Thus, PSC's pure representation is even lower than the one gained in the 1979–1984 term (4.34% of the total).

<sup>10</sup> In the 1990–1992 period, PSC's representation started showing a permanent increase. It went from 16 seats in the 1990–1992 term (12.21% of the total) to 21 seats in the 1992–1994 term (14.78% of the total) and finally to 26 seats in the 1994–1996 term (18.43% of the total).

Febres-Cordero to national politics, right after having held office as mayor of Guayaquil in the 1992–2000 term. In fact, PSC's leader political decision of returning to national politics as a candidate to the legislature in 2003 could be interpreted as a necessity of his party, which was trying to link itself to the only national political frame it had with possibilities of electoral success.

Despite PSC's strong electoral outcome for the 2003–2007 term in which it gained 25 seats (25% of the total), its electoral success in the two following periods fell drastically (13% in the 2007–2008 term and 8.87% in the 2009–2013 term). Currently, the PSC is going through the legislative period with the lowest representation in its history. After the death of former president Febres-Cordero and the absence of civic associations organized around PSC, its electorate soon migrated to other political organizations led by *caudillos*, like AP and President Rafael Correa.

I have already mentioned how the end of a *caudillo's* political cycle can bring about the end of his party. That was the case of PRE and its leader, former president Abdalá Bucaram. There is no doubt that the early ousting of president Bucaram, after continuous corruption scandals and protests demanding his removal, had great effect on his party, a political organization that, even from its origins, was built around its *caudillo* figure (Pérez-Liñán 2007). Thus, after more than a decade of regular electoral performance, during the 1996–1998 term, PRE won the largest representation of its history: 21 seats (25.60% of the total) and also won the presidency.<sup>11</sup>

However, the fall of president Bucaram on February 17, only 6 months after been elected, and his political exile to Panama left PRE without his only political frame with electoral capacity. In fact, the loss of PRE's power and influence reached its peak in the 2009 and 2013 elections in which it only gained three and one seats (2.41% and 0.72% of the total, respectively). Such electoral results led to the non-completion of the minimum electoral requisites imposed by CNE and caused PRE's elimination from the legal registry as a political organization. The end of president Bucaram's political cycle, PRE's necessity for a *caudillo*, and the subsequent absence of any political frame make up the story of another party organization lacking civic organization to connect with.

The same can be said about Lucio Gutierrez and his party: Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP). PSP's political process is very similar to PRE's. The abrupt end of Gutierrez' presidency, which meant the end of his political cycle, and the subsequent weakening of his party, is a very similar story to Bucaram's. Although PSP's life in the national political scenario was short lived, it shares many traits with PRE and, to a lesser extent, with PSC. The electoral machine structure, *caudillo* leadership, and the lack of civic associations are all the same in these three cases. Thus, just as Gutierrez' influence fell, his party representation capacity followed and, in

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<sup>11</sup> During the 1984–1986, 1986–1988, and 1988–1990 electoral terms, PRE's legislative representation went from three to four to eight seats (2.30%, 3.07%, and 6.10% of the total, respectively). During the 1990s their presence increased to 13, 15, and 12 seats in the 1990–1992, 1992–1994, and 1994–1996 electoral terms (9.92%, 10.56%, and 8.45% of the total, respectively).



the same way as PRE's, PSP will see its political influence diminished even further.

PSP's first appearance in politics took place in the 2003 elections when Lucio Gutiérrez won the presidency for the 2003–2007 term. In the legislative field, PSP gained eight seats (8% of the total). Nevertheless, the government had a political alliance with the indigenous political party PCK which gave PSP larger legislative influence. Eventually, during the 2007–2010 term, PSP's legislative representation rose to 24 seats (24%). Paradoxically, such electoral victory came after the ouster of President Gutiérrez. However, PSP's lack of fresh political frames to replace Gutiérrez' absence combined with harsh critiques of PSP's time in power based on allegations of embezzlement drove the party to lose legislative representation in the 2009 elections, in which PSP gained 19 seats (15.32% of the total). As expected, PSP's bench in the 2013–2017 term fell to five seats (3.64% of the total). Although PSP has not disappeared from the political arena as the previously mentioned organizations, it is very likely that his influence and representation will continue to deteriorate without the emergence on an alternative to Gutiérrez' leadership.

We can find a similar pattern to PRE's in Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional (PRIAN), a party founded by the banana industry tycoon, Alvaro Noboa, who until now has run in the presidential elections five times.<sup>12</sup> Like any other party lacking previously formed organizations, PRIAN relies on clientelism and a *caudillo*. This party enjoyed a moment of great political influence in the 2003–2007 with 10 seats (10% total) and in the following period in which it gained 29 seats (29% of the total). In the 2009–2013 elections, PRIAN suffered a staggering loss of representation when it only gained seven seats (5.64% of the total), and in the last elections it lost its electoral registry at CNE since it did not gain any seats in the legislature. Although Noboa could run for the presidential office once again, his political cycle is spent which also means the end of his political organization.

The last political group that has emerged without the support of civic associations and that functions under an electoral machine logic, clientelism, and depends on a *Caudillo* is AP and his leader: Rafael Correa. Just like with Assad Bucaram (CFP), León Febres-Cordero (PSC), Abdalá Bucaram (PRE), Lucio Gutiérrez (PSP), and Álvaro Noboa (PRIAN), Rafael Correa is the only electoral frame AP has.

Although during his first electoral campaign, Correa appeared to be linked with diverse social organizations, such electoral support was purely conjunctural and was related with the struggles traditionally maintained among diverse parts of the population and political actors (Dávalos 2014; Saltos 2010; Larrea 2009). Thus, despite AP's initial connection with civic associations, the passing of time transformed AP into an organization reliant on clientelism and a *caudillo*, just like all of the other cases already mentioned. While Correa's sequential terms have different characteristics in the design and management of public policy to previous governments, in the field of connecting with social organizations, the differences are quite shallow. It is also important to notice that president Correa's strong popular support has been

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<sup>12</sup>Noboa ran for the presidency in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, and 2013.

used to establish a constitutional architecture to undermine basic liberties and eliminate horizontal accountability. (De la Torre 2013; Polga-Hecimovich 2013; Mejía Acosta 2011; Pachano 2010; Conaghan 2008). Thus, following my theoretical argumentation, as long as president Correa can maintain his political influence, AP will remain a strong party, just as CFP, PSC, PRE, PSP, and PRIAN were some of the strongest political groups in their respective moments.

During its first legislative elections (2009–2013), AP gained 59 seats (47.58% of the total). As I already mentioned, until AP's 2009 victory, the largest legislative bench since the return to the democracy in Ecuador's history was CFP's during his golden age under the leadership of Assad Bucaram (42.92% total). AP's legislative influence increased even more for the 2013–2017 legislative period in which it gained 100 seats (72.99% of the total). Although AP and president Correa are going through their best electoral moment, this line of events can be equated to the golden ages of parties that also used clientelism and a *caudillo*. On the other hand, even if AP could gain a larger popular support in the 2017 elections and president Correa maintains his high popularity, the current size of its bench combined with the natural political weathering of the governing party will probably lead to an inflection point in AP's power and influence making the possibility of a larger AP legislative bench quite unlikely.

The attempts for constitutional reform to allow unlimited reelection of President Rafael Correa are evidence of the theoretical argument I have presented in this chapter. Since party organizations without links to civic associations are dependent on the *caudillo* for their electoral success, it is a matter of political survival the pursue of the *caudillo*'s political permanency. In AP's case, the consequences of the lack of social bases and the absence of political frames beyond president Correa became evident in the 2014 regional elections in which AP suffered a clear defeat. It lost city halls and provincial prefects in which its candidates were running for reelection (AP's defeat in Quito, was the most emblematic). Apart from losing key urban centers, much of AP's political representation was the result of the creation of alliances with local *caudillos* who had been jumping among different political parties. Thus, although the political system has change, at least superficially, AP's trajectory as a political organization is not different from other *caudillo*-reliant parties that were present in Ecuador's political life.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the fall of political parties from a different perspective to the ones usually used in Political Science. Although I am not trying to deny the effects of the institutional design and voter preferences in the political parties' electoral performance, I did propose that the type of existing links between the diverse forms of citizen associations and political groups can be an important element to measure the parties' degree of consolidation and institutionalization. Thus, when there is association capacity around diverse social organizations, it is more likely



that the parties that connect their demands to the political arena will be strengthened. On the contrary, in countries with a “low intensity citizenship” which also means a lower tendency to collective action, parties will draw upon clientelism, and their electoral life will rely on the *caudillo*’s political cycle or lifespan.

Unlike other perspectives, this chapter has discussed the importance of citizen’s associations as a starting point for any consolidated political party and not the other way around, as is usually stated. Thus, while there is a large amount of academic work arguing that the weakness of parties is related to the absence of links to political organizations, what I am proposing is that when faced with absence of social organizations to represent, parties will simply try to fulfill their institutional morale, the procurement of power, by other means. In other words, I argued that it is very unlikely for parties to consolidate in societies where the association capacity is marginal.

This perspective could also be innovative in the study of political parties, political institutions, and democracy in general. Although my primary focus is the capacity of articulation for collective action in the citizens, this perspective also observes the effects of civic association on institutions, like parties, or on different types of daily behavior. Thus, this proposal cannot be included in the long tradition of political culture either, since is not focused solely on the forms of relationships but on more structural issues as well. All of this is related to the necessity of a society of equals in which successful civic association ventures can be established (Tocqueville 2005).

On the other hand, the analysis on the trajectory of Ecuadorian political parties can be used as a base for an empirical test of the validity of the conjectures that come from the stated theoretical discussion. However, this analysis lacks an empirical reference to structured civic associations which are represented by consolidated political parties. In Latin-America, the traditional Uruguayan parties could fall into that description. In the case of Europe, the “green” parties, like the one in Germany, could also be included in this typology. The study of consolidated political parties and the respective explanation could be an important part of a future research agenda in field of political parties.

Finally, the analysis done to the trajectories and dynamics used by Ecuadorian parties shows that despite some superficial changes, clientelism and *caudillos* are still the main feature in Ecuador’s political life. Although president Correa’s rise to power brought about expectations about the possibility of new “high intensity citizenship,” what actually happened was that the government tried to articulate political participation from “the top.” Such behavior has created a much more organized structure with clientelism in its core. Unfortunately, this has not created a society where all of its members can see each other as equals or consider civic association as a good way of effective citizens’ participation. Although nowadays AP’s influence over Ecuadorian politics is overwhelming, that is nothing but an illusion. Reality will arise the moment president Correa’s political influence starts to wane which will inevitably bring the end of AP. In the absence of any civic associations to keep AP together, the loss of electoral representation is just a matter of time.

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