PARTIES AND SOCIAL PROTEST IN LATIN AMERICA'S NEOLIBERAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Prior research has shown that economic liberalization leads to greater levels of protest in the presence of open and democratic politics. Yet the meso-level political institutions that associate democratic political regimes with protest remain unknown. In this light, the article analyses the effects of political parties on the level of protest using cross-sectional time-series data from 17 Latin American countries beginning with the third wave of democratization in 1978. The results show that the quality of representation embodied in political parties structures the level of societal conflict. In particular, countries with low levels of party system institutionalization and high levels of legislative fragmentation experience greater levels of protest activity. Overall, the article highlights the importance of political institutions in countering the most recent wave of protest against economic liberalization across Latin America.

KEY WORDS ■ fragmentation ■ Latin America ■ party system institutionalization ■ protest

Introduction

In recent years, a Polanyi-like defensive reaction to the spread of economic liberalization has swept the Latin American region (Polanyi, 1994). The election of several left-leaning governments and the rise of anti-neoliberal mobilizations appear to have caught scholars by surprise, as the dominant school of thought to date has emphasized the atomizing effects of economic liberalization (e.g. Agüero and Stark, 1998; Kurtz, 2004; Oxhorn and Ducantenzeiler, 1998; Wolff, 2005). Street protests in Argentina, Ecuador and Bolivia have forced embattled popularly elected presidents to leave office early. Seen as the 'new poor', indigenous groups in Ecuador and Bolivia, the unemployed in Argentina, rural villagers in Peru, among other examples, have been the most important social forces in opposition to the continuation of market policies (Arce, 2008; Garay, 2007; Silva, 2007). These Polanyian
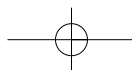
resistance events suggest that economic liberalization forces no longer reign uncontested in the political arena, and that political democracy has become a 'firewall' that can help correct the excesses of economic liberalization policies. However, it remains unclear why in some countries discontent toward economic liberalization proceeds through the ballot box and the legislative arena, while in other countries this dissatisfaction explodes into the streets.[1]

Building on recent cross-national empirical studies establishing that economic liberalization leads to higher levels of protest in the presence of open and democratic politics (e.g. Arce and Bellinger, 2007), the article disaggregates regime type to unveil the meso-level mechanisms that associate democratic political regimes with protest. I focus on the quality of representation embodied in political parties because parties are the most important political institutions in the workings of a democratic system, yet the influence of these institutions on the level of protest has rarely been systematically examined. What's more, some of the major political parties in the Latin American region have experienced declining levels of political support amid important increases in party system fragmentation and volatility, sparking a discussion about a growing 'crisis of representation' throughout the region (Hochstetler and Friedman, 2008; Mainwaring, 2006). Therefore, examining the relationship between parties and protest in the contemporary market era is both theoretically and empirically important. I posit that the quality of party representation structures the level of societal discontent emerging from economic liberalization policies. Where the quality of representation is *high*, one would expect political parties to be able to address the demands of the citizenry through electoral and legislative means, thereby dampening political conflict and suppressing extra-systemic forms of popular mobilization. Conversely, where the quality of representation is *low*, one would expect political parties to be unable to channel popular sector demands to the state, much less respond to them effectively. This lack of responsiveness may give rise to greater levels of social protest as groups pressure the formal political system from outside (Mainwaring, 1998; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). In short, low quality representation generates a political vacuum which societal actors exploit through extra-systemic forms of political behaviour.

The article tests the effects of political institutions on collective political activity using cross-sectional time-series data from 17 Latin American countries beginning with the third wave of democratization in 1978. The results show that the quality of party representation structures the level of societal conflict. In particular, countries with low levels of party system institutionalization and high levels of legislative fragmentation experience greater levels of protest activity. Overall, the article demonstrates that even amid the widespread changes in patterns of party representation across the region, political parties continue to exert an independent effect on collective protest and thus remain an important force in the functioning of democracy. To the extent that political institutions in Latin America are 'notable less for their

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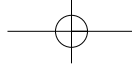
"stickiness" than for their fluidity' (Remmer, 2008: 7), these empirical find-
ings have broad implications for newly democratizing countries elsewhere.

Review of the Literature

Recent research has documented an increase in the level of political protest
in the Latin American region and has sought to understand the effects of these
mobilizations on important political processes. Hochstetler (2006) and Pérez
Liñán (2008), for instance, examine the role of collective protests in forcing
challenged presidents to leave office early. Other literature documents the
changing basis of anti-government mobilizations against economic liberal-
ization, including the emergence of alternative forms of collective action and
the geographic segmentation of protest activity in peripheral provinces (Arce,
2008; Garay, 2007; Kohl, 2002; Murillo and Ronconi, 2004). The unem-
ployed in Argentina, rural villagers in Peru and indigenous movements in
Ecuador and Bolivia, among other examples, have been the most important
social forces opposing the continuation of economic liberalization policies.

Cross-national empirical studies have shown that economic liberalization
leads to greater levels of collective political activity in the context of open
and democratic politics (Arce and Bellinger, 2007). Recent large-N studies
have also shown that Latin American countries that adopt economic liber-
alization policies tend to become more democratic in the long run (Gans-
Morse and Nichter, 2008). These cross-national studies, however, all focus
on macro-level dynamics and, as such, fail to uncover the meso-level mech-
anisms that associate democratic political regimes with collective political
activity. Stated differently, if economic liberalization produces grievances for
social actors to raise their collective voices, and the presence of democratic
politics shapes collective responses to economic liberalization, how do
specific democratic political institutions affect these responses?

Thinking about these meso-level mechanisms, I posit that the quality of
party representation structures the level of societal conflict emerging from
economic liberalization policies. Where the quality of representation is
high, one would expect political parties to reduce or suppress extra-systemic
forms of popular mobilization. Conversely, where the quality of represen-
tation is *low*, one would expect political parties to be unable to respond to
societal demands, thus forcing citizens to take their grievances to the streets
(Mainwaring, 1998; Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). Specifically, the quality
of representation is *high* in the presence of high levels of party system insti-
tutionalization and low levels of party fragmentation, yielding stronger and
bigger political parties. In contrast, the quality of representation is *low* in
the presence of low levels of party system institutionalization and high levels
of party fragmentation, producing weaker and smaller parties. Low quality
representation in the context of open and democratic politics creates a poli-
tical vacuum, producing a more conducive environment for greater levels

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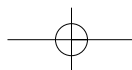
of mobilization while increasing the leverage of challengers and their chances of success in achieving their goals.

Strong and well-institutionalized parties provide a higher quality of representation compared to weak and ineffective political parties. In countries where parties are strong and well-institutionalized, parties 'help to aggregate and to synthesize bundles of issues and to provide information shortcuts for voters' (Mainwaring, 2006: 15). Voters in these countries 'stick with the existing [party] options' because parties turn out to be high-quality representative venues (Mainwaring, 2006: 15). Low levels of electoral volatility are suggestive of parties that are strong and well-institutionalized. In countries where parties are weak and poorly institutionalized, in contrast, parties are disconnected from society. In these countries, parties fail to provide policy consistency over time, and policies often change dramatically. Political elites are also opportunistic, creating new parties, rather than developing or protecting the existing party labels. Weak and poorly institutionalized parties make it hard for voters to rely on them, much less hold them democratically accountable. For these reasons, citizens are more likely to consider new parties, especially anti-establishment parties, and support political novices or outsiders. In these countries, citizens are continuously looking for alternative representative vehicles as they feel poorly represented or not represented at all by the existing party options (Hochstetler and Friedman, 2008; Mainwaring, 2006: 15). High levels of electoral volatility are indicative of parties that are weak, poorly institutionalized and constantly changing. Therefore, I hypothesize that high levels of party institutionalization will be associated with low levels of protest activity.

Similarly, the level of party fragmentation affects the quality of representation by complicating the interaction between the executive and legislative branches. Party fragmentation has a direct effect on the size of the presidential legislative contingent. Party fragmentation 'affects the number of partners with which the president must form some type of legislative coalition or structure piecemeal alliances specific to individual pieces of legislation to implement his policy agenda' (Jones, 2005: 36). In this way, the level of party fragmentation is known to imperil the ability of executives to pass their agenda, thus hampering the capacity of states to respond effectively to popular sector demands. In the neoliberal era, party fragmentation moved executives to push market policies bypassing legislatures, further adding to the social discontent toward the continuation of economic liberalization policies. Therefore, I hypothesize that high levels of party fragmentation will be associated with high levels of protest activity. Altogether, I posit that stronger and bigger political parties, which make the quality of representation *high*, are likely to serve as better transmission belts, connecting citizens with the state and thus articulating and aggregating popular sector demands. The opposite is true in the presence of weaker and smaller parties, which again make the quality of representation *low*. Does the Latin American experience support these analytical distinctions?

Preliminary evidence from the region suggests that the answer to this question may be 'yes'. Some Latin American countries appear to have in-oculated the current backlash against economic liberalization through the legislative arena, as extra-systemic forms of popular mobilizations have been muted. In other countries, however, the discontent toward economic liber-alization has exploded into the streets. In a recent study of political parties and party systems in Latin America, Jones (2005: 60) placed countries like Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela at the low end of party system insti-tutionalization, implying weak parties that are constantly changing. In these countries, the share of votes received by political parties varies consider-ably from one election to the next, and large sectors of the electorate have not developed loyalty towards any of the existing parties. Moreover, party actions, once they seize political power, are likely to be unpredictable (Main-waring, 1998). In Peru, for instance, the political party of former president Alejandro Toledo (2001–06) – *Perú Posible* – did not exist in 1995. Yet in 2001 this newly created party secured 38 percent of the seats in the legis-lature as well as the presidency (Schmidt, 2003). The policies of Toledo's *Perú Posible* have been characterized as erratic, and disagreements within *Perú Posible* were the norm. A point in fact is that Toledo's strongest political opposition actually came from his own party, *Perú Posible* (Arce, 2008). Similarly, the MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) in Bolivia and the MVR (*Movimiento V República*) in Venezuela did not exist in the previous decade, yet both of them hold the presidency of these countries today.

Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru also register high levels of legislative fragmen-tation, implying a multitude of political parties winning legislative seats as well as a 'perilously low' pro-executive contingency in the legislature (Jones, 2005: 25). High levels of legislative fragmentation affect the ability of the executive to enact policies, and in so doing hamper his capacity to respond effectively to popular sector demands. According to Mainwaring (2006: 20), some of the recent turmoil seen in the Central Andes corresponds to 'state deficiencies', whereby the state 'fails to fulfill some of its basic governance, legal, and security functions'. Similarly, the implementation of economic reforms is known to be much more difficult in deeply fragmented legislative settings, and it goes without saying that governments in the Central Andes have often utilized force to maintain control and push through their agenda. Naturally, the top-down, autocratic imposition of market reforms has helped to discredit economic liberalization policies, and contributed to the resurgence of protest behaviour (Kohl and Farthing, 2006: 15). Fragmented legislative settings propel extra-systemic forms of popular mobilization by hampering the ability of the executive to address those state deficiencies, or, alternatively, moving executives to enact market policies through other less participatory and democratic means. In both cases, protest is expected to rise.

Bolivia and Ecuador are among the pool of countries in the region where street mobilizations have played a major role in removing presidential mandates (Hochstetler, 2006). These countries have been paralysed by

outbursts of protests, often violent, against economic liberalization policies. Peripheral uprisings, such as the 'water-war' in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and the anti-privatization revolt in Arequipa (Peru), have had a high profile and economic impact (IDB, 2005: Ch. 5). Discussing the ramifications of these social conflicts, Drake and Hershberg (2006: 31) write: 'the ability of the shaky democracies in the Andes to survive all the hardships and turmoil of the last two decades has been remarkable'. Similarly, political parties in Argentina and Venezuela, which were traditionally seen as stronger than those of the Central Andes, have also been in a state of institutional flux (Levitsky, 2001; Roberts, 2002). These countries have had a fair share of significant mobilizations, including the so-called 'glocal riots' in Santiago del Estero and Corrientes (Argentina), and the popular revolt known as the *Sacudón* or *Caracazo* (Venezuela) (Auyero, 2001, 2006; López-Maya, 2003).[2]

It should be noted that this view of political parties affecting protest behaviour contrasts with other comparative institutional literature that frames party representation as a consequence of electoral laws, and thus focuses on electoral rules as independent variables. Recent research, however, has documented the 'sheer instability' of electoral laws in Latin America, and argued that changes in electoral rules often reflect party system discontinuities and rarely alter party systems (Remmer, 2008: 7). Recognizing the reciprocal causation between electoral laws and party systems in the Latin American region, this article advances a partisan account of political protest.[3]

To sum up, several case and large-N studies have shown that economic liberalization is associated with higher levels of protest in the context of open and democratic politics, yet it remains unclear what meso-level political institutions shape political protest. To the best of my knowledge, and despite the widespread consensus that political parties are a central pillar for the functioning of a democracy, none of these studies have systematically examined how political parties affect collective political activity. Moreover, some of the major political parties in the region have also undergone significant changes in their level of support, propelling concerns about a rising 'crisis of representation' across the region (Hochstetler and Friedman, 2008: Mainwaring, 2006). Therefore, an examination of the effects of political parties on societal conflict is of central importance for understanding how recent changes in party representation in Latin America have affected societal responses to government policy. In this way, one can learn why in some countries the discontent toward economic liberalization policies is taken to the street, whereas in other countries it appears to have been muted, presumably through the legislative process or the electoral arena.

Data and Measurement

I examine the effects of political institutions on collective political activity using cross-sectional time-series data from 17 Latin American countries

beginning with the third wave of democratization in 1978. The primary dependent variable is COLLECTIVE PROTEST, which consists of event counts representing the summation of the annual number of politically motivated anti-government demonstrations, riots and strikes. Similar to Przeworski et al. (2000), I aggregate these three similar protest indicators in an effort to capture the overall trend of societal mobilization in the region. The data for COLLECTIVE PROTEST comes from Banks' (2005) Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive. The variable anti-government demonstrations counts the annual number of peaceful gatherings that include at least 100 people for the purpose of opposing government policies. The variable riots counts the number of violent demonstrations and clashes of more than 100 citizens involving the use of physical force. Lastly, strikes counts the number of strikes that involve more than 1000 workers, more than one employer, and is directed at state policy or authority.

The Banks (2005) data are a good fit for my research question, and have several advantages that are not available in other datasets. First, the Banks dataset provides a consistent operational definition of protest with the broadest empirical coverage across time and countries, ensuring that the measures will not skew the results in one direction or another. Second, the Banks measures are standardized, ensuring the comparability of the data across countries and time, as well as enabling my findings to be compared with that of existing research (e.g. Arce and Bellinger, 2007; Kurtz, 2004; Przeworski et al. 2000). Lastly, the Banks data only capture major protest events that draw international media attention, which are precisely the type of events that would affect national political outcomes and are thus a suitable proxy for collective political activity more generally.

The central idea of the article suggests that the quality of representation embodied in political parties influences the level of societal conflict. Specifically, stronger and bigger parties are higher-quality representative venues than smaller and weaker parties. As noted earlier, the analytical distinction between strong and weak parties, and big and small ones, is made possible through a focus on the level of party system institutionalization and fragmentation, respectively. First, countries with strong, well-institutionalized party systems are expected to experience lower levels of social protest, since they possess institutionalized channels for the articulation and representation of societal demands. I test the level of party system institutionalization by measuring the level of ELECTORAL VOLATILITY.[4] ELECTORAL VOLATILITY is estimated according to the Pedersen (1983) index, which provides a measure of the net aggregate vote shifts from one election to the next. The index is calculated as the sum of individual party gains and losses divided by two, producing a scale from 0 to 100. A score of 0 implies that no parties lost or gained vote percentages (stronger parties) and a score of 100 means that all vote-shares went to a new set of parties (weaker parties). The electoral volatility scores use values from the lower house of the legislature.

Second, the level of party system fragmentation is theorized to complicate executive–legislative interactions, hampering governance functions, and thus increasing the need for extra-systemic forms of popular resistance. I measure the level of LEGISLATIVE FRAGMENTATION in terms of the effective number of political parties using Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) formula. Because not all parties are created equal, the measure weights each party by the number of votes they receive, preventing the count from being inflated by very small parties that only exist on paper. The source for both ELECTORAL VOLATILITY and LEGISLATIVE FRAGMENTATION is Beck et al. (2001) and Payne et al. (2007).

Control Variables

Several case and large-N studies have shown that economic liberalization leads to greater levels of collective political activity. Accordingly, I control for economic liberalization by including the widely used economic reform index (lagged one year) constructed by Morley et al. (1999) (updated to 2003). The economic reform index is a continuous measure that ranges from 0 to 1, where 1 represents the highest levels of economic liberalization. If atomization is taking place, then one would expect a negative relationship between ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION $_{t-1}$ and political protest. If, on the other hand, re-politicization is taking place, then the opposite would be true.

In order to assess the effects of economic conditions that are presumed to influence collective political activity, I include three salient economic control variables. GDP GROWTH $_{t-1}$, a measure of short-term economic performance, is the annual change in GDP. This indicator is calculated as the percentage change in GDP from time $_{t-1}$ to time $_{t}$. As a short-term indicator of economic performance, I expect that GDP GROWTH $_{t-1}$ will give social actors more confidence in the state of the economy, and subsequently reduce protest overall. GDP PER CAPITA $_{t-1}$ measures the structural conditions associated with long-term economic development rather than short-term economic performance. This indicator is reported in constant 2000 dollars yearly for each country. Although higher levels of development may signify lower poverty-related grievances, development also tends to enhance the mobilizational capacity of subaltern groups (see, for example, Rueschemeyer et al., 1992). Since mobilizational capacity is vital to the translation of objective grievances into protest behaviour, I expect greater social protest at higher levels of economic development. Finally, INFLATION (LOG) $_{t-1}$, as measured by the natural log of the consumer price index, is also an indicator of short-term economic performance. I expect inflation to encourage collective protests from social actors whose wages and consumption patterns are threatened by higher prices. Each of these variables is lagged one year and comes from World Bank (2007). Moreover, in order to control for the possibility that countries with larger populations are more prone to protest activity, I include the variable POPULATION (LOG), which is the natural log of total population from World

Bank (2007). Appendix A provides summary statistics for all of the variables used in the analysis.

To examine the determinants of collective political activity, I estimated a negative binomial event-count model. Event-count models use maximum likelihood estimation to predict the probability of event occurrences. As event counts always take on non-negative integer values, and in my case are rare relative to the population, the distribution of events is skewed and discrete, producing errors that are not normally distributed or homoskedastic (Long, 1997). In addition, overdispersion and goodness-of-fit tests indicated that a negative binomial model is the best method of estimation for the data (AIC, BIC and Pearson dispersion statistics are reported at the foot of Tables 1 and 2). Likelihood ratio tests of the alpha parameter were significant with a $p < 0.000$, providing strong evidence of overdispersion in the data, and further indicating that the negative binomial model is appropriate for these data.

I estimate the models by including the first lag of the dependent variable (COLLECTIVE PROTEST $_{t-1}$) on the right-hand side of the equation to take care of any potential serial correlation in the series.[5] I also use Huber/White robust standard errors within the country clusters to deal with potential heteroskedasticity. I do not include country dummies, since their inclusion is known to be problematic for data with a large number of panels but with limited temporal range (Huber et al., 2008: 429; Plümper et al., 2005: 330–4). The inclusion of country dummies would soak up most of the explanatory power of the time invariant party factors within countries. Plümper et al. (2005: 334) also write: 'If a theory predicts level effects, one should not include unit dummies. In these cases, allowing for a mild bias resulting from omitted variables is less harmful than running a fixed effects specification.' Since I posit that the level of party institutionalization and fragmentation has an effect on the level of protest, it is clear that a fixed effects model or the inclusion of country dummies is not justifiable.

Lastly, seeking to make the model's direction of causality more explicit, I have run models lagging all of the explanatory (electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation) and control variables one year. This specification suggests that if the independent variables in year $_{t-1}$ are correlated with this year's COLLECTIVE PROTEST, then we can infer with greater confidence that the direction of causality is in fact running from the factors specified on the right-hand side of the equation to the dependent variable on the left-hand side. The results from this alternative specification support the findings and conclusions described in the next section of this article. Moreover, to address the potential endogeneity between protest and my two measures of the quality of party representation – electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation – I performed a Granger causality test and ran models utilizing electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation as the dependent variable and the lagged values of COLLECTIVE PROTEST $_{t-1}$ as the independent variable. The lagged collective protest $_{t-1}$ coefficients were not statistically different

from zero, thus suggesting that the causality runs from parties to protest rather than vice versa (Gujarati, 1995: 620–1).

Empirical Results

Table 1 presents three separate models that test for the effects of political institutions on collective political activity. Compared to model 1, model 2 adds the first lag of the dependent variable COLLECTIVE PROTEST $_{t-1}$. Since the lagged dependent variable collective protest $_{t-1}$ primarily controls for short-term violations of temporal independence, model 3 adds another temporal control to be sure that my results are not driven by events that take place late in the sample. Both economic liberalization and protest, in fact, have been increasing in the region. The variable 1990s DUMMY is a parsimonious way to address this temporal dependence, and takes on the

Table 1. Correlates of protest in Latin America's neoliberal era

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
Electoral volatility	0.011**	0.009**	0.010**
	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Legislative fragmentation	0.115**	0.101**	0.095**
	(0.053)	(0.046)	(0.048)
Economic liberalization$_{t-1}$	0.437	0.426	0.118
	(0.623)	(0.523)	(0.468)
GDP growth$_{t-1}$	−0.008	−8.2e-05	−0.011
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.019)
GDP per capita$_{t-1}$	1.1e-04*	8.0e-05	8.0e-05
	(6.0e-05)	(5.3e-05)	(5.2e-05)
Inflation (log)$_{t-1}$	−0.059	−0.029	−0.083
	(0.109)	(0.102)	(0.095)
Population (log)	0.063	0.056	0.069
	(0.080)	(0.065)	(0.072)
1990s dummy			0.256
			(0.164)
Collective protest$_{t-1}$		0.102***	0.100***
		(0.029)	(0.029)
Constant	−1.774	−1.698*	−1.794*
	(1.187)	(0.991)	(1.021)
Observations	300	300	300
Log-likelihood	−535.65	−530.23	−528.97
Alpha	0.973***	0.893***	0.882***
Pearson dispersion	0.938	0.994	0.992
AIC	3.624	3.594	3.593
BIC	−1344	−1337	−1332

Robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses: *$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

value of 1 for the decade of the 1990s, and 0 otherwise. The discussion of the findings centres on the correlates of collective political activity that are stable across these three models.

Table 1 shows that political explanations clearly outweigh the salience of economic accounts of collective protest as the quality of representation embodied in political institutions exerts an independent effect on the level of collective resistance. The measure of party system institutionalization, ELECTORAL VOLATILITY, covaries with collective political activity at a statistically significant level. These results suggest that the level of political protest is higher in countries with weak parties. In these countries, the share of votes received by political parties varies a great deal from one election to the next, and the bulk of the electorate has not developed loyalty toward any of the existing parties. Table 1 also indicates that the level of LEGISLATIVE FRAG-MENTATION has a positive and significant effect on collective political activity. These findings suggest that countries with a multitude of political parties winning legislative seats, which in turn makes the size of the presidential legislative contingent low, also experience greater levels of collective resistance.

Still, the coefficients in Tables 1 do not tell us much about the substantive effect of these variables. In my sample, the maximum number of protests recorded by the Banks (2005) data is 11 (see Appendix A). Table 2 presents the annual predicted number of collective protests derived by exponentiating the linear predictions of model 1. The results indicate that collective political activity more than doubles as ELECTORAL VOLATILITY moves from minimum to maximum, holding all other variables constant. In the case of LEGISLATIVE FRAGMENTATION, collective protests increase more than threefold as the number of effective parties goes from minimum to maximum, holding all other variables constant. The percentage increase in protest associated with these explanatory variables shows that weak and small parties lead to a strong substantive increase in collective political activity.

To recast my central argument, when the quality of representation is low, as in countries with weaker and smaller parties, a political vacuum emerges and societal actors perceive this vacuum as a strong opportunity to advance their goals. In the absence of an effective transmission belt connecting citizens with the state, the need for extra-systemic forms of popular mobilization thus becomes paramount. Even when governments in countries with weaker and smaller parties choose to respond positively to societal demands,

Table 2. Predicted number of collective protests

	Minimum	*Maximum*	*Percent change %*
Electoral volatility	1.2	3.0	250
Legislative fragmentation	1.3	4.5	346

Annual predicted numbers of collective protests were derived by exponentiating the linear predictions of model 1.

these governments may be unable to quell waves of collective resistance. In fact, several case studies have noted that when governments respond to the demands arising from street mobilizations, these government concessions paradoxically often lead to greater levels of mobilization. For instance, in Argentina, Garay (2007: 303) notes: 'When the state responded to protests with workfare benefit provisions, it triggered *further* demands, which presented the national state with the choice of either confronting demands or acquiescing to them' (emphasis added). In Bolivia, several popular uprisings have been successful in derailing a number of privatizations and other government programmes. But according to Laserna (2002) the direct result of these civil society victories has been increased street protests, more direct action and massive mobilizations due to the strong perception that those who do not take to the streets will miss out on the opportunity to have their interests taken into account. The inability of parties to link voters with the state is perhaps best captured by a popular phrase from Peru, which goes to confirm the unrepresentative nature of political parties there: 'The only way to be heard by the government is by blocking roads, burning tires, and destroying public or private property.'[6]

Sensitivity Analysis

Beyond the results presented above, I have conducted extensive sensitivity analysis to check the stability of my main results. For instance, research has argued that protests follow a cyclical pattern in which waves of protest spread rapidly across regions and then recede in the same manner (Tarrow, 1998). As a result, the contagious nature of protest activity may violate the statistical independence of the protest counts, biasing my estimates. To control for the spatial dependence of protest activity, model 4 includes the variable REGIONAL COLLECTIVE PROTEST, which is the mean level of protest throughout the sample in a given year. Moreover, to address the so-called 'crisis of representation' across the Latin American region, model 5 adds the variables REGIONAL ELECTORAL VOLATILITY and REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAGMENTATION, which represent the mean level of electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation, respectively, throughout the sample in a given year. Consistent with theory, model 4 shows that REGIONAL COLLECTIVE PROTEST has a positive and statistically significant effect on protest in a given country. Overall, the results from Table 3 are almost identical to those presented in Table 1.

Concerning the temporal dependence in the protest data, I have estimated models with other temporal controls, such as a counter variable, alternative decade dummies, and dummies that mark the late period of the sample (for instance, 1989 and beyond). The substantive conclusion of this article was not altered by using these alternative temporal controls. Finally, given that my sample begins with the third wave of democratization that began in

Table 3. Sensitivity analysis

	Model 4	Model 5
Electoral volatility	0.008**	0.009**
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Legislative fragmentation	0.111**	0.103**
	(0.055)	(0.048)
Economic liberalization$_{t-1}$	0.057	0.646
	(0.545)	(0.819)
GDP growth$_{t-1}$	0.008	0.001
	(0.018)	(0.016)
GDP per capita$_{t-1}$	9.1e-05*	8.2e-05
	(5.1e-05)	(5.4e-05)
Inflation (log)$_{t-1}$	0.032	–0.026
	(0.114)	(0.108)
Population (log)	0.017	0.065
	(0.067)	(0.076)
Regional collective protest	0.451***	
	(0.073)	
Regional electoral volatility		–0.016
		(0.027)
Regional legislative fragmentation		0.060
		(0.276)
Collective protest$_{t-1}$	0.115***	0.104***
	(0.032)	(0.031)
Constant	–1.878*	–1.762
	(1.026)	(1.193)
Observations	300	300
Log-likelihood	–519.09	–529.99
Alpha	0.754***	0.892***
Pearson dispersion	1.020	0.991
AIC	3.527	3.606
BIC	–1330	–1326

Robust standard errors clustered by country in parentheses: *$p < 0.1$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

1978, it is possible that greater levels of democratization may be triggering greater levels of protest, since democratization provides a favourable environment to vent social grievances. In order to test for this alternative causal story, I have estimated models including a continuous measure of political liberalization based on the Polity IV dataset (Marshall and Jaggers (2000).[7] Controlling for the level of democracy did not alter my main findings.

Conclusions

Seeking to understand the meso-level mechanisms that associate democracies with protest, the article has examined how political parties shape the

level of collective protests in the aftermath of Latin America's neoliberal turn. My central findings suggest that certain attributes of political parties have a direct influence on these societal responses. Countries with high levels of electoral volatility and legislative fragmentation experience greater levels of protest activity. Moreover, both electoral volatility and party fragmentation are often taken as evidence of party system instability, decay or upheaval (Roberts and Wibbels, 1999; Tavits, 2005a), and it is perhaps no coincidence that the Latin American countries that have experienced a significant number of street protests are also some of the same countries where political party systems have been imploding. This article demonstrates that stronger and bigger parties represent a superior institutional linkage between citizens and elected officials compared to weaker and smaller parties. Weaker and smaller parties produce a political vacuum which societal actors seize to achieve their goals.

Future research should examine how other institutional characteristics, such as federalism and sub-national governments, affect protest behaviour, as well as the sources of variation in collective resistance against economic liberalization. For instance, why do protests break out in some towns and regions within a country but not in many others? And why do similar towns and regions within a country have different levels of protest activity? It is plausible that shared partisanship across levels of government reduces the propensity of social conflict. Future research should also examine how the recent surge in protest has affected the quality of democracy in the region.

Notes

1 In this article, the terms 'market' and 'neoliberal' reform are used interchangeably, implying policies that seek to reduce state intervention in the economy. Examples include trade liberalization, privatization of state enterprises and domestic and international financial liberalization.

2 Venezuela has often been seen as a country with a strong, highly institutionalized party system. Coppedge (1994), among others, has argued that Venezuela's party system was overinstitutionalized and – contradicting the central idea of this article – provided very low quality representation. These factors, among other things, contributed to the wave of protests starting in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the party system in that country. Roberts (2003) presents alternative explanations for the demise of the party system in Venezuela.

3 Describing the collapse of Venezuela's party system, Roberts (2003: 54) concludes: '[I]nstitutions should be treated as dependent variables as well as independent ones, and scholars should thrive to identify the contingent outcomes of socio-political processes that lead to both institution building and institutional decay.'

4 Recognizing that there are other dimensions of party system institutionalization (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995), in this article I utilize electoral volatility because it is a widely used measure of institutionalization (e.g. Roberts and Wibbels, 1999; Tavits, 2005b) and has the broadest empirical coverage across time and countries compared to other dimensions of institutionalization.

5 The results of the Lagrange Multiplier test provided no evidence of serial correla-
tion after the inclusion of the lagged dependent variable. Results from Arellano and
Bond (1991) and Wooldridge (2001) tests also indicated that the lagged dependent
variable is an appropriate correction for the serial correlation in my models.

6 Caretas, 25 July 2002.

7 My measure of DEMOCRACY uses the polity2 score produced by subtracting the
autocracy score from the democracy score. The resulting polity2 score plus 11 (to
eliminate negative scores) is used in the analysis, with potential values ranging
from 1 to 21.

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Appendix A. Summary statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Collective protest	1.8	2.25	0	11
Electoral volatility	29.45	19.11	0.3	83.49
Legislative fragmentation	3.16	1.44	1	11.75
Economic liberalization$_{t-1}$	0.71	0.14	0.39	0.88
GDP growth$_{t-1}$	2.63	3.98	−11.7	12.82
GDP per capita$_{t-1}$	2985.39	1792.24	830.99	8212.90
Inflation (log)$_{t-1}$	0.36	0.68	−0.01	4.77
Population (log)	16.39	1.20	14.53	19.02
Collective protest$_{t-1}$	1.81	2.33	0	13
1990s dummy	0.48	0.50	0	1
Regional protest	2.01	0.74	0.47	3.47
Regional electoral volatility	29.39	5.10	0.3	39.08
Regional legislative fragmentation	3.16	0.40	1.98	3.96

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