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Theoretical Implications and Broader Conclusions

8.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1.1 Central Findings

This book has investigated how two paradigm-shifting political movements founded by charismatic leaders, Argentine Peronism and Venezuelan Chavismo, have lived on and dominated politics for years after the disappearance of their founders. Conventional understandings of charisma would predict that the survival of these movements would require their transformation into institutionalized parties. Yet both movements have persisted by sustaining their original, deeply personalistic nature.

Perón and Chávez established their movements by rising in the midst of serious crises, recognizing people's suffering, and delivering on the promise to provide swift and thorough relief. In Argentina, Perón granted unprecedented benefits to millions of workers and poor migrants, including stable jobs, decent wages, paid vacation, housing, and healthcare. In Venezuela, Chávez established social "missions" that delivered to poor citizens a tidal wave of aid including food, water, healthcare, housing, and education. Through these impressive actions, the two leaders fostered profound, unmediated emotional attachments with their followers. Furthermore, the leaders used these bonds with their followers to overpower actors, parties, and institutions that threatened their supremacy.

Due to the unsustainable magnitude of their ambitious benefit programs, the founders' seemingly miraculous performance predictably declined, unleashing economic and political instability that would undermine democracy and harm their own supporters. Nevertheless, the followers would remember the initial, astounding performance of the policies rather than their eventual exhaustion and collapse. Moreover, because Perón was ousted by a coup and Chávez died

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before the implosion of his reforms, their followers exculpated them from blame, helping solidify the leaders' charismatic legacies.

Based on the logic of routinization, the affective intensity of followers' attachments should have dissipated after the founders disappeared. In turn, the depersonalization of these bonds should have transformed the movements into more conventional, institutionalized political parties. Yet in both cases, the deep, affective quality of citizens' attachments to the founders proved strikingly resilient.

Upon the deaths of Perón and Chávez, the followers' emotional attachments grew even more intense. When Perón passed away in 1974, his followers stampeded Congress, where his body was displayed, and "succumb[ed] to emotion" at the loss of their savior (Page 1983, 494). While different factions of the movement violently opposed each other in subsequent years, they remained unified in their unwavering loyalty to Perón. Similarly, when Chávez died of cancer in early 2013, the masses thronged the streets of Caracas to mourn his death in an amazing display of public mourning. Afterward, shrines commemorating the founder appeared in private homes and public spaces across Venezuela, evidencing the ongoing sway of his charismatic influence. Even as followers grew increasingly divided depending on their support for Chávez's handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, they all remained devoted to the founder.

Today, at least one-third of voters in Argentina and Venezuela continue to express emotional attachments to Peronism and Chavismo. Moreover, the personalistic character of the two movements remains strong, whereas their programmatic trademarks and organizational infrastructures remain underdeveloped. These characteristics suggest that the followers' loyalty is still rooted in the movements' charismatic foundations and cast doubt on the argument that the movements have routinized.

To explain this surprising outcome, my theory of charismatic movement emergence and revival examines the nature and trajectory of followers' support for the founder and movement (the demand side of charisma), as well as the strategies and conditions used by new leaders to connect with the followers and consolidate power (the supply side of charisma). Drawing insights from political psychology on the nature and behavior of political identities, I explain why citizens' charismatic attachments persist and demonstrate how new leaders can reactivate those bonds by claiming to be heirs of the adored founder. In turn, I analyze the interplay between structure and agency to determine the conditions under which successors can revive the movement and establish their own charismatic authority. Finally, I weave together the perspectives of followers and leaders to illustrate how charismatic movements can develop self-reinforcing, spasmodic trajectories that weaken democracy. Based on this research, I show that charismatic movements can persist in personalistic form and dominate politics for years and even decades after their founders disappear, rather than disintegrating or transforming into institutionalized parties.

To begin, I contend that the foundation for a movement's emergence and survival rests on citizens' charismatic attachments. As shown in Chapter 3, the founder of the movement fulfills three conditions to establish these attachments with his supporters. He directly recognizes the people's suffering; promises and enacts bold policies that provide the people with desperately needed relief; and crafts a narrative that praises him as a savior, depicts his opponents as enemies, and stresses his quasi-religious mission to provide the people with transcendence. Although existing literature documents the importance of these conditions for the formation of charismatic bonds, it underestimates the downstream impact of these factors on the followers' political attitudes and behaviors. Conversely, my research shows that the founder's direct recognition, seemingly miraculous performance, and symbolic narrative form the basis of citizens' worldview and understanding of politics for years after the founder has disappeared.

The followers' original, charismatic attachments have a profound and lasting influence on their attitudes and behaviors because these bonds develop into a resilient political identity. As suggested by political psychologists, the *nature* of this identity is enduring; however, its *intensity* fluctuates over time. Thus, when the charismatic founder disappears and his policies collapse, the personalistic nature of citizens' attachments remains intact. Under these circumstances, the political significance of the bonds is likely to decline – at least temporarily. Indeed, struck by the absence of the founder and devastated by the ensuing crisis, the followers are likely to withdraw from politics, causing the movement to retreat from power.

Crucially, as illustrated in Chapter 4, citizens' fervent devotion to the founder and movement persists because even in the founder's absence, the followers remain intimately attached to his narrative, which glorifies his heroic leadership and keeps alive his promise of salvation from evil (opposition) forces. Over time, the followers preserve this narrative and pass it to new generations by recounting cherished memories and holding onto symbols that commemorate the founder's selflessness and extraordinary qualities. This personalistic mechanism preserves the charismatic nature of citizens' identification with the movement and sustains their hope that a new savior will eventually rise up, assume the founder's mantle, and restore the movement to power. Thus, while citizens' attachments become politically latent when the founder disappears, their bonds have the potential to be reactivated by successors who prove themselves worthy of the founder's role.

To resuscitate the political significance of the followers' deep, affective bonds and consolidate power, I argue that successors must satisfy symbolic and material conditions similar to those fulfilled by the founder. In particular, new leaders must promise and implement audacious policies that deliver tangible benefits to the followers in order to demonstrate their capacity to take the founder's place. In addition, the new leaders must weave themselves into the movement's symbolic narrative to demonstrate their intention to revive

the founder's redemptive mission. As demonstrated in the survey experiments in Chapter 5, successors who achieve these strategies cause followers to express stronger emotional attachment to the movement. Moreover, the movement's supporters come to view such leaders as more charismatic and worthier of electoral support. Thus, the findings indicate that it is possible to reactivate the intensity of citizens' resilient, *charismatic* attachments.

In sum, analysis from the demand side demonstrates that followers' unmediated emotional attachments to the founder create a base for the long-term survival of charismatic movements. Yet, on the supply side, the capacity of successors to return these movements to power depends on an additional set of conditions related to both structure and agency, as outlined in Chapter 6. First, successors must seek power independently, as self-starters, and often do so years after the founder has disappeared. Unlike the weakling successors whom the founders directly anoint, self-starters have greater autonomy to reshape and update the movement's narrative without appearing to undermine the founder's legacy. Second, new leaders must seek power under conditions of crisis, when the followers' craving for a hero intensifies. Only then does the opportunity emerge for the new leaders to prove their extraordinary ability to rescue the people, thus reviving the founder's mission of salvation. Finally, because of the charismatic nature of the followers' identity, successors must conform to the founder's personalistic style. This final condition is essential for rekindling the followers' affective attachments and convincing these devotees that the successors are worthy of the founder's mantle.

By combining the perspectives of movement followers and leaders, my theory demonstrates that charismatic movements tend to develop spasmodic trajectories that are self-reinforcing. To substantiate their charismatic potential, successors implement daring reforms that lack long-term sustainability, but carry a powerful, initial impact. Achieving this impressive material performance is necessary: each successor's legitimacy as an heir of the founder depends on it. Invariably, however, the unsustainable nature of the policies causes them to break down, which eventually erodes the new leader's charismatic authority. When the successor falls from grace, the movement recedes from power and the political salience of citizens' attachments declines once again. But, this temporary slump does not change the resilient, charismatic nature of the followers' bonds with the movement. In fact, by producing a crisis, this downturn actually creates the opportunity for a new self-starter to rise up and reactivate the followers' ties to the movement. The new leader achieves this in the same fashion as her predecessor: by implementing impressive, yet shortsighted, policies and tying herself to the symbolic legacy of the founder. This process therefore repeats the abovementioned cycle. In short, the movement lives on, but it unfolds in an erratic pattern characterized by the periodic resurgence of charismatic leadership followed by temporary, leaderless recessions.

In addition to preserving personalistic leadership, the fitful life cycle of charismatic movements perpetually undermines party system development,

encourages authoritarian leader tendencies, accelerates institutional decay, and generates economic instability. While charismatic leaders' policies tend to produce abbreviated periods of impressive economic growth and social well-being, eventually they collapse and unleash terrible crises. These downturns are compounded by the disproportionate concentration of power in the executive branch, the weakness of political parties, and the relative absence of institutional safeguards – characteristics that are reinforced with the rise of each successor. Thus, charismatic movements cause countries to suffer unusually high levels of political and economic volatility.

Argentina's seventy-five-year experience of Peronism, detailed in Chapter 7, underscores the negative consequences of charismatic movement revival for programmatic development, economic stability, and democracy. Indeed, while the tumultuous character of the country's history predates Perón, the frequency and intensity of nationwide crises dramatically increased starting with the charismatic founder's rise to power in 1946. Since then, the economic and political highs and lows experienced in Argentina have been extreme, even in comparison to other Latin American countries known for volatility and institutional weakness (Levitsky and Victoria Murillo 2013; Mora y Araujo 2011).

Although Chavismo has unfolded more recently than Peronism, the political chaos and economic devastation it produced in Venezuela has made the country stand out in Latin America as uniquely unstable and undemocratic. Some scholars and pundits optimistically predict that the failed leadership of Chávez's terribly unappealing handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, has planted the seeds for the movement's self-destruction (Denis 2015; López Maya 2014; Rondón 2017). Conversely, my theory predicts that, in light of the impressive resilience of the followers' attachments and the opposition's monumental struggles to unify and gain the trust of the poor masses, Chavismo has significant potential to endure. In fact, the movement's current chapter is not unlike that of Isabel Perón, whose failed leadership following the death of her husband precipitated Argentina's 1976–83 military dictatorship. It is possible that, similar to Peronism, Chavismo will temporarily implode under the strain of Maduro's authoritarian rule and reemerge years later under a more compelling self-starter, when conditions are more favorable.

In conclusion, my theory provides a novel explanation for the remarkable persistence of political movements founded by charismatic leaders. Rather than transforming into routinized parties, I show that the original, personalistic nature of these movements fuels their perpetuation. Thus, these movements can live on and dominate politics for long stretches of time. However, their fitful trajectories generate perpetual institutional weakness, social upheaval, and economic volatility. Unlike routinization, which encourages the gradual development of programmatic continuity and organizational infrastructure, the revival of charismatic movements infuses democracies with enduring illiberal tendencies and perpetually destabilizes party systems.

8.1.2 Theoretical Contributions

8.1.2.1 *Routinization versus Revival*

To my knowledge, this study is the first to directly challenge the routinization thesis and provide an alternative explanation for the striking resilience of charismatic movements. While some scholars have produced insightful theories about the survival of charisma, their analyses are firmly rooted in the logic of routinization. Weber's original theory of charisma and its routinization provides the foundation for these studies (1922/1978). According to Weber, charisma is inherently unstable in its pure form. Yet, he argues, charismatic movements have the potential to transform into alternative forms of authority: namely traditional authority, rational authority, or a combination of the two (ibid., 246). Based on this reasoning, Weber discusses several potential pathways of routinization. For instance, charisma might be "traditionalized" into a form of hereditary succession, in which next-of-kin inherits the original leader's legitimacy (ibid., 248). Alternatively, charisma might be "rationalized" by transferring from the leader to a series of offices, rules, and procedures used to govern society (ibid.).

Building on Weber, Shils (1965) develops a theory in which the leader's charisma disperses to a series of inanimate offices, groups, and laws. He claims that charisma survives by detaching from the individual leader and injecting meaning and value into associated "collectivities," as well as inanimate "roles and rules" (ibid., 205). Citizens' faith in and attachments to the leader therefore transfer to these institutions, strengthening and stabilizing the bureaucracy that develops in the charismatic leaders' place (ibid.).

Alternatively, Jowitt argues that charismatic movements and parties can survive if their *platform*, rather than (or in addition to) their leader, embodies a heroic and transformative mission. Under these circumstances, he states that the "[charismatic] Party is called on to sacrifice, struggle, and exercise continual vigilance to maintain its purpose" (Jowitt 1992, 11). Unlike Shils, who states that the charisma originally associated with an individual leader "disperses" to institutions, Jowitt contends that the institutions can develop a form of "impersonal" charisma from the outset (ibid.; Shils 1965, 205). To illustrate his theory, Jowitt traces the history of Leninism, which he argues was always rooted at least as much in a "charismatic" platform as in Lenin's personal appeal (Jowitt 1992, 8–12).

Despite the differences across these authors regarding the origin of charismatic authority, they all conclude that charisma can only persist in *depersonalized* form. In contrast, my theory of charismatic movement revival stresses that charisma lives on precisely by sustaining its *personalistic* core. The followers help maintain the personalistic nature of their identity with the movement when the founder disappears by recounting their individual experiences of his heroic leadership. This reinforces the citizens' direct, emotional attachments to the founder and his movement, rather than transforming their bonds into respect

for bureaucratic offices and procedures that are indirectly associated with the founder, as Shils would argue. Moreover, whereas routinization theories insist that only depersonalized party organizations can perpetuate charisma, I argue that new leaders who *personally* embody the founder can revive charisma in its original form. Using this strategy, successors can become powerful charismatic leaders themselves – if only temporarily. By developing this personalistic mechanism of survival, my theory makes a novel and important contribution to the literature on charisma.

8.1.2.2 *Structure versus Agency*

In documenting and explaining the personalistic revival of charisma, this book also contributes to key debates about the roles of structure and agency in politics. Scholars debate the extent to which charisma relies on one or the other. On the one hand, some define charisma as a fixed personality trait with inscrutable origins (e.g., Antonakis et al. 2016; Hoffman and Hoffman 1968; House and Howell 1992; Keller 2006: Maranell 1970). This interpretation, which underscores the magnetic appeal of individual leaders, focuses disproportionately on agency at the expense of structure. Unsurprisingly, many social scientists have criticized this understanding of charisma as too slippery, ambiguous, and subjective to warrant rigorous analysis (e.g., Bendix 1967; Schlesinger 1960; Smith 2000; Van der Brug and Mughan 2007; Worsley 1957).

On the other hand, some authors stress that structure plays an indispensable role in the establishment of charismatic authority. For instance, Weber states that charismatic leaders must rise "in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, [or] political distress" to prove their extraordinary capacities to their potential disciples (Weber 1968, 18). Similarly, Madsen and Snow underscore the importance of a crisis for generating feelings of low self-efficacy, which initiates the process of charismatic bonding between leaders and followers (1991, 9–14). These theories of charisma highlight important structural conditions. However, they risk becoming overly deterministic. Indeed, given the intensely personal and subjective nature of this type of authority, it would seem problematic to overlook the individual agency of charismatic leaders.

My study sheds greater light on the distinct influences of agency and structure on charisma by tracing the long-term trajectories of charismatic movements. I illustrate how structure and agency interact to facilitate new leaders' ability to reactivate citizens' charismatic attachments and inherit the founder's mantle. I show that the capacity of successors to revive the movement depends in part on their agency. Without their own personal appeal, skill, and experience, these leaders could not achieve extraordinary performance reminiscent of the founder, nor could they tap into the followers' emotional bonds.

Nevertheless, my theory stresses the centrality of structural conditions in the revival of charismatic movements. To begin, the eruption of a crisis provides the indispensable opening for successors to prove their heroic potential because

it makes citizens crave a new savior in the first place. The method by which new leaders are selected and the timing of their rise also greatly influence their prospects for success. In addition, the preexisting, charismatic nature of citizens' identification with the movement structures the way these leaders govern. Specifically, these leaders must use a personalistic style and tie themselves to the founder's legacy to fulfill the followers' expectations for a savior. Thus, while charismatic successors often manage to exercise largely independent authority for a period of time, these structural conditions impose crucial constraints on their power. Paradoxically, these conditions also strengthen the movement's momentum and help extend its survival beyond the abbreviated rules of its successors.

By clarifying the roles of structure and agency in the spasmodic trajectories of charismatic movements, this study also demonstrates that the impact of charisma on politics is far less ephemeral than previously assumed (Eatwell 2006; Jowitt 1992; Kitschelt et al. 2010; Madsen and Snow 1991; Weber 1922/ 1978). I show that the resilience of citizens' affective attachments to the charismatic founder underpins the survival of these movements in their original, personalistic form. In turn, the emergence of structural conditions conducive to the rise of a new savior – namely, the eruption of a crisis – encourage new, ambitious, and talented leaders to reactivate citizens' attachments, return the movement to power, and consolidate a new wave of personalistic authority. As illustrated in Argentina and Venezuela, charisma can therefore exert a profound, destabilizing influence on politics for years or even decades.

8.1.2.3 Political Identity, Cleavages, and Partisanship

In contrast to previous studies that emphasize the short-lived nature of charismatic attachments, my theory indicates that these attachments can develop into a resilient political identity. Although the content of this identity remains rooted in the heroic legacy of individual leaders and therefore differs from more traditional political identities based on programmatic content and/or robust social networks, it has a similar capacity to endure, cross over to new generations, and profoundly shape citizens' worldviews, attitudes, and behaviors. Whereas programmatic and organizational identities "help bind voters to parties" and therefore facilitate party system institutionalization (Roberts 2014, 20), the charismatic identity tethers citizens to a weakly institutionalized movement that thrives off of, and reinforces, volatile cycles of personalistic leadership. Thus, my theory stresses that the charismatic identity can result in unique consequences for the political system.

Like other forms of partisanship, the charismatic identity establishes a cleavage that organizes society into two groups: the "in-group" constitutes true believers while the "out-group" incorporates individuals who do not belong to the movement (Tajfel 1974). In programmatic settings, these in- and out-groups tend to be rooted in left–right ideology and substantive policies as much as affect; thus, while the people in an out-group possess a negative identification

with one party, they often also possess a *positive* identity with another party. For example, in the United States, many conservative individuals negatively identify with Democrats, but also positively identify as Republicans, and vice versa.

In contrast, the charismatic identity links up with a *personalistic* cleavage, which organizes in- and out-groups based on profound (positive or negative) emotions toward individual leaders and has little to do with programmatic content. Because the out-group coalesces based exclusively on a strong rejection of the charismatic leader and movement, the group struggles to develop a positive identification with its own group or party. Thus, these individuals' anti-identification with the movement, defined by negative emotions rather than substantive policies, predominates. Even more than in programmatic party systems, affective (rather than programmatic or ideological) polarization between followers and opponents becomes a defining quality of the political system (Abramowitz and McCoy 2019, Iyengar et al. 2019). As some studies have noted (Ostiguy 2009; Ostiguy and Roberts 2016), the personalistic cleavage generated by a charismatic identity can undermine the relevance of more traditional ideological or social divisions thought to facilitate party system institutionalization (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). By demonstrating how charismatic attachments emerge and develop into a resilient identity, my theory sheds light on the mechanisms through which such a personalistic cleavage can structure the political system in ways that intensify affective polarization and harm programmatic development.

8.1.2.4 A Novel Explanation for Enduring Institutional Weakness

Finally, my theory of charismatic movement revival contributes to the literature on institutional weakness and its consequences for democracy. My analysis reinforces the findings of several important studies that highlight the detrimental impact of personalism, elites' top-down control of parties, stark programmatic reversals, and severe crises on party system institutionalization (Gervasoni 2018; Kostadinova and Levitt 2014; Lupu 2013, 2014; Mainwaring 2018; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Roberts 2007, 2014). For example, my finding that charismatic movements can remain dormant for years before suddenly becoming revived by new leaders complements Mainwaring's observation that, in Latin America, countries with seemingly stable party systems can experience surprisingly rapid institutional and ideological change, at times "unravel[ing] quickly and dramatically" (2018, 35, 62). Furthermore, the fits and starts of charismatic movements emphasized by my study align with Roberts' analysis of the "ebb and flow of populist waves" in several Latin American countries, including Argentina and Venezuela (2007, 4, 12).

My theory of charismatic movement revival contributes an alternative explanation for recurrent institutional weakness that rests on the self-reinforcing, spasmodic trajectories of charismatic movements. Specifically, as detailed in Chapter 7, I argue that the emergence of these movements sets into motion an

endogenous cycle of personalistic leadership that establishes – and subsequently perpetuates – problems of institutional weakness highlighted by the previously mentioned authors. Moreover, because the charismatic core of such movements persists over time rather than succumbing to routinization, my theory suggests that it can undermine democratic development for decades. Indeed, as shown in Chapter 7, the periodic revival of charismatic movements encourages executive aggrandizement, promotes shortsighted policies whose inevitable collapse harms citizens' well-being, exacerbates affective polarization, hinders programmatic party structuration, and makes it difficult for both citizens and institutions to hold leaders accountable.

Importantly, my explanation of persistent institutional weakness extends only to countries where charismatic movements have taken root.[1] Nonetheless, I argue that its contribution to the broader literature is valid and useful for two reasons. First, while they have hitherto not been very common, my research shows that charismatic movements have a powerful and enduring impact on political systems. Second, the growing trend toward the "personalization" of politics, combined with the recent rise of charismatic leaders in countries around the world, suggest that my theory may become increasingly relevant in diverse contexts (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Garzia 2011; Gervasoni 2018; Kyle and Mounk 2018; McAllister 2007; Roberts 2014). It is particularly notable that the recent surge in charismatic leaders and movements has coincided with the alarming global retreat of democracy (Freedom House 2020). My theory suggests not only that these trends are related, but also that the threats to democracy posed by these charismatic movements could be more enduring than previously thought. The next section demonstrates how the central components of my theory generalize to four additional cases within and beyond Latin America.

8.2 CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT REVIVAL IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Does the theory presented in this book – that charismatic movements survive by sustaining their personalistic nature – provide valid and useful insights for cases beyond Argentina and Venezuela? A brief examination of movements in Peru,

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[1] An important exception to this rule exists where charismatic movement founders have irrevocably tarnished their legacy by overshadowing their magnetic appeal with excessive brutality. In such cases, the abhorrent nature of the founder's legacy is more likely to stigmatize it in collective memory, greatly undermining its impact on the political system (see Art 2006; Manucci 2020). For example, the memory of Hitler's unspeakable genocide against the Jewish people far outweighs that of his charismatic bonds with his Nazi followers or his vision for transforming Germany (and the world). Because his abhorrent legacy has been condemned by Germany and the international community alike, his charisma has had little, if any, impact on German political institutions.

Italy, Thailand, and China – a set of cases that approximates a "most different systems" design – suggests that it does (Przeworski and Teune 1970, 34). While an in-depth, multimethod investigation of these cases lies beyond the scope of this study, I rely on secondary literature to assess the relevance of different aspects of my theory across the four cases. First, I consider to what extent leaders in these countries fostered charismatic bonds with their followers. Next, I examine whether these leaders used their authority to establish charismatic movements that overpowered existing parties and institutions. Subsequently, I analyze the trajectories of these movements after their founders' departure from the political scene, paying special attention to the status of citizens' attachments and the movements' impact on the party system.

This short analysis illustrates that, despite emerging in diverse contexts, key characteristics of the four movements under examination appear strikingly similar to those of Peronism and Chavismo. Like their Argentine and Venezuelan counterparts, the founders of all four movements established unmediated, emotional attachments with a large group of citizens and used charismatic authority to dominate politics, weakening (or attempting to weaken) important parties and political institutions along the way. The four founders also remained remarkably popular after stepping down from power. Furthermore, immediate successors – whether anointed by the founder or supported by opposition forces – struggled to establish independent legitimacy and govern effectively. Finally, in some cases, the widespread and persistent public adoration of the followers suggests the potential for revival of the movement when the right conditions emerge. In other cases, movement revival seems unlikely. Nevertheless, I demonstrate that, even in these cases, the charismatic legacies of the movement founder continue to influence politics in important ways that undermine programmatic and institutional development.

8.2.1 Peru

As described in Chapter 6, Alberto Fujimori rose to power in 1990 as a political outsider amidst a severe crisis of hyperinflation and "brutal insurrectionary violence" (Weyland 2006, 14). The urban lower classes and rural poor, who suffered disproportionately from the crisis, saw in Fujimori the potential for miraculous relief. Indeed, unlike Mario Vargas Llosa – Fujimori's elite competitor who allied with existing parties and proposed a detailed platform for economic recovery – Fujimori rose independently and campaigned on a simple promise that resonated with the suffering masses: "honesty, technology, and work" (Weyland 2002, 102–3). In office, Fujimori followed through on his promise by enacting a series of daring reforms to combat hyperinflation; next, he launched a campaign to defeat Peru's most violent insurrectionary group, the Shining Path, and soon captured its top leaders (ibid., 150–58). To the poor, Fujimori's straightforward promises and audacious performance seemed extraordinary – especially compared to the incompetence of past administrations.

Thus, although the founder's emotional appeal was less pronounced than that of Perón or Chávez, he cultivated a powerful narrative that celebrated his reputation for "getting things done," denounced his adversaries (including Congress and the Supreme Court) as obstructionist, and solidified deep, unmediated attachments with Peru's underprivileged masses.

By fulfilling the three conditions necessary for establishing charismatic attachments, Fujimori enjoyed tremendous popular support. By 1992, just two years into his presidency, he achieved an approval rating as high as 82 percent (Weyland 2002, 171–72). Even eight years later, when the impressive performance of his policies began to wane and allegations of corruption and wrongdoing surfaced, his approval remained well above 50 percent (Arce and Carrión 2010, 37–38; Wise 2006, 220).[2] Notably, poor voters offered particularly strong and enduring devotion to the leader. In fact, by 2000, his approval among the very poor was seventeen points higher than among the upper class (Carrión 2006, 130).

Having established his personalistic authority, Fujimori trampled on the already-fragmented party system and dismantled democratic institutions over the course of his ten-year rule. When he rose to power in 1990, Peruvians had already lost faith in established parties. In this context, Fujimori seemed especially appealing due to his lack of affiliation and the fact that "he hadn't done anything yet" (Weyland 2002, 102). As president, the leader capitalized on public sentiments to concentrate power and further undermine the party system. For example, rather than building a new party, he created four transient coalitions to support each of his election campaigns: "Change 90" in 1990, "New Majority" in 1995, "Let's Go Neighbors" in 1998, and "Peru 2000" in 1999/2000. He subjugated each of these coalitions to his personal will and let them fade away when he no longer needed their services, extinguishing opportunities to develop them into nascent parties (Carrión 2006, 7; Levitsky 1999, 82).

In addition to accelerating the disintegration of the party system, Fujimori challenged democratic institutions that constrained his power. In April 1992, he orchestrated a military-backed self-coup in which he "closed the Congress, suspended the constitution, and purged the judiciary" (Levitsky 1999, 78). Shortly thereafter, he enacted a new constitution that permitted his overwhelmingly popular reelection in 1995 (ibid.). Like other charismatic leaders, Fujimori reinstated elections to demonstrate his tremendous popular support, the most essential source of his legitimacy. Yet he also maintained a tight grip

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[2] In particular, Wise states that Fujimori's initially impressive reforms were rather superficial in the long run: they failed to "tackle glaring reform gaps in such areas as income distribution, the restructuring and modernization of small and medium-sized firms, and export promotion" (2010, 220). Thus, "although the Fujimori coalition was patently successful in launching the first phase of market reforms in Peru, this same coalition emerged as the main bottleneck in the pursuit of second-phase market reforms" (ibid., 224).

on other democratic institutions, enabling him to exercise unquestioned authority for eight more years (Carrión 2006, 6). In doing so, he single-handedly carried out policies to sustain his supreme power without fear of reprisal.

In 2000, under pressure from Congress, in the wake of a major corruption scandal, Fujimori reluctantly resigned and fled to Japan after being elected for a third, unconstitutional term (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 433). Crucially, many of his poor followers remained loyal to him even after he was forced from power. In fact, his abrupt departure, which was initiated by politicians in Congress, strengthened the antiestablishment appeal of Fujimorismo for these voters (Meléndez 2019). Conversely, anti-Fujimorista voters did not develop strong political attachments to other parties or leaders in the aftermath of the charismatic leader's demise. Peru's subsequent presidents therefore rose to power as "free agents," garnering support through their *negative* association with Fujimorismo rather than through building their own parties with *positive*, coherent identities (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 412; Meléndez 2019). Many anti-Fujimorista voters supported these leaders simply because they represented "the least-worst option" (Meléndez 2019). Because of their incapacity to construct lasting attachments with voters, these presidents struggled to achieve legitimacy and suffered low approval ratings, even though most of them oversaw substantial economic growth during their terms (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 147; Tanaka 2011, 77). For these reasons, while its charismatic founder has been absent from politics for nearly two decades, Fujimorismo has survived as the country's *only* cohesive political identity (Levitsky and Zavaleta 2016, 432; Meléndez 2019; Tanaka 2011, 80).

As discussed in Chapter 6, Fujimori's daughter, Keiko, made an impressive attempt to restore Fujimorismo to power by running for president in 2011 and again in 2016. Although she invested greater resources in constructing an organized party than her father did, she also revived his personalistic connections to his mass following, relied heavily on her symbolic association with him, and personally embodied his reputation for miraculously resolving the people's most pressing problems (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 152; Meléndez 2019). Keiko failed to win the presidency in either year due primarily to the absence of a severe crisis, which tempered voters' desire for a charismatic savior to relieve their suffering. Even so, her personalistic image and association with her father reactivated the support of many of his followers (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 155; Meléndez 2019; Tanaka 2011, 81). Thus, in the 2016 election, she won the first round of the elections by more than 18 percentage points and lost in the second round by a razor-thin margin of 0.24 percentage points (Dargent and Muñoz 2016, 145). Moreover, Keiko's opponent, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, won the election due to his anti-Fujimorista status rather than his own platform or identity. In fact, as an illustration of his weak mandate, the new president resigned less than two years into his tenure, under threat of impeachment, based on accusations of corruption (Vergara 2018, 65).

In sum, Alberto Fujimori's movement has continued to shape Peruvian politics since the charismatic leader's departure nearly two decades ago. Millions of followers have continued to express profound attachments to his legacy. Meanwhile, parties have remained extremely fragmented, while non-Fujimorista leaders have struggled to establish independent authority. To be sure, the absence of an economic crisis, as well as multiple corruption scandals and recent rifts between Keiko Fujimori and her brother, Kenji, have threatened the movement's future prospects. In particular, since Keiko's loss in 2016, each sibling has hurled accusations of malfeasance at the other – Keiko for accepting campaign money from the corrupt Brazilian construction company, Odebrecht, and Kenji for making backdoor deals with former president Kuczynski to pardon the siblings' father, Alberto – decreasing the likelihood that Fujimorismo will return to power in the near future (Collyns 2018).

Nevertheless, the resilience of the followers' loyalty to Fujimorismo and the movement's ongoing personalistic influence on the political system are impressive – especially in light of the political drama surrounding the Fujimori family. While a future victory for Keiko (or Kenji) seems improbable at the time of writing, the historical trajectory of Fujimorismo since their father's fall from power in 2000 reflects marked similarities with other charismatic movements – namely in its resilient charismatic nature, its capacity to maintain the emotional devotion of its followers, and its profound and often destabilizing influence on Peru's fragmented party system.

8.2.2 Italy

Similar to Chávez in Venezuela, Silvio Berlusconi rose to power from the ashes of Italy's collapsed party system in 1994. From 1948 until Berlusconi's precipitous political debut, Italy had been governed by a rigid "partyocracy" dominated by Christian Democracy (DC), a party characterized by intense factionalism and deeply entrenched patronage (Koff and Koff 2000, 32–33). Although Italy had a multiparty system during this period, the DC controlled every cabinet and all but two premierships, while the second-largest party, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), perpetually stood in second place yet remained excluded from government power (Koff and Koff 2000, 32–33). In the early 1990s, however, the explosion of a massive corruption scandal called *Tangentopoli* (kickback city) – which implicated the vast majority of parties and leaders from across the political system – caused Italian voters to abandon the DC along with the entire political establishment. The scandal implicated an estimated 5,000 politicians; over half of parliament was indicted and 400 city and town councils were forced to close down (ibid., 1–3). This scandal, combined with the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the decline in Communist identification, caused voters to thoroughly reject the political establishment and seek out an inspirational figure to rectify the situation (ibid.).

In answer to voters' cries for help, Berlusconi "burst upon the political scene" with his brand-new personalistic movement, *Forza Italia* (FI), in January 1994, promising far-reaching change (ibid., 31). By March of that year, he transformed from a political novice into the country's most popular politician, winning elections and, in May, becoming Prime Minister. Unlike existing politicians, whom voters perceived as complicit in a system of rules that had long benefited the political class at the expense of the people, Berlusconi connected on an emotional level with the masses and "gave voice" to their widespread frustration (Donovan 2015, 12, 19). Drawing on his outsider profile and his status as a wealthy media tycoon, he vowed to "transfer" his fabulous success to ordinary Italians. As he confidently implored, "Trust me, because I can make Italy as rich as I did myself" (Fabbrini 2013, 159). He also appealed to the increasingly middle-class electorate through promises to dramatically cut taxes, slash the unemployment rate, enact massive public works projects, and increase pensions for retirees. Lastly, the charismatic leader created a symbolic narrative that resonated deeply with his followers. This narrative praised Berlusconi for his "mission and sacrifice" to rescue Italy from the grips of selfish politicians and deliver both material success and happiness to the people (McDonnell 2016, 723).

By recognizing the anger and suffering of citizens who felt excluded by the political establishment, promising wealth and other tangible benefits, and crafting a narrative that depicted him as the savior who would rescue the people from the morally bankrupt political system, Berlusconi founded a powerful charismatic movement and consolidated deep, affective bonds with a large base of followers. Riding this wave of support, he served as Prime Minister three times – in 1994, 2001–6, and 2008–11 – during which he achieved high approval ratings that peaked at 63 percent and established "full personal control" over politics (Fabbrini 2013, 154–55; Sexton 2009).[3]

During his premierships, Berlusconi took advantage of his virtual monopoly over national media to project his personal appeal and showcase seemingly extraordinary (though superficial) reforms (Fabbrini 2013, 159–60). He also constructed a loyal coalition in Congress by weaving together "a complex set of personal deals dressed up in populist appeals to xenophobic nationalism and crude consumerism" (Bellamy 2006, 351). In doing so, the charismatic leader further destabilized Italy's practically collapsed party system and reaffirmed his supremacy. He also undermined democratic institutions that threatened his power. For instance, he "used his control on national television to de-legitimize

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[3] Due to Italy's parliamentary system, Berlusconi's executive power differed from that of other charismatic leaders under examination. In particular, he served as Prime Minister rather than as President, and did so during intermittent periods (1994, 2001–6, and 2008–11). Nevertheless, similar to his charismatic counterparts in other countries, he consolidated a massive, loyal following and concentrated tremendous, personalistic authority over the political system during his premierships (Donovan 2015; Fabbrini 2013; McDonnell 2016).

independent bodies such as magistrates or newspapers and other critics" (Fabbrini 2013, 160). He also brazenly engaged in scandalous behavior ranging from tax fraud to sexual exploits, trusting that his charismatic appeal and reverent group of followers would nevertheless protect his image as a national hero (Donadio 2018). Finally, like Chávez, Perón, and Fujimori, Berlusconi resisted attempts to institutionalize the FI or share power with a "second leader" or "potential successor" (Koff and Koff 2000, 44).

Over the course of his rule, Berlusconi's dramatic promises of economic reform failed to fully materialize. As the "Euro crisis" loomed and "ungovernable Italian public debt" threatened the stability of other European states, he faced mounting pressure and ultimately resigned in November 2011 (Fabbrini 2013, 167). Crucially, for his charismatic legacy, the leader's retreat from power resulted more from *external* pressure, coming from other European leaders, than from discontent among Italian voters. Moreover, Berlusconi's departure left a power vacuum that was filled by an uninspiring technocrat, Mario Monti, and "a cabinet composed of university professors, bankers, and high-level public officials" (ibid., 168). Building on his image as a victim bullied by elite European powers (especially Germany) and on the poor performance of the government that succeeded him, Berlusconi was therefore able to make an impressive comeback in 2013 (Reinbold 2013). Indeed, just two years after resigning, he courageously revived his FI movement and campaigned to become Prime Minister for a fourth time.

Ultimately, Berlusconi was barred from running due to allegations of tax fraud and did not return to power. Nevertheless, his movement won about 30 percent of the votes and one-third of the seats in both houses of Congress (Alsop 2013). Moreover, Berlusconi's supporters continued to express profound faith in him. One follower passionately stated, "Now Silvio is back and I believe again" (Reinbold 2013). Another proclaimed, "I have always loved Silvio; he stands for everything that is good in the world" (ibid.). Based on this outpouring of support, a journalist incredulously stated at the time, "adoration of Berlusconi remains widespread. In the parallel universe occupied by followers, there is no room for doubt about Berlusconi and lines are clearly drawn. Silvio is good and the others are bad" (ibid.).

Throughout the 2010s, Italy continued to struggle with political fragmentation and economic decline (Donadio 2018). Thus, support for parties – especially the bumbling center–left coalition led by Matteo Renzi and, subsequently, Paolo Gentiloni – remained low. Meanwhile, Berlusconi's followers continued to express deep attachments to their beloved leader, causing him to run for the premiership yet again in 2018. Technically, the charismatic leader's criminal record barred him from political office; he also failed to win sufficient votes. Nevertheless, Berlusconi did not disappear from politics. In fact, in 2019, with his ban from office lifted, he ran for and won a seat in the European Parliament ("Silvio Berlusconi: Italy's Perpetual Powerbroker," 2019).

In sum, Berlusconi founded a charismatic movement that dominated politics in Italy for almost two decades. Rather than fading away or routinizing when the leader resigned in 2011, his legacy and movement, backed by the ongoing devotion of millions of followers, continued to shape Italian politics. Consequently, the political system remains deeply fragmented, personalistic, and volatile (Donovan 2015, 15). In light of the leader's electoral defeat in 2018, some have declared, "the Berlusconi era is over" (Giuffrida 2018). However, given the leader's regular reappearances as well as the resilience of his followers' emotional support, it seems unlikely that his charismatic mark on politics will easily fade. In fact, as the economic crisis deepens and Italian leaders fail to address it, it is possible that voters' wistful memories of "recent times under Berlusconi when they felt richer" could facilitate the movement's return to power under Berlusconi or, eventually, another alluring self-starter (Natanson 2018).

8.2.3 Thailand

Similar to the other countries under analysis, in Thailand the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis created favorable conditions for a charismatic leader to rise up and transform politics. The political and economic collapse produced by the crisis discredited the incumbent Democrat Party (DP) and facilitated the meteoric rise of Thaksin Shinawatra, a successful businessman who portrayed himself to his fellow Thais as a "breath of fresh air" (Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 62). Although Thaksin had previously entered politics, briefly serving as Foreign Minister from October 1994 to January 1995, he abandoned his post after just five months. Then, on the heels of the crisis in July 1998, he founded his own political movement, Thai Rak Thai (TRT – Thais Helping Thais) (ibid., 64). Unlike existing political parties, Thaksin stifled the organizational development of the TRT and instead used it as a personalistic vehicle to launch himself into executive power (McCargo and Pathmanand 2005, 110). In 2001, Thaksin became the most popular Prime Minister in Thai history (Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 62).

On the campaign trail and during his first years in office, Thaksin cultivated intensely emotional bonds with the poor masses, especially in the long-neglected countryside. First, he directly recognized the two groups who had suffered the most during the 1997 crisis: small business owners and the rural poor. He appealed to the former group, which consisted largely of low- and middle-income individuals operating family owned businesses, by acknowledging their feelings of abandonment by the outgoing government, which had embraced the painful stabilization policies recommended by the International Monetary Fund. For instance, in a public speech in 2000, Thaksin stated, "a lot of my brothers and sisters are still enduring great suffering and my business friends still cannot find money from banks … don't worry for me but for the country" (in Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 74). Even more important than

these constituents, Thaksin vowed to rescue poor citizens, who resided in the rural north and northeastern regions of the country and constituted 69 percent of the national population, from their miserable living conditions. On the campaign trail, he declared, "Nothing will stand in my way. I am determined to devote myself to politics in order to lead the Thai people out of poverty – I think the people want Thai Rak Thai to take the government's reins and solve the country's problems" (in Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 80).

As Prime Minister, Thaksin followed through on his promise by enacting three audacious policies that delivered immediate relief to his struggling constituents: a three-year debt moratorium for farmers, a development fund of one million baht (approximately US$32,000) for every Thai village, and a healthcare program that provided direct access to services to all Thais for 30 baht (less than US$1) (McCargo and Pathmanand 2005, 89). Many analysts viewed Thaksin's policies as ideologically vacuous and logistically unworkable (ibid., 90). However, for poor Thais, the swift and impressive impact of the policies – referred to colloquially as "Thaksinomics" – made the leader appear extraordinary (Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 99).

In addition to his bold programs, Thailand's new savior wove his appeals and policies into a symbolic narrative that resonated deeply with his followers. Similar to Berlusconi in Italy, he confirmed his heroic status by playing up his extraordinary success as a self-made billionaire – an image that appealed to traditional Thai values and contrasted with the corrupt reputation of established politicians (ibid., 77). Additionally, Thaksin promoted a dichotomous view of the world with good, hardworking people on one side and selfish, backward enemies on the other. He warmly embraced his devotees as members of the former group while lambasting the political establishment, the IMF, and other "outside forces" as members of the latter group (ibid., 76). Finally, he stressed his dedication to a deeper mission to transform Thailand into a peaceful paradise for its humble, deserving citizens (ibid., 64). Unlike his cold and distant predecessors, Thaksin communicated this narrative to his followers in an open and intimate fashion through direct contact, off-the-cuff speeches, and a weekly radio show that was broadcast to virtually every station in the country (McCargo and Pathmanand 2005, 168; Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 96).

As Prime Minister, Thaksin further consolidated his charismatic authority by weakening institutions that threatened his power. Like his counterparts in other countries, he filled his cabinet with sycophants upon becoming Prime Minister (Phongpaichit and Baker 2004, 92). He also reformed the constitution to make it costly for cabinet members and congressmen to challenge his authority, resulting in a weak and deferential parliament. Meanwhile, he pushed his aggressive policy agenda through by using "cabinet decisions and executive decrees" (ibid., 96–97). He also stifled dissent by launching "blistering attacks" on his critics and maintaining a tight grip on media outlets (McCargo and Pathmanand 2005, 199).

Although Thaksin's illiberal actions weakened Thailand's young democracy, his followers' adoration of him intensified over the course of his premiership. He therefore swept the February 2005 elections, winning 375 of 500 seats in parliament – a full 127 seats more than he had captured in 2001 – and "came to feel virtually invincible" (Pongsudhirak 2012, 47–48). However, the combination of Thaksin's concentrated power, his overwhelming popularity, and the potentially disastrous consequences of his bold policies led opposing forces – comprised of the military, the crown, and old-guard politicians – to overthrow him a year later, in September 2006 (ibid., 49).

Similar to the junta that ousted Perón in 1955, the Thai military established a caretaker government after forcing Thaksin into exile, outlawed his party, and attempted to eradicate his influence. Yet, as in Argentina, this strategy proved ineffective, and Thaksin continued to exercise his charismatic authority from afar. Despite his physical absence, his movement – represented by a new proxy, the People's Power Party (PPP) – won elections in 2006 and 2007, both of which the military annulled; when it won again in 2008, the military begrudgingly allowed Thaksin's hand-chosen replacement, Samak Sundaravej, to serve a brief nine months as Prime Minister (Phongpaichit and Baker 2013, 610; Pongsudhirak 2012, 55).

A typical anointed successor, Samak lacked the appeal and capacity to stabilize the political situation, which was increasingly characterized by chaos and anti-government protests ("Thai Parliament in emergency session," 2008). This led the military and Constitutional Tribunal to intervene again in September 2008, removing Samak on a legal technicality (Pongsudhirak 2012, 55). In the following month, another of Thaksin's protégés – his brother-in-law, Somchai Wongsawat – stepped in as Prime Minister, only to be quickly overwhelmed by opposition protests (ibid.). By December, the military and Constitutional Tribunal once again banned the leaders of three pro-Thaksin parties from politics until 2012 and helped usher the unelected DP leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva, into the premiership (ibid., 49).

Abhisit's tenure as the military-backed Prime Minister lasted for less than two years. Lacking sufficient political legitimacy, the new leader ratcheted up repression, outlawed dissent, and cracked down on (pro-Thaksin) protests to a much greater degree than Thaksin himself had done during his rule (Hewison 2012, 28). In response to Abhisit's poor leadership, Thaksin's faithful rank-and-file held massive "red shirt" protests demanding the restoration of democracy in 2010 (Thabchumpon and McCargo 2011, 993). In response, the military called for elections in July 2011 and permitted the participation of the pro-Thaksin party – now called the Pheu Thai Party (PTP) – though not of Thaksin himself. As with each prior election since Thaksin's initial rise to power in 2001, the PTP won the elections in a landslide due to the massive support of Thaksin's followers (Hewison 2012, 28).

Unable to personally return to power as Prime Minister, Thaksin once again demonstrated his charismatic style by handpicking a replacement who would

not overshadow his authority: his younger sister, Yingluck Shinawatra. Yingluck, who "had no background in politics" and "had previously worked in the family real-estate business," posed little threat to Thaksin's power (Pongsudhirak 2012, 50). To enhance her image and ensure her electoral success, Thaksin referred to Yingluck as "his clone," while his followers demonstrated support by wearing masks with Thaksin's face during the election campaign (Hewison 2012, 30; Phongpaichit and Baker 2013, 617). The strategy worked: the PTP nominated Yingluck as their candidate in May 2011, and she became Thailand's first female Prime Minister with the party's massive victory in the July elections.

As a handpicked successor, however, Yingluck encountered several challenges during her premiership that ultimately led to her ouster in 2014. While she enjoyed the support of the majority of the Thai population upon rising to power, she struggled to control the eruption of opposition ("yellow shirt") protests, which spread across Bangkok in December 2013 and January 2014 and enjoyed the implicit support of the military, the crown, and several businesses (McCargo 2015, 338). Furthermore, she lacked the political skills and independent authority to navigate the fragile truce between her government and the powerful military–crown alliance. Meanwhile, she failed to meet the grand expectations of her brother's followers, who hoped that her government would carry out her brother's transformative mission and, after years of suffering under the military-backed DP rule, deliver peace and prosperity.

In the ultimate demonstration of her weak leadership, Yingluck allowed a dysfunctional and fraudulent snap election to proceed in the spring of 2014, even though the contest was widely perceived to be rigged against her (Mahtani 2014). In contrast to previous elections, which Thaksin's followers took as an opportunity to demonstrate their fervent support, turnout in the 2014 election was less than 50 percent. Pro-Thaksin candidates up and down the ballot campaigned in a "half-hearted" manner, illustrating their reservations about Yingluck's leadership (McCargo 2015, 341–42). Thus, in the midst of rising political unrest, the military ousted Yingluck and staged a coup in May 2014. Subsequently, the Army Commander General, Prayut Chan-o-cha, declared himself Prime Minister (ibid., 343–44).

Amazingly, despite Yingluck's political failure and Prayut's undemocratic rule, which has persisted from 2014 to the time of writing in 2020, Thaksin's disciples have continued to profess faith that their beloved leader will return to Thailand and rescue them from their misery. For example, in the lead-up to sham elections held by the military-backed party in March 2019, Thaksin's followers in the northeast thronged the streets to demonstrate their fervent hope for his return. His symbolic narrative, which claims to "believe in the majority of farmers, in the little people," speaks to these individuals, who recall that "Thaksin was the first to pay attention to this region" almost two decades earlier (Schmidt and Thanthong-Knight 2019). Furthermore, while the military government dubiously declared victory after the 2019 election, Thaksin's PTP

won more votes than any other opposition party, arousing suspicions that the military artificially inflated its own vote tally (Tanakasempipat and Thepgumpanat 2019). Although Prayut remains Prime Minister today, Thaksin maintains his position as Thailand's most popular leader – a remarkable feat, given that he has not physically returned to the country since fleeing in 2006. In fact, his charismatic movement appears to be waiting for the right conditions to return to power, perhaps under the authority of its original founder.

In short, Thaksin's TRT provides yet another example of the remarkable resilience of charismatic movements. Thaksin rose in the wake of a severe crisis and consolidated profound, emotional attachments with millions of poor Thais. When the military and opposition forces ousted him in 2006, his charismatic appeal grew more – not less – intense among his followers. Moreover, his followers' loyalty has persisted despite the failures of his anointed successors, indicating the intensely personalistic nature of the followers' attachments. Given their ongoing, fervent support for the charismatic founder, it is possible that Thaksin could return to power in the future, not unlike Juan Perón in 1973.

8.2.4 China

In China, Mao Zedong founded a far more violent, totalitarian, and ideologically coherent party than the other charismatic leaders analyzed in this book. However, from his establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 until his death in 1976, he also struggled against forces of routinization from within his party and on several occasions subordinated the organization to his personal authority. From the outset, Mao used "extraordinary charismatic powers" to establish deep attachments with millions of Chinese citizens (Pye 1976, 250). Similar to other charismatic founders, he achieved this by recognizing the suffering of rural peasants, launching a transformative program of modernization, and constructing a "romantic vision" of the common man with which the people personally identified (ibid.). To do so, he drew on his peasant background to sympathize with his followers while simultaneously glorifying himself as "the greatest figure in Chinese history" (Schram 1967, 386). He also portrayed his revolution as an all-out war against traditional Chinese society and, more than advancing Marxist–Leninist doctrine per se, promised his followers that he would emancipate them from the evils of old society (ibid., 384). In short, it is Mao's profoundly personalistic appeal – rather than his position atop the totalitarian CCP – that caused his followers to pledge their fervent devotion to his movement.

Over the course of his rule, Mao battled against the routinization of his movement and insisted on "plac[ing] the leader above the Party as the sole source of authority and the sole source of truth" (ibid., 386). For example, in 1958, Mao attacked the CCP bureaucracy, which had been growing in size and

competence, with the Great Leap Forward – an impractical, haphazard, and ambitious program that clearly aimed to subjugate the party to his personal authority. In contrast to the CCP's prior policies, which had been bureaucratic and modest in scope, the Great Leap Forward "was utopian in substance and chaotic in implementation," reinforcing Mao's charismatic leadership style (Teiwes and Sun 1999, 5). The extraordinarily ambitious and poorly organized nature of the program unleashed a catastrophic famine that caused the death of an estimated 15 to 46 million people (ibid.), causing Mao to back down in 1962 (ibid., 183–84). This disaster led Mao to temporarily cede power to other CCP officials, who sought to deemphasize his charismatic leadership and routinize the party.

Despite the massive failure of the Great Leap Forward, however, Mao staged an impressive comeback four years later in 1966 by launching the Cultural Revolution. Similar to his prior effort, he advanced the Cultural Revolution to attack the CCP organization, which had once again given way to the forces of routinization (Andreas 2007, 439). In particular, Mao used his direct, affective connections with students, workers, and peasants across the country to rebel against entrenched party officials in the name of his larger mission of physical and spiritual transcendence. In contrast to the increasingly rigid and institutionalized CCP, the Cultural Revolution had a "fluid and volatile" structure that hinged exclusively on Mao's charismatic authority (ibid., 441, 451). Unlike the Great Leap Forward, this second violent upheaval was successful: Mao confirmed his position as China's supreme savior and greatly weakened the party beneath him, effectively reversing the impressive efforts of lower-ranking officials to routinize his movement.

When faced with death in 1976, Mao further asserted his charismatic authority by choosing Hua Guofeng, a sycophant, to replace him. Like other anointed successors, Hua was "a relatively unknown figure with a fairly ordinary political legacy [who] lacked the charismatic authority enjoyed by his predecessor" (Weatherly 2010, 141). Hua attempted to shore up legitimacy by arresting more compelling leaders in the CCP, whom he viewed as threats, and – similar to Maduro in Venezuela – used propaganda to stress his personal connection to Mao (ibid.). To avoid betraying the heroic legacy of his predecessor, Hua also pledged to continue outdated, Soviet-era economic policies rather than embrace the market economy (Vogel 2011, 188). Consequently, Hua ultimately failed to establish independent authority. Instead, his "power stemmed entirely from his selection by Mao and from the official positions he held in the party and governmental bureaucracies" (ibid., 185). Just two years into his rule, in December 1978, the ambitious Deng Xiaoping sidelined Hua (ibid., 200).

Unlike Hua, Deng was a far more experienced and talented leader. He also distinguished himself from Mao: unlike the charismatic founder, Deng strengthened the CCP bureaucracy, deemphasized Mao's romantic and utopian visions, and embraced a pragmatic political style that integrated socialism with

free market policies (Wong and Lam 2017, 37–38). Interestingly, Deng never sought the chief executive office himself, but rather appointed others to serve in the symbolic role as Chairman or Secretary General while wielding de facto authority from behind the scenes (Zhiyue 2017, 124). Ironically, however, while claiming to prioritize party over personal authority, Deng held a tight grip on Chinese politics up until his death in 1997, creating another succession crisis similar to the one following Mao's death three decades earlier. Indeed, in the aftermath of Deng's demise, China's leadership consisted of "a mostly faceless group of longtime party engineers who have scaled the ranks not by fighting in wars or developing political and economic ideologies but rather by cultivating higher-ranking bureaucrats and divulging as little as possible about their ideas and plans" (Kurlantzick 2011).

In contrast to the bland party officials who succeeded Deng, China's current leader, Xi Jinping, has sought to carve out a new chapter of CCP history based on his own charismatic cult of personality since rising to power in 2012. To do so, he has invoked strategies remarkably similar to the other ambitious self-starters analyzed in this book. For example, Xi has deemphasized the significance of Deng's legacy and has instead played up his symbolic connections to Mao (Myers 2018), "reinstitut[ing] many of Mao's norms and ambitions with gusto" (Wong and Lam 2017, 31). Xi has also enacted bold reforms – such as the "Belt and Road Initiative," an ambitious and expensive project to link China to European countries by building infrastructure along the historic Silk Road. Not only has this initiative bathed the leader in a heroic glow, but also has "been compared to chairman Mao's bold plans in the 1950s to become the proud leader of the Third World" (ibid., 42).

Additionally, Xi has toured the country to communicate directly with ordinary people and "put himself on a pedestal with Mao Zedong, to rekindle a populist image" (Hernández 2018). He has also used his massive propaganda machine to launch programs of social control, such as "Xi Jinping thought" and "Xi Study Strong Nation," all of which incorporate symbols of Mao such as the "Little Red Book" (Bandurski 2019; Myers 2018). To be sure, China's coercive, post-totalitarian setting makes it difficult to parse out popular from coerced support. Moreover, Xi's personalistic rise has not coincided with a serious crisis – a necessary condition for consolidating charismatic authority. Nevertheless, his efforts to associate himself with Mao's heroic legacy mimic the strategies of other self-starters in charismatic movements and indicate the broad relevance of these leadership strategies – which appear to be important even in strongly authoritarian settings.

In sum, charismatic movements from across the world have persisted for long stretches of time without undergoing routinization. Although the leaders of these movements have fallen from power or died, their followers have continued to express profound attachments to the leaders' heroic legacies. Moreover, in most cases, new leaders have attempted to tap into the founders' legacies and rekindle citizens' attachments to consolidate independent authority, albeit with

varying degrees of success. Although these movements have developed in diverse settings, where variations in regime type (democratic vs. authoritarian), institutional system (presidential vs. parliamentary), and political orientation (from left to right) are marked, the strategies and behaviors of charismatic founders and their successors across these movements seem remarkably similar. Determining the extent to which citizens' attachments to these leaders and movements persist and become reactivated through a personalistic mechanism requires further analysis. Nevertheless, the preliminary evidence suggests that my theory of charismatic revival has broader validity in a geographically and historically diverse set of political movements.

8.3 CONCLUSION

This book has illustrated that, rather than fading away or routinizing, charismatic movements can persist in personalistic form for years after the disappearance of their founders. Consequently, these movements can infuse democracies with illiberal qualities. Specifically, followers' enduring, emotional attachments to the founder and his mission of salvation generate perverse incentives for subsequent politicians to act in similarly heroic ways. To do so, new leaders seek power in times of crisis, when citizens are most vulnerable. Next, to prove they are worthy of the followers' devotion, the new leaders forgo programmatic objectives to implement more dramatic and impressive, yet irresponsible, policies. The leaders enact such policies by draining resources and overriding constraints imposed by political parties and democratic institutions, including the legislative and judiciary branches. In these ways, successors reinforce authoritarian leader behaviors, undermine the development of parties, and perpetuate problems of institutional weakness.

In addition to undermining responsible leadership and party system development, the bold yet fragile nature of successors' policies impedes the quality of democratic representation. At the outset, such programs deliver substantial benefits to many citizens. Yet the extreme and programmatically untethered nature of the policies, combined with their inevitable exhaustion, ends up harming those same individuals. Most insidiously, these audacious policies unleash severe crises that are difficult to overcome, especially in contexts of institutional weakness. Yet rather than delegitimizing the charismatic movement, these crises generate conditions for the movement's regeneration under the leadership of new, yet similarly personalistic, self-starters.

In short, charismatic movements develop fitful but resilient trajectories that perpetually undermine institutional development and democratic representation. The self-reinforcing nature of these movements makes them difficult to overcome. Indeed, my theory suggests that transforming charismatic movements into routinized parties would require a powerful, exogenous force to break the self-perpetuating cycle of personalistic leadership. Future studies should explore the conditions that make such a path of routinization possible.

This book focuses on Peronism and Chavismo. Yet charismatic movements have dominated political systems across the world, including Fujimorismo in Peru, Berlusconi's FI in Italy, Thaksin's PTP in Thailand, and Maoism in China. More recently, charismatic leaders including Viktor Orbán (Hungary), the Kaczyński brothers (Poland), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey), and Donald Trump (United States) have risen to power and established transformative movements. These movements have posed alarming threats to democracy and have shown few signs of routinizing. My study reveals an alternative pathway such movements can take after the disappearance of their founders: revival in personalistic form. Furthermore, my theory provides a generalizable framework with which to evaluate the behaviors and relative success of new leaders who attempt to replace their charismatic predecessors. Above all, my findings indicate that charismatic movements have the potential to survive, generate instability, and undermine democracy for years to come.