



Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse

By Jana Morgan

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In recent decades, Bolivia, Colombia, Italy, and Venezuela have all faced the turmoil and democratic crisis of party system collapse. In *Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse*, Jana Morgan analyzes the causes of such collapse. She does so through a detailed examination of Venezuela's traumatic party system decay as well as comparative analysis of seven other countries. Collapse occurs when the party system as a whole is unable to provide adequate linkage between society and the state, failing to furnish programmatic representation, integration of major societal interests, or clientelist exchanges. Linkage decays when party systems face challenges that jeopardize their core strategies at the same time that they are constrained in their ability to adapt and to confront these threats. If this decay is unchecked and linkage of all sorts fails, then the bankrupt party system collapses.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Jana Morgan takes one of the great enigmas of the recent Latin American political experience—the collapse of Venezuela’s seemingly entrenched two-party system—and makes it comprehensible in this original and insightful book. Morgan places the Venezuelan case in a larger comparative perspective and employs rigorous empirical methods to show how party system collapse is related to the erosion of specific types of societal linkages. By demonstrating the importance of programmatic competition for securing party-society linkages, she makes a major contribution to our understanding of why some party systems respond more effectively than others to the challenges they encounter.”

—Kenneth M. Roberts, Cornell University

“Jana Morgan’s *Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse* offers the most comprehensive account to date of the collapse of the Venezuelan party system. Based on a rigorous study of the Venezuelan case and an impressive comparative analysis of seven additional cases, the book makes several contributions to the literature on party systems. First, it shows not only that party systems are based on diverse linkages to society but also that their fate—whether they survive or collapse—during periods of crisis hinges on how the crisis affects each of those linkages. Morgan also demonstrates how programmatic consensus and cross-party power-sharing arrangements, which are often lauded in the literature on new democracies, can, under some conditions, prove devastating to party systems. Finally, the book offers new insights into the consequences of party system collapse. Drawing on her rich comparative analysis, Morgan highlights the double-edged nature of party system collapse: new political forces offer greater programmatic choice and mobilize previously excluded groups, but they also tend to be personalistic and polarizing, which can pose dangers to democracy. I recommend this book to all students of comparative politics who are interested in the causes and consequences of party system collapse.”

—Steven Levitsky, Harvard University

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—Steven Levitsky, Harvard University

“Jana Morgan nicely blends the broader study of party systems with an analysis of Venezuelan politics; scholars who study either of these will want to read this book. It clarifies the concept of party system collapse and presents us with a definitive way of measuring the phenomenon. It offers a new causal explanation for party system collapse that is nuanced and powerful, emphasizing the multiple ways in which parties represent or provide ‘linkage’ to voters. And it offers a compelling test of these claims with a comparative analysis of several countries. For scholars of Venezuelan politics, Morgan provides a clear account of the party system’s collapse that partly refutes older findings (showing, for example, that economic performance alone is not the key cause of collapse) but that also builds on and reaffirms existing work. Her treatment of the Punto Fijo party system is fair and accurate, bringing to the table a wealth of new data that go beyond the usual public opinion surveys.”

—Kirk Hawkins, Brigham Young University

“Bankrupt Representation and Party System Collapse places Venezuela's dramatic party system collapse of the mid-1990s in comparative context. The book addresses a serious gap in the study of party systems at a time when they are changing rapidly, especially in Latin America. Jana Morgan makes a major contribution by examining party system failure at various levels of analysis and with a wide array of tools.”

—John A. Booth, University of North Texas

About the Author

Jana Morgan is Associate Professor of Political Science and a Research Fellow in the Center for the Study of Social Justice at the University of Tennessee.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernadine Williams:

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