J. Lat. Amer. Stud. **32**, 795–824 Printed in the United Kingdom © 2000 Cambridge University Press

COMMENTARY

Rethinking the Chilean Party Systems

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Although Chile is a relatively small country, writings about the Chilean party systems have long been better and more voluminous than is the case with most party systems in Latin America. Several orthodoxies have emerged in this literature: that Chilean parties are strong, that the party systems have been divided into three roughly equal parts, and that they have been relatively stable. The purpose of this article is to challenge these three orthodoxies. These orthodoxies are not completely wrong, but they need to be qualified.

The dominant view that Chilean parties are strong has been overstated. They have been strong in some respects and for some periods, but not in others. Parties have traditionally dominated mechanisms of representation in Chile's democratic periods, overshadowing unions, social movements, and other forms of representation. Party penetration in the electorate, however, has not been powerful. Parties have appeared and disappeared with frequency, and most parties have been relatively weak organisationally. More so than is the case in Uruguay, Venezuela from 1958 until the 1990s, Costa Rica or most of Western Europe, Chile's democratic periods have allowed space for anti-party populists to develop successful political careers, including capturing the presidency.

Some prominent scholars have suggested that since at least the 1930s Chile's party systems have been divided into three roughly equal large ideological blocs – left, centre and right – and that this division should be the basis for party system analysis in Chile. This conceptualisation of the party system is somewhat misleading. Although both party systems have had a significant left, centre and right since 1932, the vote share of these three large ideological blocs has fluctuated widely.

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The authors thank Alan Angell, John Carey, Carlos Huneeus, Timothy Scully, J. Samuel Valenzuela, Christopher Welna and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their comments.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The literature has suggested that the Chilean party systems have been quite stable, but the 1932–73 system was more unstable than has usually been acknowledged. Electoral volatility was consistently high, which is inconsistent with the view of a highly stable system. Moreover, the format of the party system (the number of parties) varied widely over time in a non-linear fashion.

The qualifications that we propose are important because the conventional wisdom gave ground to the idea that the Chilean party systems differ markedly from all others in Latin America, and is closer to the party systems of many Western European countries. Yet in terms of high electoral volatility, rapid change in party labels and episodic outbursts of personalism, Chile is closer to most Latin American party systems than to Western European cases.

We will examine the party systems of 1932–73 and 1989–2000. Our very use of the plural 'systems' suggests a key point, namely, that the systems of 1932–73 and 1988–2000 differ to a sufficient extent that it is sensible to think of them as distinct.[1]

The strength of the parties: parties in the electorate

The conventional view has been that Chilean parties are strong. For example, in one of his many fine works on the Chilean party system of 1932–73, A. Valenzuela speaks of 'strong national parties [that] penetrated peripheral areas and structured the issues and conflicts of local communities throughout Chile'. He emphasised 'the development of strong party networks that would serve to channel and control increasing participation in the nation's political affairs'. Elsewhere, he stated that 'Chile's party system was everywhere, not only determining the political recruitment process for important national posts but also structuring contests in such diverse institutions as government agencies, professional and industrial unions, neighbourhood organizations, and even local high schools'. Gil characterised Chile as having 'a strong political party system … [and] a low degree of personalism in politics'. Garretón called parties the 'backbone' of the Chilean political process.[2] We do not completely disagree with these views, but the strength of the Chilean

[1] On this point, also see the excellent work of J. Samuel Valenzuela, 'Orígenes y transformaciones del sistema de partidos en Chile', *Estudios Públicos*, no. 58 (1995).

[2] A. Valenzuela, *Political Brokers in Chile: Local Government in a Centralized Polity* (Durham, CO, 1977), p. x, ix; A. Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile*, vol. 4 of J. Linz and A. Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore, 1978), p. 3; F. Gil, *The Political System of Chile* (Boston, 1966), pp. 312–313; M. A. Garretón, *The Chilean Political Process* (Boston, 1989), p. xvi. See also J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes', p. 10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

parties must be qualified, especially regarding the strength of parties in the electorate.

Before further discussion of this point, disaggregating the notion of party strength and weakness is essential. We distinguish between parties in the electorate, parties in the legislature, parties as organisations and parties in organised civil society. Party in the electorate refers to the capacity of parties to win loyal voters who identify with the party over an extended period – that is, the extent to which parties structure the way citizens vote. Where parties are strong in the electorate, most citizens vote on the basis of their party affiliation. Party in the legislature refers to the degree to which parties structure legislative life; it includes dimensions such as party discipline and loyalty. Strong party organisations have ample material resources and/or a cadre of committed activists. Party strength or weakness in organised civil society refers to the degree to which parties dominate and mobilise organised interests. In some democracies parties dominate forms of political representation so much that trade unions, social movements, and interest groups tend to be subordinate to parties and often organise along party lines. In others, parties have less penetration into these organised actors, and in this sense are weaker.

Parties can be strong in some of these four dimensions and weak in others; this is precisely the case with Chilean parties, which historically dominated mechanisms of political representation and deeply penetrated organised civil society, but which did not structure the vote to a particularly high degree. Our discussion focuses on parties in the electorate, followed by brief comments on the other three dimensions.

(1) *Electoral results for different positions*

If parties structure the way citizens vote, electoral results for different positions (local positions, national congress and president) should be reasonably convergent in concurrent elections, provided four conditions are met. First, the elections must be concurrent, i.e., one kind of election must coincide with another. If elections are non-concurrent, a wide divergence in the popular vote for party X in one type of election (e.g., presidential) at time T_1 and in another type (e.g., municipal or congressional) at time T_2 may reflect changes in turnout or changing preferences of the electorate over time rather than split tickets that reflect weak party voting. Second, the electorate for the various positions should be the same. Third, the electoral rules should not create widely varying incentives for strategic voting. Incentives for strategic voting are strong with a district magnitude of one and plurality rules; they are weak with a medium or large district magnitude and proportional representation. In

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Chile (as in other Latin American cases) this rules out comparing presidential elections with other results because there have always been strong incentives for strategic voting for president. Finally, the ballot must allow citizens to split their ticket for the various offices in question.

If these four conditions obtain, one can compare party voting across cases by examining the divergence in results for different levels of elections. Convergent aggregate results for these various positions do not necessarily prove that party voting is widespread, but sharp divergence indicates the opposite. If large numbers of voters choose a candidate of party A for deputy and a candidate of party B for the Senate, this indicates a low degree of party structuring of the vote. Instead, other qualities – their programmatic positions, clientelistic linkages, or personal attractions – of individual candidates are decisive.

In Chile, the fourth condition above has always obtained in the post-1932 period, but the first three have rarely all been met at the same time; the Senate and lower chamber elections of 1932 and 1989 are the only cases that meet all of these conditions. In both years, Senate and lower chamber elections were ruled by essentially similar electoral laws; hence, we may assume that strategic voting played only a minor and roughly equal role.[3]

For these two cases of concurrent elections with relatively similar electoral rules, we constructed an index (by analogy to electoral volatility), the Cross-Election Vote Differential (CEVD), to assess the aggregate difference in voting patterns across two kinds of elections. The index is equal to the sum of the absolute values of the differences in support for each party in election Type A and election Type B, divided by two. For example, if party X wins 25 per cent in the presidential contest and 15 per cent for the lower chamber; Party Y wins 45 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, and party Z wins 30 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, the CEVD then equals 20 per cent.

$$\frac{|25-15|+|45-35|+|30-50|}{2} = \frac{10+10+20}{2} = 20.$$

For 1932, the CEVD between the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies was 16.1 per cent, reflecting fairly different voting patterns for the two chambers. For 1989, the CEVD between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate was very high (46.3 %). Many parties had widely divergent upper and lower chamber results. Aggregate electoral patterns thus indicate that

[3] Between 1932 and 1973, the mean district magnitude for the Chamber of Deputies was 5.7 with a range of one to eighteen deputies per district. The district magnitude for the Senate was five in every district. Since 1989, the district magnitude in all districts for both chambers has been two.

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Table 1. *Independent Presidential Candidates, 1932–1999*

Year	Candidate	% of Vote
1932	—	—
1938	C. Ibáñez	0.0
1942	C. Ibáñez	43.9
1946	—	—
1952	C. Ibáñez	46.6
1958	J. Alessandri	31.2
	A. Zamorano	3.3
1964	—	—
1970	J. Alessandri	34.9
1989	H. Büchi	29.4
	F. J. Errázuriz	15.4
1993	A. Alessandri	24.4
	J. Piñera	6.2
	M. Max Neef	5.5
1999	A. Frei	0.4
	S. Larrain	0.4
Mean		22.0

Sources: R. Cruz-Coke, *Historia electoral de Chile 1925–1973* (Santiago, 1984); Dirección del Registro Electoral; Servicio Electoral; Ministerio del Interior; Tribunal Calificador de Elecciones.

large numbers of voters supported candidates of different parties for the two chambers in 1932 and especially 1989, suggesting that party structuring of the electorate was modest.

(2) *Antiparty leaders*

In a democracy in which parties structure the vote to a high degree, most citizens vote on the basis of their party sympathy, making it difficult for antiparty politicians to come to power. Parties overwhelmingly dominate channels of political recruitment.

In Chile, there is a stronger antiparty tradition than the conventional wisdom has recognised. Three presidents elected between 1932 and 1958 – Arturo Alessandri (1932–38), Carlos Ibáñez (1952–58) and Jorge Alessandri (1958–64) – were antiparty populists or technocrats. Moreover, there is a long tradition of populist or technocratic presidential contenders who, despite losing, attracted substantial popular support. In six of the eleven presidential elections between 1932 and 1999, independent candidates won over 30 per cent of the vote, and on average they won 22.0 per cent – though with sharp fluctuations from one election to the next (Table 1). The significance of this fact for understanding twentieth-century Chilean parties has been understated.

In the 1920 presidential campaign, even though he was a leader of the Liberal Party and was nominated by the Liberal Alliance, Arturo

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Alessandri ran as a populist candidate against the traditional parties. Alessandri was a charismatic orator with an antioligarchic discourse. The party elite regarded this new populist style and the consequent political awakening of the urban working class as anathema. Despite the defection of most of his own party elite, Alessandri won the election by a small margin over the candidate of the National Union. He continued his anti-party practices during his presidency. Alessandri contributed to delegitimising opposition parties and the congress before the democratic breakdown of 1925.

With the re-establishment of democracy in 1932, Alessandri successfully ran for the presidency again. As the literature commonly argues, the Alessandri of 1932 was not the same as the one who won the 1920 election. He had softened his attitude toward parties, and was supported by centre and centre-right parties. Nevertheless, even during the 1932 campaign and his subsequent presidency, Alessandri was a leader above parties.

Most analysts have understated the challenge to the strong party thesis posed by presidents Carlos Ibáñez (dictator from 1927–31 and democratically elected president from 1952–58) and Jorge Alessandri (1958–64). Ibáñez ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 1938, when he won under one per cent of the vote, and in 1942, when he captured 43.9 per cent. As dictator, Ibáñez had persecuted parties and the labour movement, exiled leaders of all parties, and required parties to submit their lists of candidates for national elections to him for approval.[4] That a candidate of this ilk could win the presidency suggests that his loudly trumpeted antiparty message found a resonance in Chilean society.

The common treatment of the second Ibáñez government is that it was a temporary deviation from the rule of strong parties, but that it does not affect the overall judgement about the strength of the 1932–73 party system. The upheaval of the second Ibáñez period on the party system is considered an ephemeral phenomenon, quickly amended in the next period. Moulian, for example, argued that 'the decline of the traditional parties in 1953 ... proved to be ephemeral. In 1957 there was a return to the modal situation'. Gil wrote that 'After the *ibañista* fiasco, the voters were willing to put their faith again in the long-established political organizations'. Scully's excellent book is a partial exception to this rule. He argues that Ibáñez's antiparty politics eroded party loyalties in the rural sector, and in this way helped to produce a major transformation of

[4] J. S. Valenzuela, 'Labor Movement Formation and Politics: The Chilean and the French Cases in Comparative Perspective', unpubl. Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1979, p. 564; J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes', p. 37; T. Scully, *Rethinking the Center. Party Politics in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chile* (Stanford, 1992), p. 85.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the party system. Still, he views the second Ibáñez government as one element of a crisis in the party system that changed its format, but that neither implies a weakness in the emerging party system, nor is it presented as a consequence of fragility of the previous party system.[5]

The Ibáñez del Campo (1952–58) and, to a lesser degree, Jorge Alessandri (1958–64) presidencies manifested antiparty features that call into question the strength of Chilean parties. The mere fact that these two won the presidency and retained antiparty attitudes throughout their governments suggests that Chilean parties were not as strong is often argued. Antiparty politicians winning the presidency and imposing their style of politics means that parties do not fully control who will govern the country. It constitutes a partial failure of the party system.

Antiparty politicians dominated the executive and pervaded the legislature during Ibáñez's administration (1952–58). It is telling that a politician widely known for his antiparty past was able to win the presidency. Ibáñez's campaign symbol in 1952 was a broom, which he carried as a symbol of how he would clean the country of politicians. Once elected, faithful to his antiparty discourse, 'he discarded the normal procedure of choosing ministers from the parties and formed cabinets of "non partisan extras".'[6]

President from 1958 to 1964, Jorge Alessandri has received even less attention from scholars who consider the Chilean parties strong. Although the conservative parties backed him, and despite his family connection to the Liberal Party – his father and two brothers who were members of the national congress were Liberals – Alessandri himself remained an independent with an antiparty discourse. He narrowly defeated Socialist candidate Salvador Allende in the 1958 election. Populist candidate Antonio Zamorano obtained a crucial 3.3 per cent of the electorate. Had it not been for the populist candidacy of this maverick former priest, it is likely that Allende would have won. Subsequently Alessandri trenchantly criticised parties in three of his annual presidential addresses to the nation (*Mensajes Presidenciales*).[7] Furthermore, both Ibáñez and Alessandri translated their antiparty discourse into concrete political institutions, Ibáñez by creating new political parties and Alessandri by recruiting non-politicians to manage public affairs. Alessandri thought that public administration and national politics ought to be purely technical matters,

[5] T. Moulian, *La forja de ilusiones: El sistema de partidos 1932–1973* (Santiago, 1993), pp. 104–5; Gil, *The Political System*, p. 80; Scully, *Rethinking the Center*, pp. 124–30. See also A. Valenzuela, *Political Brokers*, p. 5.

[6] Gil, *The Political System*, p. 79. See also E. Würth, *Ibáñez: Caudillo enigmático* (Santiago, 1958).

[7] S. Carrasco, *Alessandri: Su pensamiento constitucional. Reseña de su vida pública* (Santiago, 1987), p. 58.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and he believed 'in the virtues of technocracy, superior according to him to party politics'.[8]

Both Ibáñez and Jorge Alessandri were proud of their political independence during their term in office. They shared a strong antiparty feeling and discourse. They could not have won the presidency if antiparty and anti-politician attitudes had not been widespread in Chilean society in the 1950s. Ibáñez and Jorge Alessandri were not alone in their beliefs about party politics in Chile. A good part of the electorate shared a dim view of the traditional parties and of politicians. Parties recovered their positions and roles only after paying high political costs, and after arduous exertions against the antiparty mood that permeated society. Still, the long-term damage to the credibility, legitimacy and party penetration of society is probably higher than generally assumed. The antiparty feeling re-emerged strongly in Chile within a decade of the end of Jorge Alessandri's government. The harsh antiparty politics and discourse of the 1973 military dictatorship had proximate historical antecedents.

The emergence of electorally significant personalist parties and independent candidates, and the persistence of antiparty discourse in the post-1989 period, constitute further evidence that many voters are not attached to parties. Although they were identified with and supported by the conservative parties, Hernán Büchi and Arturo Alessandri, the 1989 and 1993 presidential candidates from the right coalition, were independents. The UDI (Independent Democratic Union) is not a personalistic party, but since its origins in the *Movimiento Gremialista*, it has proposed a semicorporatist regime in which social organisations would assume some of the functions performed by parties in liberal democracies. The UDI frequently repeats the attacks on traditional party politics voiced by the military regime. Büchi, the UDI presidential candidate who received 29.4 per cent of the vote in 1989, was an independent technocrat, an outsider not deeply involved in party politics. The UDI frequently uses a technocratic and antiparty discourse; Lavín, the 1999 UDI presidential candidate, is a good example.

The UCC (Centre-Centre Union) is a personalistic vehicle, created by Francisco Javier Errázuriz, who runs the party as if it were his personal property.[9] Errázuriz captured 15.4 per cent of the presidential vote as an independent in 1989 (he later formed the (UCC), and José Piñera, an independent with a technocratic-populist discourse, received 6.2 per cent of the votes in 1993. The percentages gained by Errázuriz and Piñera were

[8] A. Angell, *Chile de Alessandri a Pinochet: En busca de la utopía* (Santiago, 1993), p. 37.

[9] In December 1999 Errázuriz led a coup in the party to overthrow the elected party president because of political disagreements. See *La Tercera*, 'UCC: el golpe de estado de Francisco Javier Errázuriz', December 31, 1999.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

notable for right-wing populists (no matter how technocratic) with virtually no party structure. Both candidates were independent caudillos with antiparty discourses. Caudillism, populism and personalism are still components of the Chilean party system.

Antiparty attitudes also continue to be present among the right in the new democracy. A good indication is the persistent use of pseudo-independent candidates in local and congressional elections, especially by the UDI and the UCCP. In the December 1997 elections, the UDI elected four 'independent' senators, compared to only three regular members of the party.

Joaquín Lavín, the nearly victorious candidate of the right in 1999, is the first non-independent (i.e., he is a member of a party) presidential candidate from the right since 1952. However, his antiparty and antipolitician discourse is similar to that of Ibáñez, J. Alessandri and Pinochet. Tironi states that Lavín has 'satanised' politicians.[10] Lavín tirelessly repeated that he was above parties, that his government would have been one of the best people rather than of politicians, and that there would have been no more political discussion but only practical solutions. The 47.5 per cent of the vote he got in the first round (the highest vote for a conservative presidential candidate in the century) indicates that antiparty and techno-populist discourse are welcomed by many Chilean voters, especially those with conservative preferences.

Antiparty politicians or populist leaders with weak ties to parties have not been as prevalent in Chile as in several other Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Ecuador and Brazil. Nevertheless, the antiparty politicians who had no party affiliation were presidents of Chile for nearly 30 per cent of the democratic period of 1932–73. In contrast, Costa Rica (1949–present) and Uruguay (1942–73, 1985–present) have never had a president outside their two main parties, nor have they ever had an unequivocally antiparty president.

(3) *Party longevity*

If parties have strong roots in the electorate and in society, most voters support them for many years, enabling the parties to endure for a long time.[11] In Chile, however, there is a mixed history of stability in party organisations. Of the 71 parties that won seats in lower chamber elections between 1932 and 1997, only the Radicals competed in all 14 elections, and only 7 parties competed in seven or more elections. The Socialists and

[10] E. Tironi, *El Mercurio*, January 9 2000.

[11] S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan, 'Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments', in S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* (New York, 1967).

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Communists have also enjoyed considerable organisational continuity (though the Socialists suffered several schisms and a few changes in name). Otherwise, however, organisational continuity was fairly limited. Forty-six of the seventy-one parties participated in only one or two elections in the whole period.

Chile has had an enormous rotation of party names. Low continuity of party labels reflects limited party penetration in society and/or limited allegiance of party elites to their parties. The rightist parties have the worst record in longevity. On the right, there was little continuity in party names throughout the twentieth century. The Conservative and Liberal Parties (PC and PL, both extinct today) participated in more post-1932 elections than any other conservative party – nine – but both parties divided several times. Today, the oldest party on the right is Renovación, which has existed since 1966, but has had its current name only since the transition to democracy.

In the centre, the continuity of party organisations has been greater. Even in the centre, however, there have been well documented changes, especially the demise of the Radical Party and its displacement by the Christian Democrats as the major centrist party. The Radical Party, the main centrist party from 1932 to 1961, declined in 1973, when the combined total for its three splinter organisations was 7.4 per cent. It has not recovered since the 1973 coup, capturing only 5.5 per cent of the lower chamber vote in 1989, 3.0 per cent in 1993 and 3.1 per cent in 1997. In the 1996 municipal election the PRSD (the merger of the PR with the SD) won 6.5 per cent, but it fell in the 1997 lower chamber election. Continuity on the left is more pronounced, especially for the Communist Party (PCCH).

According to Mainwaring and Scully, 'the ability of parties to survive a long time provides one possible indication that they have captured the long-term loyalties of some social groups.'[12] These authors used the percentage of the vote in the most recent legislative election that was captured by older parties, with 1950 as the cut-off point, as an indicator of party continuity. As of 1993, in Chile, parties that had existed in 1950 held 45 per cent of the lower chamber seats. Among twelve Latin American countries analysed by Mainwaring and Scully, Chile ranked eighth, below Colombia (97.0%), Costa Rica (94.7%), Paraguay (90.0%), Mexico (84.2%), Argentina (82.4%), Uruguay (69.7%) and Venezuela (56.4%).

Another way to look at party longevity is by focusing on the ages of

[12] S. Mainwaring and T. Scully, 'Introduction: Party Systems in Latin America', in S. Mainwaring and T. Scully (eds.), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, 1995), p. 13.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

parties that won at least 10 per cent of the seats in recent legislative elections.[13] The average age for Chilean parties with 10 per cent of chamber seats in 1993 was 32 years, much lower than the average in Colombia (144), Uruguay (112), Argentina (76), Paraguay (71), Mexico (59) and Costa Rica (44).[14] The moderate organisational continuity of Chilean parties suggests that party penetration in the electorate has not been as strong as is commonly suggested.

Parties in the Legislature

It is beyond the purpose of this article to provide detailed assessments of the other dimensions of party strength, but a few brief comments are in order. In two areas more work needs to be done to assess fully the strength of parties.

Further research is necessary on Chilean parties in the legislature,[15] especially on party discipline and the degree of loyalty of senators and deputies to their parties. The evidence suggests that parties are quite disciplined,[16] but that party loyalty is less than iron-clad. RN has faced division and lack of discipline regarding constitutional amendments during the last two governments. Gil affirmed that between 1953 and 1956, legislators had 'frequen[tly] chang[ed] party affiliation.'[17]

Parties as organisations

More work also needs to be done on how robust Chilean parties have been organisationally.[18] Nevertheless, it seems that most parties generally lacked strong organisations. Most are weakly professionalised, and they have few resources and archaic administrative techniques. The exceptions have been the Christian Democrats since 1964 and the Communist Party;

[13] R. Dix, 'Cleavage Structures and Party Systems in Latin America', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1992); Mainwaring and Scully, 'Introduction', pp. 14–15.

[14] For Chile, Mainwaring and Scully give an average age of 37 for parties with at least 10 per cent of lower chamber seats. In contrast to Mainwaring and Scully, we believe that the PPD and the PS must be seen as different parties. The PPD was founded in 1987 and by 1993 it was 6 years old. Although the UDI was legally founded in 1987, it really began to exist in 1983. This explains our different value for the percentage of lower chamber seats held by parties that existed in 1950.

[15] Some exceptions are W. H. Agor, *The Chilean Senate: Internal Distribution of Influence* (Austin, 1971); J. Carey, 'Electoral Reform and the Chilean Legislative Party System', paper for the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, 1998; and J. Carey, 'Party and Coalition Unity in Legislative Voting', Washington University Department of Political Science, *Working Paper* no. 376 (1999).

[16] Carey, 'Electoral Reform' and Carey, 'Party and Coalition'.

[17] Gil, *The Political System*, p. 121. See also *ibid.*, p. 74.

[18] There are many published studies on single parties in Chile, but most of them devote little systematic attention to parties as organisations. Gil, *The Political System*, which includes a good though brief section on parties as organisations, is among the partial exceptions.

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the latter suffered intense persecution that helped it to develop a well-organised and clandestine structure. Gil stated in 1966 that the Communist Party is 'the only party in Chile in which full-time party officers receive their full financial support from the organization'.[19]

Parties in organised civil society

This subject has been well studied, and most authors have agreed that Chilean parties have had strong and deep connections with social organisations. Parties have penetrated all kinds of institutions and established a firm social network of support. This is the arena in which the dominant view of Chilean parties is probably most accurate. Chilean parties were active in building a web of media organisations (journals, newspapers, radios, etc.) and in creating civil society.[20] However, since the return to democracy the links between parties and social organisations seem to have weakened substantially.[21]

Equal tripartite party systems?

Some influential analysts have affirmed that since at least 1932, the party systems have been divided in three ideological tendencies – left, centre, and right – that have consistently enjoyed electoral support from sizeable parts of the electorate. Moreover, these authors emphasise that the level of electoral support for the three ideological tendencies varies within predictable parameters. Scully, for example, wrote that 'Over the course of twelve decades of nearly uninterrupted political competition, each of these three political blocs almost invariably won between a fourth and a third of the vote'. In a formulation that allows for greater shifts in electoral support, J. S. Valenzuela states that each of the three tendencies regularly won between 20 and 40 per cent of the vote. In a collaborative effort, Valenzuela and Scully stated that each of the three blocs regularly garnered between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of the vote.[22]

[19] Gil, *The Political System*, p. 281.

[20] P. Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society: The Popular Sectors and Democracy in Chile* (University Park, 1995); C. Schneider, *Shantytown Protest in Pinochet's Chile* (Philadelphia, 1995); A. Angell, *Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile* (London, 1972); Angell, *Chile de Alessandri a Pinochet*; J. S. Valenzuela, 'Labor Movement'; A. Valenzuela, *The Breakdown*.

[21] Oxhorn, *Organizing Civil Society*; K. Roberts, *Deepening Democracy? The Modern Left and Social Movements in Chile and Peru* (Stanford, 1998).

[22] T. Scully, 'Reconstituting Party Politics in Chile', in S. Mainwaring and T. Scully (eds.), *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford, 1995), p. 100. J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes'. J. S. Valenzuela and T. Scully, 'Electoral Choices and the Party System in Chile: Continuities and Changes at the Recovery of Democracy', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 29, no. 4 (July 1997). See also Gil, *The Political System*; K. Silvert, *Chile: Yesterday and Today* (New York, 1965); R. Cruz-Coke, *Historia*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Several scholars have argued that this tripartite distribution of the electorate, together with the polarisation of the party system in the 1960's, the intransigence of centrist parties, and the effects of the presidential system were among the fundamental causes of the democratic breakdown of 1973.[23] Some scholars have argued that the familiar tripartite distribution of the electorate has reappeared after the transition to democracy.[24]

On this subject, two controversies already exist in the literature. Have the party systems consistently had a tripartite competitive dynamic? Recently, some scholars have questioned this view. And how even and consistent have the ideological blocs been electorally? Moulian, Huneeus, and Auth have questioned the argument about the relatively equal tripartite distribution of the Chilean electorate.[25] They argue that on many occasions these three tendencies have had widely divergent vote totals. We agree with their viewpoint. Since 1932, the party systems have had parties with significant electoral support in the right, centre and left, but the claim that Chile has had a consistent division into three roughly equal thirds is empirically ungrounded for both 1932–73 and 1989–99.

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electoral de Chile 1925–1973 (Santiago, 1984); A. Valenzuela, 'Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government', in J. Linz and A. Valenzuela (eds.), *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: The Case of Latin America* (Baltimore, 1994); A. Valenzuela and J. S. Valenzuela (eds.), *Military Rule in Chile* (Baltimore, 1986); Scully, *Rethinking the Center*.

[23] E. Boeninger, 'Chile, su futura democracia', in E. Frei (ed.), *Futura institucionalidad de la paz en Chile* (Santiago, 1977); A. Valenzuela, *The Breakdown*; M. Góngora, *Ensayo histórico sobre la noción de estado en Chile en los siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago, 1985); C. Gazmuri, 'Algunos antecedentes acerca de la gestación de la crisis chilena de 1970–1973', *Opciones*, no. 9 (1986); F. Agüero, G. Sunkel, E. Tironi and E. Valenzuela, 'Voters, Parties and Political Intermediation in Post-Authoritarian Chile', paper for the XX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, April 17–19, 1997.

[24] G. Urzúa V., *Historia política de Chile y su evolución electoral* (*Desde 1810 a 1992*) (Santiago, 1992); Scully, 'Reconstituting'; Valenzuela and Scully, 'Electoral Choices'; P. Siavelis and A. Valenzuela, 'Electoral Engineering and Democratic Stability: The Legacy of Authoritarian Rule in Chile', in A. Lijphart and C. H. Waisman (eds.), *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Boulder, 1996); J. Bosworth and G. Munck, 'Political Parties in Post-Pinochet Chile: Representation and Competition', paper for the XX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, April 17–19, 1997.

[25] Moulian, *La forja de ilusiones*; C. Huneeus, *Los chilenos y la política: Cambio y continuidad en el autoritarismo* (Santiago, 1987); J. Auth, 'Elecciones presidenciales y parlamentarias de 1993', *Estudios Públicos*, no. 54 (Fall 1994).

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A tripartite competitive dynamic?

This question is complex, and we cannot fully resolve it here because of space limitations. From the time of the founding of the Communist Party in 1922 until the 1980s the tripartite view was only occasionally well grounded.

Between 1932 and 1973 the party system had bipolar, tripolar and multipolar competition at the parliamentary and municipal level. Electoral competition and legislative dynamics moved fluidly from multipolar to tripartite to bipolar. We agree with J. S. Valenzuela, who claims that each of the three ideological blocs usually had two tendencies that competed against each other.[26] Between 1932 and 1937 competition was multipolar, and all three blocs were internally divided. Until the formation of the Popular Action Front (FRAP) in 1957, the Socialists and Communists competed fiercely to gain the allegiance of the left electorate and social organisations. However, both of these parties occasionally joined forces with the Radicals between 1937 and 1941, forming the Popular Front that created an essentially bipolar structure of competition at all electoral levels. After the demise of the Popular Front, divisions in both the left and the right led to another period of multipolar competition. During the second Ibáñez government political competition erratically varied from bipolar to multipolar. After the formation of the Christian Democrats in the 1950s, the centre became a divided arena.

It is also doubtful whether the post-1989 party system has been primarily characterised by tripartite electoral competition and legislative dynamics. In a recent contribution, Carey has convincingly argued that the post-1989 party system has been characterised by fundamentally bipolar competition and bipolar legislative dynamics between the governing centre/centre-left coalition and the conservative opposition. Tironi and Agüero make a related argument, namely that the electoral dynamic has been bipolar since 1989; the fundamental cleavage has been between those who supported and those who opposed military rule.[27] In both interpretations, the once bitter division between left and centre has given rise to more cooperation. Moreover, the sharp programmatic differences that separated the left and centre from 1922 to 1973 have softened considerably – if one still puts the Socialists and the PPD in the leftist camp.

[26] J. S. Valenzuela, 'Respuesta a Eugenio Tironi y Felipe Agüero: Reflexiones sobre el presente y futuro del paisaje político chileno a la luz de su pasado', *Estudios Públicos*, no. 75 (winter 1999), p. 284.

[27] Carey, 'Electoral Reform.' E. Tironi and F. Agüero, '¿Sobrevivirá el nuevo paisaje político chileno?' *Estudios Públicos*, no. 74 (fall 1999). For a counter-argument, see J. S. Valenzuela, 'Respuesta'.

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Table 2. *Presidential Elections, 1932–93*

	1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	Others	Blank/Null	Total
1932	54.6	17.7	13.7	12.5	1.2	0.3	100.0
1938	50.2	49.2	0.0	—	—	0.6	100.0
1942	55.7	43.9	—	—	—	0.4	100.0
1946	40.1	29.7	27.3	2.5	—	0.3	99.9
1952	46.6	27.7	19.9	5.4	—	0.3	99.9
1958	31.2	28.5	20.5	15.4	3.3	1.2	100.1
1964	55.7	38.6	4.9	—	—	0.7	99.9
1970	36.2	34.9	27.8	—	—	1.0	99.9
1989	55.2	29.4	15.4	—	—	2.5	100.0[a]
1993	58.0	24.2	6.2	5.5	5.9	5.6	99.8[a]
1999	48.0	47.5	3.2	0.5	0.8	3.1	100.0[a]
Mean	48.3	33.8	13.9	7.0	2.8	1.6	100.0[a]

[a] Since 1989 blank and void votes have not been considered for calculating total percentages according to Chilean electoral law.

Sources: 1932, 1938, 1942, 1946, 1952: R. Cruz-Coke, *Historia electoral de Chile 1925–1973* (Santiago, 1984); 1958, 1964, 1970: Dirección del Registro Electoral; 1989: Servicio Electoral; 1993: Ministerio del Interior; 1999: Tribuna Calificador de Elecciones.

In the post-1989 period, electoral competition and legislative dynamics have been primarily bipolar so far, but it is far from evident that this will necessarily continue to be the case into the future. The 1993 and 1999 presidential elections (and to a lesser degree the congressional elections of 1989–97) strained the coalition that has governed Chile since March 1990 (and the opposition coalition as well), as the majoritarian nature of the presidential election forces an agreement on a single candidate. Although the 1999 presidential election had only two major candidates, and the Concertación still seems solid, the potential fracturing of the governing coalition could lead to the fluidity of coalitions and, eventually, of legislative and electoral dynamics.

The tripartite view of the party systems is also somewhat at odds with the bipolar structure of competition in most presidential elections. As Table 2 shows, of the eleven presidential elections since 1932, only in 1946, 1958 and 1970 did the third place finisher win at least 20 per cent of the vote. The mean percentage of votes for third place finishers in the whole period is only 13.9 per cent. Only in 1970 was the presidential election a balanced competition between three candidates reflecting the three tendencies.

Strategic voting and strategic candidate supply played a major role in generating the bipolar structure of competition in most presidential elections. Nevertheless, the structure of the party system at the presidential level means that it is somewhat simplified to characterise the 1932–73 and post-1989 party systems as tripartite. Until 1973, it was occasionally

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Table 3. *Chamber of Deputies, Percentage of Votes by Tendency, 1932–1997*

Election Year	Left	Centre	Right	Others	Indep.	Total	Difference Biggest–Smallest*
1932	16.6	30.4	36.3	6.3[a]	10.4	100.0	19.7
1937	20.2	24.1	51.5	—	4.2	100.0	31.3
1941	37.9	25.5	35.8	0.2[a]	—	99.4	12.4
1945	27.9	24.3	47.1	—	0.9	100.2	22.8
1949	13.8	25.4	60.2	0.4[b]	—	99.8	46.4
1953	18.5	16.9	64.4	—	—	99.8	47.5
1957	16.3	30.9	50.9	—	1.9	100.0	34.6
1961	30.2	38.2	31.4	—	0.2	100.0	8.0
1965	27.3	58.3	13.8	0.3[c]	0.3	100.0	44.5
1969	34.6	44.7	20.8	—	0.1	100.0	23.9
1973	42.4	33.0	23.0	1.6[d]	—	100.0	19.4
1989	24.4	32.2	43.4	—	—[e]	100.0	19.0
1993	33.2	30.2	36.5	0.1[d]	—[e]	100.0	6.3
1997	33.9	26.9	38.4	—	0.7[e]	99.9	11.5
Mean	26.9	31.5	39.5	1.5	2.3	101.8	24.8
32–73	26.0	32.0	39.6	1.8	2.6	101.8	28.2
89–97	30.5	29.8	39.4	0.1	0.7	100.5	12.3

* Difference between the biggest and the smallest tendency, not considering 'others' and 'independents.'

[a] Original data do not specify the name of these other parties.

[b] Percentage of vote for the MSC, unknown party to us.

[c] Coalition of the MNSCH, a right wing party, with the VNP, a left wing party.

[d] Blank and Void.

[e] Independent candidates officially integrating a list are added to the tendency of the given list.

Sources: Dirección del Registro Electoral; A. Angell and B. Pollack, 'The Chilean Elections of 1993: From Polarisation to Consensus', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol.14, no. 2 (1995); Ministerio del Interior.

Note: See Appendix 2 for a list of parties by tendency.

tripartite at the legislative level and arguably in the electorate, but not usually at the presidential level. Moreover, the 1989, 1993 and 1999 presidential elections were characterised by fundamentally bipolar competition even though the majority runoff system has reduced incentives for strategic voting in the first round.[28]

The distribution of the vote by ideological tendency

The other issue of contention is how even the distribution of the vote has been by left, centre and conservative parties. To assess this question, we grouped the Chilean parties into these three main ideological blocs and calculated their share of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies (Table 3).

[28] M. S. Shugart and J. M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 206–25.

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The data indicate the problematic nature of the claim that the three ideological blocs have consistently won anywhere close to equal electoral support. In only four (1941, 1961, 1993 and 1997) out of fourteen lower chamber elections between 1932 and 1997 did each of the three broad ideological blocs win between 20 and 40 per cent of the vote. The eighth column shows the margin between the largest and smallest of the three blocs in a given election. If each of the three blocs won between 25 and 40 per cent of the vote, this difference would be 15 per cent or less. In only four (1941, 1961, 1993 and 1997) out of fourteen elections was this the case; in the other ten, it was at least 19 per cent. The norm is a chasm between the bloc that won most votes and the bloc that won least; the mean gap for the 14 elections is 24.8 per cent.

Table 3 may understate the shortcomings of the view that the post-1989 party system has had three roughly equal ideological blocs. The Socialist Party underwent a profound transformation under military rule, from a party committed to revolutionary socialism to one located toward the centre-left of the political spectrum.[29] The post-1989 PS and PPD are fully committed to a market economy and to liberal democracy. In this sense, the 'left' has shrunk far more since 1973 than appears to be the case in Table 3. These observations lead to doubts regarding how accurate and useful the tripartite view of the party system is for the post-1989 period.

Could our results, which strongly disconfirm the claim that each of the three tendencies consistently won between 20 and 40 per cent of the vote, be a result of misclassifying the ideological tendencies of some parties? To examine this possibility, we also used Siavelis's classification,[30] which presents different data–a fact that underscores the fluidity of the ideological blocs. Although Siavelis's classification shows slightly stronger support for the electoral evenness of the three ideological tendencies, in only 5 of 12 lower chamber elections from 1937 to 1993 did all three tendencies win between 20 and 40 per cent of the vote.

Given that the three blocs have frequently not competed on roughly equal terms, it is more accurate to speak of three ideological tendencies whose electoral strength varied widely over time rather than of three roughly equal thirds. Both the 1932–73 and the post-1989 party systems are, as J. S. Valenzuela has argued, multiparty systems in which bipolar confrontations were prevalent.[31]

Despite the distinctive character of the three ideological blocs between

[29] Roberts, *Deepening Democracy?*; I. Walker, *Socialismo y democracia: Chile y Europa en perspectiva comparada* (Santiago, 1990).

[30] P. Siavelis, 'Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System: On the Transformational Effects of Electoral Reform', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 30, no. 6 (1997), p. 666.

[31] J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes', p. 74.

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1932 and 1973, a major share of the vote sometimes went to candidates and parties that lacked a sharp ideological profile. This was particularly true in the 1940s and 1950s, when personalistic leaders captured large vote shares.

Stability, continuity and change in the party systems

This issue is closely related to the strength of the party in the electorate. If most voters consistently remain faithful to the same party over time, this party loyalty generates the basis for stability in interparty competition and for low electoral volatility. Under these circumstances, the 'floating' (i.e. uncommitted) electorate is small. Conversely, if large numbers of voters are unattached, then outcomes can shift more markedly from one election to the next. Given the relationship between party structuring of the electorate and party system stability, and given our view that party loyalty in the electorate has not been particularly deep, it is noteworthy that the empirical information indicates more change in the 1932–73 party system, and also from 1973 to 1989, than most scholars have suggested.

Most scholarly analyses of the Chilean party systems have seen them as quite stable. J. S. Valenzuela states that 'from the perspective of electoral preferences in favor of the main political tendencies, continuity, since 1925, is notable'. A. Valenzuela concluded that '[t]his competitive system has remained markedly stable for decades'. He argued that differences in electoral outcomes in presidential contests were due to shifting political coalitions rather than to broad shifts in public opinion.[32] Recently, a few scholars have underscored major changes in the party system,[33] but the interpretations that emphasise continuity have prevailed.

The main basis for the perception about the stability of the party systems has been the putative continuity of political blocs. For example, J. S. Valenzuela and Scully analysed continuities in electoral choices by looking at the results of pre-1973 and post-1988 municipal elections, focusing on the three large ideological blocs. They concluded that 'there

[32] J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes', p. 10. A. Valenzuela, *Political Brokers*, p. 10. Other works that emphasize continuity include R. Ayres, 'Unidad Popular and the Chilean Electoral Process', in Arturo Valenzuela and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), *Chile: Politics and Society* (New Brunswick, 1976); J. Prothro and P. Chaparro, 'Public Opinion and the Movement of Chilean Government to the Left, 1952–1972', in Valenzuela and Valenzuela, *Chile*; E. Saffirio, 'El sistema de partidos y la sociedad civil en la redemocratización chilena', *Estudios Sociales*, vol. 82, no. 4 (1994); Siavelis, 'Continuity'; A. Valenzuela and J. S. Valenzuela, 'Party Oppositions under the Chilean Authoritarian Regime', in J. Samuel Valenzuela and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.), *Military Rule in Chile: Dictatorship and Oppositions* (Baltimore, 1986).

[33] Carey, 'Electoral Reform' and 'Party and Coalition'; Tironi and Agüero, '¿Sobrevivirá el nuevo paisaje político chileno?'.

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are significant continuities between pre- and post-authoritarian electoral choices in Chile. They occur most strongly in the division of the electorate into tendencies -right, centre, and left. They also occur in voter support for specific parties…'[34]

Empirically, Valenzuela and Scully and also a recent article by J. S. Valenzuela base their claims about continuity partly on correlations between the pre-1973 and post-1989 vote. They analysed correlations in voting patterns at the local (*comuna*) level. We interpret their results differently. Their data show modest continuities in electoral support for the right, but a surprising negative correlation (−.18) between the PDC 1973 and 1989 lower chamber votes. This negative correlation means that the social bases of support for the PDC have changed; the party now fares worse on average in the *comunas* where it fared better than average in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This finding is partly a product of changes in the electoral system; since 1989, the major parties have needed to negotiate in what districts they will run candidates. Elsewhere J. S. Valenzuela reports correlations between the 1967 and 1992 municipal elections of .55 for the Communist Party, .33 for the PDC, .32 for the Socialist Party, .14 for the Radical Party, .27 for Renovación Nacional compared with the 1967 National Party, and .17 for UDI compared with the 1967 National Party. The PPD has no significant correlation with any party.[35] Squaring these correlations gives the percentage of variance (i.e., the R^2) across localities in the 1992 elections, using the 1967 percentage of the vote as the sole independent variable. With the exception of the Communist Party, which one would expect to have more stable geographic patterns of support, the 1967 percentage predicts only 2.0 per cent (Radicals) to 10.9 per cent (PDC) of the variance in the parties' 1992 electoral performance. Although we lack sufficient comparable data from other countries to be sure where this places the Chilean case, these correlations do not appear to support contentions of strong continuity. On the contrary, they suggest some powerful changes; our guess is that the magnitude of continuity in Chilean local election patterns is not particularly high in comparative perspective.[36] The conclusion that 'over

[34] Valenzuela and Scully, 'Electoral Choices', p. 524. A. Angell, 'Political Parties in Chile', in S. White, D. Stansfield and P. Webb (eds.), *Political Parties in Transitional Democracies*, forthcoming, agrees with this viewpoint. Another example is A. Valenzuela's seminal, *The Breakdown*.

[35] J. S. Valenzuela, 'Respuesta', p. 287.

[36] Juan Linz showed that at the provincial level in Spain, there was a correlation of .60 between the PSOE's 1936 vote and its 1977 vote. See 'The New Spanish Party System', in R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Participation* (Beverly Hills, CA, 1980), p. 103. He also shows high correlations between the 1936 left vote and the Communists (.68) and Socialists (.54) in 1977, and correlations that are higher than those found in Chile between the rightist CEDA vote in 1936 and the vote for the UCD (.46) and the AP (.35) in 1977.

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Table 4. *Electoral Volatility, by Party and Bloc, Lower Chamber, 1932–1997*

Electoral Period	Volatility	Interbloc Volatility
1932–37	37.5	12.6
1937–41	26.9	17.4
1941–45	20.3	11.3
1945–49	26.2	14.2
1949–53	38.6	8.7
1953–57	30.5	14.9
1957–61	26.4	20.4
1961–65	31.7	20.3
1965–69	21.8	14.0
1969–73	16.1	10.9
1973–89	36.8	19.6
1989–93	16.1	8.9
1993–97	10.6	3.0
Mean	26.1	13.6
1932–73 Mean	27.6	14.5
1989–97 Mean	13.4	6.0

sixteen years of dictatorship did not change the political profile of the nation's communes' is debatable.[37]

Although we question their conclusions, the research done by Valenzuela and Scully, using local election results to detect patterns of change and continuity, is invaluable. We hope that other scholars working on other countries and regions will undertake similar efforts.

Electoral volatility

Data on electoral volatility reinforce the evidence of striking change within the 1932–73 period and from 1973 to 1989; these data indicate greater stability from 1989 to 1997. For the purpose of examining party system stability, we first use parties rather than tendencies as the unit of analysis because we believe that parties are the more important unit. If the electoral fortunes of Party A rise while those of Party B decline, this represents an important change in a party system even if A and B are part of the same ideological bloc. In Chile, parties of the same ideological bloc have frequently been adversaries: the Socialists versus the Communists, the Christian Democrats versus the Radicals in the 1950s and 1960s, the PPD versus the Socialists in recent times, and the UDI versus RN. Studies of electoral continuity that rely on ideological blocs do not capture such changes.

The 41 year hiatus between elections was more than twice as long as that in Chile; the lengthier hiatus should, other things being equal, have fostered greater change and a lower correlation.

[37] Valenzuela and Scully, p. 521.

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Moreover, blocs or tendencies are not institutions. They normally do not have labels or organisations, and they do not present candidates. Tendencies are diffuse – if still valuable – theoretical groupings. Party labels rather than ideological blocs constitute the basic instrument of party identification for individuals and social organisations. Voters choose a party, a candidate or a coalition if allowed by the electoral law, but not an ideological bloc. In a stable party system, it is not only voters' allegiances to the blocs that are stable, but also to the parties themselves.

To examine electoral stability, we use Pedersen's index of electoral volatility.[38] The index is calculated by taking the percentage of change as an absolute value of each party's votes from one election to the next, summing these percentages of change, and dividing by two.[39]

Ideally, we would calculate electoral volatility for different kinds of elections: the lower chamber, the upper chamber, the presidency, etc. However, some problems render it impossible to calculate volatility for Chile's presidential elections. Parties usually formed alliances for presidential elections, and these alliances often shifted from one election to the next, creating problems of comparability.

Volatility in lower chamber elections

Table 4 presents information on electoral volatility for lower chamber elections. Volatility was high throughout the 1932–1997 period, with a decrease between the last two elections. The mean volatility for the whole period was 26.1 per cent. In view of the lengthy hiatus between the 1973 and 1989 elections, we also calculated mean volatility for 1932–73 (27.6%) and 1989–97 (13.4%). A stable party system would have lower volatility.

This volatility is much higher than that for any of the thirteen Western European countries Bartolini and Mair analysed. They studied 303 elections between 1885 and 1985, and only 24 were characterised by volatility in excess of 17.2 per cent.[40] Chile's volatility is also markedly

[38] M. Pedersen, 'Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility in European Party Systems, 1948–1977: Explorations in Explanation', in H. Daalder and P. Mair (eds.), *Western European Party Systems: Continuity and Change* (Beverly Hills, 1983). See also A. Przeworski, 'Institutionalization of Voting Patterns, or is Mobilization the Source of Decay?', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 85 no. 3 (Sep. 1975).

[39] If every party retained the same share of votes from election T_1 to election T_2, volatility would be zero. If all the parties that won votes in election T_1 failed to win any in T_2, volatility would be 100%. If parties A, B, and C win 44%, 34%, and 22% respectively, in election T_1, and 38%, 43%, and 19%, respectively, in election T_2, the absolute values of the differences (6% + 9% + 3%) total 18%, and electoral volatility is 9%.

[40] S. Bartolini and P. Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability. The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885–1985* (Cambridge, 1990). Mean volatility by country for the 1885–1985 period was as follows: France 15.8%; Germany 11.5%; Ireland 9.8%;

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higher than that for Colombia (1958–94), Costa Rica (1949–94), Uruguay (1942–73 and 1984–94) and Venezuela (1958–94), the other Latin American countries that have had sustained democracy for at least 25 consecutive years.[41]

Even allowing for the long hiatus of the dictatorship, electoral volatility from 1973 to 1989 (36.8%) was markedly higher than it was during some lengthy authoritarian periods in other Latin American countries. For example, electoral volatility in Uruguay between 1971 and 1984 was 5.2 per cent.

Volatility in Senate Elections

The districts that choose a senator in one election do not the next, and this was true from 1932–73 as well. Under these conditions, an index of electoral volatility using consecutive election years would be misleading since it would be based on two entirely different sets of voters. Therefore, rather than calculating volatility in consecutive elections, we calculated it for consecutive elections within the same electoral districts, i.e., for every other Senate election. Volatility was 36.5 per cent for 1932–37, 31.3 per cent for 1932–41, 23.0 per cent for 1937–45, 35.5 per cent for 1941–49, 50.9 per cent for 1945–53, 36.0 per cent for 1949–57, 46.9 per cent for 1953–61, 43.1 per cent for 1957–65, 32.3 per cent for 1961–69, and 7.7 per cent for 1965–73. Volatility for the 1969–89 and 1973–89 periods is impossible to calculate due to the thorough reshaping of Senate electoral districts.

The average volatility of 34.3 per cent (8.2 per cent higher than the average for the lower chamber) shows low party system stability for the Senate. The lowest value during the 1932–73 period (7.7 per cent between 1965 and 1973) is deflated thanks to the ad hoc grouping of parties into two labels for the 1973 Senate election.[42]

Volatility in municipal elections

Volatility was high in municipal elections throughout most of the 1935–1996 period. The mean volatility for the whole period was 22.6 per

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Italy 9.0%; Netherlands 8.9; Denmark 8.4%; Belgium 8.4%; Norway 8.2%; Sweden 7.7%; United Kingdom 6.8%; Switzerland 6.8%; Finland 5.8%; and Austria 5.6%.

[41] Mainwaring and Scully, 'Introduction', pp. 8–10 and M. Coppedge, 'Freezing in the Tropics: Explaining Party System-Volatility in Latin America', paper for the Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 6–8, 1995, provide data on electoral volatility for several Latin American countries.

[42] We calculated volatility for 1965–73 by grouping parties into the two coalitions for the 1965 election as they coalesced in 1973.

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cent, somewhat lower than the mean for lower chamber elections (26.1 per cent), but still a moderately high figure. Mean volatility between 1935 and 1971 was 22.8 per cent. Volatility was 20.1 per cent for 1935–38, 17.3 per cent for 1938–41, 20.2 per cent for 1941–44, 19.3 per cent for 1944–47, 31.1 per cent for 1947–50, 36.0 per cent for 1950–53, 13.8 per cent for 1953–56, 37.4 per cent for 1956–60, 15.2 per cent for 1960–63, 20.2 per cent for 1963–67, 20.7 per cent for 1967–71, 32.8 per cent for 1971–92, and 9.9 per cent for 1992–96.

The method used in our calculation, aggregating results from the local to the national level, might substantially underestimate volatility at the former because changes in municipal voting behaviour could cancel each other out. For this reason, for the 1992–96 electoral period we undertook a more detailed examination of volatility at the local level. For this purpose, the best unit of analysis is the commune, the smallest administrative territorial unit in Chile. Currently there are 334 communes.

In the light of the relatively low aggregate national volatility (9.9 per cent) for municipal elections in the 1992–96 electoral period, the mean volatility in the 334 communes in the 1992–96 electoral period was very high: 29.2 per cent. Of the 334 communes, 140 had a volatility of 40 per cent or higher, and one outlier reached 82.3 per cent. Thus, underlying a stable pattern at the national level were rapid electoral changes that largely cancelled one another when aggregated. These sharp fluctuations at the local level are inconsistent with what one would expect in a highly stable party system.

These data on electoral volatility in lower chamber, Senate, and municipal elections reflect profound shifts in electoral preferences. The data strongly show that electoral swings from one party to others have been sharp. By implication, and consistent with our earlier argument, they also indicate limited party structuring of the electorate.

Bloc stability

Although we have so far focused on parties as the unit of analysis, some scholars in the broader comparative literature on parties and party systems as well as some scholars writing on Chile have argued that bloc stability also deserves considerable attention.[43] The empirical evidence does not clearly sustain the interpretation that bloc stability in Chile is high. Interbloc electoral volatility has been high in Chile compared to the thirteen Western European countries included in Bartolini and Mair's study. We first measured interbloc stability by the share of votes that changed hands from one of the three main blocs (left, centre, right) to

[43] Bartolini and Mair, *Identity*, *Competition*; Siavelis, 'Continuity'; J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes'.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

another in lower chamber elections (see the last column of Table 4). In only three out of thirteen electoral periods (1949–53, 1989–93, and 1993–97) for the Chamber of Deputies was inter-bloc volatility under 10 per cent. Mean inter-bloc volatility for 1932–97 was 13.6 per cent. Electoral support for each tendency varied substantially from one election to the next.

This way of measuring interbloc electoral volatility, while preferable in some respects, does not lend itself to ready comparison with other countries, making it difficult to assess the data. For this reason, we also measured interbloc volatility in a manner designed to make our data comparable to that of Bartolini and Mair, who aggregated parties into two blocs, the left versus the rest. Using their criterion, from 1932 to 1997, mean interbloc volatility in Chile's lower chamber elections was 8.6 per cent, more than double that of any Western European country in Bartolini and Mair's study. Among the thirteen countries that Bartolini and Mair analysed, mean interbloc volatility from 1885 to 1985 ranged from a low of 1.9 per cent (Finland) to a high of 3.5 per cent (Germany).[44]

Changes in the format of the party systems

The last issue that we examine related to continuity and change in the party systems is the number of parties. In a stable party system, the number and relative size of the parties should remain relatively constant over time. This has not been the case in Chile. Examining lower and upper chamber elections, Table 5 shows the percentage of votes received by the four largest parties, the number of parties that elected members of congress and the effective number of parties in votes and seats.[45]

One important aspect of the party systems that has remained relatively constant is the high degree of competitiveness, i.e., the large number of parties that win votes and the fact that no party wins a dominant share.[46] In other respects, however, the structure of the party systems has undergone significant changes. The percentage of votes received by the four major parties fluctuated significantly. In 1932 the biggest four parties only received 52.7 per cent of the votes in the lower chamber and 59.3 per

[44] Bartolini and Mair, *Identity, Competition*, pp. 75–81.

[45] The effective number of parties is a mathematical formula to indicate the number of parties in a system. The formula is $N = 1/\Sigma p_i^2$, where N is the effective number of parties expressed in seats or votes and p_i^2 is the fractional share of seats or votes of the i-th party. See M. Laakso and R. Taagepera, "Effective" Number of Parties: A Measure with Application to West Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1 (April 1979).

[46] This feature of the party system is emphasised by A. Valenzuela, *The Breakdown*; Siavelis, 'Continuity'; S. Micco and E. Saffirio, 'Tipo de gobierno presidencial y régimen político democrático: Quiebre y redemocratización en Chile', unpubl. Master's thesis, Universidad Católica de Chile, 1993.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Table 5. *The Structure of the Party Systems, 1932–1997 Chamber of Deputies and Senate*

Year	% Votes 4 Largest Parties		No. Parties That Elected Members of Congress		Effective Number of Parties (Votes)		Effective Number of Parties (Seats)	
	Deputies	Senate	Deputies	Senate	Deputies	Senate	Deputies	Senate
1932	52.7	59.3	17	10	9.6	8.2	6.7	5.8
1937	71.9	81.5	11	7	6.8	5.6	5.6	5.3
1941	69.8	76.2	12	6	7.0	6.0	5.4	4.8
1945	71.8	74.7	12	7	6.6	6.0	5.3	5.0
1949	69.1	72.4	14	7	7.1	7.0	6.0	4.9
1953	49.5	56.6	20	10	11.8	9.3	9.2	7.5
1957	63.9	61	13	9	7.9	8.1	6.8	6.1
1961	67.2	66.2	7	7	6.9	6.8	5.9	5.5
1965	78.2	80.2	7	6	4.3	3.8	2.8	2.7
1969	78.7	82.2	5	6	5.4	4.9	4.1	4.1
1973	84.3	98.3	10	5	5.3	2.0[a]	4.4	3.7
1989	75.3	72.2	11	6	6.1	6.0	5.0	3.6
1993	72.4	59.5	7	7	6.1	8.6[b]	4.9	5.4
1997	66.7	66.8	9	4	7.0	7.8	4.8	2.6
Mean	69.4	71.9	11.1	6.9	7.0	6.4	5.5	4.8

[a] In the 1973 Senate election, two federations of parties presented candidates as if they were parties. The Dirección del Registro Electoral does not provide individual party affiliation of the candidates, but this affiliation is known for the elected senators.

[b] Independent candidates are considered members of a single party (as a group) when we lack evidence of their real party affiliation.

Sources: Dirección del Registro Electoral; A. Angell and B. Pollack, 'The Chilean Elections of 1993: From Polarisation to Consensus', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1995); Ministerio del Interior.

cent in the Senate; in 1973, the four biggest parties peaked at 84.3 per cent of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies and 98.3 per cent for the Senate.

Although the effective number of parties (N) has been high throughout the entire period, there have been significant changes over time. In votes for deputies, N ranged from 4.3 in 1965 to an astonishing 11.8 in 1953. In deputies' seats, it ranged from a moderate 2.8 in 1965 to 9.2 in 1953 – the highest figure in twentieth-century Latin America. The format of the party systems in the Senate presents only minor differences compared to the Chamber of Deputies. The low N in the 1973 Senate election is artificial due to the grouping of parties into two federations.

The format of the party systems has exhibited greater stability in presidential elections. Nevertheless, even in presidential elections, the effective number of parties (in votes, of course) has varied meaningfully, from a low of 2.0 in 1938 and 1942 to a high of 4.1 in 1958. Figures for the other years are 2.7 in 1932, 3.1 in 1946, 3.0 in 1952, 2.2 in 1964, 3.0 in 1970, 2.4 in 1989, 2.5 in 1993, and 2.2 in 1999, for a mean of 2.7.

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Siavelis correctly argues that in view of the change in district magnitude for the lower chamber, from a mean of 5.7 from 1932 to 1973 to two member districts in the post-1989 system, the number of parties has been surprisingly stable.[47] Yet the stability in the number of parties from 1969–73 to 1989–97 should not obscure important fluctuations over the course of the 1932–73 period.

Other evidence. Other kinds of evidence also support the idea that the party systems have been characterised by significant change between pre-1973 and post-1989. A sweeping change in the socialist pole of the party system (PS and PPD) has occurred.[48] The pre-1973 Socialist Party has split into two, both of which differ profoundly from the PS that espoused revolutionary socialism and saw President Allende as too conservative. Electoral support for the Communist Party has diminished sharply. The conservative pole had one main party from 1966 to 1973; since 1989, two major conservative parties (RN and UDI) have competed. Coalition patterns have also changed. From 1932 to 1938 and from 1948 to 1964, coalitions between the centre and right were most common; since 1989, at the national level, a coalition between the centre and centre-left has prevailed. All of these changes have been widely acknowledged.

Other changes are more controversial. Carey, Tironi and Agüero, and Mainwaring and Torcal argue that the party system has undergone striking change between 1973 and the current democratic period.[49] Carey's argument that the party system has shifted to fundamentally bipolar competition strengthens the case for viewing it as marked by important change and discontinuity. Tironi and Agüero and Mainwaring and Torcal argue that the social bases of parties and the cleavage structure of the party system have changed significantly from the earlier democratic period.

Conclusions

In this article, we have challenged three orthodoxies regarding the Chilean party systems of 1932–73 and 1988/89–2000. These orthodoxies are not completely wrong, but they need to be tempered. Chilean parties have been powerful vis-à-vis other political actors (though apparently with some erosion in the 1990s), but they have not been particularly strong in the electorate. The conventional view that the party systems had three

[47] Siavelis, 'Continuity'.

[48] Roberts, *Deepening Democracy?*; Scully, *Rethinking the Center* and 'Reconstituting'; J. S. Valenzuela, 'Orígenes'; Walker, *Socialismo y democracia*.

[49] Carey, 'Electoral Reform' and 'Party and Coalition'; Tironi and Agüero, '¿Sobrevivirá?'; S. Mainwaring and M. Torcal, 'Social Cleavages, Political Legacies, and Post-Authoritarian Party Systems: Chile in the 1990s', unpublished paper, 1999.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dominant competing blocs was correct in congressional and local elections until the late 1980s, but not in most presidential elections. The argument that the three tendencies were roughly equal electorally was true only on occasion. Finally, the 1932–73 party system and the period between 1973–89 has not been as stable as the conventional wisdom has suggested.

Without emphasising the fluidity of the party systems, it is difficult to understand some important developments in Chilean political history, such as the frequent appearance and popularity of personalistic leaders. Whereas Chile is frequently thought to have a party system somewhat akin to those of most Western European countries, our interpretation suggests that until the 1990s it was characterised by greater fluidity and personalism than any Western European system. In Latin America, the Chilean party system was unique until the 1980s in having a strong left, centre and right. But in other respects, including high electoral volatility, periodic episodes of personalism and populism, and the moderate party structuring of the vote, the Chilean party system was similar to others in Latin American countries that experienced long periods of democracy (Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela). In terms of electoral volatility, the 1932–73 system was less stable than the systems in Colombia and Uruguay. The Chilean case has some important similarities to these other Latin American cases in which democracy endured for considerable time.

Appendix 1

Calculating electoral volatility: schisms, mergers, name changes and independents

Calculating electoral volatility in party systems with frequent splits, mergers and name changes requires consistent and reasonable rules. We treated each label as a separate party but otherwise followed procedures that would result in conservative (i.e. low) estimates of volatility.

Party schisms. When a party split into two or more parties from election T_1 to T_2 we compared its T_2 total with the largest split-off. We then treated the smaller new splinter party as if it had no votes in election T_1.

Party mergers. When two or more parties merged and created a new organisation, we calculated volatility using the original party with the highest percentage. If two or more parties merged for election T_2, but competed in election T_1 as separate parties, we assumed that the one(s) with fewer votes disappeared in election T_2. We gave a zero value to this party in T_2 and counted its share of the vote in T_1 as its percentage of change.

A merger involving a change of name occurred in 1966, when the National Party (PN) was created by the fusion of the Conservative Party

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(PC) and the Liberal Party (PL). Because the PL outpolled the PC in 1965, we compared the PL's percentage (7.5%) in 1965 with the PN's 1969 share (20.8%) and the PC's 1965 share (5.3%) with 0 per cent for 1969 since we counted it as disappearing.

Name changes. When a party changed its name but had an obvious continuity with a previous party, we counted both as being the same organisation. This is the case for the Christian Democrats, founded in 1957 by members of the FN, the CSC, the PAL and other small parties. In calculating volatility, we took the FN (National Falange) as the predecessor and counted the CSC (Social Christian Conservative) and PAL (Labourist Agrarian Party) as parties that disappeared. The key here is the high level of organisational and leadership continuity from the old FN to the Christian Democrats.

Using this principle of organisational and leadership continuity, in one unusual case, we considered a new label as the historical continuity of a party whose old label continued to exist. In 1948, the PSCH (Socialist Party of Chile) split into two parties: the PSCH and the PSP (Popular Socialist Party). Even though the faction guided by B. Ibáñez and J. B. Rossetti kept the PSCH label, most influential socialist leaders and most party activists joined the PSP. For this reason, for the 1945–49 electoral period, we counted the PSP as the continuation of the old PSCH, and regarded the 1949 PSCH as a new party.

In 1989, the PSCH divided into several factions, most significantly the PS-Almeyda, which remained closer to the old leftist orthodoxy, and the PS-Renewed, which fully embraced liberal democracy and rejected revolutionary socialism. For the 1989 elections the PS-Renewed helped create the Party for Democracy (PPD) while the PS-Almeyda participated in the PAIS (Broad Party of the Socialist Left) with the Communist Party and other minor radical left parties. Because the Socialists and PPD subsequently developed into separate parties, we treated the PS-Almeyda as the successor to the PSCH and the PPD as a new party. In 1992, the PSCH partially reunited and assumed its old name. We treated National Renewal (1989) as the successor party to the National Party because of the significant continuities in leadership.

Independents. During the entire period under consideration, Chile's electoral legislation allowed candidates who had no party affiliation to run for the Chamber of Deputies. We usually treated the independents as a category because we lacked the data needed for comparing individuals' results from one election to the next. Treating independents in this fashion leads to underestimating volatility.

Exceptionally, we treated independents as Communists for 1941. The PCCH was outlawed in 1941, and it presented its candidates as

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00005873 Published online by Cambridge University Press

independents. The biggest share of the vote for independents in the municipal elections of 1941 was Communist.

After 1989, the electoral legislation allowed parties within an electoral pact to make a subpact (an electoral pact inside another broader pact). In 1993, the right coalition had two subpacts, one formed by RN and independents and the other formed by the UDI and independents. We added the votes of the independents to each party because most of the independents that were elected subsequently joined the party with which they had subpact. Moreover, in many cases the independent character of these candidates was questionable. The competition between the rightist parties led them to encourage party members to run as independents to try to obtain a larger share of the conservative electorate that declares itself as independent. Thus, for the October 1996 municipal elections, the UDI cancelled the membership of many candidates so they could run as independents. In 1997 something similar happened, and the UDI elected six 'independent' deputies and four 'independent' senators. Except for the UCCP and the PCCH, we treated independents as a category.

Appendix 2

Parties by tendency

Below we indicate how we have classified parties by ideological tendency. It is not easy to group all Chilean parties that have competed in congressional elections since 1932 according to left, centre and right tendencies. Parties and leaders occasionally change their ideological position. Populism and mixed messages also contribute to the difficulty in sorting out parties by tendency. That is why most classifications of Chilean parties by ideological tendencies have an 'other' category and differ from each other.

Left and centre-left (CL) parties

Acción Popular Izquierda CL, Izquierda Cristiana, Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario (MAPU), Nueva Acción Pública, Nueva Alianza Popular, Partido Democrático Nacional (PADENA) CL, Partido Amplio de la Izquierda Socialista (PAIS), Partido Comunista Chileno, Partido de la Izquierda Democrática, Partido Democrático CL, Partido Democrático de Chile CL, Partido Humanista (Alianza Humanista Verde from 1992 to 1996) CL, Partido de Izquierda Radical (Social Democracia since 1973) CL, Partido por la Democracia (PPD) CL, Partido Radical Doctrinario CL, Partido Radical Socialista CL, Partido Radical Socialista Obrero, Partido Socialista Auténtico, Partido Socialista-Almeyda, Partido Socialista de Chile, Partido Socialista Popular, Partido Socialista Unificado,

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Partido Socialista de Trabajadores, Unión Nacional Laborista, Unión Socialista Popular (USOPO) CL, Verdes CL, Vanguardia Nacional del Pueblo.

Centre parties

Asociación Gremial de Empleados de Chile, Falange Nacional, Movimiento Republicano, Partido Democracia Agrario Laborista, Partido Demócrata Cristiano, Partido Demócrata Nacionalista, Partido Demócrata Socialista, Partido Demócrata Independiente, Partido Radical, Partido Radical Independiente, Partido Independiente Radical Socialista, Partido Social Republicano, Unidad Popular (1953).

Right and centre-right (CR) parties

Acción Republicana CR, Partido Agrario CR, Avanzada Nacional, Acción Nacional, Alianza Popular Libertadora, Acción Renovadora, Conservadores Social Cristianos CR, Comandos Populares, Democracia Radical, Laborista de Chile CR, Movimiento Nacional Ibañista CR, Movimiento Nacional del Pueblo CR, Movimiento Nacional Socialista de Chile (Vanguardia Popular Socialista since 1938), Movimiento del Trabajo CR, Partido Alianza de Centro CR, Partido Agrario Laborista CR, Partido Conservador, Partido Demócrata CR, Partido Liberal, Partido Liberal de Chile, Partido Liberal Democrático, Partido Liberal Doctrinario, Partido Liberal Progresista, Partido Liberal Unido, Partido Nacional, Partido Nacional-Phillips, Partido Nacional Cristiano, Partido Radical Democrático CR, Partido del Sur, Renovación Nacional, Unión de Centro-Centro (Unión de Centro-Centro Progresista since 1994), Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI), Unión Nacional de Independientes CR.

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