Post-Authoritarian Party Systems: Chile, Argentina, Uruguay

Caterina PREDA
University of Bucharest

caterina.preda@fsub.ro
INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to delineate how did the newly (re)democratized countries in the Southern Cone cope with the political parties’ delegitimation process subsequent to the fall of democracy in the 1970s. Though they participated to the negotiated fall of the authoritarian regimes, political parties also played a role in the democratic demise. Parties were no longer capable of playing their role, that is, to intermediate between society and the state. In this context, the main question this study inquires about is thus: What are the main features of the three post-authoritarian party systems in a comparative approach? (Are there major changes regarding party competition? Or are party systems safeguarded in their initial pre-authoritarian configuration? (‘freezing hypothesis’)

The analysis is articulated at two levels. The first level seeks to offer a comparative approach of the three party systems taking into account a set of common/ divergent variables. Primarily, the authoritarian regime and the subsequent transition/consolidation processes are considered. Secondly, concerning the post-authoritarian setting three elements are taken into consideration: large coalition governments, constitutional arrangements and the growing lack of confidence (party delegitimation?). The second analytical level offers, through the use of three variables (new/frozen party system; new parties (new cleavages); crisis of representation – new delegitimation), a deeper look at the three case studies.

Let’s first concentrate on the comparative framework of analysis so as to, in a second stance turn our attention to a brief overview of each party system. In the three case-studies the model adopted after the return to democracy is that of a large coalition government. Beyond the early need of supporting the new process of democratization by a front-type of party government (characteristic to newly democratized countries), these three countries experience the necessity to create large coalition-governments even beyond the first transitional stage, a sign of the fragility of party allegiances (or an effect of electoral systems). As it will be seen later on, this common variable is only partially verifiable in the Argentinian case which had a large coalition government beginning with 1999 (16 years after the return to democracy, in the form of the Alianza). An adjacent focus is placed on the constitutional arrangements regarding party activity (also regarding legislatures & executive) in the immediate period after the democratization. The three countries have amended their constitutions rather late (Chile only in 2005, Argentina in 1994 and Uruguay in 1996). A look at the institutional designs (presidential system, federal versus Unitarian state and electoral system) of each country-configuration will complete this brief constitutional investigation. Another important feature of the party configuration is the lack of confidence in national parliaments/political parties/or more broadly in the political class (such as it is exemplified by the Argentinean crisis of 2001: “Que se vayan todos!”) triggered by the absence of a thorough “process of the past”. The growth of abstentionism, of the blank and void votes (voto bronca in Argentina or the non-registration of voters in Chile even though voting is compulsory) leads to a broader questioning of whether or not there exists a crisis of representation and if it can lead to a new delegitimation of party politics.
COMPARATIVE APPROACH OF THE THREE PARTY SYSTEMS

Why compare the Southern Cone countries? (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay) To begin with, the Southern Cone countries share a basic feature: they have an important democratic tradition at the moment of the democratic breakdown, though in rather different forms. Furthermore, the three of them experienced military coups in the 1970s followed by the re-installment of democratic regimes in the 1980s. Although the democratic breakdowns occurred quasi in the same period, the important national traditions played a major role and no diffusion effect could be traced. These commonalities need to be nuanced in so far as Argentina is a deviant case, as it can be seen from the diversity of authoritarian regimes it experienced before the 1976 coup (constant interference of the military into politics starting with the 1930s) whereas Chile and Uruguay had only limited experiences with quasi-authoritarian experiments in the 1930s, before the military coups of 1973. Moreover, if for Chile and Uruguay there exists a consensus regarding their stabilized party systems before the democratic breakdown, in the case of Argentina there are doubts it possessed a party system before 1983. Even so, in the three cases political instability and increasing levels of confrontation led to the democratic demise. In this context, political parties suffered a delegitimation process before the democratic breakdown – and could no longer play their intermediating role.

The two initial questions of this investigation (Are there major changes regarding party competition? Or are party systems safeguarded in their initial pre-authoritarian configuration?) invoke the matter of the previous authoritarian regime. As such, the influence of the authoritarian regime(s) must be addressed if we want to understand the actual configuration of party politics in the three countries.

The nature of the three authoritarian regimes differs in both the length of time they cover and the scope they followed. Primarily the three regimes are differentiated in regard to their duration: Chile had a military regime for 17 years (1973-1989), Argentina experienced a 7 years military regime (1976-1983) whilst Uruguay saw the military intervention into politics for a lapse of time of 12 years (1973-1985). Secondly the scope of the authoritarian regime differed in the three cases. Thus, if in Chile there was a declared volonté of “refundación nacional” with strong implications for the political, economic and social matrix (Alcántara Sáez & Luna 2004); Uruguay is depicted as having gone through just an authoritarian intermezzo with the important caveat that it experienced a particular hard political repression though in a shorter interval. Argentina displays a broader role of the military (varied forms of military intervention) all throughout the XX century, 1983 representing not only the return to democracy but also the end of their influence in Argentine politics. Moreover, the Chilean authoritarian regime included important economic transformations that proved successful. The Argentine authoritarian regime also applied orthodox economic policies but they were less

---

1 The influence of the United States and of the Latin American context at large are of course influential in the three country-configurations but internal causes are judged as essential and not as mere receivers of external influences.

2 Valenzuela (1995) states that without a look at the XIX century configuration of the Chilean party system, the current situation cannot be fully grasped. I agree with this observation and I think it applies to the three cases but given the limitations of this paper I will only briefly refer to the period preceding the democratic (re)installation.

3 “A diferencia del caso chileno, la coalición golpista poseía en Uruguay bases muchos menores de apoyo y legitimidad a nivel de la sociedad.” (Alcántara Sáez & Luna 2004: 139)
successful (Cavarozzi 1992). In Uruguay the military had no clear economic project (Linz & Stepan 1996).

Conversely the role played by the military in the period following the demise of authoritarianism is connected to the characteristic of the previous regime. Hence, Chile who safeguarded through its pacted transition an important role for the military through constitutional arrangements (until 1998 Pinochet is chief of the Army and is even nominated senator for life) differs from Argentina where the army was completely delegitimated4 (in 1987/1990 the Army still manages to endanger the newly democratized regime but its role is mitigated thereafter)5. In Uruguay after the failure to approve the 1980 plebiscite concerning constitutional reforms the army was ready to negotiate the transition and was granted by the 1989 referendum a law of amnesty.

Thus, the type of transition and the initial (post-authoritarian) democratic settlement are essential for the subsequent evolutions of the three party systems analyzed here. The return to democracy has been labeled in the three cases as pertaining to the “class” of reforma pactada (Linz). An actor-based approach, this model designates the agreements between the soft-liners and the hard-liners both inside and against the regime. Though, in the case of Argentina the democratic reinstallment was considered to pertain to the class of “regime collapse by military defeat” (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986) Linz & Stepan (1996) show the limitation of this verdict by the role the military could still retain following the military defeat as such.

How do these elements impede on the post-authoritarian party system interaction? The authoritarian regimes dismantled party activity by their interdiction of political parties and thereafter agreed (albeit in different forms) to the reinstallment of political pluralism. In the case of Chile given the important “authoritarian enclaves” safeguarded by the Pinochetista Constitution doubts were expressed so as to the democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan 1996, Ensalaco 1994). Moreover, as it will be seen later on, the authoritarian regime succeeded in altering the Chilean party system configuration beyond the initial transitional stage. In Uruguay the restrictions imposed by the authoritarian regime were limited to the first elections, conformingly to the Naval Club Accord, a pact sealed with the exclusion of the Blancos. In Argentina the gradual credibility gained by political parties subsequently to the failures registered by the differently controlled militarized politics, clearly supported the ‘return’ to democracy in 1983. The reconciliation of the main two political forces as it was shown by their collaborations (the 1970-1973 Hora del Pueblo alliance and the 1981 Multipartidaria6 broader coalition) carried an important weight on the evolution towards a party-system competition with both political forces abstaining from ‘playing the military card’ or threatening to eliminate its adversaries from the political game. In the first elections the UCR, not tainted by the ‘recent past’, was the

---

4 For Linz & Stepan (1996) the military could retain in Argentina an important power impeding on the consolidation of the democratic regime.
5 The reappearance of the army on the political scene in the context of the trials of the leaders of the military regime in 1987 (the carapintandas), made Alfonsín grant an amnesty (the ‘Obediencia Debida’ and the ‘Punto Final’ law) to the officers that “only” complied with orders. Waisman (1999), Di Tella (2004)
party with much clearer democratic credentials in the country and thus its victory in the first free elections helped the transition (Di Tella 2004). In a larger perspective, the Argentinian experience shows by and large that the economic factor is an essential coordinate (Cavarozzi 1992) in the stabilization of a new democratic regime and cannot be ignored so much as it influences the political stability and configuration of a given regime. Following the return to democracy in 1983, Argentina experienced highly disturbing economic turbulences that sent the country into a spiral of instability and uncertainty. However the political stability was recovered in 2003 and, the return to militarized politics does not represent a threat anymore (Waisman, McGuire).

The influence of the previous regime and of the transition model appears to have different effects. If in the Chilean case they cover a larger time span by the ‘authoritarian enclaves’ included in the constitution and by the influence of a new cleavage pro/anti-Pinochet, in the two other cases their influence is limited to the initial stages of democratization (reconciliation of traditional parties and delegitimization of the military).

At the outset of this paper I asserted that the three countries registered in the post-authoritarian period, the emergence of large-coalitions governments. In Chile elections have been won since 1989 by the Concertación a coalition of parties covering a large political spectrum. Thus, in Chile the electoral system creates important incentives for the formation of large coalitions, making it harder for small parties to succeed in gaining representation. The electoral mechanism has thus imposed a two-party (blocs/coalitions) system behavior on a traditionally polarized party system. Moreover, Valenzuela finds that Chilean party politics have had from the beginnings “a tradition of coalition formations for presidential elections” (Valenzuela 1995). Uruguay has had traditionally a long history of grand coalition governing ever since the XIX century (Cason 2002). Before 2004, the government was formed in Uruguay by the two traditional parties, the Colorados and the Blancos, that have had to collaborate inside informal coalitions against the growing electoral strength of the left. The 2004 elections saw the victory of the Frente Amplio, (also a large coalition of parties) and Uruguay changed this pattern of broad coalition government. Through the 2004 election of Tabaré Vazquez that enjoys a stable majority inside the two chambers and has formed a majoritarian government on the basis of a party formed of a multitude of tendencies (that can be related though to the Uruguayan traditional factionalism). In Argentina, the formation of a large coalition was unusual and unexpected between the Radicals and the Left starting with the electoral growth of the Frepaso at the 1995 elections. Their collaboration was formalized by the 1997 Alianza that after winning the congressional elections led to the presidency Fernando de la Rúa in the 1999 presidential elections.

Thus the coalition arrangements differ in the three cases. If in Chile there is already a stabilized pattern of coalition-formations induced by the electoral system, in Uruguay it is the result of the gradual erosion suffered by the two traditional parties supporting each other in the post-authoritarian governments and represents by the victory of the Frente Amplio a new pattern. It remains to be seen if the new Uruguayan party system will be articulated around a new interaction: a coalition of the traditional parties versus the left coalition (a perceptible trend since the 1994 elections). In Argentina, beyond the initial stages of transition, the large-coalition has been experienced rather late in the form of the Alianza. Its failure and the subsequent 2001 crisis have led to a return to the ‘traditional bipartism’.

Moreover, the second variable used in the comparison of the three party systems regards the constitutional arrangements. These are important in any analysis
of parties and party systems. As such, a brief look at constitutional reforms and the specific provisions regarding parties is helpful at this point. The rather late reform of constitutions is not a specificity of the Southern Cone countries if we adopt a broader comparative approach of democratizing countries. But it represents an essential task of a new democratic regime. Linz and Stepan, writing in 1996 consider as such that Chile has not yet completed the transition to a consolidated democratic regime because of the important nondemocratic prerogatives included in its constitutional arrangement. Argentina underwent a constitutional reform in 1994 (11 years after the return to democracy), Uruguay did the same in 1996 (12 years after) whereas Chile approved a broad reform of the authoritarian constitutional text in 2005 (16 years after the holding of free elections).

Primarily, the three constitutional texts include stipulations concerning political parties. If the Argentinian constitution delineates them as “fundamental institutions of the democratic system” (Art. 38), the Chilean constitution insures the “right to association” and “guarantees political pluralism” stating furthermore that a complementary organic law will stipulate the other issues and the sanctions (Art. 19); the Uruguayan constitution does not include a definition of political parties but ensures also the “right of association” (Art. 38, 39). Concerning the financing of political parties, in Argentina the state contributes to their activity and demands that the sources and destination be made public (Art. 38). The Chilean constitution also demands that the sources of financing be made public but provides no state-funds for political parties. This new provision of the Chilean constitution seeks to increase transparency whose lack was seen as an impediment, given the high costs of electoral campaigns, to the emergence of new parties trying to enter the electoral arena (Angell: 2003; Olavarría: 2003). Uruguay makes no specifications in this sense.

Regarding the electoral system, the three countries elect their presidents (and vice-presidents for Argentina and Uruguay) using an absolute majority two-round system (TRS). A peculiar specification is found in the Argentinian constitution (Art. 97 and 98), in order to win, a candidates must succeed in gaining 45% of the vote in the first tour or, at least 40% insofar as his score is more than 10% than the 2nd placed candidate. This odd mechanism allowed the election of Nestor Kirchner in 2003 (after Menem stepped back from the second tour) even though he had gained less than Menem in the first tour. The differences among the three political systems are found in the modalities they elect their congresses.

As such, Argentina has a PR system with closed lists and possesses a perfectly symmetrical bicameralism, but as De Riz (2004) notes the Senate has an over-representation of the under-populated provinces (Malamud & De Luca 2005). As of

---

8 The constitution of Uruguay was amended in 1989, 1994, 1996 and 2004. But the essential modifications were made in 1996 (entry into force in 1997 and applied to the elections of 1999).
10 The Chilean constitution has nonetheless safeguarded the provisions that declare as unconstitutional parties or movements that attempt the establishment of a totalitarian system or that incite/ use violence as a political method.
11 With the specification that “…su contabilidad deberá ser pública; las fuentes de su financiamiento no podrán provenir de dineros, bienes, donaciones, aportes ni créditos de origen extranjero; sus estatutos deberán contemplar las normas que aseguren una efectiva democracia interna.” (Art. 19, section 15)
2001, the 1994 constitutional reform established new rules for the election of the Senate. Firstly the number of senators was increased from 48 to 72 and their mandate shortened from 9 to 6 years (with one third being renewed every two years). Secondly, senators are elected since 2001 by direct election and not by the provincial legislatures (Malamud & De Luca 2005). Thus, each of the 24 districts (23 provinces plus Buenos Aires) elects three senators (2 of the seats are awarded to the most voted party and one to the 2nd placed) directly for 6 years. Malamud and De Luca (2005) consider that notwithstanding these changes, the overall power balance in the Senate was not altered. In change, the Camera de Diputados is elected for four years (half of its members renewed every 2 years) with candidates from all the provinces plus Buenos Aires (257 members) using a D’Hondt formula with a threshold of 3%.

The Uruguayan parliament, elected for five years is composed of a Camara de Senadores (30 members) and a Camera de Representantes (99 members). Both are chosen by a PR closed lists system using Double Simultaneous Vote. As such the constitution enshrines internal party democracy, each faction inside the parties providing lists for both the Senate and the Camera de Representantes. At elections time, the voter elects simultaneously the president and his vice-president, a list for the senate and one for the lower chamber. This system awards the leaders of each faction inside parties as they have the power over nomination. Traditional factionalization is thus constitutionally prescribed.

In Chile the constitutional reform of 2005 could not do away with the binominal system (that is included in fact a special electoral law) established by the authoritarian regime given the strong opposition of the right parties and of the majority required for a constitutional reform; two thirds of the Senate is required and given the number of designated senators this couldn’t be achieved. As such the binominal system remains in force but the constitutional reform has succeeded in eliminating one of the “authoritarian enclaves”, namely the designated Senators (as well as the quality of ex-president equals permanent senator). Conformingly to the reformed text, the Senate (38 members, 2 for each of the 19 circumscriptions) is elected for eight years (with half of it members renewed every four years). Furthermore, the Camera de Diputados composed of 120 members (in the 60 districts) is elected for a four-year term based on a PR open list system in two-members districts making it harder for small parties to succeed and awarding coalition of parties. As such, in every district the second placed coalition will win an equal representation as the first-voted unless this one does not double the vote total of the 2nd placed. As it has often been remarked, the constitutional arrangement established by the authoritarian regime has tended to favor the right parties (the UDI and the RN) direct heirs of the Pinochet regime. By introducing a binominal electoral system the military have succeed in imposing a two-party behavior (with large coalitions acting as two competing parties) on the traditionally polarized Chilean party system.

Further constitutional provisions impede on the party system. De Riz has observed that the specifications of the Argentinian reformed constitution (1994) that tried to reduce presidential powers of legislation through emergency and necessity

---

12 This double simultaneous vote was used until the 1996 constitutional reform also for presidential elections. Afterwards a TRS system was adopted. Moreover the Constitution states that each party must organize primaries before nominating its presidential candidate.

13 LEY Nº 18.556

14 As of the 11th of March 2006 the Senate is composed by 38 directly elected senators (of which 20 were elected in 2005). [www.senado.cl](http://www.senado.cl)

15 Art. 67 Constitucion política de la República
decrees that limit the Congress’ power to legislate, are not respected ten years after the reform. Moreover, Liliana De Riz also observes that the national and provincial Argentinian electoral systems tend to favor the PJ and that the decentralized organization of parties tends to favor the nomination of legislators at the level of the province strengthening the power governors have upon legislators\textsuperscript{16}. This is congruent with the analysis advanced by Andrés Malamud who explores three party systems in Argentina: the presidential, the congressional one and the provincial level (Malamud 2005). Moreover, authors have observed the relative parliamentarisation of the Uruguayan system. As presidential and parliamentary elections are simultaneous in so long as presidents cannot run for re-election whereas legislators can, the presidential power is limited because of the limited power it holds over the party (Bergara 20005). Moreover, the reform of the presidential election (the runoff system) led to a new form of cooperation between parties. In the 1999 elections, the two traditionally-rivals parties, the Colorados and the Blancos had to unite against the left candidate, Tabaré Vázquez. For the first time the Blancos called on their electors to vote for the Colorado candidate, Jorge Battle (Cason 2002: 98). As such the constitutional reform created a new form of cooperation between the two traditional parties created as back as 1836.

Regarding the manifested lack of confidence in the political class (visible in the level of abstentionism and in the void votes) the question of a new process of party delegitimation is addressed. Chile and Uruguay saw in the 1960s the emergence of a new actor that challenged the traditional party system interaction: in Chile on the right side with the growth of Christian Democracy and in Uruguay on the Left with the growth of the Frente Amplio (the Tupamaros were declared the official reason for the irruption of the military onto the political stage). Concerning the differences between the Chilean party system before and after the Pinochet regime, Scully finds that “The newfound capacity of the major center and left parties to cooperate, and their eventual political alliance, constitutes the single most important transformation in the post-Pinochet party system\textsuperscript{17}.” Moreover, a true achievement of the Uruguayan redemocratization was the successful integration of the left in the party system sealed by the foundational act of redemocratization and by the subsequent incorporation of far left (M-26) into the democratic politics. Argentina saw also the emergence of extreme-left movements that challenged the political arrangement. In this case, the ‘traditional’ interventions of the army in the political sphere reached a new level all throughout the infamous decade. Internal changes in the two major parties, the Radicals and the Peronists led to the reaffirmation of party politics as a viable choice of the return to democracy. Although Argentina suffered an important crisis in 2001-2002 it did not return to a pattern of military intervention and parties reassumed their intermediating role with the 2003 elections. Thus in the three cases authoritarianism led to political learning and consensus was adopted as a norm. A broad academic consensus exists regarding the democratic consolidation of the three political systems and the absence of a threat of a new authoritarian interruption. The delegitimation process is found to be expressed through new forms of participation or detachment of politics as such (example: the non-registration of voters in Chile).

\textsuperscript{16} Liliana De RIZ. “La frustrada reforma del presidencialismo argentino” in “Hacia el fortalecimiento de la gobernalidad democrática: situación y perspectivas del presidencialismo y parlamentarismo en América Latina”, Seminario internacional, 21-24 October 2004, Georgetown University

All three countries have mandatory voting; notwithstanding, in at least two of them (Argentina and Chile) there is an important increase in both abstentionism and void voting. Considered as a general trend at the level of world politics the growing lack of confidence in political parties and the political class is noticeable in the three countries analyzed here (Carey 2004). The absence of a thorough process of the past is considered to have provoked the disappointment of citizens (the pacts between the military and the new democratic forces in Chile and Argentina after the transitional momentum). Gradually, in the three cases, human rights activism succeeded in pressuring the state up to the point of criminalizing the previously amnestyed military. Along with the discussion of the “voto bronca” (voluntary annulment of votes in the parliamentarian 2001 elections), the issue of new societal divisions is brought to the fore by the Argentinian crisis of 2001 (a possible new cleavage between the losers and the winners of transition). For Malamud, referring to the Argentinian 2001 crisis, this is not an indicator of a crisis of representativeness but one of efficacy. Furthermore, for Moreno (2005) the social movements that manifested in the 2001 crisis cannot be considered a proper revolutionary movement – they are mitigated after the 2003 elections – no political visibility whatsoever is gained.

The Chilean case is also found to register the existence of a loss of legitimacy by the political class. As it is showed by a recent opinion poll, the intention to vote blank or null is situated at around 30%. Another opinion poll concerning confidence in political parties in the interval 1997-2002 found an increase of the number of persons that have ‘no confidence in political parties”; from 36% in 1997 this percentage rose to 50% in 2002. The observed loss of party militants in Chile and the deployment of new forms of social action in a complete rupture with party identifications (Olavarría 2003, Angell 2003) are considered as direct consequences of the adoption of “a technocratic approach to political activity that have led to widespread disengagement from formal politics at the grassroots” (Olavarría). Moreover the rise of abstentionism and of the blank and void ballots that combined reached 31.5% in the 1997 parliamentary elections “must be interpreted as a rejection of political institutions rather than as apathy and ignorance (Olavarría).” Thus, Olavarría (2003) considers that there exists in Chile “an increasing delegitimation of existing political parties. Ideological homogenization and pragmatism in party discourse have tempered party competition and made party labels much less meaningful”.

In Uruguay the increasing disappointment of citizens with the government was monopolized by the Left that succeeded in gaining the 2004 elections by a constant opposition to the politics imagined by the two traditional parties governing since 1985.

---

Is the traditional Argentine two-party system challenged/transformed in the post-authoritarian setting? Even though some analyses of the Argentine post-authoritarian setting depart from the negation of the existence of a party system before 1983 (McGuire 1995, De Riz 1986), this study considers it as a given fact. Thus, Argentina has a two-party system articulated, at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, around the PAN and the UCR (1890) and, after the 1930s around the Radicals and the Peronists. All throughout the XX century the constant presence of the military is manifest: as an arbiter (1955 and 1958) or in an active formative posture restructuring economy and society (1966 and 1976). It is only after the 1983 return to constitutional democracy that Argentina rediscovered competitive politics whereas the military was under government control and not the opposite.

After the return to democracy Argentine bipartism regains gradually its pre-authoritarian configuration. An alternative view is that of McGuire (1995) who, using Sartori’s classification, finds that the Argentine post-1983 party system displays a medium fragmentation and a “moderate” ideological distance placing it between the “moderate multiparty” and the “two-party” categories. I agree nonetheless with Malamud, that the Argentine party system has not changed its two-party pattern in spite of the ephemeral scores obtained by alternative political actors. Malamud offers in addition a series of motives for the persistence of the Radicals and Peronists as unique power options: the concentrating incentives of presidentialism, the federal electoral system, the electoral cycle and the effect of placing the executive elections above the legislative ones, the presence of a majority of districts with little magnitude, the political culture and the resilience to party identification, the clientelist mechanisms of party financing and the incompetence of alternative leaderships (Malamud 2004: 36). Moreover, the author advances a tripartite analysis of the Argentine party system: the presidential system, the senatorial, and the deputies’. Thus, the presidential party system is bipartisan; the senatorial is predominant whilst the deputies’ is a moderated pluralism. Furthermore, the regional party systems must be acknowledged if a more profound understanding of the national configuration is inquired about. I argue that this approach is pertinent insofar as a case study analysis is concerned but given the brief comparative analysis I attempt in this study I will return to the advanced scheme of 3 variables: new party system; new parties (new cleavages); crisis of representation.

Insofar as new actors are concerned, even though in the period 1983-2005 the two traditional parties won the elections, their majority was not absolute as ‘third’ political forces entered the electoral arena. After the elections of 1994 for the

---


22 McGuire (1995) considers that presidentialism, the executive dominance, and the coincidence of legislative and presidential elections have reinforced the two-party configuration that grew from the cleavage-structure

23 Among these ‘third actors’ present in the first period we find: the Partido Intransigente (PI) of Oscar Alende (absorbed by the PJ in 1987), La Unión de Centro Democrático (UCeDé) of Alvaro Alsogaray, (which formed a coalition, Alianza de Centro (AC) that gained a little bit more than the PI (6% in
constitutional convention there were two important opposition parties: Modin and *Frente Grande* (FG) (14%). The Frepaso proved the most successful and in the 1995 elections became temporarily the second political force, replacing the UCR. In 1997 the UCR and Frepaso formed the *Alianza* and surpassed the PJ in the congressional elections winning furthermore the presidency in 1999. The De la Rúa-Alvarez administration proved instable and unconsolidated as Alvarez left the government after 10 months and Alianza proved its failure in the 2001 elections. Murillo (2002) finds that the coalition between the UCR and Frepaso was born as “a last-minute electoral alliance in 1997, purely tactical and pragmatic, it never succeeded in institutionalizing a decision structure or a mechanism of consultation of its members”. Hence, Malamud considers rightfully that these third-actors’ successes were circumstantial and did not survive or/and consolidate. After one of the traditional parties ‘captured’ the most important alternative political force of the post-authoritarian paysage the party system regained its bipolarity in spite of the re-emergence of third options.²⁴

The 2001 elections saw an increase in the number of void and blank votes and were followed by the general debacle of December 2001. “The onset of Argentina’s recession had both economic and political causes; its longevity and depth have had mostly political causes” (Corrales 2002). For Ollier (2003) two combined causes brought about the Argentinean crisis: the fragmentation of the politico-institutional system and the extreme dependency of its economy on foreign credit. The first aspect is related to the ‘old discussion over presidentialism and the loyalty or not of opposition that needs to be revisited; as does the role of Congress and of the parties’. However Malamud (2004) warns against the over-evaluation of the ‘political decomposition of 2001’ limiting it to the metropolitan area and considering that at the regional level the ‘questioning’ of the political system did not happen (see also Pérez-Liñán 2002).

The post-crisis 2003 elections were atypical as the PJ presented 3 candidacies for the presidential scrutiny. They showed even so, the re-consolidation of the PJ as the main Argentine party. In the presidential elections the PJ, albeit split between 3 candidates, obtained almost 61%. The UCR attained only 3% although the combined results of its splinters, ARI and Recrear of Lopez Murphy, reached 30%. In the following 2005 elections the scores of these two parties fell down and the UCR regained its second place inside the system. Malamud & De Luca (2005) observe the strengthening of the PJ and conclude that “in 20 years third parties have sporadically made electoral inroads but have never managed to consolidate; in contrast the two traditional parties have shown stronger resilience than many had thought.” The restructuring of Peronism around Nestor Kirchner is manifest after the 2005 elections (Calvo 2005) “Even if Peronism controlled since 2003, 50.1% of the Chamber of deputies, the party bloc was fractured in at least 3 factions among whom the official line was minoritarian with around 40 legislators.” After the positive results for

---

²⁴ In 1997 the third place in the Chamber of Deputies, was won by a regional party, the *Fuerza Republicana* (FR) and in 1999 by the *Acción por la República* (AR) founded by the ex minister of Economy, Domingo Cavallo. In the 2001 elections the third political force was *ARI* of Elisa Carrió.

²⁵ In 2005, the PJ holds again the presidential office, 57% of the Senate, 51% of the Chamber of Deputies and 66% of the provincial governorships. The UCR keeps 28% of the Senate, 17% of the Chamber of Deputies and 25% of the provincial governorships. After them there is an abyss...RECREAR and ARI, have no senator, no governor, and only 4% (ARI) and 1% (RECREAR) of the Chamber of Deputies.
Peronism of the 2005 elections, there is a considerable migration towards the official party confirming thus the strengthening of Peronism. An important element that has to be taken into account when studying recent Argentinian politics is the crisis of representativeness manifest in the 2001 crisis. Malamud (2002) considers that the Argentinian crisis is perceived as a crisis of representativeness, (manifest in the high volatility, abstentionism and the voluntary void vote) but “the persistence of strong party identifications in spite of the prolonged Argentinian decadence indicate that it is not the representativeness which is the black spot of Argentinian democracy but efficacy.” In the 2001 elections a quarter of the votes expressed were annulled or blank and the same proportion of the population chose not to vote. This political sanction of the population led to the popular slogan: ‘Que se vayan todos!’ equivalent of only 5% of confidence in politics in October of 2001 (Murillo 2002). A new form of political activism was chosen the cacerolazos and the piquetes. Nonetheless, the return to formal politics was confirmed in the 2003 and moreover in the 2005 elections. The failure to transform themselves (also given the political and financial barriers) into viable political alternatives has led to the gradual extinction of these new forms of political activism (Moreno 2005).

Is the “freezing theory” valid in the case of Argentina? The two-party system seems to be nowadays reconsolidated. Even if since the 1983 democratic reinstallment, ‘third political forces’ have emerged, their impact has been limited both in time and outcomes. Even though the most successful third actor, the Frepaso by its coalition with the UCR won the elections of 1999 its subsequent downfall confirm Malamud’s analysis that “even if third political forces have emerged they constituted ephemeral phenomena (flash parties) or they remained limited territorially to one province (local parties)”. Thus no third/alternative actor thrived in altering the two-party system articulated around the two traditional parties.

CHILE [MODERATED PLURALISM-ARTIFICIAL BIPARTISM]

The Chilean party system, labeled by Sartori as a case of ‘extreme and polarized pluralism’ was until the 1973 coup a multi-party system with a clear tripartite division on the right-center-left axis. Moreover, Valenzuela (1995) finds that Chile has not one party system but five, each with its characteristics. These five party systems correspond to the evolutions of the Chilean party system since its creation in the XIX century up to the period following the return to democracy at the beginning of the 1990s. Furthermore the Chilean party system is the result of the interaction of four levels: the societal (the cleavages of Rokkan & Lipset), the organizational (Duverger’s classic analysis), the political regime (electoral system and procedures also), and the ‘incidental party-generating divisions” (conflicts among leaders, crises in organizations etc). The breakdown of democracy in 1973 spurs from a major political and societal crisis with important parts of the Chilean society legitimating the believed ‘brief’ intervention of the military.

26 The first one (1828-1891) coincides with the creation of the most historic parties, the Conservatives, the Radicals and Liberals. The second (1891-1925) corresponds to the parliamentarist interpretation of the 1833 Constitution and sees the emergence of a new Liberal Party as well as working-class parties. The third one, (1925-58) contains the party system after the return to a fully presidentialist system. The fourth one (1958-73) saw the rise of Christian Democracy and the changes it produced. The last one (1989-to present) is the post-authoritarian party system. (Valenzuela: 1995) p. 6

What are than the characteristics of the post-authoritarian Chilean party system? Does the “freezing theory” apply to the Chilean case? The influence of the constitutional arrangements devised by the authoritarian regime goes well beyond the transition stage and led to an important modification of political parties’ articulations. As such, at the level of systemic analysis, the Chilean party system displays the characteristics of moderated pluralism (Sartorian terms, 1976, p.179) instead of the extreme polarized pluralism around a tripartite division on a right-left axis (Olavarría: 2003). After the return to democracy the main political forces have been two, it is true not two parties but two political coalitions/blocs.

The return to democracy saw the emergence of new political parties (Valenzuela: 1995). In the first stage a grand array of new parties were formed but gradually the political stage was equilibrated around seven/eight countable parties, in Sartorian terms. These parties constructed large-coalitions for the first series of elections. Given the Chilean new binominal electoral system (replacing the PR system used until the 1970 elections) two blocs/coalitions of parties became permanent: the Concertación and the Alianza. The scores of the right parties (due to the electoral artifacts that allowed them to gain more seats than the Concertación), have risen and present them as important alternatives to the coalition government already in power for 17 years (San Francisco: 2003). Among them the most important are the Renovación Nacional (RN) and the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI), both created in 1983. The most important new party, member of the governing coalition is the Partido por la Democracia (PPD). An ‘instrumental party’ whose origins reside in the constitutional proscription of Marxist parties, the PPD established steadily itself as an important part of the Concertación.

The new Chilean party system began by a clear articulation around a pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage. Some authors underlie its non-permanence given the strong societal origin of political parties in Chilean society (Valenzuela 1995, Angell 2003). Ortega Frei (2003) considers, in the line of Valenzuela (1999) and that of Torcal & Mainwaring (2003) that there is a post-authoritarian cleavage in Chile, but not one that substitutes the traditional societal cleavages identified by Lipset and Rokkan but a political one: pro- or anti-pinochetismo. Thus, the preferences for the two coalitions are determined by the elector’s stance in favor or against the Pinochet regime and its legacy. While

Thus, in the Chilean case the choice operated by the authoritarian regime regarding the electoral system has led to the modification of the party system. Even though some authors (Siavelis 2004) challenge the view that the binominal electoral

---

28 That is parties elected to parliament (Lower chamber) and/or who formed the government. The electoral service of Chile notes that there are 11 parties registered in Chile. www.servel.cl
29 Based on the 1925 Constitution, the Chilean Congress was elected using a PR system whereas presidents were by majority (with the mention that the Congress elected the president from the two leading candidates if no one received an absolute majority).
30 Nowadays formed of: the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC), Partido por la Democracia (PPD), Partido Radical Social Demócrata (PRSD) and the Partido Socialista (PS).
32 In the last elections the Right scored around 38% in parliamentary elections compared to the 50 to 55% of the Concertación.
33 Alcántara Sáez & Luna (2004) label it “un clivaje cultural”, p. 140
34 Valenzuela (1995) notes in this sense: “With this electoral regime applied to a multiparty system in which no party has more than a third of the vote, parties sharing proximate positions that decide to run separately risk loosing many seats to their adversaries if the latter agree to join forces. op cit., p. 54
system leads to the creation of large coalitions (in turn it can lead to disintegration of coalitions, Siavelis: p. 78) that at their turn facilitate a two-party system, the Chilean post-authoritarian trajectory stands as a proof of the contrary. It is true nonetheless, that no final judgments can be made with regard to the Chilean political system until Concertación experiences opposition and until more time has elapsed so as to allow the weakening of the pro/anti-Pinochet cleavage (Torcal & Mainwaring 2003).

Furthermore the choice of the electoral system led to a different pattern of intra-party interactions. The system encourages candidate identification rather than party identification (Angell 2003) and this personalization of current Chilean politics leads to the dispense of party politics (San Francisco 2003), ‘Party labels are barely visible…emphasis is now placed on individual candidates’ (Olavarría 2003). Olavarría considers that there is a crisis of representation in the Chilean party system due to a cumulus of factors: the effects of the binominal electoral system, the designated Senators (now eliminated), and the preeminence of the executive over Congress. This combination of factors leads to the debilitating of party politics and renders legislators incapable of completing their tasks. Thus “Chile’s parties are different from those of the pre-1973 democracy. No longer mobilizing agencies, they are more like catch-all parties that are falling to ‘catch’ significant portions of the electorate, above all youth and the urban poor…[as such] parties are moving closer to the state and further from society. (Olavarría:33)” Relating to the crisis of representation and the demobilization acknowledged above, the gradual consensus concerning economic and social policies as well as over the value of democracy (Valenzuela 1995, Angell 2003, Olavarría 2003) has led to an ideological homogenization of the political parties. This homogenization combined with the professionalisation of politics has lead to disengagement from formal politics and contributed to the representativeness crisis (Olavarría 2003).

URUGUAY [MODIFIED BIPARTISM]

The important electoral rise of the left in the 1960s culminating in the creation of the Frente Amplio in 1971, combined with a political crisis of which the guerilla activities were an important element, marked a radical change in the Uruguayan traditionally two-party system. Thus, before the democratic breakdown, the new party system had at least three relevant parties (in Sartorian terms) or as some observers noted in so far as electoral strength is concerned, a ‘two and a half party system’.

After the return to democracy some authors noticed the re-emergence in rather intact form of the party system (Gillespie). As such, Altman (2002) agrees with the “freezing hypothesis” and shows (using electoral results between 1971 and 1999) that the parties perform mainly in the same way if the 1971 and the 1984 elections are compared. Nonetheless, later on, the impressive growth of the FA breaks this freezing logic. Other authors were led to believe that in fact the re-democratized (O’Donnell, Dahl) party system had changed in important ways, allowing for a plurality of political forces. I contend that in fact the party-system safeguarded its bipolarity with the caveat that immediately after the return to democracy there were four actors

35 Siavelis (2004) argues that other factors, such as: the influence of sub-pactos, the capcity of the government to reward losers, and that of the simultaneity of elections may undermine the incentives for the formation of coalitions. (p. 74)
behaving as two political forces. Uruguay is thus found to display the characteristics of moderated pluralism keeping in mind that “The structure of moderate pluralism remains bipolar. Instead of two parties we generally find bipolar alignments of alternative coalitions.” (Sartori 1976:179)

As such, the growth of the left in the 1994 elections was a clear menace for the two traditional parties (Forteza 2003) leading them to form a more solid coalition used also for the constitutional reform (Cason 2000, 2002) approved by the plebiscite of 1996. The absolute victory of the FA-EP-NM in the 2004 elections is in my opinion not a proof of the alteration of the traditional bipartisan system (as Altman 2002 observes, p. 94) but as it has been seen ever since the re-democratization and, more clearly since the 1994 elections, the system has articulated itself around a new division: on one side the traditional parties and on the other side, the Left (Forteza 2003, Alcántara Sáez & Luna 2004).

The main new actor of the Uruguayan political landscape is Nuevo Espacio, a splinter of the Frente Amplio\(^\text{37}\), after an initial important score of 8.5% has lost in consistency and regained a place in the broad coalition FA-EP-NM. In this sense, we don’t find any important new parties, the interesting evolutions are found more in the changes undergone by the pre-authoritarian parties.

An important characteristic of Uruguayan political parties not altered by the authoritarian experience is the extreme factionalization (sublemas). This intense factionalization has been enshrined in the constitutional reform proposed by the two traditional parties and opposed by the left coalition. As such party factions can present candidates for elections and the list most successful wins the representation. This happens at all levels of the political system except for the presidential (for which a TRS system was adopted following the 1996 constitutional reform).

As to a crisis of representation as Cason (2002) shows, the level of the void and blank vote is situated around 2% and moreover, politics still represent a major interest for Uruguayans.

Concerning new cleavages, a number of authors find that the pro-anti authoritarian division is not as important in Uruguay as it is for example in Chile (Altman, Buquet & Chasquetti). Bergara (2004) finds that the Uruguayan party system displays less ideological polarization after the dictatorship. The distance between the traditional parties is less than that between them and the Left. Alcántara Sáez & Luna (2004) talk about two ideological families, one formed of the two traditional parties (PN and the PC) and the other by the left parties (FA and NE). The two authors find that in fact the NE is closer to the traditional parties’ bloc than to the FA. Given the electoral reunion of the two left parties inside the broad coalition “Frente Amplio - Encuentro Progresista – Nueva Mayoría (EP-FA-NM)” this evidence is unconvincing.

After more than a century of a political interaction based solely on two main actors (PN and the PC), in the October 2004 elections, the Frente Amplio extended coalition succeeded in gaining both the presidency and the parliamentary elections. Tabaré Vázquez’s government is the first majority government in almost 40 years (Buquet & Chasquetti 2005) in a country with more than a century of traditional parties’ collaboration-consensual politics. Buquet & Chasquetti consider the 2004 elections as having generated an extraordinary change in the configuration of the political system: the president enjoys a majority in both chambers of the Congress and enjoys a majoritarian cabinet (as he didn’t have to construct an intra-party government

---

\(^{37}\)Nuevo Espacio participated alone in elections in the period 1989-1999 (Buquet & Chasquetti 2005)
Thus, the post-authoritarian party system has seen the display of the growing strength of the Frente Amplio up to the recent victory in the elections confirming thus, the alteration of the traditional bipartism.

Thus, the authoritarian regime does not play an important role in the restructuring of the party system. The “freezing theory” applies in a larger measure to the initial post-authoritarian Uruguayan party system. Gradually the party system gains a new bipolar articulation, this time around the traditional parties and the Left.

PARTIAL CONCLUSIONS

Our brief analysis found that post-authoritarian party systems display new characteristics and conform to a changed logic. Both the authoritarian regime and the transition were found to have influenced the subsequent party evolutions.

Concerning the constitutional arrangements we found a few interesting elements. In Uruguay, one of the main characteristics of political parties, the traditional factionalization is enshrined in the Constitution. Furthermore, the change of the presidential election mechanism has modified party activity as it can be seen by the mere reference to the Frente Amplio who always presented a candidate and who now has to organize internal elections for this purpose, on the same day as the other two parties. Moreover, Chile has undergone various constitutional reforms, the most important being very recent in September 2005. The ‘authoritarian enclaves’ are not completely eliminated as the electoral system remains the same and is considered to alter the representativeness of Chilean political preferences (small parties are disadvantaged). In Argentina the desired limitation of presidential powers by the 1994 constitutional reform is not as much as necessary enacted and still the president overshadows the congress. In the three case studies the influence of the electoral formulas is considered as influential relating to the representativeness of legislators.

I consider that the lack of confidence and the increase of abstentionism and of void votes in two of the cases (Argentina and Uruguay) are to be related to a generalized trend in the context of “the end of ideologies”. Relating to the perceived crisis of representation and its possible evolution towards a new delegitimization of political parties, the experiences of the three countries demonstrate a consolidation of the democratic contest though gradual political learning. The 2001 Argentinian crisis is an example in this sense. Though new forms of political action were imagined they did not succeed in channeling the discontent into new political actors. The elections held beginning in 2003 show a return to the classic articulation between Radicals and Peronists with a clear prevalence of Peronists.

Large coalition government is evident in Chile where the Concertación has formed the government ever since the return to democracy. The formation of large party coalitions is encouraged in this case by electoral means. In Uruguay the two traditional parties collaborated inside the government (or parliament) against the growing importance of the Left (represented by a large coalition of parties). Coalitions (whether formal or informal) were imposed thus in this case by the rise of a new political actor. Furthermore, in Argentina large coalitions are only ephemeral (1997-2001) invalidating the preliminary assumption that this variable is valid for the three case studies.

Referring to the restructuring of the party systems (the criterion of new/frozen party system) there are similarities between the evolutions of the Argentine and Uruguayan party systems (both being cases of bipartism) if we consider the emergence of a third actor. In the Uruguayan case the Leftist Frente Amplio grew
stronger throughout the 1990s and led to the formation of an alternative coalition between the two traditional parties. The Argentinian Radicals, one of the traditional parties, saw their electoral scores sore and decided to ally with the new left inside the Alianza. Thus, in the first case we saw a coalition against a competing third actor leading to the formation of two blocs: traditional parties versus Frente Amplio; while in the second case, one of the traditional parties enters a coalition with the new emerged actor that seemed to annull the long-established party interaction between Radicals and Peronists. The Chilean party system appears the most interesting as it displays now a bipolar logic. Its pre-authoritarian extreme pluralism has been replaced after 1989 by a moderated pluralism with two coalitions of parties acting as main contenders. This modification was secured through a new electoral system aiming at reducing (and succeeding in) the traditionally polarized politics. In the Chilean case the new post-authoritarian parties are important only in so far as they integrate the two new grand coalitions: the Concertación or the Alianza. Regarding the consolidation of a new cleavage, the Chilean case is the one that appears to display the largest influence of the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage. In the other two cases this cleavage doesn’t play a structuring level. But as it is shown also by the experience of other recent democratized countries (in post-communist Europe), the pro/anti-authoritarian cleavage tends to dissipate in time with the accentuation of new political divisions.

REFERENCES


Forteza Alvaro (coord.) (2003), “Understanding Reform, the Uruguayan case”, Global Development Network Project of Understanding Reform, February (Draft)
“Hacia el fortalecimiento de la gobernalidad democrática: situación y perspectivas del presidencialismo y parlamentarismo en América Latina”, Seminario internacional, 21-24 October 2004, Georgetown University
Lavedra Ricardo Gil ()2003, “Un vistazo a las reformas constitucionales en Latinoamérica”, Seminario en Latinoamérica de Teoría Constitucional y Política (SELA), 6-10 June,
http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/granada/ws2/Malamud_%20DeLuca.pdf
Moreno Hugo (2005), *Le désastre argentin*, Editions Syllepse, Paris


Uggla Frederik (2005), “‘For a Few Senators More’? Negotiating Constitutional Changes During Chile’s Transition To Democracy”, Latin American Politics and Society, Vol. 47, No. 2, pp. 51-75


- (1993) with Scully Timothy “From Democracy to Democracy: Continuities and Changes of Electoral Choices and the Party System in Chile”, Notre Dame WP # 199 (July)
