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## The Evolution of Latin American Party Systems

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In the aftermath of Independence, almost all of the new nations of Latin America were divided by the same cleavage—liberals versus conservatives. Conservatives were more likely to be *peninsulares*, to own land, to defend the Church's property and corporate privileges, and to favor a strong central government and state regulation of trade. Liberals were more likely to be *criollos*, to engage in commerce or the professions, to resent the Church's property and privileges, and to favor a weaker federal government that allowed free trade. The relative salience of these issues varied from country to country, and in a few cases some of the positions were reversed, but for the most part this was the basic cleavage of Latin American politics, even if the Liberals and Conservatives were called by different names in some countries.

Contemporary Latin American party systems, however, no longer reflect this original or traditional cleavage except in Colombia and Uruguay.<sup>1</sup> Class cleavages are reflected in Chile and to a partial degree in Argentina; Venezuela, Mexico, and Costa Rica contain a cleavage between a large multiclass party and the opposition to it; and most of the other countries (Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador) have such volatile party systems that it is difficult to identify what the principal cleavage might be.<sup>2</sup> These party systems differ greatly in other respects as well. In some, the political culture welcomes the pluralism of party competition while in others, each of the major parties considers itself the sole legitimate representative of the people or the national interest. In some, parties are poorly institutionalized and relatively unimportant to the political process; in others, parties have acquired such strength and

importance that the political system is criticized as being a *partidocracia* rather than a *democracia*.

This paper explains why contemporary Latin American party systems are so diverse in spite of their common point of departure in the nineteenth century conflict between liberals and conservatives. While a full explanation of the many minor differences in party systems—the nature of the smaller parties, major parties' success in particular elections, etc.—would require a detailed political history of each country, the most obvious and most interesting differences—which cleavage divides the major parties, how legitimate the role of the opposition is, and how well institutionalized the parties are—can be explained by just two factors. The first is the nature of the political order (if any) that was achieved before the expansion of political participation to the middle and lower classes. This order (or disorder) left a legacy of cleavages, culture, and institutions that shaped the environment in which aspiring party leaders built organizations, defined issues, and competed for votes once that crucial threshold had been passed. The second factor is the timing of the expansion of participation, which constrained the possibilities for recruiting supporters at the time the new mass parties were being founded.

This explanation is supported by a brief comparative political history of eleven Latin American countries. It is similar to Lipset and Rokkan's comparison of cleavage structures and party systems in Western Europe in the set of questions it addresses, its historical focus, and its emphasis on crucial thresholds and the possibilities for alliances among social groups.<sup>3</sup> As Robert Dix has observed, the history of Latin America differs from that of Western Europe in several ways that require a modification of their explanatory framework before applying it to Latin America. First, Latin America lacked two cleavages that were present in several Western European countries: one between Catholics and Protestants, and another between a national and a subnational culture with a different language or religion. Thus there is little need to account for the origins of exclusively Protestant, Catholic, ethnic, or regional parties in Latin America.<sup>4</sup> Second, political instability in Latin America has interrupted both democracy and party development, creating a discontinuous pattern of evolution.<sup>5</sup>

Dix further argues that Latin America differs from Western Europe in that parties are typically catchall parties rather than "class-mass" parties. In this generalization there is some truth, but more error. Only eleven of the twenty-three parties Dix mentions by name fit his full definition of a catchall party. While it is true that many of the others possess a few catchall-like characteristics, the desire to identify a "Latin American type" of party leads Dix to downplay important differences in

the parties of the region. And rather than explain these differences, as Lipset and Rokkan did, Dix merely attributes them to "the vagaries of political history."<sup>6</sup> This essay makes those vagaries less vague.

Substantively, however, this essay has more in common with Juan Linz's study of the party system of Spain than it does with Lipset and Rokkan's survey of other European countries.<sup>7</sup> As Linz noted, the Spanish party system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not fit Lipset and Rokkan's model. The nineteenth century was interrupted too often by civil wars, the "dynastic" Liberal and Conservative parties failed to organize a mass base of support, dictatorship undid what little party development had taken place by the 1920s, and the first attempt at mass democracy ended in polarization and civil war. Anyone familiar with Latin American history will immediately see parallels.

It should not be surprising that such strong parallels exist; rather than insisting on classifying Spain as a relatively backward European country, perhaps we should think of it as a relatively advanced Latin American one, the most advanced of twenty countries formed by the breakup of the Spanish Empire. In that spirit, this paper is an attempt to describe the dynamics of the alternative universe of party evolution to which the Spanish case belongs. Offering a broader range of possibilities than the countries of northern Europe, it is a universe in which radical discontinuities and lagging social development have a dramatic impact on what kinds of parties develop, when they develop, and whether they develop at all.

### Overview

Before attempting to explain the characteristics of a party system, it is prudent to consider whether there is a party system there to be explained. A party system, at least in the sense intended in this essay, is more than a collection of parties; it is a collection of parties of a certain kind: parties that 1) are organized well enough to survive the loss of their most important leader, and 2) are able to rely on a core of strong party identifiers in the electorate, and therefore are not likely to disappear from one election to the next. A system of such parties is characterized by a fairly constant set of parties, whose share of the vote varies within roughly predictable limits. By this criterion, not all Latin American democracies have party systems; some merely have poorly institutionalized parties with a tenuous and fickle base of support. The first question to answer, therefore, is: what conditions are necessary for the development of party organizations and party loyalties?

One of the claims of this essay is that party systems became established only in countries where it was expected, at the time that mass parties were first being formed, that the new parties would play an important role in government. This expectation provided the necessary incentive for party leaders to invest their energies in building party organizations and recruiting a loyal base of support. Once these efforts bore fruit, partisan identification was passed down through families and friends by processes first described by Converse and thoroughly documented since then.<sup>8</sup> In these countries, organizations were able to outlast the founding generation of leadership, so parties became institutionalized.

Whether or not this crucial expectation existed was a function of that country's history up to that point. One favorable scenario, present in Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Uruguay, occurred when embryonic parties, formed by elites before the expansion of electoral participation to the middle and lower classes, already played an important role in recruiting candidates, distributing patronage, and organizing the work of congress. This situation gave rise to the expectation that mass parties would perform similar functions. A second favorable scenario, present only in Venezuela, occurred when the country had no experience with democracy or parties whatsoever before participation was expanded. In this situation, the public's idealistic illusions about the role of parties in a democracy remained intact, untarnished by direct experience with sordid politicking, long enough for parties to become established.

If, however, embryonic parties had been too ephemeral, inconsistent, divided, or dependent on a regime or a founding leader to play an important role in the past, in the context of either a stable regime or general instability, then the public naturally expected that new parties would be similarly weak. This was the situation in Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru. Argentina and Mexico are intermediate cases, and Bolivia is an exception due to the extreme disruptions of the Chaco War, which divided the old aristocratic regime from the new era of mass politics. A companion argument to be advanced here is that some of the regimes preceding mass participation passed certain characteristics on to the emerging party systems—especially tendencies toward pluralism or hegemony.

Provided that there is party system, the next question is *which* cleavages does it reflect? The second claim of this essay is that the answer to this question depends in part upon what happened to the old cleavages that predated mass participation. Among the cases examined here, there were four different outcomes. In Colombia and Uruguay, the civil wars of the nineteenth century lasted so long that the middle and lower classes came to identify strongly with the traditional parties even

before electoral participation was opened to them, so that this cleavage between liberals and conservatives became institutionalized in the competitive embryonic party system. In Chile the suffrage expanded gradually, allowing both sides to be successful at recruiting supporters among the new voters, but eventually this old cleavage lost its relevance to a greatly expanded electorate, and the old parties, facing marginalization, eventually merged.

In Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela, the liberals won on the battlefield long before the age of mass politics. Eventually the problem of how to incorporate the rising classes created a new cleavage, but in the meantime, political conflict consisted of nothing more than personal rivalries among elites within the liberal consensus. In the countries that never managed to establish party systems, the fate of the liberal vs. conservative cleavage is irrelevant. If it survived, it was eventually lost in the shuffle of other parties; if it was resolved, there was still instability from another source that prevented it from having any lasting impact on party formation.

Still, we cannot explain which cleavages a party system reflects until we know how the new cleavages came to be reflected by parties. The third claim of this essay is that parties reflect the issues that were most salient in society at the time that the parties were recruiting their initial base of support, and that these periods of new party growth coincide with the years of dramatic expansion of electoral participation. This claim is a logical extension of Converse's widely accepted model of increasing party identification.<sup>9</sup> If voters tend to inherit the party loyalties of their parents and become more partisan as they grow older, then the only way a new party can enter the system and grow is to appeal to voters who have not already formed a loyalty to an existing party. When political space is full, it is harder for new parties to enter the system.<sup>10</sup> New parties can grow only at the margins, picking up a few apathetic voters here, a few defectors there, a share of the voters who have just come of age, and some of the swing vote in any given election. Until some sort of crisis undermines voters' loyalties to their parties, the only way for a new party to grow suddenly and rapidly is for there to be a dramatic increase in the size of the electorate, which creates a large pool of uncommitted, first-time voters. This argument does not deny that there are swing voters and defectors; it assumes only that such crises are absent and these party switchers either cancel each other out or are few enough in number to make only marginal changes in the level of support a party receives. The comparative history presented below shows that over and over, in country after country, the established parties that survive today first grew large during periods in which electoral participation was expanding rapidly.

It is also logical for the content of this cleavage to reflect the important issues at the time of expanded participation, if one considers the matter from the perspective of aspiring party leaders. If participation is expanding gradually, the potential rewards for organizing are meager in comparison to the effort expended, so there is little incentive to start a new party. But if participation expands dramatically, comparatively little effort can bring in a great return, so many "political entrepreneurs" attempt to found parties. One of them is bound to succeed—the one who does the best job of defining the party's appeal in terms that resonate with the most salient concerns of the new voters; the one, in other words, who is most closely aligned with the cleavage of the day.

The pace of expansion also suggests how pragmatic or ideological a new party will be. The larger the pool of new voters, the more diverse they are likely to be, and the broader the party's appeal will have to be in order to take full advantage of this opportunity for growth. This would account for the narrowly ideological appeal of parties in Chile, where participation expanded gradually, as contrasted with the major multiclass or catchall parties of Venezuela and Bolivia, where participation exploded in 1945 and 1952, respectively.

### *A Conceptual Caveat*

It is tempting to equate the expansion of participation with a relatively simple phenomenon, such as the extension of the suffrage or phases of incorporation of the middle class, followed by the working class, and then peasants. Such an approach would promise enticing (and familiar) hypotheses concerning middle-class parties, labor parties, and populism. The reality, however, is much too complex for that kind of analysis.

In the first place, the suffrage was not restricted or extended by class criteria, but by property, income, literacy, age, and sex. Property and income would coincide roughly with class, but not perfectly; literacy would only somewhat; and age and sex cut straight across classes. Each extension of the suffrage, therefore, released a heterogeneous (with respect to class) group of new voters into the system, and the parties consequently recruited a heterogeneous base of support. This is an important reason why it is hard to identify any party with a particular social class.

Second, there is more to participation than suffrage. Participation is also a question of the *ability* and *desire* to vote, on *one's own terms*. Therefore, in addition to simple extension of the suffrage, one needs to take into account: 1) the enforcement of voter eligibility, both denying it

to those who are eligible and granting it to those who are not; 2) turnout: sometimes an expansion of participation is manifested as a sudden increase of turnout sparked by some event—the secret ballot, an attractive candidate—that signals to many previously apathetic eligibles that now their vote will *matter*; and 3) intimidation of voters: voters who are intimidated into voting for a party do not form a genuine party loyalty to it. Results of such elections therefore do not necessarily reflect party loyalties faithfully.

### Colombia and Uruguay

The analysis properly begins with two cases in which the traditional parties and cleavages of the nineteenth century survived into the twentieth—Colombia and Uruguay. The Liberals and Conservatives have dominated Colombian politics in this century, sharing more than 90 percent of the vote in every election before 1990 except 1970 and 1974.<sup>11</sup> Party politics in Uruguay has been dominated historically by the Colorado Party and the National Party (the Blancos). Before the emergence of the Frente Amplio in 1971, these two parties shared 90 percent of the vote.<sup>12</sup>

Both of these party systems reflect cleavages held over from the nineteenth century. The Colombian Liberals' ideals were anticlericalism, federalism, and free trade, while the Conservatives defended the Church and favored centralization and protectionism, although "these disputes became interwoven with personal, familial, and regional rivalries."<sup>13</sup> The only cleavage clearly expressed by the Uruguayan parties is an urban-rural one, since the Colorados have been disproportionately strong in Montevideo, and the Blancos in much of the interior, in line with their respective strengths in the last century. However, the Colorados also have had a mild tendency to be more anticlerical, statist, and strong among ethnic Italians and French (as opposed to Spanish), and therefore more classically liberal, than the Blancos.<sup>14</sup>

The origin of these parties is no mystery. The Liberals and Conservatives began as warring alliances of *caudillos* and their peasant militias dating from at least 1850, which frequently struggled for control of the central government in the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Gradually, with numerous setbacks along the way, they transformed their competition into a struggle for votes, and in the process became political parties. Similarly, the Blancos and Colorados began as militias led by two *caudillos* of the 1830s and 1840s—Manuel Oribe and Fructuoso Rivera. Rivera's men were called Colorados because of the red armbands they

wore, and Oribe's were called Blancos because of their white arm-bands.<sup>16</sup> All observers agree that these militias, organized even before a unified nation-state of Uruguay definitely existed, evolved over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into the principal political parties of modern-day Uruguay.

What needs to be explained is why the cleavage expressed by these traditional parties survived when similar cleavages in most other Latin American countries were erased or displaced by other cleavages. There are two reasons—one common to both cases, and one that is peculiar to each case.

The common reason is that the two sides were more evenly matched in Colombia and Uruguay than in the rest of Latin America, and therefore they fought longer—into the twentieth century. In most other countries of the region, the fighting between liberals and conservatives ended by the 1870s, usually because of a liberal victory. In Colombia, the Liberals dominated from 1863 to 1880, but the Conservatives regained control during the *Regeneración* of 1880–1910. After 1910 the Conservatives gradually opened their system to electoral participation by Liberals, which allowed the Liberals to dominate from 1930 to 1946, but not on a permanent basis, for the Conservatives returned to power in 1946 to 1953. And in 1948, *la violencia* began, extending the violent struggle between the traditional parties at the local level into the National Front period (1958–1974), when a powersharing pact between the two parties finally brought their partisan war to an end (while other groups continue to fight other battles). Clearly, the Liberal vs. Conservative civil war lasted longer in Colombia than anywhere else in Latin America.

The Colorados in Uruguay, with the help of the British, French, and the Brazilians, gained control of Montevideo by 1851, but Blancos, entrenched in the interior and buttressed by Argentine support, could not be completely subdued, and continued to rise against the Colorados frequently the rest of the century.<sup>17</sup> In 1865, the Colorados recognized Blanco control of four interior departments, but fighting broke out again and by 1897 the Blancos had control of six departments.<sup>18</sup> Peace came only in 1904, when Colorado President José Batlle y Ordóñez won a relatively decisive victory over the Blancos after an eight month civil war and the Blancos agreed to end the fighting in exchange for a permanent share of power in a reorganized state.<sup>19</sup> While Colorado observers have interpreted Batlle's offer to share power with the Blancos as a purely magnanimous gesture, it was not a completely free choice. The Blancos may have been temporarily defeated in 1904, but they were still strong enough to recover and challenge future Colorado governments.



It was the Blancos' potential to renew the civil war endlessly that led Batlle to propose a powersharing arrangement.

In Colombia it was the prolonged and intense fighting that forged the public's strong identification with the two traditional parties and prevented other parties from displacing them. According to Kline there were more than fifty insurrections between 1853 and 1885, and eight civil wars totaling eleven years in the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The "War of a Thousand Days" in 1899-1902 took 100,000 lives. As the fighting continued and more and more Colombians of all classes lost property, relatives, or their own lives, it became a feud between two national families, Liberals and Conservatives. Party loyalties were firmly rooted long before electoral participation was expanded. When that finally happened (1910-1936 for men, 1954 for women), Colombians naturally voted for their side in the feud. *La violencia* later reinforced these loyalties.

In Uruguay the fighting was not as bloody and did not involve as many people directly. To be sure, much of the population formed attachments to one side or the other during the decades of virtually constant civil war, whether or not they had any opportunity to vote for Blancos or Colorados in an election. In a country with fewer than one million inhabitants, it was hard for people to avoid taking sides in that kind of environment, especially during periods of prolonged tension, such as the nine year siege of Montevideo (1842-1851), when even the Italian and French immigrant communities formed militias to defend the city against the Blanco assault.<sup>21</sup>

However, the traditional parties would not have remained as dominant in Uruguay as they did in Colombia if it had not been for the early expansion of electoral participation, while the rivalry between the two camps was still fresh. Universal suffrage for males eighteen and older came in 1918, and at the same time the secret ballot was adopted and elections became indisputably fair. (Female suffrage followed in 1934 but, as elsewhere, had little impact on party formation.) Virtually everyone, therefore, who could possibly be called upon to vote for a party was given the vote at a time when the rivalry between Blancos and Colorados, the most salient cleavage during the previous two or three generations, was still fresh. It is quite understandable that most of them formed loyalties to those two parties and that those loyalties have changed only marginally since that time.

The manner in which party loyalties were formed also accounts for the relatively weak and factionalized party organizations in these two countries. With a large population of party faithful virtually guaranteed to support their party in elections (as well as an opposing camp that they could not hope to win over), there was little reason for politicians

in either country to invest their time, energy, and wealth in developing a strong, disciplined party machinery. Their chief competitors were other politicians in their own party. Therefore, they devoted themselves to organizing their own cliques of personal loyalists, who form the basis for the factions that still permeate the traditional parties today.

## Chile

The modern Chilean party system is often considered the most "European" system in Latin America. This is probably because it is a multiparty system that reflects two ideologically charged cleavages that are commonly found in European party systems—the Catholic-secular cleavage and the class cleavage.<sup>22</sup> There are two reasons for this pattern. First, the two cleavages were the most salient ones during the three periods of Chilean history in which political participation was expanding and party identities were being formed—1891–1915, 1917–1925, and 1958–1965. The second reason is that the political order that was achieved before the expansion of participation was pluralistic, and therefore any new parties that came into existence were simply added on to the previous party system. The traditional parties and traditional cleavages continued to exist alongside the new ones.

It is this second reason—the early achievement of a pluralistic political order—that sets Chile apart from the rest of Latin America. While Chile was institutionalizing parliamentary parties in a stable aristocratic republic, the rest of the region was consumed by *caudillismo* and civil wars lasting into the 1870s and beyond. Chile's unusual geography helped it escape a similar fate, for in a long, narrow coastal country, it was harder for a rebellious *caudillo* to establish a stronghold, and easier for the central government to assert its control over the national territory, especially since the bulk of the population was concentrated in the central valley. It also helped that the largely European population was united by the very real common threat of attack from the southern Araucanians, who were not completely subjugated until 1883. Chilean stability was further fostered by the wisdom of Diego Portales (whose 1833 constitution laid the groundwork for a strong central state) and the leadership of the successor to his *de facto* presidency, Manuel Bulnes, who brought the Portalian state into being. Bulnes succeeded in his undertaking because of the prestige he had won as the victorious general in the war against the Peru-Bolivia Confederation in 1839, and because of a generally prosperous economy.

Portales and Bulnes headed the conservative *pelucones* faction which, although it controlled the government until 1851, never

completely excluded the faction of liberal *pipiolos* from the parliament. The political class was so small and so intertwined by marriage and economic interests that political conflict took on the character of a friendly competition rather than a life-or-death struggle. Bulnes himself married the daughter of a *pipiolito*, and the proportion of the members of parliament who were related by ties of blood, marriage, or *compadrazgo* began extraordinarily high and increased from 1834 to 1888.<sup>23</sup> The need for cooperation among different factions also increased during these years, as the original factions in the parliament fragmented repeatedly. The *pelucones* divided into clerical Conservatives and anticlerical Nationals in 1851, and the *pipiolos* divided into Liberals and Radicals when the latter favored coalition with President Montt's Nationals and the former opposed it. By 1871 the legitimacy of political opposition was recognized, understandable given the fact that factionalism had forced three of the four embryonic parties into the opposition by that year.

These parties remained parliamentary parties without a mass base of support before the civil war of 1891. The suffrage was extremely restricted in the beginning—limited to literate males twenty-five years and older who met income and property requirements. Only 0.01 percent of the population voted in the election of 1864.<sup>24</sup> The Radical Party promoted some extension of the suffrage believing that it stood to gain from middle-class participation, and the Conservative party at times cooperated, believing that the lower classes would side with the Conservatives on clerical issues. But these occasional measures, such as the elimination of the income requirement in 1885, had little effect, due to the presidents' determination to administer elections in their own favor.

Control of elections was one of the issues that caused the civil war between the presidency and the Congress in 1891.<sup>25</sup> One of the powers that was stripped from the presidency in the aftermath was the power to administer elections. This did not mean that elections became fair, only that the abuses were decentralized. Nevertheless, in some areas, particularly in the larger cities and the northern nitrate fields, Radicals had enough local strength to oversee elections and make sure that their candidates were elected. While electioneering in this era had more to do with buying votes than with persuading voters, it required an extra-parliamentary party organization, so the Parliamentary Republic of 1891–1925 became the context for the first expansion of participation, and therefore the first formation of mass party loyalties. The Radicals grew from twenty local assemblies in 1888 to 100 in 1919; in order to broaden their base of support, the Conservatives began organizing departmental assemblies after 1900, and the Liberals followed suit in 1906–1907.<sup>26</sup>

Participation expanded slowly, however. Even by 1915, only 5 percent of the population was eligible to vote in the congressional elections of that year.<sup>27</sup> Since participation expanded slowly and selectively, at the discretion of the traditional parties running elections in the departments they dominated, new parties did not emerge. Instead, the new voters formed loyalties to the traditional parties (including the Radical Party, which did become more important) and the old Catholic-secular cleavage was preserved. New parties were not added to the system until a new social group began to participate in electoral politics.

This new social group was, of course, the working class of miners, railway and port workers, and industrial labor. Their numbers increased rapidly after 1883, when Chile acquired rich nitrate fields from Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific, attracting foreign investment and spurring the development of infrastructure. They became an increasingly large and militant force but shunned electoral and parliamentary politics during the early years, preferring to take direct action. The governments of the Parliamentary Republic, however, consistently met their strikes with brutal repression, which encouraged some leaders to try other avenues. At the same time, some elites began searching for ways to channel working-class discontent into more peaceful avenues. These complementary desires came to a head in 1917–1919 when the First World War disrupted nitrate exports and caused greater labor disruption than ever in the north, and brought down greater repression than ever.

Hoping to avert another such disaster, progressive Liberals and Radicals formed a Liberal Alliance that appealed for working-class support in the elections of 1918 and captured a majority in the Chamber of Deputies for six months. The leader of this majority, Arturo Alessandri, was then elected president with the support of Radicals, Democrats, and progressive Liberals in 1920. These successes encouraged labor leaders to support leftist political parties, and when they did, they found that the pluralist political institutions that had been built up by the elites were surprisingly open to them. The principal labor federation, the Workers' Federation of Chile (*Federación Obrera de Chile*—FOCh), in 1921 formalized ties to the Socialist Workers Party (*Partido Obrero Socialista*—POS) which in 1922 became the Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de Chile*—PCCh) and won representation in both houses of Congress. By 1924–1925, organized labor was committed to the electoral path to power.<sup>28</sup>

The parties that were formed when participation expanded during these last years of the parliamentary Republic carry their imprint to the present day. They are well organized, since the supremacy of Congress

rewarded party discipline and effective electoral machines. They also reflect the cleavage of the day which was, without any doubt, the Social Question, that is, what to do about the inequality and class conflict that had been intensified by industrialization. This is why the Chilean party system expresses the class cleavage so clearly.

The rate of participation was still rather low, however. Even though the 1925 constitution abolished the property and income restrictions and lowered the voting age to twenty-one, the literacy requirement was still in place and was a substantial obstacle. Only 10–19 percent of the population was eligible to vote before 1958.<sup>29</sup> Several things happened in the 1950s, however, that dramatically expanded participation. First, female suffrage was granted in 1952, and women began streaming into the electorate in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Second, increasing numbers of peasants left the large agricultural estates and migrated to the large cities where they were finally free to vote for someone other than the *patrón's* candidate. Third, literacy rates were increasing—up to 75 percent in 1950—which contributed to the expansion of the electorate until the literacy requirement was abolished in 1972.<sup>30</sup> And finally, the secret ballot was introduced in 1958, making it possible for the peasants who were still on the large estates (and probably many others) to vote according to their consciences and form their own party identities for the first time.

Some of the existing parties flowed into this new political space, especially the Communist and Socialist parties, which grew gradually. But the party that benefited most dramatically was the one that best reflected the cleavage of those years—the Christian Democrats. Frightened by the extremism and atheism of the rising left in a Cold War environment, alienated by the traditional right's lack of compassion in the face of glaring poverty, and disgusted by the Radicals' tiring lack of principles, many Chileans, including many of the newly enfranchised, were looking for a Third Way, and Eduardo Frei promised one. His Christian Democracy did not add a new cleavage to Chilean politics so much as redefine an old one, the Catholic-secular cleavage, which was made to carry the Church's progressive social aims and oppose the secularism of the left rather than that of the Radicals and Liberals. By 1965, the PDC was the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies. It became a disciplined and well-organized party like the others, perhaps even more than the others, driven by its belief that it could become the majority party of Chile.<sup>31</sup>

Three decades later, there has been less change in the Chilean party system than one might expect after a sixteen year military interregnum. This should not be surprising. By 1973, Chile's parties were well established and their supporters identified with them strongly (though

less with the Radicals). These partisan identities change on a timescale of generations, not years, and Pinochet, for all his tenacity, was not in power long enough to erase them completely. One should expect only incremental change in such a party system, barring any great expansion of participation, and that kind of expansion has been impossible since the 1960s when elections and registration became fair and universal adult suffrage was achieved.<sup>32</sup>

### Costa Rica

In recent years, Costa Rica has appeared to have a nearly two-party system in which the nominally social democratic Party of National Liberation (PLN) is pitted against the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). The PLN is definitely a strong, well-institutionalized political party. The PUSC, however, formally became a party only in 1984; before that, it was a series of coalitions built from smaller, largely personalist parties. The two-party label is therefore misleading. It would be more accurate to say that Costa Rica has an old party system nested inside a new one, for the PLN is the product of the Revolution of 1948–1949; the parties that make up the PUSC belong to an earlier tradition of party formation rooted in the politics of the nineteenth century.

The first phase of party organization in Costa Rica occurred during the Liberal Republic, a long period of stable civilian rule (1890–1948) interrupted only by a brief dictatorship in 1917–1919. Electoral participation expanded from a tiny minority of the coffee elite in the 1830s to 10–15 percent of the population in 1928.<sup>33</sup> A variety of measures made this expansion possible. Every government of the period is credited with expanding education and therefore increasing literacy; mutual-aid societies were organized after 1875, and multitrade guilds between 1890 and 1902, and both involved their members in politics; the franchise was extended between 1905 and 1914; presidents began to be elected directly in 1914, and peasants were allowed to run for municipal council; unionization spread among the still small working class in the 1920s; a National Election Council was established in 1925; the secret ballot was adopted in 1928; and voting became obligatory in 1936.

It is difficult to tell which of these measures had the greatest impact, or even whether participation expanded gradually or suddenly, but in this case, the pace of expansion had little consequence for the formation of party identities because the available parties did not inspire strong loyalties, except to personalities who failed to routinize their charisma. The only party that lasted throughout the Liberal Republic was the Republican Party, which was “a loosely organized electoral platform for

liberal elite politicians...held together more by patronage than by program."<sup>34</sup> After 1930, the party's orientation depended on which charismatic figure happened to be leading it at the time. In 1936, conservative, antilabor León Cortés Castro gained control to serve the coffee barons. Rafael Calderón Guardia, who succeeded him as party leader, was his political opposite: a populist supported by reformist Catholics, organized labor, and the Communist Party.<sup>35</sup> This odd alliance of Catholics, labor, and the left survived into the 1960s but it is significant that they were known as Calderonistas, not Republicanos.

Personalism dominated the Liberal Republic because Costa Rica was so thoroughly liberal and there were no other significant cleavages. In a country that inherited few colonial interests, relative social equality, and a consensus in favor of promoting coffee exports, conservatism never had much of a foothold. Its last gasp was the clerical Catholic Union Party, which did not survive past the 1890s, despite an open society and free elections. Liberal reforms had been begun by nominally Conservative presidents Carrillo (1835–1842) and Mora (1849–1859), and finished by the Liberal Constitution of 1871 and the liberal "dictatorship" of Tomás Guardia (1870–1882).<sup>36</sup> In the midst of liberal consensus, the most important conflicts were personal rivalries. By the time new cleavages developed in society, the expectation that parties were little more than personalist vehicles hindered efforts to institutionalize strong parties with a mass base of support. The Reformist Party of the 1920s, for example, managed to mobilize a mass following but it disintegrated after 1924 when its founder Jorge Volio was coopted by an offer of the vicepresidency in a Republican administration.<sup>37</sup>

It took a revolution to make it possible for a different kind of party to become established in Costa Rica. That revolution occurred in 1948, when José Figueres and a rebel army of students, middle-class professionals, and organized workers took advantage of an electoral dispute between Calderón and publisher Otilio Ulate to start a civil war, seize power, and enact a series of deep social reforms for 18 months.<sup>38</sup> Figueres' National Liberation Junta (Junta de Liberación Nacional) became the National Liberation Party (Partido de Liberación Nacional, PLN) in 1951, during a rapid expansion of participation caused not by changes in eligibility but by increased motivation to participate due to the credible promises of fair elections following the establishment of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in 1949 and the polarization of the civil war years. Voter turnout increased from 12.4 percent of the population in 1948 to 21.0 percent in 1953 and 29.7 percent in 1962.<sup>39</sup> The PLN has remained the most important party in the country ever since, to such a

degree that the principal cleavage in Costa Rican politics since 1948 has been between the PLN's supporters and its adversaries.

### Argentina

There are a number of fundamental differences between Argentina and the cases discussed so far that need to be highlighted at the beginning because they make for a very different style of party politics. First, Argentina has a true federal system. Most Latin American republics have had federalism on paper but in Argentina the provincial governors are powers to contend with and provinces guard their autonomy jealously, even to the point of having different electoral laws and provincial political parties. Second, the Argentine Congress has never been as important a body as the legislatures of Chile, Costa Rica, or Uruguay. Instead, presidents have always been accustomed to exercising broad executive powers, whether or not Congress approves, and sometimes whether or not their actions are constitutional. (Effective implementation of presidential decrees is, of course, another matter.) Third, the "corporate interests" of society—the military, the Church, cattlemen, financiers, and more recently, industrialists and organized labor—have from the beginning eclipsed political parties and Congress as agents of influence. Decisions are much more the result of informal negotiations between these interests and the president than of bargaining between the president and Congress.

All three of these characteristics—federalism, executive dominance, and corporate representation—have caused parties to be weaker in Argentina than in the cases discussed above. They are weaker in an organizational sense, being parties with at least a federal structure internally, and often an aura of separate but affiliated provincial parties considered part of their movement. This structure has promoted chronic factionalism among both Radicals and Peronists, culminating in several profound party splits. They are also weaker in the sense that party loyalties have been more focused on the party founders—Irigoyen and Perón—and less on the party itself, than in Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, or Colombia.

The Argentine party system has also been shaped by the regime that held power for a generation before the expansion of electoral participation. From 1880 to 1916, Argentina was governed by the leaders of single group, the National Autonomous Party (*Partido Autonomista Nacional*, PAN), which was not a true electoral party as much as it was the bureaucratic machine of a string of presidents who handpicked their own successors and their governors, who in turn



handpicked congressmen and senators and had them ratified in tightly controlled elections with extremely limited participation.<sup>40</sup> Partly due to the regime's ability to coopt, and partly due to a strong cross-class consensus in favor of promoting the export economy, the PAN had virtually no electoral opposition. While this single party regime could not last forever, its success during at least twenty-five years fixed a powerful notion into the political culture of Argentina. This notion is that national consensus is possible, which means that opposition is at best misguided and at worst malicious, and in any case, illegitimate. Political organizations that have arisen since the PAN's *unicato* have therefore striven for complete hegemony even when that meant ignoring the rights of the opposition.

Thus the Radicals and the Peronists both deny that they are political parties and instead claim to represent the entire nation; the conservative regime of 1930–1943 engaged in fraud (except in 1940) to prevent the Radicals from winning; the Peronists amended the electoral law and the constitution in the late 1940s to deprive the Radicals of a fighting chance at elections; the Radicals acquiesced in the proscription of the Peronists from 1955 to 1973; and the military felt justified in banning all parties from 1976 to 1983 in the interest of national unity.

Because of these manipulations intended to achieve hegemony for one group or another, electoral results in Argentina have not always reflected party loyalties faithfully. It is only since truly competitive and unfettered elections began to be held in 1983 that election results confirmed what was obvious to most: that most Argentines are loyal to one of two political tendencies—radicalism or Peronism. These tendencies do not coincide perfectly with parties, because the parties have often been divided into different factions and have been organized as separate parties in some provinces. But the predominant loyalties to radicalism and Peronism have not changed greatly since the late 1940s. These are the loyalties to be explained here.

Radicalism took root in the first expansion of political participation, following the Sáenz Peña Law of 1912. Technically, the party had been founded in 1891, and its founders—Leandro Alem and Hipólito Irigoyen—had become active in politics as early as 1877, when they split from the PAN to form the shortlived Republican party (Partido Republicano).<sup>41</sup> But the Radical Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical, UCR) did not succeed in winning a mass base of support in these early years. In fact, it was party policy to *abstain* from elections between 1892 and 1912, since Hipólito Irigoyen preferred to seek power through armed insurrections in 1890, 1893, and 1905 (all of which were defeated). The PAN had not recruited a mass base of loyalties either, since elections were simply unimportant to its dominance.

When President Roque Sáenz Peña decreed universal (eighteen years and older) male suffrage in 1912, and backed it up with permanent registration, the secret ballot, obligatory voting, and guaranteed representation of the minority party, political space was suddenly wide open, and the UCR moved rapidly to fill it between 1912 and 1930. In anticipation of an electoral opening, the party had begun organizing in 1906, so it had a head start on the other fledgling parties. This was one reason for its success in winning the support of the huge mass of new voters.

The other reason was that the UCR was most closely aligned with the cleavage of the day. All previous cleavages had been erased by the *unicato*. Upon Independence the nascent struggle between conservatives and liberals (called *Demócratas* at first) was quickly overwhelmed by a deeper struggle over federalism vs. centralism and over control of the Buenos Aires port revenues. The *unitario* advocates of centralism were defeated militarily by 1832, and Buenos Aires established its dominance over the interior provinces in 1861 when Mitre's Liberals defeated Urquizas' Federalists in the Battle of Pavón. After that, the only remaining issue was a hairsplitting dispute among Liberals over whether the province or the city of Buenos Aires should dominate the federation, and that issue was resolved when Julio Roca federalized the capital city in 1880.

The absence of cleavages made a long period of stability and economic growth possible, but it also cleared the way for the next emerging cleavage to polarize politics, and that cleavage swept away the PAN regime. That emerging cleavage pitted the oligarchy of ranchers producing for export against the middle class and small working class that had been created by decades of economic development and a flood of immigration. Their aspirations were diverse, but they had one demand in common—an end to political domination by the large landowning elite. The UCR had unassailable credentials as an intransigent opponent of the regime and issued an uncomplicated call for fair elections, broad suffrage, and honest administration. Typical of its platform was José Cantillo's claim that "the only program of the UCR is the restoration of the constitution and freedom of suffrage."<sup>42</sup> As the candidate appealing best to the least common denominator, Irigoyen in 1916 won the first presidential contest he entered, with 51.5 percent of the vote.

Peronism coincided with the second great expansion of participation, in the late 1940s. Although universal manhood suffrage had been achieved in 1918, there was still political space open for a new party because much of the population either had not identified strongly with radicalism the first time around, or had lost that identification in

the intervening years. Many of the people who had voted for the UCR before 1930 did so more as a protest vote against the Conservatives than because of any positive identification with the party. Snow writes:<sup>43</sup>

In spite of the electoral success of the Radicals after the adoption of the Sáenz Peña Law, it seems quite possible that many of the votes cast for UCR candidates were primarily a reaction against the Conservative rule which appeared to many to benefit only the upper classes. The UCR had very little competition for the vote of the middle and lower classes....In many areas there was virtually no choice for the voters who wanted to see the Conservative removed from office—the UCR offered them their only hope.

It is also very true that many of the UCR's middle-class supporters, who had voted it into power trusting its promises of moral renovation and honest administration, became disillusioned by the nepotism, corruption, and mediocre leadership of the Radical governments and were open to appeals by other parties by 1930.<sup>44</sup> Others may have despaired of a Radical return to power during the Patriotic Fraud years (1930–1943), when elections were stolen from the UCR repeatedly.

Another potential base of support was to be found among immigrants and their descendants. While most immigration occurred in the nineteenth century, the first generation preferred direct action to electoral participation, and citizenship was required for suffrage.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, 55–60 percent of the adult male population was ineligible to vote even in 1912.<sup>46</sup> Since the percentage of the total population that was eligible to vote increased only gradually between 1912 and 1930, from 13 to 17 percent, there can be little doubt that there were a substantial number of first- and second-generation immigrants who had yet to form partisan loyalties by the end of the Radical Republic.

But participation exploded during Perón's first term as president (1946–1951). Before 1946, never had as much as 20 percent of the population voted in an election; in 1951, suddenly 45 percent of the population voted, a 137 percent increase in five years.<sup>47</sup> The extension of the suffrage to women in 1947 was probably responsible for doubling participation, but the remaining 37 percent increase can only represent the mobilization of previously inactive voters.

Peronism quickly occupied this newly available political space. Perón took advantage of his powers as minister of labor and president to attract as many supporters as possible. Many were won over, for example, by his "Aguinaldo Decree" during the presidential campaign of 1946, when he granted most of the workforce a 5–20 percent salary

increase and an annual Christmas bonus equal to one month's pay.<sup>48</sup> Sticks were used along with the carrots, too. Union leaders who refused to affiliate with Perón's organizations in return for generous wage increases and benefits were removed by the labor ministry and replaced by new leaders loyal to Perón.<sup>49</sup> In this way, Perón accomplished a nearly complete takeover of organized labor, which remains predominantly Peronist to this day.

The appeal of Peronism is not now, and was not then, limited to organized labor. While the probability of being a Peronist is higher at the lower income levels, Peronism is well represented in all classes and sectors of Argentine society.<sup>50</sup> The original Peronist coalition, therefore, could not have been united by any common economic interest. Many Peronists were, rather, attracted by the personality of Juan Domingo Perón and by his vague rhetoric of *justicialismo*, which blended elements of anti-imperialism, national solidarity, and social justice. Only vague rhetoric and personal charisma could have held together the diverse coalition that remained to be politicized in Argentina. The reliance on personal appeals also prevented the formation of a strong party organization. Since Perón's exile in 1955, and especially since his death in 1974, Peronism has been a deeply, sometimes violently, divided movement.

Still, Peronism and radicalism survive as political tendencies with which the bulk of the Argentine electorate identifies. No major new parties have arisen since the late 1940s, and it is unlikely that any will soon, as Peronism and radicalism have almost completely filled the available political space.

## Mexico

In view of the tremendous differences between the Argentine and Mexican party systems today, it is perhaps surprising to note that these two countries evolved along similar paths prior to the expansion of participation. In both countries, the liberals won the civil wars following Independence and established a hegemonic civilian regime that lasted more than a generation. In Argentina, it was the PAN's *unicato*; in Mexico, it was Díaz's Porfiriato (1876–1911).

Two legacies of this resolution of the liberal-conservative conflict were the same in Mexico as they were in Argentina. First, the cleavages of the nineteenth century were erased from Mexican political life. The original conservative vs. liberal cleavage aligned monarchists, centralists, protectionists, and defenders of the Church's property and authority against republicans, federalists, free traders, and anticlericals.

The dream of a monarchy died abruptly when Iturbide's delusions of grandeur bankrupted the government in 1822.<sup>51</sup> The conflict over the Church's property fizzled out as both sides expropriated it and sold it off to pay for the civil wars. The period of liberal dominance known as *La Reforma* then restricted the Church's authority over marriages, burial, and other rites, and enacted hard-to-reverse liberal economic and social policies.<sup>52</sup> The federalism vs. centralism issue became moot until Díaz, by force and cooptation, was able to establish the authority of the national government in the entire territory of the nation. Porfirio Díaz inherited a nation whose cleavages had been scoured away by civil war, an important reason why he was able to maintain order for the next thirty-five years and preside over a long period of economic recovery and growth.

Another consequence of the Porfiriato that parallels the Argentine case is the desire for hegemony and intolerance of opposition. Díaz faced virtually no opposition for many years; the PRI until recently expected the same. Of course, Mexico's leaders actually achieved hegemony, while for the various Argentine aspirants hegemony had to remain an unfulfilled dream. The reason for this difference is that the Porfiriato ended in a revolution, while the *unicato* ended in a relatively smooth transition to a fairly democratic regime. The causes of the Mexican Revolution were many and complex, but in comparison with Argentina one cause stands out: the Díaz regime was not institutionalized enough to have routinized presidential succession. The PAN's rule was stable, and had solved this question by allowing the incumbent to choose his successor, subject to ratification in a pro forma election. The expanded suffrage only modified an established practice. The Mexican regime was also stable, but it was a personal dictatorship. When Díaz abandoned the presidency, his regime collapsed, and the power vacuum was filled by civil war.

The consequences of the Revolution for the Mexican party system were profound. After more than a decade of fighting, the forces of Calles and Obregón emerged from the rubble to establish virtually uncontested control over the country. Any groups that had not been completely subjugated by military force, such as organized labor and a few regional caudillos, were soon coopted. Because it was thoroughly in control, the "Revolutionary Family" was able to use state resources to create an official party (PNR, the PRM, and finally the PRI of 1946 to the present) that was from its founding the dominant party in Mexico.

"Participation" was expanded preemptively in Mexico, into an overwhelmingly poor and uneducated population. Only a tiny middle class had even asked for effective suffrage; the mass of the population had not, though many of them had asked for land, wage increases, or

the spoils of war. The official party formulated its appeal to reach all of these groups, and succeeded in obtaining their votes, but elections have never been fair enough to inspire genuine party loyalty in much of the electorate. What party loyalty the PRI enjoys had different origins. First, the intense fighting of the Revolution, which cost 1,000,000 lives, created strong loyalties within the Sonoran clique that eventually prevailed and later launched the official party. Second, a different kind of loyalty was generated by Lázaro Cárdenas' land reform, interventions in labor disputes, and expropriations of the railroads and the foreign oil companies. Thus the PRI (until 1988) possessed enough genuine loyalty to make its victories plausible, even if its margin of victory was not. But a true party system has not yet taken shape in Mexico and cannot take shape until the PRI is willing to accept its own electoral defeat. Only then will voters form loyalties to other parties.

### Venezuela

The evolution of the Venezuelan party system is simple to explain, for there were no significant parties before the 1940s. The absence of parties was due to the absence of meaningful elections in which parties might participate; in their place was a dynasty of military dictators who maintained an unbroken line of Andean hegemony from 1899 to 1945. The dictator who ruled the longest, Juan Vicente Gómez (1908–1935), controlled opposition by banning it altogether: potential opponents were imprisoned, exiled, or murdered, so parties did not have a chance to form during his twenty-seven year rule. His successor, General López Contreras, experimented briefly with liberalization, but when it led to a general strike in 1936, he renewed the repression. General Medina Angarita (1940–1945), however, was more committed to liberalization, and it was during his government that party (and union) organizing really began. Organizational activity therefore took place in an organizational vacuum, which meant that virtually the entire adult population was open to the appeals of the party that best expressed the cleavage of the moment—the yearning for democracy.<sup>53</sup>

The chance to make those appeals came in 1945, when the Democratic Action party (*Acción Democrática*, AD) joined with junior military officers to seize power from General Medina. They established a Revolutionary Junta that expanded suffrage completely all at once: men and women, literate or not, propertied or not, were given the vote. They were also given two chances to exercise their suffrage—constituent assembly elections in 1946, and presidential and legislative elections in 1947. AD won both votes overwhelmingly. Like the UCR in

1916, it had the advantage of championing the winning side of a new cleavage, in an environment wiped clean of old cleavages:<sup>54</sup>

The peasant, who by the simple act of joining Acción Democrática found himself able to call the Jefe Civil or Comisario 'compañero,' believed that in reality the country was divided between the Partido del Pueblo [AD], the party of the people who wore sandals, and those who had traditionally governed.

According to Bunimov-Parra, AD identified itself with democracy with such great success that in the elections of 1946 and 1947, a vote for AD was considered a vote for democracy and a vote for anyone else was a vote for a return of the old dictatorships.<sup>55</sup>

Having grown up under a hegemonic regime, the leaders of AD sought to establish their own hegemony. Working in an organizational vacuum and from a position of power, AD's leaders quickly came close to achieving hegemony. But their very success created a new cleavage dividing AD's supporters from those who feared that Venezuela had escaped from a military dictatorship only to be ruled by a party dictatorship. The Catholic Church and other opponents of AD funneled support to one party, COPEI, which was able to occupy much of the remaining political space before it was filled up by other parties. During this period of initial party organization (1945–1948, known as the Trienio), COPEI had a definite conservative and Catholic mentality, but really the nature of the opposition party was defined in reaction to AD's bid for dominance from which to secularize the state and impose radical social reforms. Even though both parties became very pragmatic, moved toward the center, and learned to seek consensus, and the original cleavage between them meant little, they became the largest parties by far and shared 80–90 percent of the vote from 1973 to 1989.<sup>56</sup> Thus it was the cleavage of the Trienio that survived. One could also say that the legacy of hegemony persisted for, even though AD had to share power with other parties, the "establishment" parties *jointly* established their hegemony over political life at the expense of most nonparty organizations, leading to charges of *partidocracia*.

### Volatile Party Systems

The seven countries discussed to this point are the only major ones in which party systems have become institutionalized. In the other major countries of Latin America—Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador—party

loyalties are not as firm and not as widespread and as a result, election results are often marked by discontinuities: victories by electoral novices, devastating defeats for parties that had seemed to be important, and a high turnover in the roster of parties winning representation in Congress. The only consistent explanation for this common trait is a negative one: these countries lacked the advantageous experiences undergone by the other seven countries before the expansion of participation to the middle and lower classes. Unlike Chile and Costa Rica, they lacked a period of institutionalized protoparty competition immediately prior to expansion. Unlike Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela, no stable hegemonic regime had been in power in that crucial period. And unlike Colombia and Uruguay, the wars between liberals and conservatives either did not take place or ended too long before the expansion of participation to permit the survival of the traditional cleavages.

These countries that failed to institutionalize some kind of political order before the expansion of participation were not prepared to handle the new cleavage and the result was that the problem of how to incorporate the new social groups merely complicated the search for order. In the ensuing cycle of democratic and authoritarian governments, the incentives for organizing permanent political parties were negligible, hopelessly complicating discussions of which cleavages are expressed in party systems that change so rapidly.

### *Peru*

Peru is an apt illustration of the pattern described above. Peruvian history is the story of a fruitless search for stability.<sup>57</sup>

The country's longest period of uninterrupted rule (constitutional or otherwise), the Aristocratic Republic, lasted for only nineteen years (1895–1914). During the twentieth century, the common pattern has been alternation between constitutional and de facto rule every five to twelve years. Overall, between independence in the early 1820s and 1985, approximately two-thirds of Peru's presidents have been military, ruling for almost 100 of those 160 years.

The first mass participation occurred in 1931 when Luis Sánchez Cerro, riding a wave of popularity after ending eleven years of dictatorship under Augusto Leguía, defeated Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre of the APRA in a presidential election. The election was relatively fair, and turnout was 20 percent of the adult population, double the



level of participation in any previous election.<sup>58</sup> If regular elections had continued and the suffrage had continued to expand, 1931 might have been the beginning of a party system. But Haya repudiated the election results (apparently without cause); Sánchez Cerro exiled all of APRA's congressmen; APRA seized Trujillo, killing sixty army officers; the army retaliated by killing 1,000 to 2,000 Apristas; and an Aprista assassinated Sánchez Cerro in 1933. This was not an auspicious beginning for mass party politics.

It was, rather, the beginning of a fifty year feud between APRA, on the one hand, and the oligarchs and the military on the other. The results of the 1936 election were annulled because of a strong showing by APRA, the party was banned altogether from 1948 to 1956, and coups were staged in 1962 and 1968 partly to prevent Haya from becoming president. This was not the ideal environment for the development of an electoral party but the atmosphere of violence and persecution did create strong loyalties to APRA, much the same as the intense fighting in Colombia created deepseated loyalties to Liberals and Conservatives.

It is hardly surprising that other parties were not encouraged to recruit loyal followers, especially in view of the fact that the suffrage remained relatively restricted until very late. Illiterates could not exercise the right to vote until 1980. Less than half of a sample of Peruvian urban residents, and 5–6 percent of a sample of peasants, considered themselves party members, compared to two-thirds of a similar sample of lower-class Chileans.<sup>59</sup> The low levels of party identification show up in extreme electoral volatility. AP, for example, which is the vehicle of two-time president Fernando Belaúnde Terry, dropped from 45.4 percent of the presidential vote in 1980 to 7.3 percent in 1985. APRA itself dropped from 53 percent in 1985 to 22 percent in 1990. Most notorious, however, is the case of President Alberto Fujimori, who won 29 percent of the vote in the first round of the 1990 elections and 56 percent in the runoff, even though he was completely unknown six weeks before.

### *Bolivia*

Bolivia might have had a chance at developing a party system if the Chaco War had not intervened. Oligarchic parties had been developing during a long and relatively stable period of civilian rule from 1884 to 1932. The suffrage was restricted to 2–3 percent of the population and elections were won by the best-armed group (though usually without fighting), but under the successive rule of the Conservatives, Liberals,

and Republicans, Congress and the elite protoparties inside it came to play an important role in government.<sup>60</sup>

This system came crashing down in the wake of the Chaco War which President Salamanca foolishly provoked to strengthen his support in Congress. When the war left 65,000 dead for no good reason, the traditional parties were completely discredited and any legacies of the past regime were wiped away, ushering in two decades of great instability and political ferment, for the war had also taken many mestizos and Indians from their homes and led them to question the arrangements under which they had been living. This was a time when many new parties were founded, but it was unfortunately an environment that did not encourage aspiring party leaders to take the electoral path to power. The MNR, for example, founded in 1941, plotted to take power by force with the assistance of junior military officers.<sup>61</sup>

Their plot succeeded in 1952. It was during the MNR-led Bolivian Revolution that electoral participation expanded dramatically, from 120,000 voters in 1951 to 958,000 in 1952, and the timing of this expansion explains why the MNR is the only party from that period that survives today. However, today's MNR is a shadow of its former self, after chronic fragmentation during the Revolution and proscription and cooptation by a string of mostly military governments between 1964 and 1982. This inherently unstable environment has not only not provided the necessary incentives for party organization, it has at times violently discouraged party organization. Participation is still very low; only 17 percent of the total population voted in 1980 despite the fact that illiterates have been eligible to vote since 1952.<sup>62</sup>

### *Ecuador*

Ecuador has been, over the last century and a half, the most consistently unstable country in Latin America. Periodic fighting between liberals and conservatives lasted almost into the twentieth century, but ended long before the expansion of participation, which came very late. Illiterates were not enfranchised until 1978 and did not actually vote until 1984. The Liberals won the civil war of 1895–1896, after which the Conservatives never governed again, but the Liberals did not establish order. Rather, they fought among themselves, especially during the 1911–1916 civil war between Eloy Alfaro and Leonidas Plaza. After 1925, the military began intervening on its own in politics, with the result that there were twenty-seven governments between 1925 and 1948.<sup>63</sup> There was a brief oasis between 1948 and 1961, when three elected presidents served out their terms, but the

overwhelming fact of Ecuadorian politics has been instability and, therefore, political parties have hardly organized.

Instead of party politics there is a politics of personality, epitomized by the career of José María Velasco Ibarra, a charismatic orator elected president in 1933, 1944, 1952, 1960, and 1968—and allowed to finish his term only once. Velasco had no real party, only a varying coalition of opportunistic groups who supported his presidential candidacies, hoping to share in the spoils of office, and who then deserted him and disbanded after the election. It is common for congressmen to change their party affiliation after the election. These practices are so well-known that some parties are known as “taxi parties”—hired for a ride to the presidential palace and then vacated to serve as a vehicle for someone else.<sup>64</sup> Velasco was not the only president to be abandoned by the parties who supported his candidacy: Jaime Roldós lost seventeen of his twenty-nine CFP congressmen to an opposition faction within a year of taking office, and Febres Cordero suffered from similar political isolation.

### *Brazil*

Brazil is probably the best-known example of a poorly institutionalized party system. Politicians negotiate their candidacies with several parties or alliances of parties, then switch parties after they are elected; legislative discipline is unknown; and the party system changes dramatically from one election to the next.<sup>65</sup> This reality is somewhat surprising in view of the fact that the country enjoyed forty-one years of stability during the Old Republic (1889–1930), when an aristocratically dominated political system became fairly institutionalized. The reason why this promising start did not culminate in established mass parties was that there was little true expansion of participation either during the Old Republic or immediately after it. Expanded participation was postponed by a government that in the interim sabotaged party development for decades to come—Vargas and his *Estado Novo*.

Technically, suffrage had been extended to literate males over twenty-one already in 1891, but with elections administered by state oligarchs in a system in which it was understood that the presidents from São Paulo and Minas Gerais would look the other way, it was ludicrous to contemplate winning power in an election; therefore parties did not organize during the Old Republic. The rising middle class in São Paulo began to clamor for the secret ballot by 1930, so Vargas granted it in 1933, along with voting rights for eighteen to twenty-one year-olds and women; and then proceeded to ban parties and elections four years

later.<sup>66</sup> Effective suffrage, therefore, came into being only in 1945, when Vargas was forced to step down and hold elections.

Before stepping down, however, Vargas asked his governors to organize the PSD, and his Labor Minister to organize the PTB. These two parties won all but one of the elections held between 1945 and 1964, but they did not make much of an effort to organize in a way that would establish strong party loyalties. That is, they paid little attention to platforms, programs, promises, or to recruiting cadres who would recruit likeminded supporters throughout the nation. Instead, the PSD simply asked the governors to get out the vote in the traditional clientelistic style of the *coroneis*, while the PTB relied on its network of coopted official labor leaders to mobilize their union members. People who voted for these parties did so to support their local leader, not because of any identification with the party or its symbols.

The electoral laws of the Second Republic, some inherited from the Old Republic and some adopted in 1945, encouraged crossparty alliances and the independence of candidates from parties, and rewarded small regional parties.<sup>67</sup> This was the immediate reason for the fragmentation and indiscipline of the party system. These laws guaranteed that any other parties that developed would have predominantly regional strengths, like the PSP and even UDN.

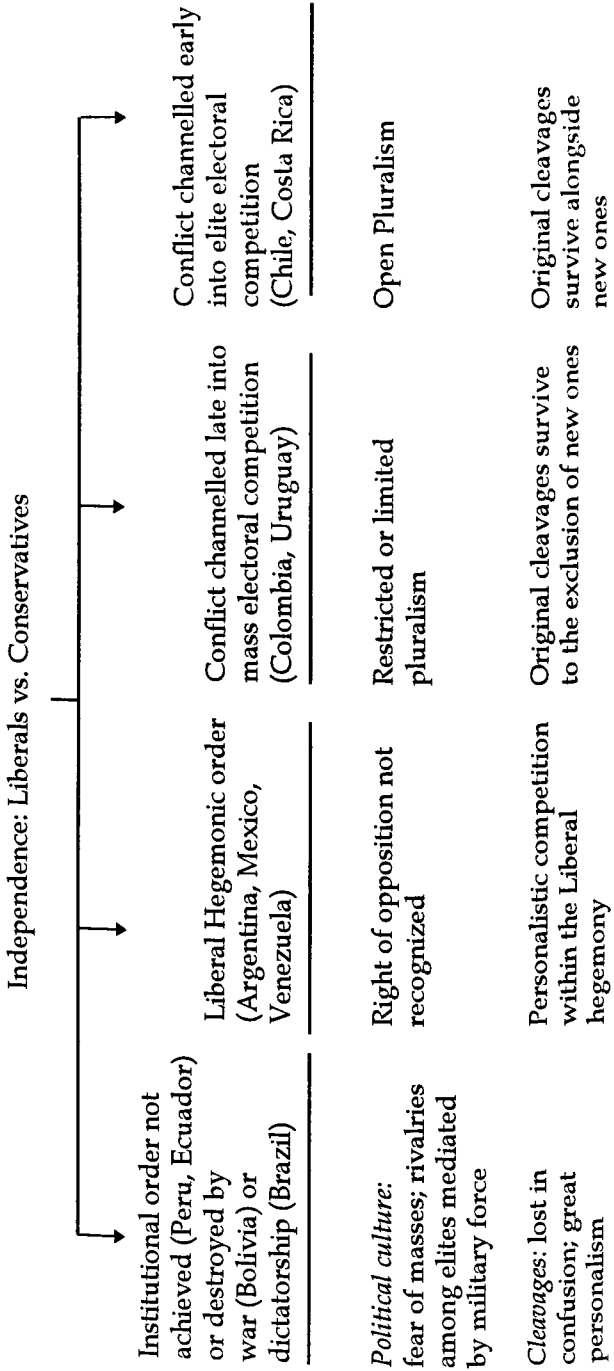
There was a deeper cause, however, for both the electoral rules and the paternalistic cooptation practiced by the PTB and PSD. Both were deliberate strategies adopted by the upper class to prevent genuine participation by the lower classes. As long as these new groups were either under the tutelage of state-sponsored organizations or atomized into localities easily manipulated by the local bosses, the vested interests of the upper class were safe. It was when some labor groups dared to assert their autonomy and Goulart began to talk about mobilizing the peasants that the military put an end to the Second Republic and its party system. Needless to say, twenty-one years of authoritarian government did little to further the development of a party system. In 1965, the military forced the politicians it found acceptable into an artificial two-party mold but when the mold was lifted in 1979, they discovered that the solution had not gelled. Since then, the party system has veered erratically from extreme fragmentation to PMDB dominance to the rise of the PT and the near demise of the PMDB. After the overnight emergence of President Collor, one wonders whether party leaders will ever have any incentive to build grassroots organizations; it is so much easier to appeal directly to the voters on television.

### Summary

Figure 8.1 summarizes the main points of the argument detailed in the preceding pages. The principal distinction to be made among the party systems of Latin America is between the established systems—Colombia, Uruguay, Chile, Costa Rica, Argentina, Mexico (with some qualifications), and Venezuela—and the chaotic systems—Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Brazil. A necessary condition for the creation of an established party system was the institutionalization of some kind of political order prior to the expansion of electoral participation to the middle and lower classes. Where this order was either never achieved, as in Peru and Ecuador, or destroyed just prior to the expansion of participation, as it was by the Chaco War in Bolivia and the Estado Novo in Brazil, the environment was too unsettled to make the organization of political parties a worthwhile enterprise. Moreover, these systems were repeatedly unbalanced by the demands of the newly activated social groups, so the cycle of instability continued. The elite political culture was infused by a fear of the masses and by personal rivalries among elite leaders, mediated by military force.

Elsewhere, order was achieved in time, but the different ways in which order was achieved affected the kinds of party systems that subsequently evolved. In the Argentine *unicato*, the Mexican Porfiriato, and the dynasty of Andean dictators in Venezuela, the heirs of nineteenth century liberalism established their hegemony. It became possible to establish parties in these countries but they carried with them the legacy of a hegemonic political culture, whether it was the hegemony of party vs. party (Argentina and Mexico) or parties vs. society (Venezuela). Liberals and Conservatives (or their Colorado and Blanco equivalents) were more evenly matched in Colombia and Uruguay, but loyalty to the two sides permeated the population during the long civil wars so completely that it became possible for the elites eventually to channel their conflict into electoral competition without the danger of losing power to the middle or lower classes. The traditional cleavage was thereby preserved (and enforced, to the exclusion of third parties for decades) in the party system, although it was composed of parties that never felt the need to organize at the grass roots, due to the strong preexisting loyalties in the population. In Chile and Costa Rica, the wars did not last long enough to instill liberal or conservative loyalties in the larger population; instead, for various reasons elites learned to handle their conflicts peacefully among themselves, before mass participation began. Embryonic parties came to play

Figure 8.1 The Evolution of Party Systems in Latin America



*Institutional development:*  
 chaotic: few organized parties; clientelistic networks

Organizations are either officialist (Mexico, Argentina) or non-existent (Venezuela)

Strong party loyalties without effective organizations

Institutionalized elite organizations

BEFORE EXPANSION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

AFTER EXPANSION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

*Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil:* participation aggravates preexisting problems, so chaos continues, undermining incentives for organizing political parties. Low levels of party identification

*Argentina:* two-step expansion; 1912-1930 → UCR 1946-1951 → Peronism

*Venezuela:* sudden expansion; 1945-1948 → AD, COPEI

Mexico: sudden expansion through revolution → PRM/PNR/PRI, but political space not yet full

*Colombia:* loyalties established by violent civil war, 1830-1960s → Liberals vs. Conservatives

*Uruguay:* early (1918) expansion on heels of civil war freezes loyalties → Colorados vs. Blancos

*Costa Rica:* sudden expansion in 1948-1962 → PLN, a multiclass alliance

Chile: gradual expansion → multiparty system reflecting old Catholic-secular and new class cleavages



an important role in political life, which created the expectation that mass parties would also.

This institutional and cultural context was only a necessary condition for the establishment of a party system (except in Colombia, where the extreme violence of the civil wars was sufficient to establish party loyalties). Sufficient conditions for the creation of new parties existed only when the suffrage was broadened and the newly enfranchised were moved to vote and free to do so on their own terms. These conditions emerged at different times and rates in different countries. In Chile, it was a gradual, phased process that led to the formation of many rather small parties that added the class cleavage to the old Catholic-secular cleavage. In Argentina, it was a two-step process, first creating the Radical Civic Union in the wake of the Sáenz Peña law of 1912, and then the Justicialist Party during the mobilizing excitement of Perón's first term as president. In Uruguay, participation expanded very rapidly after 1918, but since it took place less than a generation after the end of the civil wars, it had the effect of freezing the traditional cleavage between Blancos and Colorados. In Costa Rica and Venezuela, participation expanded very suddenly also, but long after the resolution of the liberal-conservative conflict. This led to the creation of large multiclass or catchall parties (PLN and AD) and soon afterward, a major opposition party galvanized by the threat of one-party dominance (PUSC and COPEI). In Mexico, the sudden social mobilization during the Revolution also led to the formation of a broad multiclass (middleclass/labor/peasants) party, but because it was formed so early in the country's social development, and during a tumultuous time when the need for order predominated, it was both possible and desirable for the PNR/PRM/PRI to favor controlling mobilization over genuine participation in fair elections with the result that much of the Mexican electorate has not yet formed a party loyalty.

### Notes

1. Robert Dix and McDonald and Ruhl add Paraguay and Honduras to the list of party systems in which the traditional cleavage is preserved. See Robert H. Dix, "Cleavage Structures and Party Systems in Latin America," *Comparative Politics* (October 1989): 23-27 and Ronald H. McDonald and J. Mark Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989).
2. It should be understood that this essay seeks to explain only the *major* cleavages represented in Latin America's party systems, i.e., the pivotal issues that divide the *major* parties in each country. The "major" parties are meant to be the two or three largest parties which together win at least two-thirds of the vote.



3. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments." in Lipset and Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 1-64.

4. While there are many examples of parties with regional strengths or weaknesses (the Mexican PAN, most parties in Brazil, the Ecuadorean CFP), the only purely regional parties are found in Argentina, and they have always been too small to justify consideration here. Recently there have been presidential candidates who have had a notably Protestant Evangelical base of support (Fujimori in Peru, Ríos Montt and Serrano in Guatemala), but they do not yet constitute political parties as such. Only since the 1980s have noteworthy indigenous parties emerged, and only in Bolivia and Ecuador.

5. Dix, "Cleavage Structures and Party Systems," pp. 23-27.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

7. Juan J. Linz, "The Party System of Spain: Past and Future," in Lipset and Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, pp. 197-282. This paper would not have been possible without Juan Linz, not only because he encouraged and directed my own interest in the development of parties and other democratic institutions, but also because he taught or worked with many other scholars whose publications on Latin America were essential references for this study - Catherine Conaghan, Charles Gillespie, Luis Eduardo González, Jonathan Hartlyn, Bolívar Lamounier, Daniel Levine, Scott Mainwaring, and Arturo Valenzuela.

8. Philip E. Converse, "Of Time and Partisan Stability," *Comparative Political Studies* 2, 2 (July 1969): 139-71.

9. Converse, "Of Time and Partisan Stability."

10. Juan J. Linz, "Political Space and Fascism as a Late-Comer," in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Peter Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists?* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), pp. 153-89.

11. This remains true in the 1990s, except that the M-19 enjoyed a brief burst of success in the constituent assembly election of 1990 and both traditional parties are being challenged by regional splinters.

12. That share dropped to 82 percent in 1971, 78.8 percent in 1984, and 69 percent in 1989, making it now effectively a 3.5-party system by the Laakso-Taagepera Index. The emergence of the Frente is compatible with the general argument defended here, since even well institutionalized party systems change marginally over the years. The most important characteristic to be explained is why the Uruguayan party system remained unchanged for so long.

13. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 78.

14. Luis Eduardo González, "Los partidos políticos y la redemocratización en Uruguay," *Cuadernos del "CLAEH"* 37, 1 (1986).

15. Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

16. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 92.

17. George Pendle, *Uruguay*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 24-26.

18. Ronald H. McDonald, "Party Factions and Modernization: A Comparative Analysis of Colombia and Uruguay," in Frank Belloni and Dennis Beller, eds., *Faction Politics: Political Parties and Factionalism in Comparative Perspective* (Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-Clio, 1978).

19. The Blancos agreed to Batlle's offer to share administrative responsibilities with a nine member *Consejo Nacional de Administración* elected in a way that guaranteed the Blancos a third of the seats. See Pendle, *Uruguay*, pp. 33–34.

20. Harvey F. Kline, *Colombia: Portrait of Unity and Diversity* (Boulder: Westview, 1983), chapter 2.

21. Pendle, *Uruguay*, p. 25.

22. According to Arend Lijphart, the greater the number of cleavages, the more fragmented the party system. Thus it is no accident that Chile's two cleavages are found in a multiparty system. See his *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 147–49.

23. Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 159.

24. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 19.

25. Harold Blakemore, "Chile from the War of the Pacific to the World Depression, 1880–1930," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume V, c. 1870–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

26. Karen L. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile: Political Recruitment and Public Policy, 1890–1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1984), pp. 67–77.

27. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 192.

28. Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

29. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 192.

30. John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 89.

31. Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

32. In 1972, the voting age was reduced to eighteen and the literacy requirement was abolished. Neither change expanded participation greatly since only a small fraction of the population was between eighteen and twenty-one and literacy rates had long since been high enough to make the literacy requirement a minor obstacle.

33. This estimate is based on Ameringer's statement that half of the adult male population could vote by 1928. See Charles D. Ameringer, *Democracy in Costa Rica* (New York: Praeger, 1982).

34. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 170.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 170–71.

36. Ciro F. S. Cardoso, "Central America: The Liberal Era, c. 1870–1930," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*.

37. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 170.
38. Robert J. Alexander, *Organized Labor in Latin America* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 215.
39. John A. Booth, "Costa Rica: The Roots of Democratic Stability," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries, Volume 4: Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989), pp. 396–97.
40. Peter G. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism: The History and Doctrine of the Radical Civic Union* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1965), p. 6.
41. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism*, p. 5.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 44–45.
45. Remmer, *Party Competition in Argentina and Chile*, pp. 106–109.
46. Liliana de Riz, and Catalina Smulovitz, "Instituciones y dinámica política. El presidencialismo argentino," Documento CEDES/37 (Buenos Aires, 1990).
47. Figures in the last two sentences are from McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 160.
48. Snow, *Argentine Radicalism*, p. 61.
49. Gary W. Wynia, *Argentina in the Postwar Era: Politics and Economic Policymaking in a Divided Society* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), pp. 43–45.
50. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 163.
51. Monarchy was resurrected in 1863–1867 under the Emperor Maximilian, but only with a push from the French, and it failed as soon as French troops were withdrawn.
52. Some would say that the nineteenth century religious cleavage survived to spur the *cristero* revolt and the emergence of the PAN. I would say the old cleavage was effectively resolved, and a new religious cleavage was created during the Revolution by the Northern generals and Cárdenas, whose radical secularism broke with the prevailing understanding between Church and State.
53. Daniel H. Levine, *Conflict and Political Change in Venezuela* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973). It also meant that the parties' organizational efforts were unimpeded by preexisting nonpolitical organizations. This is why parties came to penetrate social groups so thoroughly, prompting complaints about *partidocracia*.
54. Boris Bunimov-Parra, *Introducción a la sociología electoral venezolana* (Caracas: Editorial Arte, 1968), p. 248.
55. Bunimov-Parra, *Introducción a la sociología electoral venezolana*, pp. 246–48.
56. Other research suggests that AD and COPEI would have been nearly as successful even in the elections of 1963 and 1968, when the party system was much more fragmented, if AD had not suffered three internal splits in the early 1960s. See Michael Coppedge, *Strong Parties and Lame Ducks: Presidential*

*Partyarchy and Factionalism in Venezuela* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), chapter 3.

57. Cynthia McClintock, "The Perils of Presidentialism? Insights from the Peruvian Case," in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds., *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 337.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 379n.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

60. Herbert S. Klein, *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

61. Christopher Mitchell, *The Legacy of Populism in Bolivia: From the MNR to Military Rule* (New York: Praeger, 1977).

62. McDonald and Ruhl, *Party Politics and Elections in Latin America*, p. 230.

63. David W. Schodt, *Ecuador: An Andean Enigma* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), chapter 3.

64. The intended meaning of "taxi" parties is that they are so small that they can hold their conventions in a taxi, but the implication that they are parties for hire is equally apt. Catherine Conaghan, "Party Politics and Democratization in Ecuador," in James M. Malloy and Mitchell A. Seligson, eds., *Authoritarians and Democrats: Regime Transition in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987).

65. Scott Mainwaring, "Brazilian Party Under-development in Comparative Perspective," *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (Winter 1993): 677-707.

66. Bolívar Lamounier, "Brazil: Inequality Against Democracy," in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries, Volume 4: Latin America*.

67. Mainwaring, "Brazilian Party Underdevelopment."