

The Dynamic Diversity of Latin American Party Systems

Abstract: The analysis of Latin American party systems should be supplemented by the analysis of ideological blocs in order to enhance comparability and to revive the study of the content of party politics in the region. This paper presents a new set of data that makes the analysis of Latin American blocs possible for the first time. The data cover 166 20th-century elections in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The paper also describes indicators of four party-system characteristics--Mean Left-Right Position, Left-Right Polarization, Adjusted Bloc Volatility, and the Effective Number of Blocs. The data confirm some of the conventional wisdom about Latin American party systems, but also put them in clearer comparative perspective. The evolution of these four characteristics in each country shows that party systems are not merely passive reflections of what the voters want, nor are they simply monuments to political engineering or the skill of party strategists. Rather, they are the product of a continuously evolving interaction among all these forces. Political scientists must be willing to go beyond typologies and use appropriate analytic tools in order to grapple with the dynamic diversity found in Latin American party systems.

[NOTE: Some of the data used in this paper are tentative or incomplete, and subject to change in the following respects: (1) No complete and accurate election returns exist for the 1986 Brazilian elections. I have used a rough estimate that is certainly wrong, but in my judgment not too far off for use in Figure 3. (2) The classification of Brazilian parties is my draft, and does not incorporate the revisions suggested by Brazil specialists. (3) The votes used for the Peruvian elections of 1931-63 are presidential, not legislative, as national legislative returns by party do not exist. (4) Certain other classifications, such as labeling Costa Rica's PUSC "Christian," may be changed after further research or consultation with country specialists.]

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There is growing interest in the comparative study of party systems in the developing world. Recent research suggests or finds that the nature of party systems affects the chances for meaningful democracy (Collier and Collier 1991, Coppedge 1993, Domínguez and Giraldo 1996), the consolidation or survival of democratic regimes (Sartori 1966, Diamond and Linz 1989, Mainwaring 1993, Remmer 1996), the maintenance of political order (Huntington 1968, Powell 1982), and long-term success at carrying out difficult policy reforms (Haggard and Kaufman 1992). And because party systems seem to be contributing causes of such important political phenomena, we need to understand the forces that shape them. The search for this understanding is encouraging the use of cases from the world periphery to test hypotheses about party systems that were originally developed in the core--including hypotheses about the political consequences of electoral laws, social and political cleavages, economic transformation, regime consolidation, and transnational ideological currents (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Taagepera and Shugart 1989, Lijphart 1994, Remmer 1991). All of this research creates a demand for information about emerging party systems that is useful for comparative theorizing and testing.

Those who wish to compare party systems have no choice but to work with concepts that "travel," i.e., that meaningfully describe some characteristics of all the party systems being analyzed. Such comparability is difficult to achieve when the units of analysis are parties rather than blocs because Latin American party systems are diverse and dynamic. Diversity is a constant, because all parties are unique. The only solution to the problem is to climb up one rung on the ladder of abstraction and take as units not parties, but groups of parties that share common characteristics (Sartori 1970). Parties are as seemingly incomparable as apples and oranges, but even apples and oranges can be compared if they are treated as "fruits" that are unique combinations of various common characteristics--color, mass, sweetness, etc. Similarly, parties such as the Peruvian APRA and Venezuela's Acción Democrática may be treated as members of a larger political "family" varying in size, age, unity, and other respects. If this can be done for most parties in all the countries of interest, then the party systems of those countries can be compared as unique combinations of a common set of characteristics.

All party systems change, but Latin American party systems are, on average, far more volatile than those in the industrialized countries that have been the focus of most of the existing research on party systems. To be specific, Latin American party systems are, on average, three times as volatile as the Western European party systems analyzed by Bartolini and Mair (1990) (Coppedge 1995). The high volatility is partly a reflection of big shifts in the vote for the parties that survive for a long time. But it is also a reflection of high turnover among the parties: approximately 1,200 parties contested the 166 elections in 11 countries surveyed here.¹ Of these, only 15 participated in all of their country's elections sampled here, and only 3 ran in as many as 20 elections--the Colombian Liberals and Conservatives, and the Argentine Radicals.² More than 80 percent of these 1,200 parties contested only one legislative election before disappearing. The vast majority of these were vanishingly small and could be safely ignored. But some of the "flash" parties were quite successful for a short period of time and should not be ignored in a systematic study. Focusing on blocs rather than parties makes it easier to examine change over time, and often makes it possible to perceive a kind of continuity in party systems that otherwise might go unnoticed.

In recent years, political scientists have paid increasing attention to certain characteristics of party systems--the number of parties (fragmentation) and rates of party-system change (volatility). Some of these studies have even included Latin American cases. Almost all use the most natural and obvious units of analysis--political parties themselves.³ Both characteristics are fairly objective, simple to measure, and therefore travel well. Both have the virtue of breaking away from simplistic and static typologies that are unwieldy and misleading for the analysis of differences of degree and change over time. But studies of fragmentation and volatility require knowledge of nothing but the number and relative sizes of parties, and tend to ignore other characteristics of party systems. This focus limits the analyst to a dissection of party systems that have been drained, gutted, and picked clean of the flesh and blood of politics--ideology, personalities, interests, ideas, platforms, slogans, images, issues--in short, the substance of political competition. This is not to say that the forms and mechanics of party systems do not matter.

On the contrary, they can crucially affect the democratic process. But there are certain aspects of that process, such as alliances and coalitions, policy choices, and polarization, that cannot be understood well without considering the ideas, interests, and images of parties, in addition to their number and sizes.

A Method for Analyzing Blocs

There are two basic approaches to the comparative analysis of the substance of party politics--either building typologies or directly measuring a variety of party-system characteristics. The construction of typologies dominated the early study of party systems (Duverger 1954, Almond and Coleman 1960, McDonald and Ruhl 1989). Typologies are useful for identifying the most basic differences among party systems, but they have three serious drawbacks. First, they are static, and therefore ignore change. Second, they measure crudely what could be measured more precisely. Typologies rely on a type of measurement that is unnecessarily imprecise, i.e., sorting cases into categories or ranks. If continuous data on party systems were not available, then the use of typologies for analysis would be understandable. But continuous data *are* available. In fact, there are few phenomena in politics that lend themselves as naturally to quantification as parties. Parties derive their power from numbers; they compete for numbers; they win numbers in elections; numbers are the coin of the political party realm. Because appropriate continuous data are available, reducing all of the values within a continuous range to the same rank or category introduces unnecessary and avoidable measurement error.⁴

The third drawback of typologies is that the one or two criteria that are used to classify party systems into types tend to monopolize the research agenda, diverting attention from other dimensions of comparison that may be equally important. A typology is essentially the skeleton of an open-ended theory: it singles out a few independent variables as important, without specifying what they are important *for*. With respect to party systems, the most common sort of typology has distinguished among one-party, dominant-party, two-party, and multiparty systems. This analytic scheme goes back to the late nineteenth century, but became dominant in modern political science with the publication of Almond and Coleman's *Politics of the Developing Areas* (1960) and Duverger's *Political Parties* (1954). There is nothing wrong with classifying party systems as one-party, dominant-party, two-party, multiparty, etc., for some purposes, such as understanding cabinet and coalition stability (Lijphart 1984, Taagepera and Shugart 1989). The problem does not lie so much with those who initially selected fragmentation as the dimension relevant for some specific purpose, but with those who assumed that it must be relevant for any and every purpose and therefore allowed themselves to become distracted from other characteristics of party systems that may have had more plausible and promising associations with the phenomena to be explained. We should not assume that any one characteristic of party systems holds the key to understanding the impact of party systems on everything else. The elevation of one or two characteristics to "fundamental" or "primary" status without specifying the purposes for which they are useful inhibits both insightful theorizing and appropriate testing.

The approach followed here remedies all three problems. First, instead of describing a single static classification, or even a short series of classifications, of each country's "typical" party system, I provide separate descriptions of the party system as it evolved in each election. Second, rather than limit my descriptions to rough categorizations, I make the seats, votes, and shares won by *blocs* the objects of study. I identify the least common differences of *kind* in order to get on with the analysis of differences of *degree*. Finally, to avoid overemphasizing one or two general-purpose characteristics, I report a greater variety of indicators. These indicators are not meant to replace other appropriate continuous measures that are already in use, such as indicators of party volatility or the effective number of parties. Rather, I offer them to supplement the existing analytic tools, to help us avoid excessively narrow conceptualization and theorizing. These indicators hardly amount to thick description, but they constitute a small step in that desirable direction.

The first steps in the comparison of blocs is to define criteria for classifying parties into blocs and to classify as many of them as possible. Lumping parties together into comparable families is nothing new, but no one has ever produced a classification sufficiently comprehensive and exhaustive to support rigorous comparative analysis. Various studies have been published about Latin American communist (Alexander 1957, Caballero 1986), Christian Democratic (Williams 1967, Lynch 1993), "national revolutionary" (Martz 1966, 366-74), "mass" (Hilliker 1971), conservative (Gibson 1996, 1-28), and "populist" (DiTella 1965, van Niekerk 1974, Conniff 1982)

parties. These studies have virtues of their own, but do not make it possible to compare whole party systems cross-nationally, because (a) not every Latin American country has a member of the party families listed above, and (b) these studies give insufficient information about the other parties in each system that are outside the family. There are a few works that attempt a more comprehensive survey of Latin American parties and party systems, but almost all either ignore the many minor parties (Martz 1964, Dix 1989) or classify party systems according to numbers (McDonald and Ruhl 1989). There are two exceptions that stand above the rest. One is the introduction to Mainwaring and Scully's *Building Democratic Institutions* (1995), which classifies party systems by ideological polarization in addition to number and institutionalization. The other is the three-volume reference work, *Political Parties of the Americas* (Alexander 1988 and Ameringer 1992), which provides short histories of all the major, and an amazing number of the minor, parties in every country, and almost always informally specifies the ideological orientation of each one. The Mainwaring and Scully introduction is systematic, but is too brief to do more than locate each country in a simple static typology. *Political Parties of the Americas* is encyclopedic, but not quite systematic or consistent enough to provide cross-nationally comparable classifications of parties without additional research and conceptual precision.

I have therefore produced, with the help of several dozen country specialists, my own classification of Latin American parties into ideological blocs.⁵ In lieu of precise and relatively objective information about party positions, I defined classification criteria that seemed likely to capture the most salient aspects of the images of most parties in most Latin American countries. The classification scheme is based on two major dimensions and several minor ones. One major dimension is the Christian vs. secular conflict inherited from the 19th century. The other major dimension is the classic left-right dimension, which is segmented into right, center-right, center, center-left, and left blocs. I have assumed that these two dimensions cross-cut each other, producing 10 blocs ranging from the Christian Right to the Secular Left. In addition, parties that could not be plausibly classified in left-right terms were classified as either "personalist" or "other" (meaning environmental, regional, ethnic, or feminist). Parties for which no good information was available--usually comprising a small fraction of the vote--were classified "unknown." The classification criteria used are reproduced in the appendix.⁶

Some readers will undoubtedly be skeptical about this enterprise on the grounds that Latin American parties are insufficiently ideological or inconsistent in their ideology; or that the left-right dimension is not relevant in Latin America; or that other dimensions such as church-state relations or ethnic or regional conflict are far more relevant than the left-right dimension. There is some truth to these perceptions. Indeed, I began the classification project uncertain myself about whether it would yield useful information, and resolved to abandon it if the classifications enjoyed little face validity among specialists on each of the 11 countries. But for many reasons I am now convinced that this classification of parties is valid, meaningful and useful.

Abbreviations for Blocs Used in This Classification

XR=Christian Right	SR=Secular Right	
XCR=Christian Center-Right	SCR=Secular Center-Right	
XC=Christian Center	SC=Secular Center	
XCL=Christian Center-Left	SCL=Secular Center-Left	
XL=Christian Left	SL=Secular Left	
O=Other Bloc	P=Personalist	U=Unknown

First, many of the parties whose ideological purity is questionable due to personalism, populism, or clientelism are *roughly* classifiable in left-right terms. The classification scheme is not, after all, extraordinarily precise. It is usually clear to country specialists whether these parties are basically left of center or right of center, and the questioning itself usually rules out classification in either the more ideological extreme left or the extreme right, so center-left or center-right are pretty safe choices in these cases. In the relatively rare instances in which even these assessments were impossible, I still had the option of classifying such parties as centrist, personalist, or "unknown."

Second, although some parties make temporary shifts to the left or the right, I do not feel that such shifts must always be reflected in the classifications. Few governing parties have the luxury of doing exactly what their programs promised; all must compromise and react to unforeseen events, sometimes with policies that seem to contradict every principle the party stands for. This is normal, and does not mean that such parties have abandoned their ideological commitments. I believe that voters understand this and almost always expect--perhaps naively--that parties will at least try to fulfill their historic ideals. Moreover, sometimes the "center" is an appropriate classification for a party that takes some positions on the left and some on the right; the second draft of the instructions to country specialists made this criterion explicit. For these reasons I did not reclassify parties lightly. But in a few cases, parties undeniably and credibly changed blocs, and in these cases their classifications change here as well.

Whether or not the left-right dimension is relevant in Latin America depends on how one defines it. In reality it is a bundle of issue dimensions that are all closely interrelated, such that a party that is on the "left" on one is likely to be on the left on the others as well, and vice-versa. Definitions of "left" and "right" do not always travel or age well: they can vary greatly from region to region, country to country, decade to decade, and even person to person if they are made very precise. The specific issue dimensions that are conventionally considered part of the bundle change. For example, in Latin America during the 1960s, support for political democracy was often considered incompatible with being on the left; but in the early 1980s, it was often considered incompatible with being on the extreme right. Huber and Inglehart (1995) list 10 different issues that are considered relevant as criteria for being on the left or right in some country or other, but many of these would not be very relevant for many of the countries they discuss, and still less for other historical periods. In extreme cases, certain issue positions that are considered "right" in some countries are considered "left" in others (Kitschelt 1992). The more diverse the regions to be analyzed, and the longer the span of time to be covered, the less specific the criteria for the left-right dimension can be, because dimensions that are relevant in only a few countries must be dropped from the cross-national criteria for comparison. Probably the only element that is common to all definitions is the association of "left" with change, and "right" with either preservation of the status quo or a return to the past. Nevertheless, if the comparison is limited to one region and a manageable span of time, the criteria for the left-right dimension can be made more specific than positions for or against change. The criteria I used, and asked the experts consulted to use, focus on the social classes to which parties direct their appeals, as suggested by positions and rhetoric regarding the priority of growth and redistribution. (For a more detailed discussion, see the appendix.) These minimalist criteria for left and right resonate in every Latin American country during this century.

Finally, it is true that the left-right dimension is not the only relevant dimension of competition in Latin American party politics. It is precisely for this reason that my classification scheme also classifies parties on a Christian-secular dimension, and allows parties that cannot be classified in either left-right or Christian-secular terms to be classified as "personalist," "other," or as a last resort, "unknown." The "other" category is a diverse combination of regional, indigenous, environmental, feminist, and other parties. But in every country the "other" vote is so small that there seems to be little reward for attributing much significance to these third dimensions: the first two dimensions adequately capture the meaningful cleavages by themselves.

In the final analysis what matters is whether this classification of parties is considered acceptable by the communities of political scientists who know each country's parties well. To minimize errors in the classification, I sent out my draft classifications for each country to various specialists, asking for comments and revisions. The classifications went out to more than 80 country specialists, most of whom also specialize in the study of political parties. I received replies from 31 of them, all suggesting reclassification of some parties for some or all elections,

often with additional commentary on the classification scheme or the country in question.⁷ I was pleased to find that the experts suggested relatively few revisions.⁸ Thus, the vast majority of the classifications seem to be quite sound. In a few cases, however, there was no agreement on the classification of parties, some of which are quite important--the Peronists, the Mexican PRI, Costa Rica's PUSC, the Colombian Liberals and Conservatives, and the Uruguayan Blancos and Colorados. In these cases I made judgment calls that I thought best reflected continuous patterns of evolution in each country while maintaining as much cross-national comparability as possible.⁹ Nevertheless, some of these decisions will inevitably remain controversial.

Once individual parties were classified, I tallied the percentage of the total valid vote that each bloc won in each election. Several hundred parties remain unclassified, but they are so extremely small that I succeeded in classifying 97 percent of the vote cast in the average election. The percentage of the vote that remains "unknown" is less than 15 percent in all but 5 elections (all in Argentina and Ecuador). Less than 10 percent of the vote is unclassified in all but 14 elections, and less than one percent is unclassified in 58 percent of the elections. The coverage of the classification is therefore quite thorough.

Figures 1-11 are "portraits" of the evolution of these blocs in the Latin American countries with the most electoral experience. The percentage of the vote won by the party or parties in each bloc is represented by the vertical distance between the lines on the graphs; heavy lines divide the Christian, secular, and personalist blocs, and all of these from parties in "other" blocs and unclassified parties.

These figures can be used to judge the face validity of the classifications. Figure 1 portrays Argentina as a country with a large and increasingly dominant center (the Unión Cívica Radical and its regional allies) before 1930. After the "Patriotic Fraud" interruption of 1930-46, the center-left Peronists emerged and threatened to become the new dominant party. Between 1957 and 1965, the center's dominance was artificially restored by proscribing the Peronists, but toward the end of that period the left gained strength, perhaps by winning votes from the frustrated center-left. After the military rule of 1966-73, center-left voters once again found their vehicle in the legalized Justicialist party, but the center-right had grown in the meantime, and the center shrank. After the interruption of the 1976-83 *proceso militar*, this system was restored with few changes. However, under the leadership of Carlos Menem, the Justicialists shifted to the center by 1987, leaving the country once again with a dominant center bloc, and leaving an opportunity for new center-left alliances to gain support in 1994 and 1995.

In Bolivia (Figure 2), the postwar party system began with MNR dominance during the revolutionary years 1952-64. The military leader René Barrientos enjoyed a one-time electoral victory in the 1966 election, the last to be held for the next 13 years. When new elections were held in 1979 and 1980, competition was between the right-wing vehicle of former dictator Hugo Bánzer Suárez, the more conservative heirs of the MNR in the center-right, and the center-left composed of the more progressive MNR heirs and the MIR, with small challenges from various left-wing parties and alliances. In 1985 the center-left lost much of its support, while the parties to the right of center gained votes. An odd electoral alliance between the MIR and Bánzer's ADN eliminated the center-left in 1993, while personalist vehicles emerged to rob support from the right.

The Brazilian party system was transformed in 1966 when the military regime forced all politicians into a two-bloc (and two-party) mold (Figure 3).¹⁰ With parties as the units of analysis, changes after 1978 are complicated by extreme fragmentation. But with blocs as the units of analysis, the tendencies are clearer: *abertura* permitted a gradual diversification of blocs, including substantial growth of the left and center-left.

Figure 4 illustrates two well-known characteristics of the Chilean party system. One is the relatively large size of the left bloc, which peaked in 1941 and 1973. The other is the redefinition of the center as the Christian Democrats replaced the Radical Party as the main center party (Scully 1992). Two other characteristics, however, suggest modifications of the conventional wisdom about the traditional "three thirds" of the Chilean party system. First, the famed three thirds did not really take shape until 1969: if there was any pattern before then, it was more like "four fourths," at least according to the criteria used here, which distinguish between the Christian and secular right. And second, the shares won by the traditional blocs were not all that stable. Even leaving aside the swings

endured by the left, there was a very striking surge of personalism in the form of Ibañismo in the elections of 1949, 1953, and 1957. The portrait of the Colombian party system (figure 5) holds no surprises, as it reflects well the lack of change in this system of two large parties dating back to the mid-19th century. The only two major changes were the secularization of the Conservatives by 1982 and the AD/M-19's spectacular showing in the 1990 constituent assembly election.

Figure 6 represents Liberación's center-left as the largest and firmest bloc in Costa Rican politics. What is now a true center-right party, PUSC, was built relatively late out of parties from the right, the center-right, and personalism. The high levels of personalism in the 1960s and 1970s may surprise those familiar only with Costa Rica's reputation as a well-institutionalized democracy, but will not surprise anyone familiar with the details of Costa Rican party politics.

The Ecuadorian party system (figure 6) has been so volatile that it is difficult to describe succinctly, but several constants and trends are discernible. First, there has always been a comparatively large vote for personalist parties and candidates. Second, it began as a very conservative party system, but the left and center-left blocs grew rapidly after the 1979 transition, only to suffer partial setbacks since 1988. And third, it became more complex, with center-right and center-left (both secular and Christian) choices added to the stark left or right offerings of the 1950s.

Mexico presents the picture of a dominant official party, the PRI, increasingly outflanked by the left or center-left (various leftist parties, many of which eventually merged into the PRD) and the PAN's Christian center-right. Figure 8 also captures the pendulum swing of the PRI from center right of the "stabilizing development" period to a center-left orientation under Echeverría, to a more centrist position under López Portillo, and back to the center-right under de la Madrid and Salinas.

In Peru (figure 9) the center-left, spearheaded by APRA, was traditionally the largest bloc, but in the 1990s it had nearly vanished. Its challengers on the right and center-right were a series of personalities such as Manuel Prado, General Odría, and, after a slight ideological shift in the late seventies, Fernando Belaunde. There was also a significant challenge from the left in the wake of the progressive military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-75). However, what finally decimated the center-left was the explosion of the personalist vote for Alberto Fujimori. (In 1995 Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's Unión Por el Perú alliance is also counted as personalist because it was so ideologically diverse that the only unifying factor was Pérez de Cuéllar himself.)

The stability of the Uruguayan party system rivals that in Colombia. Although both the Blancos (SCR) and the Colorados (initially SCL) gradually converged toward the center, only the Colorado shift shows here because it was the more significant of the two. And although this shift was gradual, it is somewhat artificially placed at 1971, the same year the leftist Frente Amplio formed. After that year, the two-bloc Uruguayan system splintered as the center-right Blancos declined, the left grew, and a new party, Nuevo Espacio, emerged in the center-left.

Finally, Venezuelan politics has long been dominated by competition between the secular center-left and the Christian center-right. The principal vehicle of the center-left is Acción Democrática (AD), although at first it competed against the Unión Republicana Democrática for dominance within this bloc. The Christian Democratic COPEI shifted from the right during the 1945-48 Trienio (reflecting its image as an opponent of AD and democracy more than the actual ideals of its founders) to the center-right by 1958. Venezuela has also had a small and slowly growing left bloc, except when the Communists and the MIR were proscribed in the early 1960s, and a series of personalistic *fenómenos* in almost every election.

This classification of parties into comparable blocs makes it possible to ask and seek answers to several important questions about blocs: What explains variation in the size of the vote for the left? The Center? The Right? Personalist candidates and parties? Why has a Christian bloc survived in some countries but not others? (This article does not answer these questions, but the discussion near the end proposes some possible answers.) If we want to generalize about whole party *systems*, however, the uniqueness of each party system is still an obstacle.

In no two countries are the largest blocs of the same ideological tendencies, much less equal in size. In fact, if one were to classify these party systems according to which two blocs were the largest, the systems resulting from elections in these the 11 countries would have to be sorted into 22 different types. Furthermore, every party system has changed significantly over the years: none of these countries has kept the same two major blocs during its entire history.

Summary Indicators of Party-System Characteristics

One way to achieve additional comparability in spite of this persistent diversity is to ascend one more rung on the ladder of abstraction by defining, measuring, and comparing characteristics of entire party *systems* rather than *blocs*. No single indicator can possibly capture everything we want to know about party systems, but with a variety of indicators we can extract much of the interesting information and express it in a form that permits meaningful, albeit partial, comparisons. In this article I discuss four indicators of party-system characteristics--mean left-right position, left-right polarization, adjusted bloc volatility, and the effective number of blocs.

Mean Left-Right Position

Mean Left-Right Position (MLRP) measures the how far to the left or the right the average party was in each election, based on the left-right positions of all the parties and their shares of the vote. This indicator assumes that all parties classified left (whether Christian or secular) are approximately twice as far from the center as parties classified center-left; and right parties are twice as far to the right as the parties of the center-right. This assumption permits the calculation of MLRP as:

$$(XR + SR) + .5(XCR + SCR) - .5(XCL + SCL) - (XL + SL),$$

where "XR" represents the percentage of the vote won by all the parties in the Christian right bloc, and so on for the other bloc abbreviations. This index would equal 100 if all parties were on the right, -100 if all parties were on the left, 50 or -50 if all parties were center-right or center-left, respectively, or zero if all parties were centrist, personalist, other, or unknown, or if the parties to the left perfectly counterbalanced the parties to the right. Obviously this indicator contains measurement error because there is some variation among parties within each bloc and there is no way to know whether the extremes are twice as far out as the center-right and center-left, or only 50 percent farther out, or three times as far out. However, I am persuaded that measurement with some error is better than no measurement at all, as long as the party classifications are valid.

Left-Right Polarization

Polarization is defined here as the dispersion of the vote away from the relative center of the party system. The relative center can be farther to the right or the left than the absolute center as defined in the classification criteria, and is operationalized here as MLRP. The index of polarization (IP) makes the same assumptions about the positions of the blocs on a (-1,+1) range, with similar consequences for measurement error. Its formula is

$$|1-mlrp|*(XR+SR) + |.5-mlrp|*(XCR+SCR) + |-.5-mlrp|*(XCL+SCL) + |-1-mlrp|*(XL+SL),$$

where $mlrp = MLRP/100$. The index can reach its maximum only when half of the vote goes to the right and half to the left; if all of the vote went to just one extreme, polarization would be zero because the relative center would be at the extreme as well and there would be no dispersion. It is important to remember that this is an indicator of *left-right* polarization only, and does not reflect the intense personal, ethnic, ins-outs, or other rivalries that sometimes exist between parties that are relatively close in left-right terms.

Adjusted Bloc Volatility

The index that has become the standard indicator of electoral volatility for parties was developed by Pedersen (1979), although it is conceptually the same as an index earlier proposed by Rae (1970).¹¹ The index used here is identical except that (1) bloc shares are substituted for party shares, and (2) the index is adjusted to deduct any volatility resulting from party shifts from one bloc to another. The formula is:

$$V_{bloc} = .5 \sum_{n=1}^i |B_{i,t+1} - B_{i,t}| - \text{lesser}(S_{i,t+1} - S_{i,t}, S_{i,t} - S_{i,t+1})$$

where $B_{i,t}$ is the percentage of the vote won by bloc i in election t and $S_{i,t}$ is the vote share of party i that will shift to a different bloc in election $t+1$. For example, if old blocs were to shrink by 25 percent and new blocs emerged to capture that 25 percent for themselves, V would be half of 25 + 25, or 25. The volatility index can therefore range from 0 to 100. There are a couple of possible variants on this formula in addition to the option of basing it on seats rather than votes. One is to examine change cumulated over a longer span of time than simply one election to the next. Mainwaring and Scully (1995), for example, use the percentage of the vote recently won by parties that existed in 1950 as an indicator of party-system institutionalization. A similar variant could be used for bloc volatility, but the volatility reported here is only from one election to the next. If there is regular alternation between 2 blocs, a party system could in principle have a relatively high level of inter-election volatility and a relatively low level of cumulative volatility. However, I doubt that there are many cases of this. Because bloc volatility is based on more highly aggregated data than party volatility, it is lower than the latter and not directly comparable. However, it is a more appropriate index if one is interested in the stability of preferences for ideological tendencies rather than for individual party organizations.

Effective Number of Blocs

The now-standard indicator of fragmentation when parties are the units of analysis is the effective number of parties, which was developed in Laakso and Taagepera (1979). This is an indicator that counts parties after weighting them by size. The effective number of blocs is the same indicator, with blocs substituted for parties. Its formula is

$$ENB = \frac{1}{\sum_{n=1}^i (B_i)^2}$$

where B_i is again the share of the classified vote won by bloc i .¹² In a perfect two-bloc system, with the votes split 50-50, ENB equals 2.0; in a four-bloc system (25-25-25-25), it equals 4.0. But if some of the blocs are larger than others, the effective number of blocs will usually be some fraction. For example, if the center-right and center-left win 40 percent each and the left wins the remaining 20 percent, the value of ENB is 2.78: not quite a perfect three-bloc system, but certainly more fragmented than two. Intuition tells us that the number of blocs should be 2.5 in this case, but in practice the values of ENB are usually a bit higher than the intuitively expected number of blocs (as is the case with the effective number of parties). The minimum possible value of ENB is 1.0, which would occur only if all parties belonged to the same bloc. The theoretical maximum is 13 because that is the total number of blocs in my classification scheme, but in practice it rarely exceeds 6.

The bottom halves of figures 1-11 chart the values of these four summary indicators for each country in each election. The -60 to 100 scale on the left-hand vertical axis is for Mean Left-Right Position, Left-Right Polarization, and BlocVolatility, while the 1-7 scale of the right-hand vertical axis is for the Effective Number of Blocs. These plots are placed directly underneath the portraits of bloc evolution so that it is easy to see how the evolution of the blocs corresponds to the values of these indicators.

Possible Causes of Mean Left-Right Position

Space considerations do not permit systematic examination here of all four party-system characteristics. There is room, however, to explore some possible causes and consequences of Mean Left-Right Position. It is reasonable to suppose that MLRP would be useful for explaining a variety of political outcomes. First, the left-right

orientation of governing parties presumably has some impact on policy and spending patterns, and may therefore be useful for understanding the politics of land reform, economic stabilization, structural adjustment, openness to foreign investment, and other economic policies. Left-right orientations may also be useful for analyzing political stability. If a governing party or coalition is far to the left, it could be threatening to powerful economic interests, the middle class, and the military, all of whom could conspire to overthrow the democratic regime. Or if governments are consistently far to the right, they may create the perception that nothing will likely be done to correct deep social inequities, and may therefore inspire guerrilla movements or terrorism. An MLRP farther to the left does not guarantee that a *government* will be farther to the left, but it is more likely.

One obvious pattern is the very stable mean tendency in four countries--Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Not surprisingly, these are the four Latin American countries that are reputed to have the strongest party identification. It now seems likely that there is an ideological component to this identification, such that even when the specific parties change, voters choose new parties from the same blocs they favored in the past. It is somewhat surprising that Chile is not among this group, as Valenzuela (1978) and others have long contended that Chileans identify with blocs rather than specific parties. This may well be true, but if so, this tendency appears to be more pronounced in the four other countries: the standard deviation of MLRP is less than 10 in Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela, but reaches 18.5 in Chile. Because MLRP is relatively stable in these four countries, it is also meaningful to say that the mean tendency in the Colombian party system is clearly right of center (at +16.5), Venezuela's is definitely center-left (-20.7), and the Costa Rican and Uruguayan tendencies are ever so slightly left of center (-7.9 and -8.4, respectively).

The only other obvious pattern is the fairly consistent rightward trend (from -33.9 to +30.5) in Bolivia since the 1952 Revolution. Of the remaining 6 countries, Argentina and Peru tend left of center (-2.1 and -9.9); Chile is slightly to the right (+9.2); and Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico are on average more definitely to the right (30.6, 23.7, and 20.5); but all exhibit far more drastic and frequent shifts, both left and right, making averages much less meaningful. Aside from Chile, these are all countries known for weaker party identification (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, Domínguez and McCann 1996). It is probably not premature to conclude that where party and bloc identification are weak, party systems experience more dramatic and frequent swings between the left and right poles. It is also interesting to note that several notorious military coups occurred soon after elections that produced rather leftist (for each country) party systems--Argentina 1965, Bolivia 1962, Brazil 1962, and Chile 1973.¹³

Aside from the strength of party or bloc identification, what explains these swings to the right or the left? One cause that is obvious, although rarely incorporated into theory, is the manipulation of the party system by the military or the party leaders themselves through *proscriptions, boycotts, and purges*. Peru shifted to the right in 1978-80 in part because Fernando Belaunde's center-right Acción Popular returned to electoral politics in 1980 after boycotting the constituent assembly election of 1978. Argentina artificially shifted to the right between 1948 and 1961 because of the proscription of Peronism, and began a shift back to the left in 1961-65 because the Peronists threw their support to Peronist-front or other friendly parties. An equally blatant manipulation occurred in Brazil, where the authoritarian government purged all leftist or populist politicians after 1964, proscribed all the old parties, and forced all candidates to affiliate with one of two officially recognized parties. These acts eliminated all left-of-center parties and considerably strengthened the right. When the electoral laws were liberalized in 1979, the left, center-left, and center-right blocs gradually began to grow back, shifting the mean tendency closer to the center.

A less blatant elite-initiated cause of left-right shifts is the ideological *shifting of individual parties*. The classification criteria were designed to discourage reclassifying parties because of minor or temporary ideological shifts, but a few important Latin American parties really have changed their stripes so significantly that reclassification was necessary, and in those cases the value of MLRP usually changed, at least in the short term. (In some cases parties seem to have lost votes by straying from their usual position, and other parties in the vacated bloc picked up votes, thereby preserving the mean tendency of the party system in the long run.) Examples of this phenomenon are (1) the Chilean Radicals' shift to the left in the late 1960s; (2) the rightward shift of the Bolivian MNR and its splinters during and after the Revolution; (3) Menem's leadership of the Peronists toward the center, or even center-right, since 1989 in Argentina; (4) the centripetal blurring of ideological competition between Blancos

and Colorados in Uruguay; (5) COPEI's move toward the center following the 1945-48 Trienio in Venezuela; and (6) the pendulum-swing of the Mexican PRI.

A less obvious, but also likely, cause of left-right shifts is the *international diffusion* of political ideas. We are all aware, especially in the post-communist era, that political ideas go in and out of fashion and affect the fortunes of the parties that are identified with them. The causal mechanisms are difficult, if not impossible, to trace, and it is hard to sort out how important this influence is compared to other forces operating at the same time, but we must presume that some sort of diffusion matters. Rightward shifts in the 1919-60 period could be attributed to the rise of fascism in Europe or to the Cold War as with Chile in 1931-37 and 1941-58. Similarly, shifts to the left *or* the right after 1959 could be attributed in part to a delayed impact of the Cuban Revolution, as the source of either inspiration or threat. This could help explain the leftward shift in Chile from 1958 to 1973, in Peru 1963-78, in Ecuador 1970-88, and in Mexico 1967-70; or the rightward shifts in Ecuador 1958-70 and Brazil 1964-70.

Changes in turnout may be responsible for some of the variation, as new voters were sometimes more favorable to the center-left than the relatively privileged first voters. The expansion of the suffrage may therefore explain the leftward shifts in Chile in 1925-70, Peru in 1931-78, Ecuador in 1947-58 and 1970-88, Argentina 1912-48,¹⁴ and Brazil in 1970-90. Conversely, declining or artificially low turnout may have been favorable to parties to the right of center, as in Argentina from 1965 to 1994 and Brazil from 1964 to 1970.

Another possible explanation for left-right voting trends is *retrospective economic voting*. This hypothesis would hold that voters reward the bloc of a governing party that manages the economy well and punish the bloc of a governing party that manages the economy poorly. Further theorizing and research would be necessary to specify what aspects of economic performance voters care about and which blocs would be the most likely beneficiaries of anti-incumbent sentiment. But regardless of the exact specification of the hypothesis, some elections that appear to support retrospective economic voting are Chile in 1937 and 1989, Venezuela in 1963, Peru in 1990 and 1995, and Ecuador in 1992, all of which were instances of a rightward shift following economic decline under left-of-center leadership, combined in Chile and Peru with economic recovery under a right-of-center government.

One final hypothesis worth investigating is an *incumbency effect*, i.e., the growth of whichever bloc was governing (even if nondemocratically) before the election in question, regardless of economic performance. Incumbency can help parties grow because it provides access to patronage, expertise, and personnel; opportunities to build organizations and manipulate public policy for partisan gain; and in the case of the left, simply reassurance that a vote for the left will not be nullified by military intervention. Incumbency undeniably worked to the benefit of the center-left Acción Democrática in Venezuela and the Peronists in Argentina, and to the benefit of the left in Peru immediately after the Velasco regime of 1968-75 and in Ecuador following the Rodríguez Lara dictatorship of the 1970s. Incumbency may have also helped the right in Bolivia after the 1970s and in Chile after Pinochet, although in the latter case it is difficult to separate incumbency from economic voting.

Some Additional Observations

Although a systematic analysis of polarization, volatility, and the effective number of blocs is not possible here, several observations are worth making.

The Consequences of Polarization

Juan Linz (1978) and others have argued that polarization makes regime breakdown more likely. The theory behind this hypothesis is intuitively appealing, but the cross-national empirical support based on mean polarization as defined here is weak. It is true that mean polarization has been relatively high in three countries that have been especially coup-prone--Bolivia (42.9), Ecuador (43.8), and Peru (42.0)--and rather low in two stable regimes--Colombia (15.7) and Mexico (20.1). But polarization has been as high or higher in some of the most stable Latin American democracies--Costa Rica (47.1), Venezuela (42.4), Uruguay (48.0), and Chile (59.2)--and low in one of the least stable--Argentina (19.4) (Table 1). It may be that what contributes to breakdown is not any absolute average level of polarization, but a sudden increase in polarization above the level that is considered normal in each country. This hypothesis is consistent with interventions in Argentina in 1966, Bolivia in 1979 and

1980, Chile in 1973, Ecuador in 1961, and Venezuela in 1948, although not with several other interventions. All in all, polarization per se does not seem to be as good a predictor of regime breakdowns as sudden shifts to the left, which do not necessarily increase polarization.

Adjusted Bloc Volatility

It has sometimes been argued that bloc volatility measures an aspect of party-system institutionalization that transcends specific party organizations. I.e., in some countries it is claimed that voters may not be loyal to parties, yet still identify strongly with ideological blocs. Arturo Valenzuela, for example, has made this claim for Chilean parties (Valenzuela 1994, 169-79). Such bloc identification would lend a kind of coherence to electoral competition despite constant change in the roster of competitors. An index of bloc volatility should reflect this behavior. However, it also reflects other sources of volatility and must be purged of them before it can be used to make inferences about voter behavior.

The index plotted in the figures and averaged in the fourth column of Table 1 is already adjusted for one extraneous source of change: the shifting of parties between blocs. But bloc volatility can be greatly affected by proscriptions, restorations, and boycotts as well. These interventions show up in the figures as vertical spikes in the volatility series. The major cases proscription, restoration, or boycott are:

- Argentina 1957: Peronists were proscribed
- Argentina 1973: Peronists restored
- Bolivia 1966: MNR boycott
- Bolivia 1979: MNR remnants restored
- Bolivia 1993: MIR merged with ADN
- Brazil 1966: all prior parties proscribed
- Peru 1978: Acción Popular boycott
- Peru 1980: Acción Popular returns to competition
- Peru 1992: APRA and AP boycott

A simple way to control for the volatility caused by these actions is to exclude these elections from the sample before calculating the historical average. The third extraneous source of volatility is the passage of time between elections. Prior research has shown that volatility accumulates at a fairly constant rate as time passes, other things being equal, although the rate of accumulation depends on the country (Coppedge 1995). I believe that the average annual rate of change, excluding proscriptions and other "supply-side" disturbances, is a better indicator of the degree of voter loyalty than raw volatility rates. The last column of Table 1 reports this purged and adjusted annual mean volatility.

In Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico it is low, signifying voting that is guided by loyalties to blocs.¹⁵ In the Andean core of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, the index is very high, suggesting that voters are loyal to neither parties nor blocs. Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica are somewhere in the middle. Brazil is a surprise in this respect because its raw volatility levels, whether for parties or for blocs, are among the highest in the region, and it has a reputation for heavily clientelistic and personalistic voting, so it is a mystery why it should be found in the company of Chile and Costa Rica (von Mettenheim 1990, Ames 1995). Chile does rank higher on institutionalization with respect to blocs than it does with respect to parties, but it is merely in the middle: Chileans do not appear to vote ideologically to a greater degree than Brazilians, Colombians, Venezuelans, Mexicans, or Uruguayans. Argentina is a puzzling case because its volatility is far higher than that of its neighbors. This finding is consistent with reports from survey analysis that Argentine is one of the few countries in which left-right orientation is not a good predictor of voting behavior (McGuire 1995, 223). There may be other explanations, such as strong regional loyalties (which would help account for high bloc volatility in Ecuador as well), but they must await further research.

Effective Number of Blocs

In an ideal world, the effective number of blocs could be interpreted as an indicator of ideological diversity, or the number of political cleavages in a society. In practice, because this indicator is calculated using

actual election results, it is hard to know how much of the bloc fragmentation is due to divisions in society, and how much is due to divisions among the political elite. The existence of many blocs could mean that society is deeply and multiply divided along ideological lines, and the parties represent those divisions well; or that nonideological rivalries among parties and politicians are misrepresenting a much greater consensus that prevails among voters. If the effective number of blocs is small, it could mean that parties represent a broad consensus well, or that the party system fails to offer voters the diversity of alternatives they would like. In the long run I expect the number of blocs and the number of parties to converge, because if voters have too few parties to express their opinions, there is a strong incentive for some politicians to break away and found new parties, which would be rewarded with success and increase the number of parties. And if there are too many alternatives, party leaders would have an incentive to merge with other parties, reducing the number of parties. There is indirect empirical evidence that this sort of convergence does take place (Coppedge 1997). However, it does not take place immediately, and it can be delayed or distorted by elite manipulations of the supply of parties. These “supply-side” interventions include a wide variety of actions--overt proscriptions, electoral law engineering, mergers and splits, ideological positioning, campaign strategy, and the use of public funds for partisan ends--up to and including the legitimate use of public policy to please the voters. The theoretical point is that party systems are not passive reflections of the electorate’s identities and priorities. The voters’ desires matter at the ballot box, but state and party elites have many opportunities to limit or condition the available alternatives before the voters ever get to the polls.¹⁶

Taking the record of manipulation of the party system into account helps in identifying what the “true” effective number of blocs is likely to be. In Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela, there have been no major cases of interference with the supply of parties (other than temporary proscription of small communist parties in Costa Rica and Venezuela), so the means between 2 and 3 reported in Table 1 are probably accurate. In Colombia the groundrules of the National Front (1958-74) artificially limited the number of parties to two, so the bloc structure before and after that period is more reliable. However, the effective number of blocs was also very close to two both before 1958 and after 1974, so this estimate probably is also accurate. There was a dramatic increase in the number of blocs in the 1990 Constituent Assembly election, but fragmentation seems to be returning to historic levels since then.

The ENB line in Figure 4 makes more clearly a point made earlier about Chile: the “three thirds” emerged only in the 1960s, according to this classification scheme. From 1915 to 1945, the effective number of blocs was usually between 4 and 5, and from 1949 to 1957, it was between 4.5 and 6.0. The three thirds came into being only when the Christian Democratic party consolidated its hold on the center, displacing the Radicals and capturing some of the Conservative party’s Christian right base of support.

During both periods in which there was unfettered electoral competition in Argentina (1916-30 and 1983-95), a dominant center bloc eventually emerged (figure 1). This suggests the interesting possibility that Peronists and Radicals have been competing for essentially the same bloc of voters for the last 50 years, which would explain why (1) both parties long claimed to be movements representing the entire nation rather than parties, (2) left-right issues do not seem to be the most salient issues in voters’ minds, and (3) one party or the other tends toward dominance after a while (the Radicals in the 1920s, the Peronists in the 1940s and 1950s, and the Peronists again today), threatening the opposition with permanent minority status and destabilizing the democratic regime. Mexico began as the archetypical dominant-party system, but political liberalization in the last three decades has steadily allowed the effective number of blocs to increase. It is too early to say at what level this number will level off.

Despite the mean of 2.5 reported in Table 1, the true number of blocs in Bolivia is probably between 3 and 4. This is because illiberal electoral practices during the revolutionary MNR governments artificially limited the number of blocs, as did the MNR boycott of the 1966 election. With fully free competition after 1982, the number of blocs was always over 3 until 1993, when the odd MIR-ADN merger shunted the right and the center-left into the center-right. Such manipulations cannot last long, so I expect new vehicles for the center-left and the right to emerge soon in Bolivia and bring the effective number of blocs back up to 3 or more.

The Brazilian party system of the 1990s is only one surveyed here in which all 5 possible left-right blocs are significantly large. This seems to be in part an unintended consequence of the military’s manipulation of the

party system from 1966 to 1978, because before 1966 only the center-right and center-left were significant. The artificial ARENA-MDB party system created right and center blocs that had been insignificant before, and both survive today alongside the reborn center-right and center-left. It could be argued that the new left bloc, composed mostly of the PT, is also in part an unintended by-product of the military regime, because the military's removal of hundreds of the old coopted union leaders opened the way for more militant *auténtico* union leaders to gain control of the unions (Keck 1986). Among the new leaders was Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva, the principal founder of the PT.

Ecuador's experience shows a similar late diversification of blocs, but there was no overt manipulation of the party system to account for it. Rather, Ecuador seems to be a genuine case of the multiplication of cleavages in society. In Brazil, the number of blocs increased without changing the mean ideological tendency of the party system. In Ecuador, the increase was associated with a definite shift to the left, as the blocs that grew most were on the center-left and left (figure 7). Some of this shift could be due to radicalization of existing voters by militant unions in the context of economic crisis. But it seems likely that it is also partly due to the entry of new, more leftist voters, because the electorate expanded dramatically after the literacy requirement was dropped in 1978: the total valid vote grew 150 percent in 1978 (compared to 1966), and another 40 percent in 1984.

The Peruvian party system is the hardest to interpret because elections were so sporadic until 1978, and have been so volatile ever since. Moreover, Alberto Fujimori's striking success in dealing with inflation and terrorism is bound to modify the structure of political competition for some time to come. After he leaves office, I expect the personalist and center-right blocs to be strengthened, as new personalities strive to inherit his personal appeal and center-right parties, whether secular or Christian, try to inherit his program. For the time being, the center-left and left are greatly weakened, but major blocs do not disappear easily or for long, so we can expect some recovery left of center in the future. This scenario translates into 3-4 significant blocs in Peru's future.

Conclusion

If this analysis has demonstrated anything, it is that no simple conclusions are possible, because Latin American party systems are diverse and dynamic. They are diverse with respect to the kinds of blocs within which competition is channeled, the number of blocs, the degree of polarization, the rate of change, and their leanings to the left or right of center. They are probably equally diverse with respect to other characteristics not discussed here. Furthermore, they are changing--some glacially, others more fluidly, and still others in fits and starts--but they are all in flux.

In lieu of a simple conclusion, I will offer an anti-conclusion: that we should stop proposing typologies of Latin American party systems. Typologies are too simplistic and static to capture the dynamic diversity presented here. They can be useful in an early stage of political analysis, when scholars are still getting acquainted with their subject and just beginning to identify some useful dimensions for comparison. But that stage is over in this literature, and we need to get on with the business of establishing rigorous bases for comparison, measurement, and testing.

One branch of the literature, the branch concerned with the number of parties, disproportionality, volatility, and other supposed consequences of electoral laws, has pioneered the measurement of party-system characteristics and systematic testing. These scholars have made great strides, but their work has largely ignored the content of party politics. We need to apply similar methods to the study of bloc competition and integrate the findings of both of these efforts if we are to understand the forces that shape party systems in developing countries.

Appendix: Classification Criteria

The following classification guidelines were sent to the country specialists who were asked to check my draft classifications:

General notes:

--These criteria are not intended to capture all aspects of a party's program or image, only those necessary for basic comparison with other Latin American parties.

--Neither are they intended to reflect every slight or temporary shift in a party's position. However, in some cases where there is a scholarly consensus that a party made a definite shift in position--as with COPEI's move toward the center before 1958, or the Chilean Radicals' shift to the left in the 1960s--its classification should reflect that. The relevant position in this study is the one that would help explain voting behavior. Think of a party's position as a midpoint between the variable image its leaders try to project in their discourse and the more slowly changing image most voters perceive.

--The religious dimension and the Left-Right dimension overlap, so that any party that can be classified in Left-Right terms must also be classified as Christian or Secular (which is defined partly as a residual category to make this easier).

--Parties that are classifiable in Left-Right terms do not meet the criteria for the "Personalist" or "Other Bloc" categories as defined here. A prototypical example of each classification is given in italics.

The Criteria

Christian: 1. Parties that claim to base their ideology and programs on the authority of the Catholic Church, the Bible, or religious philosophy. 2. Parties that defend the temporal interests of the Catholic Church or oppose or seek to reduce the separation of church and state. 3. Parties that are widely perceived as satisfying either of the above criteria, even if religion is no longer an important aspect of their ideology, program, or policies. (*P. Demócrata Cristiano Chileno*)

Secular: 1. A residual category, i.e., parties that do not claim to base their ideology and programs on the authority of the Catholic Church, the Bible, or religious philosophy. 2. Parties that challenge the temporal interests of the Catholic Church or support the separation of church and state. (*Mexican PRI*)

Right: 1. Parties that target heirs of the traditional elite of the 19th century without moderating their discourse to appeal to middle- or lower-class voters. (*Chilean P. Conservador*) 2. Parties that employ a fascist or neo-fascist discourse. (*Chilean P. Nacista*) 3. Parties sponsored by a present or former military government, as long as they have a conservative (organicist, authoritarian, elitist, looking to the past) message and are not primarily personalist vehicles for particular authoritarian leaders. (*Brazilian ARENA*)

Center-Right: Parties that target middle- or lower-class voters in addition to elite voters by stressing cooperation with the private sector, public order, clean government, morality, or the priority of growth over distribution. (*Argentine UCeDé*)

Center: 1. Parties that stress classic political liberalism--broad political participation, civic virtue, the rule of law, human rights, or democracy--without a salient social or economic agenda. (Argentine Unión Cívica Radical). 2. Governing parties whose policies are so divided between positions both to the left and to the right of center that no orientation that is mostly consistent between elections is discernible.

Center-Left: Parties that stress justice, equality, social mobility, or the complementarity of distribution and accumulation in a way intended not to alienate middle- or upper-class voters. (*Venezuelan Acción Democrática*)

Left: Parties that employ Marxist ideology or rhetoric and stress the priority of distribution over accumulation or exploitation of the working class by capitalists and imperialists, and advocate a strong role for the state to correct social and economic injustices. They may consider violence an appropriate form of struggle, but do not necessarily. They do not worry about alienating middle- and upper-class voters who are not already socialist intellectuals. (*P. Socialista de Chile; any Communist party*)

Other Bloc: Any parties that represent an identifiable ideology, program, principle, region, interest, or social group that cannot be classified in left-right or Christian-secular terms. (*Unidad Catamarqueña of Argentina, Movimiento Revolucionario Tupak-Katari of Bolivia, P. Verde*)

Personalist: 1. Parties that base their primary appeal on the charisma, authority, or efficacy of their leader rather than on any principles or platforms, which are too vague or inconsistent to permit a plausible classification of the party in any other way. (*P. Nacional Velasquista of Ecuador*) 2. Independents. 3. Unusually heterogeneous electoral fronts formed to back a candidate. (*P. Agrario Laborista of Ibáñez in Chile*)

Unknown: Parties on which no information other than their name is available and whose names give no reliable clues about their orientation. “*Comunista*” and “*Izquierda*” are taken as reliable indicators of parties of the Left, while “*Socialista*” is not. Other common labels that are not considered reliable are *Revolucion(ario)*, *Demócrata*, *Democrático*, *Radical*, *Liberal*, *Laborista*, *Social*, *Popular*, *Auténtico*, *Republicano*, *Renovador*, *Independiente*, *Agrario*, or names of leaders.

For the parties with which I am less familiar, the classifications that follow are based primarily on Robert J. Alexander, ed., *Political Parties of the Americas: Canada, Latin America, and the West Indies*, 2 vols. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988); Charles D. Ameringer, ed., *Political Parties of the Americas: 1980s to 1990s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992); and George Delury, ed., *World Encyclopedia of Political Systems and Parties* (Longman, 1983).

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Table 1: Historical Means of Party-System Characteristics
(Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.)

Country	N	MLRP	IP	ENB	VBLOC ¹	VBLOC ²
Argentina	27	-2.1 (13.6)	19.4 (8.5)	2.0 (0.5)	26.8 (16.3)	13.4 (9.5)
Bolivia	10	-3.4 (23.7)	42.9 (16.2)	2.5 (1.3)	35.0 (33.6)	6.7 (6.4)
Brazil	14	30.6 (20.6)	34.0 (11.8)	2.8 (1.1)	20.2 (23.9)	4.0 (2.6)
Chile	17	9.2 (18.5)	59.2 (12.6)	4.3 (0.8)	21.6 (8.7)	4.9 (1.9)
Colombia	23	16.5 (9.5)	15.7 (7.5)	2.1 (0.4)	8.9 (10.1)	3.2 (5.5)
Costa Rica	11	-7.9 (6.1)	47.1 (7.0)	2.6 (0.4)	20.3 (15.8)	4.9 (2.8)
Ecuador	13	23.7 (26.4)	43.8 (17.2)	3.9 (1.2)	31.2 (15.8)	9.2 (4.4)
Mexico	12	20.5 (30.2)	20.1 (11.7)	1.7 (0.4)	7.5 (5.0)	2.5 (1.7)
Peru	10	-9.9 (19.7)	42.0 (16.0)	2.5 (0.7)	36.9 (15.7)	6.8 (4.0)
Uruguay	19	-8.4 (7.3)	48.0 (5.0)	2.4 (0.4)	8.6 (6.2)	2.4 (2.7)
Venezuela	10	-20.7 (8.0)	42.4 (7.5)	2.2 (0.5)	12.7 (4.9)	3.2 (2.1)

¹One fewer election is used for VBLOC because the first election serves as a benchmark.

²Average of adjusted bloc volatility per year elapsed between elections, excluding elections with supply-side interventions.

Notes

1. "Parties" are defined here in the simplest, most literal sense, as organizations that contested legislative elections and showed up in the election returns I am using. The total number of parties is so large due to the plethora of microparties that have existed in Argentina and Venezuela, which each contributed more than 300 parties to the total. The approximate numbers of parties for the other countries are 57 in Bolivia, 75 in Brazil, 93 in Chile, 81 in Colombia (most of which emerged after 1990), 66 in Costa Rica, 47 in Ecuador, 31 in Mexico, 62 in Peru, and 24 in Uruguay.

2. The 15 permanent parties are the Unión Cívica Radical in Argentina; the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario in Bolivia; the Partido Radical in Chile; the Liberals and Conservatives in Colombia; Liberación Nacional in Costa Rica; the Partido Conservador (Ecuatoriano) in Ecuador; the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Partido Popular Socialista (PPS), and Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM) in Mexico; the Partido Nacional (Blancos) and Partido Colorado in Uruguay, and COPEI and Acción Democrática in Venezuela. No party contested all national legislative elections held in Brazil or Peru.

3. Political parties are not always the most natural and obvious units. In Uruguay and Colombia, as well as Italy, Japan, and a few other countries, it is sometimes argued that factions are the basic building blocks of the party system. But because well-defined factions do not exist in many Latin American countries, no cross-national analysis can meaningfully compare factions. In Chile the conventional wisdom is that ideological tendencies--left, center, and right--are more basic than the specific parties that happen to represent them in any given election. The analysis of such tendencies can produce meaningful comparisons, but it should not preclude comparisons at the more specific level of parties where it is theoretically appropriate, because this is possible in all Latin American countries, too.

4. For some theorists, however, the availability of data is not the issue. Sartori, for example, argued that there are empirical discontinuities between party systems above and below a numerical threshold of about 5 "relevant" parties (Sartori 1976, 132). These are, in his view, differences in kind rather than differences in degree, which means that categorical measures are most appropriate. It may well be true, as Sartori claimed, that there is a distinct dynamic, such as polarized pluralism, that is common to all party systems that exceed a certain threshold of fragmentation. But this is a bold assertion about empirical relationships, and one that is not intuitively obvious. Shouldn't a 7-party system experience worse polarized pluralism than a 5-party system? Might not a 4-party system experience a similar dynamic under some conditions? Assertions to the contrary should be tested, not hardwired into the very measures one is using to test them. The best way to test this claim would be to measure fragmentation with continuous data, which election returns make feasible, and then check to see whether the relationship is linear, nonlinear, or discontinuous; and if the latter, what the best cutpoints for classification are.

5. Obviously, this classification ignores variation within each bloc. This problem is due entirely to data limitations. If enough information had been available to place the several hundred parties involved on an ideological spectrum with any accuracy, I would have done that instead as a matter of methodological principle, to conserve as much information as possible. One cannot, unfortunately, conserve information that does not exist.

6. A complete description of the classifications is probably forthcoming as a Working Paper from the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame, and will be available on request.

7. I am deeply indebted to the country specialists who, without compensation, took the time and effort to comment on my draft classification. They are, for **Argentina**: Marcelo Leiras, James McGuire, Guillermo O'Donnell, Scott Mainwaring, and Edward Gibson; **Chile**: Aníbal Pérez Liñán, Iván Jaksic, and Manuel Antonio Garretón; **Colombia**: Pablo Abitbol, Ronald Archer, David Bushnell, Robert Dix, Jonathan Hartlyn, Gary Hoskin, Francisco Leal Buitrago, and Steven L. Taylor; **Costa Rica**: Fabrice Edouard Lehoucq, Mitchell Seligson and Cynthia Chalker, Deborah Yashar, Manuel Rojas Bolaños, John Booth, and Jorge Vargas; **Ecuador**: J. Samuel Fitch and Andrés Mejía Acosta, who also supplied copies of published classifications by Fernando Bustamante, Luis Verdesoto Custode, and E. Durán; **Mexico**: John Bailey, Roderic Ai Camp, Xochitl Lara Becerra, Soledad Loaeza, Alonso

Lujambio, Kevin Middlebrook, Juan Molinar Horcasitas, and Esperanza Palma; **Peru**: Cynthia McClintock, Charles Kenney, Felipe Ortiz de Zavallos, Carol Graham, and David Scott Palmer; **Uruguay**: David Altman, Rossana Castiglione, and Juan Rial; **Venezuela**: Brian Crisp, José Molina Vega, David J. Myers, Juan Carlos Navarro, Juan Carlos Rey, and Luis Gómez Calcaño. Unfortunately, no one replied in detail to my queries on **Bolivia**. I have received replies on **Brazil** from Scott Mainwaring, David Fleischer, Barry Ames, and Timothy Power, but have yet to reconcile them.

8. If no specialist suggested revision of a party's classification, I retained my original one. If one or two experts suggested revisions but the majority did not, I usually kept the original classification. In a few cases, particularly knowledgeable experts were especially persuasive and changed my mind, leading me to change a classification over the implicit objections of a silent majority. So far I have not consulted the experts about these reclassifications, so they are in no sense responsible for the classifications presented here, although their advice is greatly appreciated.

9. The classifications of these parties were: Peronists SCL 1948-85 and SC 1987-95; Liberals SC; Conservatives XCR 1931-78 and SCR 1982-94; PUSC XCR; PRI SCR 1961-67, SCL 1970-73, SC 1976-79, and SCR 1982-94; Blancos SCR 1917-93; Colorados SCL 1917-66 and SC 1971-93.

10. I am not commenting here on the pre-1964 party system because I plan to reclassify some of the personalist vote in a later draft.

11. Rae's index, which was also used in Remmer (1991), is equal to the sum of the changes in party shares, and is therefore simply the Pedersen index doubled.

12. The classified vote is simply the vote for parties that could be classified in this project. Rather recalculate the vote shares for all parties or blocs before calculating ENB, ENB_t was first calculated using percentages of the total valid vote and then divided by $(1-U_t/100)^2$, which is mathematically equivalent. U_t is the percentage of the vote won by unclassified parties in election t .

13. To be fair, however, the relatively leftist party systems of Brazil 1990, Chile 1941, Colombia 1990b, Ecuador 1988, Mexico 1970, Peru 1978 and 1985, and Venezuela 1958 were not followed by coups, and coups did occur in Argentina 1930, Bolivia 1979 and 1980, Colombia 1948, Ecuador 1972, Peru 1968 and 1992, Uruguay 1973, and Venezuela 1948 in the absence of party systems skewed toward the left. I suspect that MLRP reflects the mean tendencies correctly, but the empirical relationship between left-right positions and coups is not a simple one.

14. It has been well documented that Argentine women, who were enfranchised only in 1946, voted disproportionately Peronist (McDonald and Ruhl 1989).

15. In Mexico some of the "ideological" voting may have more to do with ideas about the wisdom of turning out the official party than it does with the usual left-right issues. See Domínguez and McCann (1996).

16. Counting the true number of blocs is even more complicated than this because they do not necessarily hold still. There may be secular changes in the number of blocs, which could be caused by the expansion of the suffrage, the impact of transnational diffusion, learning from the country's own experiences, or successful leadership following splinters, mergers, and the founding of new parties.