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THESIS

**DESIGNED TO FAIL: PROPORTIONAL
REPRESENTATION AND PRESIDENTIALISM
IN LATIN AMERICA**

by

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June 2020

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**DESIGNED TO FAIL: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND
PRESIDENTIALISM IN LATIN AMERICA**

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ABSTRACT

Operating under the assumption that proportional representation (PR) systems strengthen rather than undermine democracies, scholars have largely ignored the question of how this particular system interacts with presidentialism to shape stability outcomes. This thesis challenges that understanding. It argues that presidentialism, in interaction with PR for legislative elections, reduces coalition-formation incentives and makes inter-branch conflict in Latin American democracies more likely. Through a cross-regional comparative analysis and case studies on the Chilean and Venezuelan democratic experiences, this thesis shows that presidential systems experience higher levels of conflict when not subject to the systematic coalition incentives regularly produced by parliamentary or plurality-presidential systems. It also indicates that institutional factors can shape governing coalitions, independent of traditional political divides. Without electoral incentives to coalesce policy visions before elections or institutional mechanisms to ensure the formation of a majority coalition after the election, PR-presidential systems often create a multiparty result that is especially prone to inter-branch conflict and political crisis.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Democratic Action Party
CODE	Confederation of Democracy
COPEI	Social Christian Party
FND	National Democratic Front
MAS	Movement toward Socialism
MMP	Mixed-member Proportional System
PCV	Venezuelan Communist Party
PR	Proportional Representation
URD	Democratic Republican Union

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I. RETHINKING PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACIES

Latin American republics were born in the age of Enlightenment. Liberal thought around the world influenced the independence movements of the 19th century and instructed the founding constitutions of these newly-formed nations. Though Latin Americans settled on presidents to replace their dethroned rulers, the constitutions they created were not simply imitations of the North American experiment.¹ Rather, Latin American constitutional designers borrowed significantly from Europe's own developing democratic systems.² Latin American presidents would supplant monarchs, differentiated by derived popular mandates and fixed terms, but would otherwise have powers that were as similar to European heads of state as they were to U.S. presidents.³

While most European regimes would evolve over time into parliamentary systems as monarchical powers commonly became circumscribed, Latin Americans instead saw the power of their executives grow relative to their assemblies.⁴ However, these diverging experiences did not stop Latin American republics from continuing to mimic European practices. Eventually, countries throughout Latin America would adopt proportionally representative (PR) elections for their assemblies, copying European systems that incorporated an array of ideological preferences into their parliamentary governments. While scholars have lauded European parliaments under PR for their stability and representativeness, presidential systems in Latin America have not been so praised. Rather,

¹ Matthew Shugart and John Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

² Tom Ginsburg, Jose Cheibub, and Zachary Elkins, "Latin American Presidentialism in Comparative and Historical Perspective," *Texas Law Review* 89, no. 7 (June 2011): 1720; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 6.

³ Ginsburg, Cheibub, and Elkins, "Latin American Presidentialism in Comparative and Historical Perspective," 1720; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 6.

⁴ Ginsburg, Cheibub, and Elkins, "Latin American Presidentialism in Comparative and Historical Perspective," 1718.

the Latin American experience instead has become a cautionary tale warning of overly empowered executives and societies not suited for democracy.

What remains unclear is whether particular constitutional designs that excel for the European tradition fit appropriately in Latin American presidential systems. In particular, is PR equally compatible within a presidential system as it is within a parliamentary system? The presidential system of the United States has maintained plurality elections and winner-take-all districts for its legislature, encouraging pre-election coalitions that compel a two-party system. Parliamentary systems in Europe require a post-election majority coalition to form the executive. In Latin-American presidential systems, PR elections may make the formation of broad coalitions less automatic and less stable than those incentivized through these alternate constitutional designs.

Operating under the assumption that proportional representation systems strengthen, rather than undermine democracies, scholars have largely ignored the question of how this particular system interacts with presidentialism to shape stability outcomes. This thesis challenges that understanding. It argues that presidentialism, in interaction with PR for legislative elections, reduces coalition-formation incentives and makes an inter-branch conflict in Latin American democracies more likely. I posit that the process that most Latin American countries use to elect their legislative and executive branches impedes the institutionalization of the checks and balances required to sustain the legitimacy of democratic governments, increasing the frequency of inter-branch conflict and constitutional crisis. I first test this argument through a comparative study of Latin American democracies during the era defined by the third wave of democratization. This study illustrates the correlation between an electoral outcome unique to PR-presidential systems and higher levels of inter-branch conflict. The thesis then turns to two case studies to evaluate the causal linkages between coalition patterns and political crisis. Both Chile and Venezuela provided long periods of democratic rule with clear and significant variations in stability outcomes. Understanding the evolution of coalition outcomes during this variation sheds light on whether instability led to coalition breakdown or whether coalition breakdown led to instability.

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DISCUSSION

Despite the long tradition of democratic inspiration throughout the Americas, the road to democratic consolidation in Latin America has been troubled. While opinion polls illustrate that Latin Americans have maintained their favorable views of democracy in the abstract, the same polls also divulge frequent concerns with the effectiveness and quality of their own particular democratic governments.⁵ Instead of growing stronger, Latin American democracies have been plagued by street demonstrations and inter-branch crises.⁶ The experience in Latin America seemingly contradicts the assumption that, as long as democratic regimes simply endure, democratic institutions will strengthen over time.⁷

There may be nothing more important to the security of the United States than the success of its allies' democracies. Stable and well-functioning democracies have been one of the surest signs of international alignment with the United States and the embracing of shared democratic principles makes international peace more likely.⁸ Shared democratic values tie the Latin American region to the United States, promoting strategic partnerships in the hemisphere and enhancing U.S. security.⁹ However, unrepresentative governments can promote popular discontent that not only threatens democratic institutions but also the values attached to them. In the worst cases, inter-branch crisis can promote democratic breakdown entirely, severing shared democratic bonds and potentially leaving Latin American countries vulnerable to authoritarian impulses and the influence of adversary world-powers such as Russia and China.

⁵ Arturo Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (October 2004): 6, ProQuest.

⁶ Gretchen Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2; Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," 11.

⁷ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 152.

⁸ Bruce Russett, "The Fact of Democratic Peace," in *Debating the Democratic Peace*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 58–81.

⁹ White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2017.pdf>.

Repeated democratic crises also risk serving as kindling for a global movement that questions the efficacy of the liberal order. Latin American republics have repeatedly fought for liberal institutions, overcoming monarchs, dictators, and Marxists, most recently embracing a third wave of democratization at the end of the 20th century. Whether Latin America will continue on this wave or embrace an illiberal turn may depend on whether or not democratic governments can finally live up to the democratic vision that has historically inspired the region. This study indicates that the institutional designs of Latin American countries (and perhaps other countries such as Afghanistan that have incorporated PR into presidential regimes) have them fighting an uphill battle to form a stable and representative democratic government. Latin America, as well as constitutional designers around the world, can gain by further understanding how commonly accepted optimal practices, such as PR, fit within diverse democratic systems. In their constitutions, Latin American nations chose presidential governments while incorporating proportionately representative legislatures common to parliamentary systems. This study helps to determine the implications of that decision.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many approaches have sought to explain the causes of inter-branch crisis and subsequent political instability in Latin America. Preeminent arguments to explain the high frequency of political crisis include a particular Latin American cultural inclination that yields dominant executives, presidents allotted too much legislative power, and presidents that are too weak politically to effectively rule.¹⁰ However, by and large, this literature tends to take for granted the role of institutional design in shaping the onset of crises, assuming this to be a constant rather than dynamic variable. In particular, it neglects the increased variation in coalition arrangements made possible by incorporating PR legislative elections within presidential systems.

¹⁰ Hugh M. Hamill, *Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992); Guillermo A. O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no.1 (January 1994) 55–69, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1994.0010>; Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted"; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*.

1. Cultural Conflicts with Democracy

A Latin American cultural preference for authoritarian leadership often filters through the subtext of even more nuanced discussions of Latin American government. While some directly single out an emphasis on family hierarchies, ties to Catholicism, or a prevalence of *machismo* masculinity in explaining the supposed Latin American partiality for authoritarian government,¹¹ others who point to more complex factors that drive inter-branch conflict and political crisis also describe a Latin American cultural proclivity for strong leaders.

Guillermo O'Donnell, in his argument outlining *delegative democracy*, describes how legacy thinking contributes to the stubborn perseverance of a system in which “whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office.”¹² According to O'Donnell, a perpetual cycle of social and economic crisis leads Latin American constituencies to seek not just a new government, but a *salvador de la patria* (savior of the country) that can unilaterally pull the country from the brink of disaster.¹³ With a conception of the proper exercise of executive authority based on authoritarian leaders of the past, Latin Americans, O'Donnell argues, seek presidents who operate independently of stymieing democratic practices.

Arturo Valenzuela, in his critique of presidentialism in general, also bluntly describes a Latin American attachment to strong leaders, writing: “The overwhelming symbolic authority attributed to presidentialism leaps out from the pages of the region’s history and bestrides its politics like a colossus.”¹⁴ He, like O'Donnell, argues that presidents in Latin America are seen as the single true voice of the electorate, a belief that often encourages the president to bypass perceived encumbering democratic frameworks

¹¹ Hamill, *Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America*.

¹² O'Donnell, “Delegative Democracy,” 59.

¹³ O'Donnell, 65.

¹⁴ Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 16.

like legislatures. “The heavy symbolic trappings carried by the head of state,” Valenzuela describes, “combined with often-overblown folk memories concerning powerful and nondemocratic past presidents, lead citizens to expect that a leader must fix the country’s problems or face bitter charges of incompetence and corruption.”¹⁵

2. Overly Powerful Presidents

Another leading theory for a highly volatile political landscape in Latin America argues that their presidents have too much legislative power. O’Donnell laments the lack of horizontal accountability on the executive in Latin America, where presidents can too easily use an electoral mandate to supplant the legislature and overrun the judiciary. Valenzuela places the blame for democratic fragility on the presidential system itself, instead arguing in favor of parliamentary systems that make the executive branch responsible to the legislature. Rather than needing to get rid of presidentialism in general, as Valenzuela argues, Matthew Shugart and John Carey maintain that a properly designed presidential system which sufficiently limits executive authority can be advantageous to democracy.¹⁶

Shugart and Carey do agree that more powerful presidencies are especially problematic.¹⁷ They contend that successful constitution designs for presidential systems must ensure that the legislative powers of the president are specifically delineated and thoroughly circumscribed.¹⁸ Shugart, in collaboration with Scott Mainwaring, found this especially important in systems in which the president does not have stable congressional support. “Having weaker executive powers,” they claim, “also means that cases in which presidents lack reliable majorities are less likely to be crisis-ridden, since the president has fewer tools with which to try to do an end run around the congress.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Valenzuela, 12.

¹⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 286.

¹⁷ Shugart and Carey, 16.

¹⁸ Shugart and Carey, 286.

¹⁹ Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, Conclusion, in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 436.

3. Presidents without Support

In their observation that presidential powers must be limited in minority governments, Shugart and Mainwaring joined a chorus of scholars who discuss the hazardous byproducts of a fragmented political system. Indeed, Gretchen Helmke claims that “it is difficult to find any serious scholar of Latin American institutions who has not acknowledged the dangers associated with minority government, or pondered the various ways to reduce the fragmentation of party systems.”²⁰ Whether due to weak political parties, as Kenneth Roberts, Mainwaring, and Valenzuela suggest, or a result of poor electoral design, as Shugart and Carey claim, this fragmentation can promote inter-branch conflict.²¹ Valenzuela contends that the challenge of building and maintaining wide support in a system of weak and fragmented parties inhibits the ability of presidents to fulfill their political mandates and promotes a hostile executive-legislative relationship.²² Shugart and Mainwaring argue that presidential regimes function better “when presidents have at least a reasonably large block of reliable legislative seats.”²³

Gretchen Helmke develops her thesis to combine the concerns of strong presidents and weak partisan support. Building off the arguments advanced by Shugart and Mainwaring, she contends that the relationship between a president’s *de jure* power, granted by the constitution, and his or her *de facto* powers, accumulated through loyal party support in the legislative branch, is what drives inter-branch conflict. She determines that “contemporary presidential crises are fueled not by presidentialism per se, but by a certain mix of institutional and partisan features that precludes effective inter-branch

²⁰ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 161.

²¹ Kenneth M. Roberts, “Market Reform, Programmatic (De)alignment, and Party System Stability in Latin America,” *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 11 (November 2013); Scott Mainwaring, “Party System Institutionalization in Contemporary Latin America,” in *Party Systems in Latin America: Institutionalization, Decay, and Collapse*, ed. Scott Mainwaring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 34–70; Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 5–19; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*.

²² Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 12.

²³ Mainwaring and Shugart, Conclusion, 436.

bargaining.”²⁴ Helmke claims that presidential regimes with strong formal powers but weak partisan support are especially crisis-prone, leading to bargaining failures that encourage both legislative efforts to impeach the president and also presidential attacks on legislatures to preempt impeachment.²⁵

4. An Incomplete Case for Weak Presidents?

The solution to the problem of presidentialism in Latin America often seems to be to create a system that reduces presidential power enough to make it effectively parliamentary. Yet this is easier said than done. As various scholars have pointed out, there are no real-world examples of presidential systems transitioning to parliamentarism.²⁶ In fact, the trend in Latin American constitutional reform is to grant the executive more, not less, power.²⁷

In Latin America, even the weakest presidential systems have succumbed to breakdown. The case study of Venezuela had long been used as an example of the success of circumscribed presidents. Shugart and Carey write, “we do not believe it is merely coincidental that the two Latin American countries that are, as of 1991, longest-lived and generally regarded as the ‘most’ democratic, are also two with the most highly constrained presidential powers over legislation... Costa Rica and Venezuela allow their congresses to be quite dominant.”²⁸ The Venezuelan constitution of 1961 significantly favored the legislative branch at the president’s expense, requiring only a simple majority to override a presidential veto. This simple majority override could enable smaller opposition parties to coalesce to effectively shut out the president from the government.²⁹ However, when

²⁴ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 14.

²⁵ Helmke, 17.

²⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 3.

²⁷ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 161.

²⁸ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 277.

²⁹ Shugart and Carey, 278.

Hugo Chávez stormed to power with a significant electoral victory that was unmatched in the legislature, he used his popularity to rewrite the constitution and bypass legislative checks on his power. Helmke describes that “Chávez not only eliminated obstacles to getting his policies enacted, but also deprived the opposition of the major institutional routes it could have potentially used to get rid of him,” suggesting a motivating factor for changing the constitutional order was the insecurity caused by his weak partisan support in the legislature.³⁰ The constitutionally weak presidency of Venezuela was not enough to prevent Chávez from rewriting the constitution of one of Latin America’s most established democracies for his own advantage—in fact it appears to have been a contributing factor.

5. Representative Assumptions

In these important texts on Latin American presidentialism, the assumption that PR best suits the representative needs of Latin America’s diverse electorate goes unchallenged. Works by both Helmke and by Shugart and Carey incorporate the results of G. Bingham Powell’s studies on electoral systems into their considerations of the value of PR elections.³¹ Powell, after analyzing over 150 elections spread across 20 countries, finds a “persistent superiority of the proportional influence designs in linking the citizen median to the policymakers,” (and even more so the influential policymakers).³²

However, Powell’s data set is almost exclusively European. His analysis is thus constricted to a region with a much different electoral and political history than Latin America. More importantly for this discussion, his research does not include an example

³⁰ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 15.

³¹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 11; Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 162.

³² G. Bingham Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 243, 253.

of a proportionally elected legislature with an independently formed executive.³³ The result in a parliamentary system, where PR has found much of its success, still forces broad coalitions post-election. As Anthony Downs notes, “voters in multiparty systems are indeed faced with definite and well-integrated policy sets, but none of these sets will in fact govern them.”³⁴ Despite the ability of a voter to support a more particularistic policy platform in a multi-party system, the need to form a post-election coalition requires a series of compromises, though left to be determined by the political elite rather than the voter. But the conclusions cited by Powell were not forced to reconcile the fact that, in Latin America, the political elites are not required to form coalitions and make these compromises. In fact, in Latin America, the most influential policymaker is often not responsible to the post-election bargaining that Powell argues moderates PR systems.³⁵ Rather, as noted by the scholars of Latin American presidentialism referenced above, it is not uncommon for Latin American presidents to “go it alone,” neglecting entirely the post-election bargaining forces that constrain Powell’s PR systems.

The story particular to the adoption of PR elections in Latin America also colors the common conception that PR elections best promote a diverse and equitable electorate in presidential systems. Laura Wills-Otero explains that PR in Latin America was not adopted to empower the voices of forgotten minorities. Rather, PR was adopted by established political elites to preserve their waning influence, looking to dilute the effects of a changing electorate. Throughout Latin America, Wills-Otero notes, “PR was introduced when the electoral arena changed significantly and threatened the power of the

³³ Powell’s 2000 work cited by Helmke studies: (single-member districts) Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States; (Multimember districts): Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Ireland, Japan, and Spain (France does have an independently elected president, but a cabinet whose formation is dependent upon the legislature); the cases studied in Powell’s 1989 work referenced by Shugart and Carey is the same, other than substituting W. Germany for Germany.

³⁴ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 155.

³⁵ Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*, 233.

dominant party.”³⁶ Whether caused by the growth of the voting population, more effective outside parties, or simply changed voter preferences, the established political leaders believed that changing electoral rules gave them the best chance to maintain power.³⁷ Reengineering the electoral system allowed incumbent parties to avoid total defeat without adapting their ideological preferences to become more representative of the voting population.³⁸

Much analysis shows that there are indeed important positive effects of plurality-based elections, though these studies generally stop short of recommending it as a solution to the problems of partisan fragmentation in presidential systems. Shugart and Carey do desire a form of plurality, rather than majority-runoff, for *presidential* elections to encourage broad pre-election coalitions in presidential contests.³⁹ Helmke too considers plurality-based elections instead of PR as one option to reduce fragmentation.⁴⁰ But these authors balk at a solution that might produce a two-party outcome. Shugart and Carey, instead more concerned about increased representation in government, argue that “voters should have a large menu of partisan choices from which to select, in order that nearly every voter has a party close to his or her ideal policy point.”⁴¹ In their conclusion, these authors fix “a representative assembly elected by PR to ensure ‘fair’ representation of diversity,” as an essential key to a properly crafted presidential system. Helmke, even after declaring a need to narrow the gap between a president’s constitutional and partisan

³⁶ Laura Wills-Otero, “Electoral Systems in Latin America: Explaining the Adoption of Proportional Representation Systems During the Twentieth Century,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2009.00055.x>.

³⁷ Wills-Otero, “Electoral Systems in Latin America: Explaining the Adoption of Proportional Representation Systems During the Twentieth Century,” 37.

³⁸ Wills-Otero, 36.

³⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 286.

⁴⁰ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 161.

⁴¹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 273.

powers, dismisses a move away from PR because she believes it would result in a legislature that represents fewer citizens.⁴²

Shugart and Carey may incorrectly assume that significant electoral fractures often resolve themselves post-election in presidential systems.⁴³ Powell shows that, for his samples, post-election coalition formation results in a government more aligned with the median voter; but Valenzuela describes how, without requirements for post-election bargaining for executive formation, “legislators may ignore programmatic considerations entirely and seek instead to gain as many advantages as possible for specific constituency interests.”⁴⁴ Rather than forcing a stable coalition based on programmatic compromises to ensure executive survival, coalitions in Latin America instead become, as Valenzuela notes, “short-lived and ad hoc, aimed at grabbing the main chance or weathering the crisis of the moment rather than representing a stable majority of legislators.”⁴⁵

Minority governments that try to survive without building a wider coalition may be equally troubled. Though Shugart and Carey contend that a government short of a majority can join with other minor parties to effectively govern, the common addition of a minority president may change these incentives. As Valenzuela notes, “Opposition parties will often stand to get no credit for successful policies but risk blame for failures, giving such parties scant reason to rally to the president.”⁴⁶ O’Donnell observes that not only do opposition parties most often unite against the president but that it is common for the president to lose the support of his own party.⁴⁷

While electoral diversity provides voters with more voices to choose from, Latin American systems often do not translate that into a government that is more representative

⁴² Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 162.

⁴³ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 11.

⁴⁴ Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 13.

⁴⁵ Valenzuela, 13.

⁴⁶ Valenzuela, 13.

⁴⁷ O’Donnell, “Delegative Democracy,” 61.

of the people. More commonly, the government is made up of a minority president (often provided what O'Donnell has described as the "myth" of legitimacy through a runoff)⁴⁸ and a highly fractured legislature. Without widely representative coalitions required to govern, it is not clear how more electoral choice provides for more representative government in Latin America.

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

In contrast to the explanations outlined above, I argue that inter-branch conflict is less likely when a democracy provides systematic incentives to form widely-representative political coalitions, either among multiple parties or simply through the incorporation of broad political interests within a party. Parliamentary systems, through a requirement for a majority-endorsed executive, and plurality-presidential systems, through winner-take-all legislative elections, both naturally encourage broadly-representative political coalitions. However, a government produced by a system that combines PR elections and a president is neither institutionally nor electorally forced to produce such coalitions. Without these predetermined coalition incentives, stable, broadly-backed coalitions may be rare in combo PR-presidential regimes. The evidence from this thesis indicates that inter-branch conflict is made more likely in PR-presidential systems that are not shaped by coalition incentives similar to the ones inherent in parliamentary or plurality-presidential systems.

In Latin America, institutional incentives do not drive broad coalition formation like they do in many other democracies. Electoral outcomes in the region often result in a president who, in the first round of elections, was supported by well short of a majority and a legislature without one party in control. However, as Anthony Downs contends, "every democratic government must somehow obtain the voluntary consent of a majority of voters before it can legitimately govern."⁴⁹ In a parliamentary system, this majority is produced through a legislative coalition that determines the composition of the executive, with new elections threatening if a consensus cannot be achieved. Elections decided by a single-

⁴⁸ O'Donnell, 60.

⁴⁹ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 142.

ballot, plurality rule force efforts at majority formation *before* elections, most often resulting in a two-party system.⁵⁰ In Latin America's multiparty presidential systems, scholars have described how fixed terms often have encouraged opposition rather than support post-election in order to form distinctions with the government. If coalitions are not institutionally incentivized they may never form, undermining the assumption of majority representation as a necessary (though not sufficient) requirement for democratic governance.

Fragmentation that weakens partisan support for the president but strengthens his power relative to the legislature may be a result of the institutional incentives of the electoral system employed. The electoral incentives provided by PR-presidential systems avoid the requirement for pre- or post-election coalition formation that derives a majority consensus. Though Shugart and Haggard argue that constitutional designers intentionally gave executives particular law-making powers to accommodate for disunity in political systems,⁵¹ it can also be argued that the constitutional design itself promotes the disunity that encourages executive overreach into legislative matters. In Latin American political societies, presidents who are only supported by a minority nevertheless have gained an increasing ability to bypass legislatures to impose their policy objectives. Without a requirement for broad, passion-diluting coalitions to govern, the self-interested factions that U.S. constitutional designers warned of often get a chance to rule in Latin America, bringing confrontation rather than compromise to government.⁵²

1. Variation in Coalition Dynamics

An ideal research plan would compare nations with histories and cultures similar in all aspects other than the institutional arrangement that produces either a parliamentary system, a plurality-presidential system, or a PR-presidential system. Despite these diverse

⁵⁰ Maurice Duverger, "The Number of Parties," in *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*, ed. Patrick H. O'Neil and Ronald Rogowski (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 432.

⁵¹ Eduardo Alemán and George Tsebelis, "Political Parties and Government Coalitions in the Americas," *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 3, no. 1 (January 2011): 12, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/876184109/>.

⁵² James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," in *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

outcomes globally, Latin America is dominated by presidential systems that incorporate PR elections for national legislatures. As already discussed, Latin American political systems, much less histories, are neither replications of Europe nor the United States (nor Africa and Asia for that matter), making a comparative analysis of systems across continents difficult. Though Latin America's democracies adopted a PR system after democracy proliferated across the continent, comparing inter-branch conflicts from Latin America's incomplete foundational democracies in the 1890s with the crises that accompanied the resurgence of democracy in the region during the 1980s also would lead to an analysis of countries in many ways more dissimilar than alike. However, though parliamentary and two-party coalition outcomes are not *incentivized* through a standard institutional arrangement in Latin America's combined PR-presidential systems, they still are possible. The combination of PR and presidential systems just makes it much more likely for a broad governing coalition not to exist.

The comparative study in Chapter Two classifies Latin America's political coalitions into plurality, parliamentary, and alternate groupings. Plurality outcomes are further broken down into two subcategories to analyze the increased variation of two-party dominant systems in Latin America. A "Strong Plurality" group includes governments in which the two principal legislative parties and the two principal presidential candidates each receive more than 84 percent of the vote. These regimes most often have two parties that can each compete for independent control of the executive and legislative branches. A "Weak Plurality" group, in which the top two parties and candidates receive at least 75 percent of the vote, is also considered. This system is still indicative of two dominant parties and presidents responsible to healthy pluralities, although independent majorities may be difficult to achieve. The "Parliamentary" category includes governments that form post-election majority coalitions through legislatively inclusive executive cabinets. Lastly, the "Alternate" design coalition, uniquely common to PR-presidential systems, encompasses all other coalition results that cannot be classified into the previous categories.

Despite the uniform utilization of PR legislative elections in Latin America's presidential systems, the historical experience has provided a healthy mix of regimes that

fall within each of these categories. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Colombia were effective two-party systems praised for being stable democratic governments.⁵³ Post-election executive-branch cabinet coalitions similar to a parliamentary outcome also occur in Latin America, even without congressional requirements. Latin American presidents, such as Fernando Cardoso in Brazil and Julio María Sanguinetti in Uruguay, have governed over fractured congressional systems with executive cabinets derived from parties that together constituted a legislative majority.

2. Effects of Variation

The peculiar mixing of PR and presidentialism may encourage inherently unstable governments and increased inter-branch conflict. Shugart and Carey observe that four of the five longest-lived presidential systems as of 1991 (Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, United States, and Venezuela) all have presidents that score low on legislative power.⁵⁴ However, all of these countries, including the omitted Colombia (in 1991), also had plurality based presidential elections that incentivized some pre-election coalition formation. Evidence from studying the inter-branch crises from both a broad group of Latin American countries during a common era, as well as a selection of individual cases over longer periods, can point to whether presidential strength, partisan support, or voter preference for authoritarian leadership is more commonly associated with inter-branch conflict, or rather if coalition formation outcomes are more important.

Under presidential regimes, electorally independent branches may mean that effective coalitions can only be adequately guaranteed through pre-election coalitions best achieved through plurality-based elections. Rather than reducing representation by shifting away from PR systems, adopting plurality elections throughout Latin America may actually encourage a broader base of representation in the governing parties of both branches, making them more electorally secure, more moderate, and less prone to political attack.

⁵³ Gabriel L. Negretto, "Presidents and Democratic Performance in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 65.

⁵⁴ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 158.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

To shed light on the roots of inter-branch crises in Latin America, this study begins by examining the correlation of each coalition type to political crisis, focusing on the era defined by the third wave of democratization. High-frequency inter-branch conflict and the premature termination of constitutionally defined electoral terms both indicate political crisis. Valenzuela, Helmke, and Gabriel Negretto all have accumulated robust data sets of inter-branch conflicts and interrupted presidencies at the end of the 20th century. The expected result is that coalitions that best mimic either a plurality or a parliamentary system are significantly less prone to inter-branch conflict and democratic breakdown than those of an “alternate” design.

The thesis will then turn to the case studies of Chile and Venezuela to evaluate the causal linkages between coalition patterns and political outcomes. In Latin America, a lack of institutional incentives for coalition building means that coalition types can be ephemeral. Without electoral requirements, coalitions are more susceptible to breakdown. According to the theory advanced in this thesis, coalition breakdown is often attached to crisis. However, it may not be immediately clear if this coalition breakdown leads to crisis or rather is caused by it. These case studies help uncover the details of inter-branch conflict and the various contributing forces that lead up to a political crisis. This more detailed analysis sheds light on whether coalition forces were a driving factor to crisis, or whether presidential strength, a dearth of partisan support, or a Latin American cultural proclivity for an authoritarian leader were stronger contributors. The goal of these studies is not to explain the particular crises that led to democratic collapse. Rather the goal is to explain the conditions that made it harder to resolve these crises within the established democratic framework.

Due to the varied nature of Latin American nations, histories, and constitutions, the best way to control for the multitude of factors that can contribute to any one crisis is by analyzing individual countries with varied stability outcomes over time. In particular, countries that had been stable for an extended period before significant inter-branch crisis might suggest an immunity that was lost independent of general external shocks. Both Venezuela (with a relatively weak president) in the 1980s, and Chile (with a relatively

strong president) in the 1960s, represented democracies that were arguably consolidated, with strong democratic traditions and entrenched respect for democratic institutions. The precipitous and shocking unraveling of their democracies coincided with the collapse of inter-party cooperation, offering important clues as to whether crisis or coalition breakdown occurred first.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

The next chapter presents the comparative analysis of Latin American democracies from 1978–2002. It begins by discussing the expected results of the study, advancing a theoretical framework that explains why a two-party result may be most conducive to both stability and popular representation in presidential systems. It then reviews the results from the analysis which, as expected, shows that plurality and parliamentary regimes have lower levels of inter-branch conflict and fewer interrupted regimes than those of the “alternate” design. The chapter concludes that broadly inclusive two-party systems are the most likely to sustain healthy presidential democracies.

Chapter III analyzes the presidential system in Chile under the 1925 constitution. This system balanced a fragmented legislature with a president through a distinct separation of responsibility that allowed plurality electoral incentives to dominate national political expression. However, electoral and constitutional reform gradually nationalized the congress, bringing the divisions common in the PR-determined assembly to presidential races. The result was an increase in inter-branch conflict as coalitions became more ideologically rigid and as presidents could win office with narrower popular appeals.

Chapter IV turns to Venezuela to assess political coalitions throughout its democratic period under the 1961 constitution. The harsh lessons from the nation’s initial failings with democracy were sufficient to ensure elite partisan compromise and post-election coalitions to protect the democratic regime through its transition from military rule. However, once that transition was assured, presidential incentives took over and post-electoral coalitions broke down, taking the consensual multiparty system with it. The raised stakes of presidential elections, along with their plurality nature and concurrent legislative elections, subsequently encouraged the dominance of two parties in 1973. However, the

PR system did not require these parties to compete for majority support to protect their dominant positions. The subsequent alternation in leadership of two major parties each unable to produce an electoral majority created a representation crisis that threatened the democratic regime, forcing a reversion to a multiparty system in 1993 (though one still without the post-election coalition incentives that built consensus during the country's democratic transition).

Chapter V draws on conclusions from the research and discusses general lessons learned from Latin America's experiences with presidential democracy.

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II. INSTITUTIONAL ALTERNATIVES IN LATIN AMERICA: SUCCESS AND FAILURE DURING DEMOCRACY'S THIRD WAVE

Although all Latin American presidential systems select assemblies using PR elections that favor multiple parties, some electoral outcomes reflect a two-party result common to plurality-presidential systems while others see post-election coalitions, similar to those produced in parliamentary governments, built by the president in his or her cabinet. By further categorizing Latin American governments based on whether they reflect plurality-presidential outcomes, parliamentary outcomes, or instead remain uniquely identifiable as multiparty presidential systems, we can gain a better understanding of the implications of multiparty constitutional designs on the stability of presidential democracies. Using Latin American electoral results and post-election coalition data, this chapter will sort democratic administrations from 1978–2002 into Plurality (Strong and Weak), Parliamentary, or Alternate groups and analyze the propensity for political conflict within each category. The chapter will begin, though, by providing a theoretical framework that will lay out the expectation that governments are more stable when broad coalitions are deliberately built, either by pre- or post-electoral arrangement. It will also explain how plurality- and parliamentary-style presidential governments institutionalize such broad coalitions while more traditional multiparty presidential governments do not. As the data will show, Latin America's democracies are indeed more prone to constitutional crisis and inter-branch conflict when their systems most closely reflect the multiparty presidential outcomes that their constitutional designs encourage.

A. INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND COALITIONS IN PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS

The expectation that majority coalitions are requisite for stable democracies is not new. Arturo Valenzuela claims that “the need for a solid capacity to practice the ‘politics of addition’ and build governing coalitions becomes especially apparent when one realizes how many failed Latin presidents have been bereft of *prima facie* majority support.”⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 13.

Valenzuela and others argue that Latin America's fragmented body politic can only produce consistent majority coalitions by adopting parliamentary systems "where the country's future is not at the mercy of a president who was either elected for a fixed term without a majority mandate or who has lost a majority mandate."⁵⁶ G. Bingham Powell, who argues that PR systems better represent a diverse constituency by electorally rewarding multiple parties, does so under the assumption that distinct political groups will then be reconciled in "an arena of shifting policy coalitions," in which a majority of elected officials resolve their differences to form a compromise government.⁵⁷

As many advocates of parliamentary democracies point out, however, presidential systems inhibit the bargaining that promotes broad coalitions. Valenzuela describes that presidents are not only empowered by an individual electoral mandate that makes them reluctant to cede power to legislative competitors, but outside parties also have little to gain by joining a coalition that supports policies for which the president alone will receive credit.⁵⁸ Juan Linz notes the "exceptional" and "unsatisfactory" nature of multiparty coalitions in presidential governments and warns of presidentialism as a system that can leave "more the 60 percent of voters without representation." since no institutionalized mechanism ensures the brokering of a majority coalition.⁵⁹ Too often for these authors, presidents come to hold a nation's highest office without the popular backing of a democratic majority.

However, just because broad coalitions are not mandated through a specific institutional design does not mean that Latin American governments will not produce them. As the data will show, Latin American presidents do at times look to use their cabinet positions to build legislative alliances that can facilitate the implementation of their

⁵⁶ Arturo Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, ed. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 1990), 79.

⁵⁷ Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*, 6.

⁵⁸ Valenzuela, "Latin American Presidencies Interrupted," 13.

⁵⁹ Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 19, 69.

political agenda. Additionally, as Marisa Kellam observes, pre-electoral coalitions are actually commonly formed during Latin American presidential elections. In studying over 77 elections, she finds that more than one in three presidential candidates able to gain above 10 percent of the vote (in the first or only round) were part of a coalition, and that nearly half of the winning candidates came from coalitions.⁶⁰

However, there are often limits to the binding power of the pre- and post-electoral coalitions commonly seen in Latin America's presidential systems. Although presidents may build legislatively representative cabinets similar to what is required of prime ministers, an individual electoral mandate and a fixed term provide presidents an independence from the assembly not shared by parliamentary heads of government. Additionally, the common use of presidential runoffs throughout the region actually causes most pre-electoral coalitions observed by Kellam to remain too narrow to produce first-round majorities. Though a second-round runoff guarantees the victor over 50 percent of the vote, it does not reflect a real coalition of parties or even the true support of the majority.⁶¹ Rather, a second-round election may simply force voters to choose between two candidates they were initially opposed to, creating a victor who may not again be able to achieve a majority backing any time after election day.⁶²

Defenders of presidential systems generally acknowledge these shortcomings and argue for institutional arrangements that can help to address them. As described in Chapter I, Shugart and Carey desire plurality-based presidential elections that encourage presidents to broaden their platforms to gain wider bases of popular support.⁶³ Gretchen Helmke and Scott Mainwaring contend that presidents need to be able to win broad legislative support

⁶⁰ Marisa Kellam, "Why Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Presidential Systems?" *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (April 2017): 393, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123415000198>.

⁶¹ Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" 21.

⁶² Kellam, "Why Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Presidential Systems?" 393.

⁶³ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 286.

to prevent political conflict,⁶⁴ and Mark Jones argues that, in presidential regimes, a “system with two major parties is desirable” in order to avoid partisan deficits in the assembly that are too great for presidents to overcome.⁶⁵ However, these authors also advocate for a moderate level of multipartism in the legislature to ensure what they consider to be a more accurate representation of political interests in elected office.

Even those who acknowledge the dangers of fractured legislatures in presidential systems nevertheless reject the adoption of plurality legislative elections to complement winner-take-all presidents.⁶⁶ Jones, an advocate for presidential systems that favor the development of two main parties, nevertheless argues against single-member plurality districts (SMPDs) that are known to favor a two-party result. Jones worries that SMPDs lead to the marginalization of the second most popular party, the exclusion of smaller parties from government, the increase in gerrymandering, and a decrease in partisan unity due to an increased tendency for members of congress to “represent the interests of their district at the expense of those of the president/party.”⁶⁷

B. RETHINKING THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

The conception that a two-party system provides for less representation in presidential systems than a PR system misunderstands the nature of these alternative designs. A central insight from Kellam’s findings is that pre-electoral coalitions do not require parties to abandon their positions, but rather are formed with the intent of advancing their particular agendas.⁶⁸ Although cabinet positions and other governmental spoils are

⁶⁴ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*; Scott Mainwaring, “Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination,” *Comparative Political Studies* 26, no. 2 (April 1993): 198–228, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414093026002003>.

⁶⁵ Mark P. Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1995), 10.

⁶⁶ Mainwaring, “Presidentialism, Multipartism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination,” 212; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 286; Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 162.

⁶⁷ Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*, 79–80.

⁶⁸ Kellam, “Why Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Presidential Systems?” 392.

effective bargaining tools *after* elections, pre-electoral coalitions form because, according to Kellam, “parties can identify and support presidential candidates who are willing to compromise on policy and, if elected, would be most likely to pursue a policy agenda that they find favorable.”⁶⁹ While parties within a pre-electoral coalition can maintain separate identities, such coalitions may also encourage parties to merge and form a larger and more internally diverse political organization under a common banner.⁷⁰

Although Duverger points out that electoral arrangements which promote two-party outcomes severely limit third-party competition, this does not mean that two-party systems ignore the policy preferences of substantial segments of the electorate. Because of the electoral incentives provided by winner-take-all districts, the parties are encouraged to incorporate rather than ignore outlying constituencies. As Downs describes, “since the only way to ensure a plurality against all opponents is to win a majority of votes, small parties tend to combine until two giants are left, each of which has a reasonable chance of capturing a majority in any given election.”⁷¹ Rather than viewing a two-party system as one in which two parties dominate at the expense of alternate ideological positions, a more accurate description is that two-party systems require the internal balance of many policy positions in a single party (policy positions that would otherwise be expressed by multiple parties in a PR system) to maximize electoral success. The incentives of plurality systems encourage political bargaining not unlike what one would expect to see in a PR parliamentary system, only the electorate votes on the end result of the bargaining process, not just the inputs into the system.

The question remains whether plurality incentives actually force the major parties in two-party systems to represent various policy interests or if they can simply race toward the center, taking for granted all other policy preferences behind them. Some claim that, in a two-party system, the competition for the median vote eventually makes the parties

⁶⁹ Kellam, “Why Pre-Electoral Coalitions in Presidential Systems?” 407.

⁷⁰ Kellam, 392.

⁷¹ Anthony Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” *Journal of Political Economy* 65, no. 2 (April 1957): 145, <https://doi.org/10.1086/257897>.

indistinguishable from one another. However, Downs shows that this assumption does not necessarily hold. “In a two-party system,” he writes, “if either party moves away from the extreme nearest it toward the other party, extremist voters at its end of the scale may abstain because they see no significant difference between the choices offered them.”⁷² In reality voters may abstain or vote in protest for a third-party candidate if either party moves too close or too far away from a voter’s acceptable policy position, potentially swinging the high-stakes, winner-take-all elections to the opposing party. Because oppositions in two-party systems coalesce and victorious parties cannot rely on low-mandate pluralities, this actually provides significant leverage to each coherent faction within a party.⁷³ If, despite the electoral incentives, a major party continually fails to adapt to the policy preferences of the voters, it will eventually be overtaken by a new party that can more successfully build a broad coalition.⁷⁴ Winner-take-all incentives continually require major parties to adjust in hopes of reflecting the policy preferences of a majority of the electorate or otherwise risk falling to insignificance.⁷⁵

Although broad pre-electoral coalitions dilute the policy preferences available to voters, this, as Downs describes, is no different than what happens when a majority government is formed in a parliamentary system. If a particular set of policy preferences alone are insufficient to produce electoral majorities, a majority government must, as Downs describes, “mix various policies from a variety of viewpoints, espousing many philosophic outlooks imperfectly rather than any one perfectly.”⁷⁶ The common need to form a coalition to garner the indirect support of a majority forces multiparty parliamentary systems to mesh policies of an array of parties into the government, leading to a policy-set that is actually “less definite and less well-integrated than those of the government in a two-party system.”⁷⁷

⁷² Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” 142

⁷³ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 209.

⁷⁴ Duverger, “The Number of Parties,” 433.

⁷⁵ Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” 143, 145.

⁷⁶ Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 155.

⁷⁷ Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy,” 144.

While a requirement for a majority consensus forces most democracies to integrate a wider, though less cohesive, set of policies into the government, this is not always the case in Latin American democracies. Unencumbered by the need to win a plurality and with the impediments to post-election compromise described by Linz and Valenzuela, Latin American presidents often govern unconstrained by broad coalitions. Latin America's multiparty systems, rather than integrating definite policy-sets into a compromise government, often instead promote the winner-take-all outcome that Jones worries about, only without requiring a diverse base of support. When it comes to who does the governing, not only can such an outcome underrepresent *one* losing party (like is seen in plurality-presidential systems), it can shut out of the government many losing parties and, along with them, the voting preferences of the majority of the electorate.

C. EXPECTATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LATIN AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES

Based on these insights, I expect Latin American democracies to be more stable when broad coalitions are built to form a government actually representative of a majority interest. Rather than what many advocates of plurality systems would contend, I expect Strong Plurality outcomes, where the top two parties and presidential candidates dominate the electoral space, to be as stable if not more so than those in which plurality incentives either affect only presidential contests or otherwise leave more space for smaller parties to compete in the legislative arena. Countries that have multiparty dominant competitions in their presidential elections, legislative elections, or both (without successfully building a majority post-election coalition in the executive cabinet) are expected to perform poorly.

This study is limited to governments produced through competitive democratic processes. It requires elections, in line with Robert Dahl's description, to be frequent and fairly conducted, with coercion comparatively uncommon.⁷⁸ This requirement forces the exclusion of both Mexico, which produced a system dominated by a single-party for 71

⁷⁸ Phillip C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is...and is not," in *Essential Readings in Comparative Politics*, ed. Patrick H. O'Neil and Ronald Rogowski (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 180–89.

years, and Paraguay, which maintained its own one-party rule for 61 years, as data points during the period studied.

Additionally, it is acknowledged that the “plurality” and “parliamentary” descriptors of Latin America’s PR-presidential systems really only represent approximations of a true form of such systems. For example, even with the significant dominance of two parties in some Latin American systems, it is extremely rare for there to be no third-party representation in Latin American congressional houses. Additionally, the use of post-election cabinet coalitions to determine effective legislative support requires the assumption that political parties will align with the president simply through the inclusion of a representative of that party in his or her cabinet. In true parliamentary regimes, this alliance is brokered in the assembly and may be undone if the party loses confidence in the executive; in presidential systems, the cabinet arrangement is most often exclusively subject to the discretion of the president and thus may not form as binding a tie to the legislative contingent.

Despite these limitations, these regime-type approximations can provide insight into what institutional designs are more successful in Latin America’s democracies. If presidential systems operate more efficiently with plurality incentives, than they should become more stable when two-party outcomes are stronger. If presidential systems require a multi-party consensus, then those presidents that build inclusive cabinets should be relatively successful. If democratic stability in Latin America is independent of the multiparty nature of its governments, we should see no adverse effects when multiparty outcomes are most dominant.

D. DATA AND RESULTS

This chapter analyzes democratic stability, as measured through inter-branch conflict and early terminations of presidential systems, during the third wave of democratization in Latin America. Using data from 1978 to 2002, Latin American regimes are classified according to the outlined criteria: those that approximate a plurality model (subcategorized into Strong and Weak Plurality outcomes to better analyze current academic debate), those that approximate the post-election consensus of a PR-

parliamentary model, and those that are dominated by multiparty outcomes without such post-election partisan accommodations. “Strong Plurality” results are seen when the top two presidential candidates and the top two parties competing in legislative elections (lower or single house) each receive more than 84 percent of the vote, in line with the definition of plurality from Shugart and Carey.⁷⁹ A “Weak Plurality” category, where top-two results for president and legislative elections are at least 75 percent, allows an analysis of a system with two major parties but which maintains more room for minor parties to independently influence governance. A “Parliamentary” category is formed by governments in which executive cabinets are built to incorporate a mix of parties that together represent a legislative majority. Lastly, an “Alternate” design category is built from systems where the top-two results are under 75 percent for either presidential or legislative contests and where there are no parliamentary-style majority cabinet coalitions.

The comparative analysis done in this chapter draws from data produced by Gabriel Negretto for his study on minority governance in Latin America. Negretto compiles an index of executive-legislative conflict from information in the *Latin American Weekly Report* that provides an informative dependent variable for the purposes of this chapter. This index reflects the frequency of executive-legislative conflict based on the ratio of articles reporting conflict to those with politics as a main or secondary theme.⁸⁰ While Negretto’s index includes the type of legislative-executive conflict typical of healthy democratic processes, such as congressional rejection of presidential proposals or presidential vetoes, it also includes reports of more severe conflicts such as censures and impeachments.⁸¹ The expectation that reports of these types of conflict would become more common the further they deviate from normal practices is supported by the high conflict index associated with early termination of presidential regimes, a separate measure

⁷⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 209; Douglas Rae advances a similar definition for a two-party system, in which two parties combine to win more than 90 percent of the vote with neither winning more than 70 percent alone (see Molina and Pérez, “Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993,” 11).

⁸⁰ Negretto, “Presidents and Democratic Performance in Latin America,” 78.

⁸¹ Negretto, 78.

of political conflict complied by Valenzuela (and also utilized by Negretto). Early terminations are defined as “when presidents were ousted from office after a successful impeachment process; when they decided to dissolve the congress, either legally or illegally; when they were forced to resign after mass protests against the government; or when the government was overthrown by a military coup.”⁸² Overall, there are 13 early terminations of regimes in this data set, described further in Table 2. Electoral results are drawn from Dieter Nohlen’s thorough catalog of elections in the Americas, while post-election coalition data is again drawn from Negretto.

Table 1. Coalition Types and Levels of Conflict in Latin American Democracies, 1978–2002.⁸³

STRONG PLURALITY SYSTEMS				
<i>>84% results for top two parties/candidates in both lower/single congressional house and presidential races</i>				
Country	President	Term	Freq. of Conflict(%)	Early Term.
Chile	Aylwin*	1989–1994	9.8	
Colombia	Turbay	1978–1982	3.5	
	Betancur^	1982–1986	4.6	
	Barco	1986–1990	2.9	
Costa Rica	Monge	1982–1986	4.0	
	Arias	1986–1990	0.0	
	Calderón	1990–1994	0.0	
	Figueroes	1994–1998	0.0	
Honduras	Suazo Córdoba	1982–1986	8.6	
	Azcona	1986–1990	11.9	
	Callejas	1990–1994	3.3	
	Reina	1994–1998	0.0	
	Flores	1998–2002	0.0	
Nicaragua	Barrios	1990–1996	29.3	
Countries	Governments	Avg. Conflict Frequency		Early Term.
5	14	5.6%		0 (0%)

* Multi-party coalition

^ Combined Plurality/Post-election coalition

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⁸² Negretto, 78.

⁸³ Adapted from Negretto, “Presidents and Democratic Performance in Latin America,” 63–92; Dieter Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: Volume 1 North America, Central America, and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Dieter Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: Volume 2 South America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

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WEAK PLURALITY SYSTEMS

>75% results for top two parties/candidates in both lower/single congressional house and presidential races, but not a Strong Plurality system

Country	President	Term	Freq. of Conflict(%)	Early Term.
Argentina	Alfonsín+	1983–1989	4.9	Yes
	De la Rúa	1999–2001	12.2	Yes
Chile	Frei*	1994–2000	8.1	
Costa Rica	Carazo	1978–1982	7.3	
	Rodríguez	1998–2002	0.0	
Dom. Rep.	Balaguer I	1986–1990	0.0	
	Balaguer III	1994–1996	0.0	Yes
	Fernández Reyna^	1996–2000	0.0	
El Salvador	Cristiani	1989–1991	0.0	
Nicaragua	Alemán	1997–2002	0.0	
Uruguay	Sanguinetti I	1984–1989	13.2	
Venezuela	Herrera Campíns	1978–1983	14.1	
	Lusinchi	1983–1988	9.0	

Countries	Governments	Avg. Conflict Frequency	Early Term.
8	13	5.3%	3 (23%)

* Multi-party coalition

+ Strong Plurality from 1983–1985; Weak Plurality from 1985–1989

^Combined Plurality/Post-election coalition

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS

Executive Cabinet Representative of a Legislative Majority

Country	President	Term	Freq. of Conflict(%)	Early Term.
Bolivia	Paz Zamora	1989–1993	11.8	
	Sán. de Lozada I	1993–1997	7.1	
	Bánzer	1997–2001	0.0	
	Sán. de Lozada II	2002–2003	21.0	Yes
Brazil	Cardoso I	1994–1998	12.3	
	Cardoso II	1998–2002	6.2	
Colombia	Betancur^	1982–1986	4.6	
Dom. Rep.	Fernández Reyna^	1996–1998	0.0	
Peru	Belaúnde	1980–1985	10.5	
Uruguay	Lacalle	1989–1994	20.5	
	Sanguinetti II	1994–1999	0.0	

Countries	Governments	Avg. Conflict Frequency	Early Term.
5	11	8.5%	1 (9%)

^Combined Plurality/Post-election coalition

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ALTERNATE SYSTEMS				
<i>Regimes with <75% for either one of top-two candidates for president/parties in congress and without post-election majority coalition in the executive cabinet</i>				
Country	President	Term	Freq. of Conflict(%)	Early Term.
Argentina	Menem I	1989–1995	8.9	
	Menem II	1995–1999	9.1	
Bolivia	Siles Zuazo	1982–1985	16.7	Yes
	Paz Estenssoro	1985–1989	20.5	
Brazil	Collor de Mello	1990–1992	20.7	Yes
Colombia	Gaviria	1990–1994	6.8	
	Samper	1994–1998	6.7	
	Pastrana	1998–2002	3.4	
Dom. Rep.	Balaguer II	1990–1994	0.0	
Ecuador	Roldós~	1979–1981	34.8	
	Febres Cordero	1984–1988	26.6	
	Borja	1988–1992	28.8	
	Durán Ballén	1992–1996	24.2	
	Bucaram	1996–1997	23.1	Yes
	Mahuad	1998–2002	7.8	Yes
El Salvador	Duarte	1985–1989	5.6	
	Cristiani	1991–1994	0.0	
	Calderón	1994–1999	0.0	
Guatemala	Cerezo	1986–1991	12.0	
	Serrano	1991–1993	10.0	Yes
	Arzú	1995–1999	0.0	
Panama	Pérez Balladares	1994–1999	0.0	
Peru	García	1985–1990	15.3	
	Fujimori I	1990–1992	21.1	Yes
	Fujimori II	1995–2000	4.2	
	Fujimori III	2000–2000	25.0	Yes
Venezuela	Pérez	1988–1993	25.3	Yes
	Caldera	1994–1999	10.3	
	Chávez	1998–2000	19.4	Yes
Countries	Governments	Avg. Conflict Frequency		Early Term.
11	29	13.3%		9 (31%)

~ Died in office

Table 2. Interrupted Governments in Latin American Democracies, 1978–2002.⁸⁴

Weak Plurality	Raúl Alfonsín (Argentina, 1983–89): Resigned five months before scheduled end of term. Economic crisis, mass street demonstrations, unable to implement policies that were being criticized by the president-elect. Elected: 48.8–39.1 Congressional vote: 38.6–42.9 Replaced by: Elected successor.
	Fernando De la Rúa (Argentina, 1999–2001): Resigned two years into a four-year term. Economic crisis, violent demonstrations, allegations of corruption. Vice-president had resigned. Elected: 48.4–38.7 Congressional vote: 43.8–35.9 Replaced by: A series of congressional appointees.
	Joaquín Balaguer (Dominican Republic, 1994–96): Resigned after allegations of electoral fraud undercut the legitimacy of his narrowly won third-term. Massive popular demonstrations. Constitutional changes reduced his term in office by two years. Elected: 42.3–41.6 Congressional vote: 39.1–41.9 Replaced by: Elected successor.
Parliamentary	Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (Bolivia, 2002–03): Resigned one year into his second (non-consecutive) four-year term. Massive street demonstrations. Majority coalition disintegrated. Elected: 22.5–20.9 Congressional vote: 22.5–20.9 Replaced by: Vice-president.
Alternate Design	Hernán Siles Zuazo (Bolivia, 1982–85): Resigned three years into a four-year term in accordance with a church-brokered agreement. Economic crisis, hyperinflation, street demonstrations, allegations of corruption. Elected: 38.7–20.2 Congressional vote: 38.7–20.2 Replaced by: Elected successor.
	Fernando Collor de Mello (Brazil, 1990–92): Resigned two years into a four-year term. Economic crisis, street demonstrations, allegations of corruption. Impeached. Elected: 30.5–17.2 (First round) Congressional vote: 19.3–12.4 Replaced by: Vice-president.

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⁸⁴ Adapted from Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 8–9; Jennifer L. McCoy, “From Representative to Participatory Democracy?” in *Unraveling of Representative Democracy in Venezuela*, ed. Jennifer L. McCoy and David J. Myers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 279; Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: Volume 1 North America, Central America, and the Caribbean*; Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: Volume 2 South America*.

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Alternate Design (continued)	Abdalá Bucaram (Ecuador, 1996–97): Resigned six months into a four-year term. Economic crisis, allegations of corruption. Charged with “mental incapacity” by the congress. Elected: 26.3–27.3 (First round) Congressional vote: 20.4–30.4 Replaced by: Congressional appointee; vice-president bypassed.
	Jamil Mahuad (Ecuador, 1998–2000): Resigned two years into a four-year term. Allegations of corruption, massive protests by indigenous groups, military split in support over austerity policies. Elected: 34.9–26.6 (First round) Congressional vote: 23.8–19.0 Replaced by: Vice-president.
	Jorge Serrano (Guatemala, 1991–93): Resigned two years into a five-year term after an attempt to close the congress and arrest members of the Supreme Court. Economic crisis led to confrontation with the legislature. Elected: 24.1–25.7 (First round) Congressional vote: 24.1–25.7 Replaced by: Congressional appointee; vice-president resigned.
	Alberto Fujimori (Peru, 1990–95): Dismissed congress in an <i>autogolpe</i> in 1992. Strong popular support and support from the military. Elected: 29.1–32.6 (First round) Congressional vote: 16.5–30.1–25.0 (president’s party in third) Replaced by: President called for new elections for constitutional assembly.
	Alberto Fujimori (Peru, 2000): Resigned at the beginning of a constitutionally questionable third-term. Contested election, allegations of corruption, scandal with intelligence chief, street demonstrations. Elected: 49.9–40.2 (First round) Congressional vote: 42.2–23.2 Replaced by: Congressional appointee; first vice-president resigned, second vice-president bypassed.
	Carlos Andrés Pérez (Venezuela, 1989–93): Impeached and removed from office at the end of his second presidency (non-consecutive). Economic crisis, attempted military coups, allegations of corruption. Elected: 52.9–40.4 Congressional vote: 43.3–31.1 Replaced by: Congressional appointee.
	Hugo Chávez (Venezuela, 1998–2000): Constituent assembly elected with 94 percent partisan support for the president. Congress dismantled, judges disbarred; assembly threatened to unseat local government officials before international outcry. New constitution written. Elected: 56.2–40.0 Congressional vote: 19.9–24.1 Replaced by: President called for elections in 2000 for president and new unicameral National Assembly.

Elected data (%) indicates top-two candidate electoral results from first- or only-round presidential elections; president’s electoral percentage first. **Congressional vote** data (%) indicates top-two party electoral results in the lower or only chamber of congress; president’s party listed first.

Although the interrupted governments in Latin America during the third wave of democratization were often not breakdowns of democratic system, these events nevertheless are still very concerning. Interruptions of governments signal unhealthy democracy, even if legally accomplished and when removing clearly corrupt presidents. As Helmke describes, impeachment and other similar checks and balances “are designed primarily to serve as a deterrent. Thus, even if presidents who committed misdeeds are appropriately removed from office, we should still be concerned that institutions are failing *ex ante*, at least in this basic sense.”⁸⁵ Moreover, quite often the remedy to political crisis in these cases is far from politically neutral. Many instances of early interruption conclude with outcomes that bypass standard methods of succession and instead change the partisan balance—impeached presidents are replaced by their political rivals instead of their vice-presidents, opposition congresses are disbanded before the end of their terms and reconstituted with members more amenable to the president.⁸⁶ Partisan payoffs encourage politicians to drum up allegations of corruption against their political opponents or claim that individual leaders or branches of government are exclusively culpable for economic crises. The extra-electoral tools provided to check amoral or illegal actions are often used as referenda on an opponent’s political performance and political allegiances instead. Furthermore, these inter-branch attacks also serve to undermine the legitimacy of established procedures and reduce popular attachment to established democratic institutions. Almost always, interruptions during this period were accompanied by widespread popular protest and a breakdown of the popular faith in a country’s democratic institutions.

The data presented in the above tables show distinct trends among the governments of each regime classification. Countries that met the criteria to be classified as Strong Plurality systems reported well-below average levels of inter-branch conflict (5.6 percent) and had no early terminations of their governments. The frequency of inter-branch conflict was in the single-digits for almost all regimes of this type, which included 14 separate

⁸⁵ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 3.

⁸⁶ Helmke, 3.

governments among five nations. The two exceptions to this were the Azcona government in Honduras, at 11.9 percent, and an outlier in the Barrios administration, reopening democracy in Nicaragua after over a decade of Sandinista rule, which alone brought the group average up over two points.

At just 5.3 percent, the Weak Plurality grouping (which included thirteen governments from eight countries) had a similar average frequency of executive-legislative conflict as the Strong Plurality group, but also had three early terminations of governments. Although no single country from this group had a frequency of conflict over 14.1 percent, three governments had reported levels in double digits (of which only one accounted for an early termination in this group). Parliamentary-type regimes reported inter-branch conflict in 8.5 percent of political articles and had one early termination of government. Double-digit levels of inter-branch conflict were observed in 5 of the 11 governments that made up this category, with two reporting levels above 20 percent. As expected, the most common regime type in Latin America during this period was the Alternate design system, which described 29 of 67 governments (43 percent of the total) and was seen in 11 countries. Also as expected, this group had the highest levels of reported conflict, *averaging* in the double-digits at 13.3 percent, and governments in this group failed to fulfill their elected terms nearly one-third of the time (in nine of twenty-nine governments).

The single-country strings that appear in each category are not surprising, as coalitions are often systematically encouraged—a nation's established political arrangements should promote common coalition outcomes, even if not as rigidly as true plurality-presidential or parliamentary systems. The variation in the strength and type of coalitions produced within countries that is observed, however, suggests that institutional mechanisms rather than political culture play the dominant role in their shape. Plurality-type coalitions in Colombia became less common after 1991 constitutional reform made presidential elections decided by majority runoff rather than plurality. Constitutional reform in Argentina in 1994 produced similar results, although fewer governments from Argentina are included in this analysis. However, individual case studies, like the ones in the chapters that follow, will allow a more detailed analysis of the effects that institutional arrangements have on coalition formation.

The single-country variations observed in this data-set also further support this thesis. Although reported levels of inter-branch conflict are relatively low in Colombia, the frequency of conflict among its three Strong Plurality governments is nearly 40 percent less than what is produced when its administrations instead fall into the Alternate design category. Costa Rica's Strong Plurality governments outperform its Weak Plurality governments; Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru's Parliamentary governments, and Venezuela's Weak Plurality governments, all also average lower levels of inter-branch conflict than when they otherwise produce an Alternate design. Even a same president in Uruguay's Julio María Sanguinetti presided over significantly less inter-branch conflict when he built a multiparty cabinet coalition than when his regime barely made the cut as a Weak Plurality system. Of all the cases assessed, there are *zero* nations that on average have less inter-branch conflict with their Alternate regimes than with their Strong Plurality or Parliamentary counterparts.

Although some countries have higher general levels of conflict than others, variation of unrelated endogenous factors can partly be controlled for with the diverse regional sampling provided in this data-set. In assessing the mean level of conflict, outliers on either end of reported stability can mostly cancel each other out; El Salvador and the Dominican Republic weigh against Ecuador in the Alternate grouping, Nicaragua weighs against Costa Rica in the Strong Plurality group. Moreover, some of these extreme measurements may indeed be system induced. Perhaps Ecuador's high levels of inter-branch conflict should not be surprising from a system that produced presidents and leading legislative parties that each frequently struggled to win 30 percent of the vote (and that did not form post-electoral coalitions to make up the difference).

The evidence from above suggests that presidential systems in Latin America supported by broad coalitions are less prone to inter-branch conflict and interrupted presidencies than those that are not. As hypothesized, the multiparty dominant presidential systems of the Alternate regime type are the most likely to be unstable and lead to early regime terminations; these systems are twice as likely to have reports of inter-branch conflict (13.3 percent compared to 6.4 percent for all other regimes during this period) and their governments are three times as likely not to survive to the end of their appointed term.

The difference in the reported inter-branch conflict between Strong and Weak Plurality systems is negligible. However, there does appear to be an increased chance of early termination as the two-party influence weakens. Additionally, the level of reported inter-branch conflict does increase substantially as the electoral percentage of the top two-parties/candidates drops closer to 75 percent, with the frequency of executive-legislative conflict growing to 9.7 percent for those five governments with top-two results under an 80 percent threshold. This evidence calls into question the assumption that some levels of PR are obviously healthier for presidential systems and suggests that engineering a system with exactly the right amount of multiparty expression may be a risky gamble. This also offers insight into the popular acceptability of two-way electoral choices. Despite the suggested lack of representativeness of two-party systems, each of the regimes in the Strong Plurality category survived to the end of their elected terms; popular protests that demanded presidential resignations only took place in systems with heavier multiparty influences.

The data also indicate that presidents that build post-election coalitions reduce the levels of inter-branch conflict and increase the odds that the regime will survive intact until the end of the term. However, the results for this regime type do not indicate post-electoral compromise is better at increasing stability in presidencies than a system that encourages two-party results. Instead, the reported level of inter-branch conflict is on average *higher* for “Parliamentary” systems than those of the plurality categories, while the percentage of early terminations is greater than that of the “Strong Plurality” grouping and nearly exactly the same as is found in a combination of the plurality categories (11 percent–9 percent).

Another insight from this data is that Strong Plurality outcomes not only are very likely to produce majority legislatures for presidents (a “unified government”), providing the partisan support argued for by Mainwaring and Helmke, but they may be even less prone to inter-branch conflict than unified majority regimes in general. Of the 66 governments analyzed during this period, only eight (12 percent) were unified without a two-party influence. On the other hand, of the 14 regimes in the Strong Plurality group, only three were *not* unified governments; the outliers, Colombia in 1982–1986 and 1986–1990, and Costa Rica in 1994–1998, nevertheless were regimes with well-below average

levels of reported conflict. Moreover, while unified governments avoided early terminations, their levels of reported conflict were not better than the plurality groupings (with reports of inter-branch conflict for non-plurality unified governments *higher* than the plurality average, at 8.1 percent). The observed relative increase of inter-branch conflict in multiparty governments that nevertheless provide their presidents a single-party majority is interesting. It suggests that, while higher partisan support reduces the level of inter-branch conflict, a presidential system is nevertheless healthier when the majority government also must contend with a unified and electorally threatening opposition.

Table 3. Efficient Presidential Elections Without Two-Way Influence in Legislative Elections.⁸⁷

Country	President	Cong. Term	Conflict Freq. (%)	Early Term.
Colombia	Samper	1994–1998	6.7	No
El Salvador	Cristiani	1991–1994	0.0	No
Peru	Fujimori	1995–2000	4.2	No
Peru	Fujimori	2000–2000	25.0	Yes
Venezuela	Pérez	1988–1993	25.3	Yes
Venezuela	Chávez	1998–2000	19.4	Yes
Average			13.5%	50%

Additionally, nations with Strong Plurality results in both presidential and congressional elections fare better than countries that provide an efficient, two-candidate race only for president (a solution proposed by Shugart and Carey). Systems that produce an effective two-way race for president, however, do generally coincide with a legislative system that is also heavily influenced by a two-way partisan competition. Of the 28 total presidential elections where the top-two candidates received more than 84 percent of the vote, 22 had at least a weak plurality outcome in the congress. But the six cases that brought about an efficient choice for president without carrying this two-party influence to the assembly appear especially vulnerable to political crisis. Table 3 shows the governments that had their top-two presidential candidates win over 84 percent of the electoral vote, but nevertheless maintained fractured legislatures (with top-two parties combining for less than

⁸⁷ Adapted from Negretto, “Presidents and Democratic Performance in Latin America,” 63–92; Dieter Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: Volume 2 South America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

75 percent of the vote). The average levels of inter-branch conflict in these systems is even higher than those of an Alternate design with less popular presidents, and half of the governments of this type resulted in an early termination of the executive or legislative branch. While plurality elections for presidential contests appear to be beneficial insofar as they facilitate plurality-type results in the assembly, they appear to lose their benefits when this influence fails.

When an effective two-way race for president does not result in a clear split between government and opposition factions in the congress, the data indicate that there is a well above-average likelihood of conflict between the branches. As Helmke discusses, this may be due to the significant disagreement in the electoral mandate for the president and the actual amount of partisan support available to carry out his or her policy programs in the legislature.⁸⁸ In particular, as Samper in Colombia and Fujimori in 1995 Peru were both able to secure single-party majorities in the legislature, Table 3 indicates that political crisis may be especially likely when the president is significantly more popular than any congressional group. With a relative imbalance of popular support, these presidents may try to steamroll divided and unpopular oppositions in congress. Rather, a system that can provide an efficient choice for president without requiring an efficient choice in congress may facilitate the rise of populist leaders looking to break free of the established parties and the constraining democratic institutions in which they hold power.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Although this chapter advances an argument for the benefits of two-party systems in presidential governments, it does not resolve the academic debate over whether presidential or parliamentary regimes are superior. The apparent advantage of the “Plurality” regimes to those of the “Parliamentary” design seen in this chapter does not necessarily equate to a superiority over a true parliamentary government (which, at this time, can only be imagined in Latin America). In Latin American democracies, a majority-representative cabinet can only mimic one outcome of parliamentary systems. The driver

⁸⁸ Helmke, *Institutions on the Edge: The Origins and Consequences of Inter-Branch Crises in Latin America*, 15.

of that coalition, however, remains an independent president with fixed terms rather than an empowered assembly to whom the executive is responsible. Though diverse cabinets in Latin American governments reflect a president's willingness to compromise, the strength of such a coalition remains constrained by the limitations of presidential coalitions discussed by Linz and Valenzuela.

Nor do plurality-based elections guarantee the two-party outcome that appears to benefit presidential systems. Hardened societal divisions may prohibit broad coalitions in certain polities. However, as the case study on Chile will show, the dominance of plurality incentives can encourage coalitions that overcome traditional political divisions, while the influence of PR, especially without a mechanism to force a governing majority coalition, can entrench these same divisions deeper into the political process. The evidence from Latin America suggests that, in order for democratic institutions to thrive, at some point, either before or after elections, broad coalitions must form to span narrow sectoral interests.

Another problem with plurality systems and SMPDs, as noted by Jones, is the potential for political gerrymandering.⁸⁹ SMPDs that promote two-party systems are not only subject to intentional political gerrymandering but give a territorial weight to electoral systems that may create unintentional gerrymandering solely as the result social geography.⁹⁰ With partisan divides becoming increasingly segregated between highly concentrated (and more politically homogenous) urban populations and dispersed (and slightly less politically homogenous) rural populations, this can lead to high numbers of "wasted" votes and electoral outcomes out of line with popular vote totals.⁹¹ However, like many problems in social science, there is a debate to the costs and benefits of such a design. As Shugart and Carey describe, "representativeness" can be described in geographic terms as the "parochial interests of localities," just as easily as it can be

⁸⁹ Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*, 80.

⁹⁰ Jowei Chen and Jonathan Rodden, "Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8, no. 3 (2013): 239–69, <https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00012033>.

⁹¹ Chen and Rodden, "Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures," 755.

described in more ideological terms “as the narrow interests of groups within the society.”⁹² Moreover, a more parochially focused legislature may make inter-party compromise more common and political polarization weaker. Jones’s concern that members of congress do not always align with their party or the president when using SMPDs might actually be an advantage that increases the representation of local constituencies and provides room for the partisan compromises required for effective democratic governance.⁹³

Lastly, building majority or near-majority popular mandates are not sufficient for democratic governments to find success. The ability of the majority to tyrannize the minority has preoccupied thinkers from Aristotle to De Tocqueville.⁹⁴ However, one guard against such tyranny, as James Madison described in Federalist #10, is to force the government to be responsible to as broad an audience as possible.⁹⁵ Broader audiences, according to Madison, dilute the passions of factions and reduce the likelihood that any single group will continuously dominate the rest of society. While Latin American countries cannot easily expand territorially or quickly swell their populations to fit the republican national ideal of Madison’s vision, requiring a government to be formed by a broad majority rather than a narrow minority would be a move in the right direction.

The conclusions reached in this chapter suggest that multiparty presidential systems incapable of institutionalizing broad bases of support, either before or after elections, are especially prone to inter-branch conflict and instability. Governments that can be formed while only representative of narrow interests seem to impede democratic consolidation and political progress in Latin America. If presidential systems continue to be desired in Latin America, the region’s democracies would benefit by promoting broadly backed two-party outcomes. As the following case studies of Chile and Venezuela indicate, Latin American

⁹² Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 9.

⁹³ Jones, *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*, 80.

⁹⁴ Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. T.A. Sinclair, rev. Trevor J. Saunders (New York: Penguin, 1992), 186–92; Alexis de Tocqueville, “Unlimited Power of Majority, and Its Consequences,” in *Democracy in America Volumes I & II*, trans. Henry Reeve (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009) 470–99.

⁹⁵ James Madison, “The Federalist No. 10,” in *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

nations can produce broad political coalitions when systematic arrangements encourage it; but these coalitions easily break apart when the incentives otherwise inherent in multiparty presidential systems dominate.

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III. EXTRAORDINARY TO ORDINARY: POLITICAL COALITIONS AND DEMOCRACY IN CHILE

Chilean democracy in the 20th century was stable when its national politics were shaped by broadly representative political coalitions. For a time, even with a multitude of political parties and the significant political polarization of civil society, electoral incentives in Chile encouraged a national vision endorsed by either popular or legislative majorities. However, the incentives that encouraged such coalitions were not inherent to Chile's multiparty presidential system; rather, they were the biproduct of a fragile institutional arrangement that made Chilean democracy unique. When institutional reforms undermined these incentives, Chile's democracy became increasingly susceptible to inter-branch conflict and political crisis.

Chile's long democratic heritage allows for a clearer understanding of the impact that institutional reforms had on the country's political stability. From 1830 until 1973, Chile remained under constitutional rule for all but thirteen months.⁹⁶ This tradition deepened under the 1925 constitution, as the country's democratic institutions successfully confronted the challenges of economic depression, natural disaster, and political extremism to maintain regular elections and orderly transitions of power. However, in the 1970s, the country's long-practiced democracy fell victim to a suddenly insurmountable polarization of political belief. But the system that collapsed in 1973 was not the same as the one that had successfully negotiated the crises of earlier generations; over time, constitutional and electoral amendments had made it harder to form broad political coalitions that had once been common to the Chilean democratic process. No longer able to bridge polarized ideological divides, Chile's political system itself exacerbated a crisis that would undo the country's storied democracy.

This chapter describes the arrangement that allowed for the formation of broad political coalitions in Chile's multiparty presidential system. It shows that politicians joined across party lines not because these alliances were forced together by the natural political cleavages of Chilean society but because of the institutional arrangements and

⁹⁶ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 40.

electoral incentives that made broad coalitions likely. However, reforms targeted at increasing electoral efficiency also altered the institutional arrangement which facilitated political cooperation. As new electoral rules impeded cross-party alliances, and as the Chilean assembly became a medium for national rather than parochial political expression, partisan fractures encouraged through the legislative PR electoral system filtered into national politics. Without its traditional electoral incentives to form pre-election coalitions or an institutional mechanism that would require a representative government form post-election, political bargains became harder to make and political divisions became further entrenched. As a result, Chile's democratic outcomes came to produce governments neither responsible to a majority consensus nor capable of producing one.

A. WHEN PLURALITY RULED: THE ERA OF COALITION POLITICS

One of the major goals of the 1925 Chilean constitution was to restore to the government a more assertive executive following an era of ineffective parliamentary rule.⁹⁷ As Chilean democracy crumbled in 1973, many pointed to the nation's empowered executive and argued that it was the reason for the polarization and political conflict that doomed Chile's liberal tradition.⁹⁸ However, for much of this period, Chile's presidents labored to build broadly backed popular and legislative coalitions that spanned Chile's historical ideological divisions. Moderated platforms and frequent cabinet reshuffles were common as presidents sought to build cross-party alliances to advance their political agendas.⁹⁹

Initially, a divide between the national interests of the president and the parochial focus of the legislature facilitated inter-branch cooperation. The 1925 constitution restored the president's control over cabinet positions and expanded some of the president's legislative

⁹⁷ Julio Faundez, "In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 305.

⁹⁸ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime"; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*.

⁹⁹ Valenzuela, "Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government," in *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 168.

powers from the previous era, giving the president greater control over the executive branch and national policy.¹⁰⁰ However, the Chilean congress still retained control of the budgetary processes that provided it access to an electorally lucrative system of local patronage.¹⁰¹ While the presidency inherently became an expression of national policy preferences, electoral realities demanded that legislators overlook polarized worldviews to better deliver resources to their districts.¹⁰² With this division of interests, the legislature and the executive became responsive to two separate electoral constituencies. Until 1958, as Shugart and Carey describe, “electoral lists in districts were regularly drawn up for expressly local purposes, rather than for the purpose of providing voters with a set of ideologically coherent policy priorities at the national level.”¹⁰³ Instead, an independent election for president provided a distinct political sphere for national policy debate. While the PR electoral system for members of the Chilean congress encouraged a multiparty result, presidential politics, answerable to its own constituency, remained largely insulated from the multiparty electoral pressures driving congressional outcomes.

This division of political interests allowed broad coalitions that bridged Chile’s fractured political party system to provide voters an efficient choice over national policy. Though the 1925 constitution did not create a presidency that would be chosen by a simple plurality vote, it nevertheless initially created a system that produced similar electoral incentives. The constitution allowed for a president that would be elected to a six-year term by an absolute majority of the popular vote; if an absolute majority was not reached, congress would decide between the two most popular candidates.¹⁰⁴ Because candidates would either have to gain a majority or at least form a coalition that would survive any post-election bargaining in congress (bargaining that was not uncommon due to the parochial rather than ideological focus of congressional members), Chilean presidential

¹⁰⁰ Faundez, “In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970,” 303.

¹⁰¹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 193.

¹⁰² Shugart and Carey, 182.

¹⁰³ Shugart and Carey, 182.

¹⁰⁴ Faundez, “In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970,” 303.

candidates were incentivized to build coalitions that were much more representative than the narrow interests of their own particular parties.¹⁰⁵ During the same period in which Chilean congressional races were competitively contested by anywhere between six to twelve political parties, presidential races most often presented a choice of two competitive candidates.¹⁰⁶

Table 4. Effective Number of Parties in Chilean Congressional and Presidential Elections.¹⁰⁷

Date	N_v	N_p
1931		1.9
1932		2.7
1933	10.6	
1937	6.9	
1938		2.0
1941	7.7	
1942		1.9
1945	6.5	
1946		3.1
1949	7.4	
1952		2.9
1953	11.8	
1957	7.4	
1958		4.0
1961	6.4	
1964		2.1
1965	4.3	
1969	4.9	
1970		3.0
1973	2.1	

Effective number of parties contesting legislative elections (N_v) and effective number of presidential candidates (N_p).

¹⁰⁵ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 182.

¹⁰⁶ Shugart and Carey, 180.

¹⁰⁷ Adapted from Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 180.

This structure produced presidential contests that offered two competing national policy visions, similar to those found in a two-party presidential system. While congressional elections from the 1930s to the 1950s were “highly local, centering on district-specific and even citizen-specific benefits,” Shugart and Carey describe that, “the existence of presidential elections, and especially the early emergence of a plurality character to those elections, meant that parties would need to present a broader focus in those elections.”¹⁰⁸ From 1932 to 1952, presidential electoral coalitions often did just that, winning majorities in three of the five presidential elections (1932, 1938, 1942), with another falling just short at 47 percent of the popular vote (1952).

This broader positioning made presidents flexible in searching for support, even when they were unable to build an electoral majority backing prior to the election. In 1946, for instance, Gabriel González Videla came to office after winning a three-way race with the support of only 40 percent of the electorate. Following his election, however, he built a cabinet of Radicals, Liberals, and Communists that represented 60 percent of the congress. “The president,” Arturo Valenzuela describes, “even sought to bring Conservatives into the government, but they balked at the Communist party presence.”¹⁰⁹ In 1958, an even more divided presidential race gave Jorge Alessandri Rodríguez a narrow 31-percent plurality. However, he too was able to form a majority-representative cabinet for part of his administration.¹¹⁰ Executive-legislative ties were further strengthened in these arrangements by the requirement that party leadership give official permission for party members to join executive cabinets, requiring programmatic concessions from the president for party support.¹¹¹ Moreover, this flexibility allowed for a diverse partnership of parties which, as Julio Faundez describes, “made it possible for all the parties in the

¹⁰⁸ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 183.

¹⁰⁹ Valenzuela, “Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government,” 196.

¹¹⁰ Valenzuela, 196.

¹¹¹ Valenzuela, 194.

Table 5. Chilean Presidential Coalitions: Pre-Electoral Support and Post-Electoral Cabinets.¹¹²

President	Electoral Majority	Legislative Majority Cabinet Coalition	Coalition Partners
Alessandri Palma (Liberal) 1932–38	Yes (55.1%)	Yes (1932–38)	32–37: Democrat, Democratic, Radical, Social Republican, Conservative 37–38: Conservative, Democrat, Radical
Aguirre Cerda (Radical) 1938–41	Yes (50.5%)	No; (Max 48% Chamber of Deputies, 1941)	38–41: <i>Popular Front</i> (Communist, Socialist, Democrat, Radical Socialist) 41: Socialist, Democrat
Ríos Morales (Radical) 1942–46	Yes (56.0%)	Yes (1942–45 <i>Chamber of Deputies only</i>)	42–46: <i>Chilean Democratic Alliance</i> (Radicals, Socialists, Communists), Falangists
González Videla (Radical) 1946–52	No (40.2%)	Yes (1946–48) (1949–50 <i>Senate only</i>)	46–48: Liberals, Communists 49–50: <i>National Concentration</i> (Conservative, Liberal) 50–52: <i>Social Sensibility</i> (Falangist, Democrat, Social Christian)
*Ibáñez del Campo (Independent) 1952–58	No (46.8%)	No; (Max 33% in Chamber of Deputies, 1953–57)	52–53: Agrarian Labor, Popular Socialists, other left and right fragments 53–57: Agrarian Labor, other shifting support 57–58: Agrarian Labor
Alessandri Rodríguez (Liberal) 1958–64	No (31.6%)	Yes (1958–60 <i>Senate only</i>) (1961–63)	58–60: Parts of Agrarian Labor and Democrats, Republican Movement, National People's Movement, Social Christians, Conservative (informally), Independents 61–63: Radical, Conservative 63–64: Conservative
Frei Montalva (Christian Democrat) 1964–70	Yes (56.1%)	Yes ⁺ (1965–69 <i>Chamber of Deputies only</i>)	None
*Allende Gossens (Socialist) 1970–73	No (36.6%)	No; (Max 42% Chamber of Deputies, 1973)	70–73: <i>Popular Unity</i> (Communists, Radicals, MAPU, API)

*Only twice was a president unable to form either an electoral majority or a cabinet representative of a legislative majority. Once was under the Independent candidate, General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, who led a populist, anti-party movement to a 19-point victory before the movement collapsed shortly after the election.¹¹³ The other was under the Socialist candidate, Salvador Allende, whose presidency precipitated the collapse of the democratic regime.

⁺Single-party legislative majority only.

¹¹² Adapted from Valenzuela, "Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government," 197–99; Dieter Nohlen, "Chile," in *Elections in the Americas: Volume 2 South America*, ed. Dieter Nohlen, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 253–93.

¹¹³ Faundez, "In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970," 309.

political spectrum, from Conservatives to Communists, to be part of the governing coalition.”¹¹⁴ Although these legislative coalitions were far from permanent and prone to frequent breakdown, they allowed representation of a diverse interest of society in the executive when the president could not provide that representation alone.

While the legislative priority of delivering political pork to constituents facilitated political compromise across ideological divides, systematic patronage also was expensive. Discontent with run-away spending prompted a series of reforms that upset the fragile coalition system. In 1943, congress sought to constrain superfluous spending projects by passing a constitutional amendment that limited its own ability to increase the federal budget. This amendment gave the president, with strict oversight of an independent comptroller, the sole discretion to introduce bills that called for increases in public expenditure.¹¹⁵ However, by limiting their own ability to direct federal funds to constituents, congressional members reduced the local focus of their offices. The national objectives that drove executive branch policy also determined the allocation of new federal funds. With a reduced ability to control local outcomes, the role of congress became more about approving or rejecting presidential policies than delivering local results.

Although the 1943 reform was not the most expansive reform to the intuitional design of the 1925 constitution, it may have made an immediate impact on coalition politics. Chile’s first truly multiparty presidential election came just three years after the reform, in 1946. Additional reforms in 1958 and 1970 made inter-party coalitions even more difficult to form, leading to the end of Chile’s era of coalition politics.¹¹⁶

B. THE BREAKDOWN OF PLURALITY INCENTIVES

After reaching a peak of thirty-six in 1953, the number of parties competing for seats in the Chilean congress fell drastically.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, it became increasingly difficult to form broad national coalitions in support of presidential candidates. Perhaps

¹¹⁴ Faundez, 307.

¹¹⁵ Faundez, 307, 314.

¹¹⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 182.

¹¹⁷ Federico Gil, *The Political System of Chile* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), 244.

counterintuitively, the coalescing of political parties at the legislative level coincided with an increase in the number of effective candidates for president. In 1958, electoral reforms further reduced the parochial focus of the Chilean congress, exacerbating the like effects of the 1943 amendment. Aided by this institutional reform, the presidential election of 1958 signaled the beginning of a more rigid tripartite split of Chilean national-policy visions (one that many argue is the true expression of Chile's natural political cleavages).¹¹⁸

Prior to the reforms of 1958, congressional candidates often participated in cross-party bargaining to improve electoral prospects. Initially, voters pre-selected ballots created by their preferred political party to vote.¹¹⁹ However, the list of candidates that appeared on this ballot was not exclusive to card-carrying party members. Federico Gil describes that, "some candidates ran at the same time under the banner of two parties that were irreconcilably opposed, perhaps from the two ends of the national political spectrum. At times clericals, anti-clericals, rightists, and leftists all got together on the same [electoral] list, especially in the provinces."¹²⁰ Political pacts between regions allowed a popular candidate from one party to appear on another party's list in one district, while the favor would be reciprocated in another district.¹²¹ With multimember districts, this allowed popular candidates to grow support for parties other than their own in return for support elsewhere. While ideological divisions were important to political coalitions, partisan divisions were in many ways amorphous, allowing individual candidates to shape coalitions based on personal rather than partisan beliefs and interests.¹²² J. S. Valenzuela describes that "local pacts occurred as personal political ambitions took priority over party

¹¹⁸ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime"; Peter M. Siavelis, "Executive-Legislative Relations in Post-Pinochet Chile: A Preliminary Assessment," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Gil, *The Political System of Chile*.

¹¹⁹ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 224.

¹²⁰ Gil, 216.

¹²¹ J. S. Valenzuela, "The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System" (working paper, The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 1995), 28, https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/215_0.pdf.

¹²² Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 50.

interests, as segments of parties disagreed on whether to support or oppose the government, as they discussed which parties should be approached to forge pacts with, or as they decided which presidential candidate to support.”¹²³ This arrangement reduced the need for congressional members to strictly adhere to partisan positions, instead making it common for political candidates to work across party lines to form politically advantageous coalitions.

Importantly, even coalitions based on political calculations and personal ambition encouraged presidential candidates to moderate their political platforms to gain support. Though promises of cabinet positions could help build alliances with other major parties, well-positioned presidential candidates commonly worked to elicit a more diverse range of partisan support by building platforms broad enough to attract the alliance of smaller parties, even without a guarantee of electoral spoils.¹²⁴ Electoral success at the national level most often required inclusive political perspectives which in turn led to more moderate policy positions.¹²⁵ In the 1930s and 1940s, the Radical Party came to dominate Chilean politics by developing moderate policy positions that could attract an array of support. “By providing assurances that policies would not go to any extreme,” J. S. Valenzuela describes, “the Radicals [a center-left political party] even had the ability to draw into the same coalition the Liberals [center-right] and the Socialists and gain the Communists’ electoral support as well, as occurred with the election of Juan Antonio Ríos [in 1942].”¹²⁶ Governed by an incentive to gain the plurality, if not majority of the vote, presidential candidates worked to knead disparate local interests and particular ideological preferences into one broader national vision.

The same forces that facilitated pre-electoral pacts also made post-election coalitions easier to form. Unlike a true two-party system that solidifies pre-electoral coalitions by placing them under a common partisan banner, the coalitions that formed

¹²³ J. S. Valenzuela, “The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System,” 29.

¹²⁴ J. S. Valenzuela, 39.

¹²⁵ Faundez, “In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970,” 307.

¹²⁶ J. S. Valenzuela, “The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System,” 38.

before elections in Chile were often highly transient. As Valenzuela describes, “because pre-election coalitions were constituted primarily for electoral reasons... they tended to disintegrate after a few months of the new administration.”¹²⁷ However, history shows that this breakdown did not much hinder the president’s ability to form new coalitions once in office. Rather, as Faundez describes, “the president of the day always managed to form another coalition to replace the old one.”¹²⁸ To help, presidents commonly reshuffled their cabinets.¹²⁹ In fact, there was nearly as much ministerial turnover during this period as there was when the congress controlled cabinet posts.¹³⁰ Chilean presidents initially proved themselves just as capable of realignment as the parliamentary system that preceded the 1925 constitution—a result no doubt aided by the ideological flexibility and political moderation that brought them to office.

However, faults with the mechanisms that facilitated such political flexibility led legislators to enact electoral reform in 1958. Partisan ballots made it easier for those in positions of power, such as large landowners and employers, to monitor and influence voters, while the arbitrary appearance of many electoral pacts suggested high levels of political corruption.¹³¹ Reforms to address these issues created a unified national ballot that ended the practice of a party-controlled ballot system.¹³² Legislators also formally prohibited electoral pacts in municipal elections and elections for the Chamber of Deputies (while this prohibition was expanded to senatorial elections in 1962).¹³³ To many it seemed that these reforms brought about the changes necessary to rescue Chile’s political

¹²⁷ Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime,” 50.

¹²⁸ Faundez, “In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970,” 307.

¹²⁹ J. S. Valenzuela, “The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System,” 36.

¹³⁰ J. S. Valenzuela, 37.

¹³¹ Jean-Marie Baland and James A. Robinson, “Land and Power: Theory and Evidence from Chile,” *American Economic Review* 98, no. 5 (December 2008): 1739, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.98.5>; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 199.

¹³² Baland and Robinson, “Land and Power: Theory and Evidence from Chile,” 1749.

¹³³ Daniel Hellinger, “Electoral Change in the Chilean Countryside: The Presidential Elections of 1958 and 1970,” *Western Political Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (June 1978): 255, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1291821650/>; Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 216.

processes from its own damning shortcomings. Gil, in his 1966 publication on Chilean politics, describes that these reforms “have brought about the elimination of many vices that marred the Chilean electoral system. Principally, they have put an end to party coalitions in congressional and municipal elections which had led to so many disreputable practices.”¹³⁴

Still, the reforms that better categorized political parties also increasingly segregated them. As Arturo Valenzuela describes, “while this reform succeeded in making pre-election arrangements less ‘political,’ it also eliminated an important tool for cross-party bargaining.”¹³⁵ While more programmatic platforms encouraged by these reforms helped congressional parties coalesce, the new, more ideological policy expression in congress also reified political divisions in Chilean society. Chile’s tripartite electoral division was in fact spurred forward by the electoral reform process: “With the disappearance of many minor political groups,” Gil writes, “the party system [became] tighter and better defined... The trend toward development of three great blocs—the Right, the Center, and the Left—has continued steadily, since its beginnings in the twenties, given impetus by these electoral reforms.”¹³⁶

The sharper ideological divides of the parties made them more policy-oriented, breaking down the rigid separation of interest between the branches that had once made Chile’s multiparty presidential system unique. Increasingly, Chilean legislative elections and presidential elections were competitions over the same interests appealing to common political constituencies. As a result, the multiparty incentives of congressional elections began to shape the divisions of national politics, upsetting the plurality-derived balance that had made Chile’s previous presidential elections an efficient choice between popular alternatives. After the 1958 reforms, the noticeable tripartite split of society became commonly expressed in the nation’s presidential contests. The result was that two of the next three presidents won with the support of only around one-third of the Chilean

¹³⁴ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 231.

¹³⁵ Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime,” 62.

¹³⁶ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 216.

electorate; and though there was a two-candidate race in 1964, it was the result of a coalition of necessity rather than any broadly supported political alignment.

The results of the lone two-way contest that followed the 1958 reform moreover only accelerated the collapse of Chile's coalition system. In 1964, the fear of a socialist presidential victory led to a coalition that made Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Chile's first majority-endorsed president in over 20 years.¹³⁷ However, this coalition was not the result of an inter-party bargaining process. Instead, it was, as Shugart and Carey describe, "a response to the perceived dangers of not forming such a coalition in the presence of ideological polarization"—a danger made more immediate after Socialist Salvador Allende came within a few percentage points of victory in 1958.¹³⁸

Despite the backing of the Right and other anti-communist sectors of society, Frei interpreted his 1964 landslide victory as a mandate for his own political program.¹³⁹ However, without the cross-party working arrangement that had once been typical, Frei found his agenda blocked by a much more nationalized congress, even during the common "honeymoon" period immediately after his inauguration. As J. S. Valenzuela describes, "The winning presidential coalition would normally participate in the new president's first cabinets and compose the initial main nucleus of his legislative supporters."¹⁴⁰ However, this was not the case in 1964, "The centrist and rightist parties," Gil writes, "alienated by the reform proposals of the new President and bidding for a comeback, opposed the Christian Democrats bitterly."¹⁴¹ Rather than moderating his position to form a governing coalition, Frei attempted to govern alone.¹⁴² The gamble paid off. The 1965 congressional elections carried the Christian Democrats to a resounding victory, giving the party the first

¹³⁷ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 63.

¹³⁸ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 202.

¹³⁹ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 306–07.

¹⁴⁰ J. S. Valenzuela, "The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System," 36.

¹⁴¹ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 307.

¹⁴² Valenzuela, "Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government," 195.

absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies in Chile's history.¹⁴³ With just over 43 percent of the vote in a five-party field, Frei became convinced of his mandate and could now count on the legislative support he needed to carry out his policies.

With increased control of the government and a perception of unrivaled electoral support, Frei and his party sought to augment the executive's powers and reduce the reliance on what remained of the traditional multipartisan logrolling that Shugart and Carey had described as the system's "glue."¹⁴⁴ By 1970, Frei and his party pushed through a constitutional amendment that closed the loopholes leftover from the budgetary reforms of 1943.¹⁴⁵ This change further restricted congressional inputs into the federal budget, now prohibiting amendments to bills that did not directly pertain to the bill itself. The result was, in effect, a line-item veto that removed even the president's discretion to bargain with congress.¹⁴⁶ Not only did the congress lose another avenue for localistic expression, but this reform also further reduced the ability for the president and the congress to negotiate across party lines.

This additional reform pushed legislative powers even more to the president, making the presidency ever more vital a position to hold in the country. As Shugart and Carey note, "By 1970 the presidency had been granted such great legislative powers as to characterize the regime by the most dominant of presidencies... Thus congressional elections took on far less import in the actual making of policy, making conflicts less manageable, as the effect was to place ever greater weight on the presidency."¹⁴⁷ Chilean reform had caused ideological entrenchment in parties and raised the stakes for the presidency to such levels that coalition formation became nearly impossible. When the 1970 presidential election came around, the zero-sum nature of the contest prohibited the anti-socialist coalition that had coalesced in 1964. A three-way division of the national

¹⁴³ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 308.

¹⁴⁴ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 202.

¹⁴⁵ Faundez, "In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970," 315.

¹⁴⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 200.

¹⁴⁷ Shugart and Carey, 200.

electorate allowed Salvador Allende to claim the plurality of the vote with just 36.6 percent, a smaller portion of the vote than his losing effort had gained six years earlier.

The constraints on Chile's coalition producing system, first introduced in 1943, grew more debilitating from the reforms of 1958 and 1970. As congressional elections became statements on the desired direction of Chilean national policy, parties became more ideological and less able to compromise. The executive became less dependent upon the legislature to enact its political programs and consequentially less dependent on political coalitions to advance the executive's agenda. While congressional elections became focused on national issues, they became incapable of shaping national policy. Thus, when voters endorsed Allende's opposition 52–44 percent in the 1973 congressional election, the result only further polarized the nation and paralyzed the government.¹⁴⁸ Though Allende's coalition saw an increase in vote share compared to the 1969 and 1970 elections, it won only 11 of the 25 contested Senate seats and 63 of the 150 seats in the Chamber of Deputies—far from enough to build a legislative majority. Instead, the anti-Allende coalition (CODE) coalesced to form both popular and legislative majorities but nevertheless was unable to shape national outcomes. As Shugart and Carey note, Chilean voters were stuck with “a constitutionally powerful president who represented the policy preferences of the losers of that congressional election.”¹⁴⁹

C. INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND THE FRACTURING OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Chile's politically divided society was not a new phenomenon in 1970, even if the intransigence of elite political cooperation was. Despite a massive entrance of eligible voters between 1946 and 1970, the ideological divisions of the Chilean electorate remained mostly constant.¹⁵⁰ The majority of the electorate's middle- and working-class expansion had already been incorporated by the 1930s. Further expansion, starting with women's

¹⁴⁸ Shugart and Carey, 203.

¹⁴⁹ Shugart and Carey, 201.

¹⁵⁰ Hellinger, “Electoral Change in the Chilean Countryside: The Presidential Elections of 1958 and 1970,” 254–55.

suffrage in 1949, followed by the lowering of the voter-age and the elimination of literacy requirements, grew the electorate nearly five-fold by 1970; but these adjustments did not herald massive electoral shifts.¹⁵¹ “Any analysis of electoral politics for this period,” notes Daniel Hellinger, “must account for the stability of the distribution of the vote for different factions despite the massive entrance of new voters into the electoral arena between 1946 and 1970.”¹⁵²

Table 6. Chamber of Deputies Electoral Results by Ideological Bloc, Chile: 1932–1973.¹⁵³

Year	Left	Center	Right
1932		31.9	35.0
1937	15.4	28.1	42.0
1941	33.9	31.0	31.2
1945	23.1	31.2	43.7
1949	9.4	47.1	42.0
1953	14.2	49.0	28.0
1957	10.7	48.6	38.9
1961	22.1	44.4	38.4
1965	22.7	60.3	12.5
1969	28.2	42.8	20.0
1973	34.6	32.1	21.1
Average	21.4	40.6	32.1

Despite the growth of the electorate, the tripartite political division that stalemated the Chilean system in the 1970s was not unusual to Chilean politics. As Gil has described, this tendency was already apparent in the 1920s.¹⁵⁴ Election patterns for the Chamber of

¹⁵¹ Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime,” 40–41.

¹⁵² Hellinger, “Electoral Change in the Chilean Countryside: The Presidential Elections of 1958 and 1970,” 254.

¹⁵³ Adapted from Valenzuela, “Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government,” 174–75.

¹⁵⁴ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 216.

Deputies shows that a single ideological bloc could not command a majority share of the vote until 1965.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, political polarization, even early in the democratic regime, was so pervasive that it would structure people's friendships, school choices, and social lives.¹⁵⁶ "Elections and politics became nation 'sport'," writes Valenzuela, "as parties became so deeply ingrained in the nation's social fabric that Chileans would refer to a Radical or a Communist or a Christian Democratic 'subculture'...even high-school student associations, community groups, universities, and professional societies selected leaders on party slates."¹⁵⁷ However, for most of this era, political coalitions were built capable of bridging these divides. It was not until the reform of Chile's institutional practices that these divisions became insurmountable.

The reforms and amendments that undermined Chile's coalition system were not brought about by a desire to make a more inclusive political system or create a system more representative of Chile's "inherent" political divisions. Rather, in line with Laura Wills-Otero's argument, the evidence suggests that these reforms were initiated based on political calculations by the ruling elite. Baland and Robinson contest that the unified ballot, "with its easily anticipated effects on voting in the countryside, was a calculated gamble."¹⁵⁸ The congressional debate over the bill, transcribed in the Chilean newspaper, *El Mercurio*, points to the political calculus behind the support of the new law. Quoted in the periodical, Socialist Senator Marontes argued that that the law would rectify the corrupt advantage of the conservative landowners in influencing the vote: "if that law [that required voters to openly choose party ballots] did not exist," *El Mercurio* recorded him saying, "instead of there being nine Socialist senators there would be 18, and you [the Conservatives] would be reduced to two or three."¹⁵⁹ However, it appeared that the gamble did not bring the Left the traction that it hoped. "Interestingly," describe Baland and Robinson, "despite these

¹⁵⁵ Siavelis, "Executive-Legislative Relations in Post-Pinochet Chile: A Preliminary Assessment," 345.

¹⁵⁶ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 49.

¹⁵⁷ Valenzuela, 49.

¹⁵⁸ Baland and Robinson, "Land and Power: Theory and Evidence from Chile," 1749.

¹⁵⁹ Baland and Robinson, 1738.

[electoral] changes, the Conservative Jorge Alessandri won the presidential election in 1958, principally on a platform emphasizing conservative monetary policies.”¹⁶⁰

While the outcome of the reforms was to split national political expression into three, rather than two broad visions, the result actually reduced the representation of the less powerful elements of Chilean political society in government. Political coalitions that once included smaller parties in the governing majority became rare while the positions of the establishment parties strengthened. “It is interesting to note,” writes Faundez, “that the end of the period during which broad coalitions could be made as easily as they could be unmade was not marked by a dramatic fall in the electoral support of the Radical Party—the party that had played a pivotal role in the 1930s and 1940s. On the contrary, it was accompanied by the disintegration of the two extreme poles of the party system.”¹⁶¹ With the ability to form pre-electoral pacts removed in 1958, the nontraditional parties became unable to create the pre-election arrangements required to gain representation under the D’Hondt PR system that governed Chilean congressional elections. Without a plurality system to encourage broad coalitions otherwise, these parties became excluded from Chilean politics.¹⁶²

Shugart and Carey contend that democracy in Chile failed because the strong presidency of Chile left the country unable to adapt to an assembly that became ideologically divided. Arturo Valenzuela also believes that Chile’s strong presidency was especially problematic: “In Chile,” he writes, “there was an inverse correlation between the power of the presidency and the success of presidential government. The stronger the president, the weaker the presidential system.”¹⁶³ Although Frei was successful at increasing presidential power in 1970, the structural impediments to Chile’s traditional coalition system were apparent prior to his reforms. Moreover, despite the ideological divisions of society, it was not inevitable that the divisions of the Chilean congress would

¹⁶⁰ Baland and Robinson, 1750.

¹⁶¹ Faundez, “In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970,” 309.

¹⁶² J. S. Valenzuela, “The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System,” 41.

¹⁶³ Valenzuela, “Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime,” 67.

become unworkable. For some time, electoral incentives had encouraged cross-party cooperation at the legislative branch, while the historical experience shows that the plurality incentives of presidential elections were sufficient to reconcile the common polarization of society. Even with relatively weak plurality incentives, Chile's presidential candidates were able to overcome Chile's "troublesome" political splits.

Nor was weak partisan support, even in combination with Chile's strong presidency enough to derail Chilean democracy. Valenzuela and others also claim, in line with Helmke's thesis, that what was especially disastrous to Chilean democracy was this strong presidency combined with weak partisan support. Valenzuela describes that, in Chile, "there was an inadequate fit between the country's highly polarized and competitive party system, which was incapable of generating majorities, and a presidential system of centralized authority."¹⁶⁴ But presidents in Chile had often been able to generate majorities, even with a fractured political system. Valenzuela himself describes Chile's common coalitions, where "accommodation and compromise were also the hallmarks of democratic institutions such as the Chilean congress, whose law-making, budgetary, and investigatory powers provided incentives for party leaders to set aside disagreements in matters of mutual benefits."¹⁶⁵ For generations, Chile was able to resolve political divisions to form majority coalitions in spite of the fact the first single-party legislative majority was not secured until the 1965 congressional election.¹⁶⁶ It was not until institutional changes brought about by the discussed reforms that a lack of partisan support led to terminal executive-legislative deadlock.

D. CONCLUSIONS

During the first half of the 20th century, Chilean democracy grew to become a "high success."¹⁶⁷ It consistently ranked as one of the world's top democracies; in 1960 is

¹⁶⁴ Valenzuela, 66.

¹⁶⁵ Valenzuela, 51.

¹⁶⁶ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 201–02.

¹⁶⁷ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 40.

outranked Great Britain and, in 1965, it was thought to be a stronger democracy than the United States.¹⁶⁸ Gil, in 1966, describes the institutional resilience of Chile's democracy that persevered despite its flaws:

A certain national pride in political serenity and a certain political sophistication characterized Chilean elections. Many Chileans believe that even under the stress of social upheaval or of a government inspired by Marxist principles, the country would conduct a "Chilean experiment" unique in the context of Latin American politics and quite different from the one conducted in Castro's Cuba. Indeed, the freedom and peace of Chilean elections are striking symptoms of political health, though they are somewhat paradoxical in view of the country's grave social and economic evils.¹⁶⁹

However, by 1970s Chile's exceptional democracy started to look ordinary, even in a regional context. The same institutions that were able to successfully negotiate conflict for 40 years suddenly found themselves paralyzed by national political polarization. The faith that its people once maintained in the polls disappeared when electoral outcomes in Chile no longer represented the electorate's popular will. Chilean democracy crumbled at the same time its majority-producing coalition system failed.

Early under the 1925 constitution, presidents were able to build political visions broad enough for executive-legislative coalitions to be both common and flexible. Chile was able to balance a PR legislature with presidential politics because of the distinct separation in roles and responsibilities of the two branches. While separated this way, the plurality incentives of Chile's presidential elections were often able to encourage coalitions that overcame the fractured ideological divisions within Chilean society and expressed through its legislature. When the plurality incentives failed to provide a clear mandate, presidents often sought to build legislative support through parliamentary-style cabinet coalitions, coalitions made possible because of a parochial orientation that allowed ideologically opposed legislative parties to support a common executive. As a result, governments could represent the majority interest. However, as this separation broke down, Chile lost the unique arrangement that made its system so stable. The nationalization of

¹⁶⁸ Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," 40.

¹⁶⁹ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, 224.

PR-encouraged partisan divisions found in congress made it easier for a presidential candidate to win without appealing to a broad cross-section of society. No longer moderated by electoral necessity, presidents also found it more difficult to form majority legislative coalitions. This change, however, was not inevitable—it was a result of the amendments to the institutional arrangement that governed legislative-executive relations.

After Chile's democratic collapse, many Latin American countries adopted a majority runoff for their presidential contests to protect against divisive, minority-backed presidents. However, Chile's problems stemmed not from the plurality tradition that allowed Allende's victory but from the contradictions created by a system that impeded ideological coalitions in one branch yet demanded them in another. A parliamentary system likely would have maintained Chile's tripartite expression but with an executive dependent on a legislative majority. A plurality system for congressional elections likely would have encouraged the same broad coalitions once common to Chile's presidential elections in its legislative races, allowing the programmatic alignment necessary both to give voters clearer policy options in the polls and to stabilize post-election coalitions. In the end, Chile's presidential problem was not that the office was decided by plurality rule, but that the congress was not. Chile, precariously balanced between plurality and PR electoral systems, would only remain stable for so long.

Across diverse historical experiences, competing with different economic, social, and political challenges, Chilean democracy has found the most success when electoral incentives encouraged coalitions broad enough to represent popular majorities. When Chilean democracy returned in 1990, it once again became a success story of Latin America. For 25 years, electoral incentives muted the multipolar divisions in society. Not until the 2017 presidential election was a three-way competition obvious, notably just two years after electoral reforms removed the binomial system that had favored two-party competition. Will strong democratic traditions be sufficient for Chilean society to overcome its “inherent” political divisions this time?

IV. ON THE EDGE: THE PRECARIOUS BALANCE OF SYSTEMS DURING VENEZUELA'S DEMOCRATIC ERA

Venezuela's democracy was born at the end of the 1950s, developed in the shadows of Marxist revolutions during the 1960s, and consolidated as the ideological polarization of the 1970s tore at its neighbors. By the 1990s, Venezuela had built a reputation as one of Latin America's "most stable and crisis-free examples of presidentialism."¹⁷⁰ However, the historical path of Venezuelan democratic consolidation was far from smooth, even if the country's democratic breakdown took many by surprise. Although many factors played a part in the collapse of Venezuela's democracy, this chapter focuses on the forces that shaped the nation's legislative and electoral coalitions and the vulnerabilities that were exposed when the governing coalition no longer represented the diverse interests of society.

Initially built around a multiparty consensus and a power-sharing president, Venezuela's democracy morphed into a system dominated by two major parties in the 1970s before reverting back to a fractured party system in the 1990s. During these transformations, Venezuelan democracy had two main periods of democratic stability—the first when presidents were determined to build multiparty coalitions to attract the support of legislative majorities, and a second when two leading parties expanded their bases in an effort to attract a majority backing. However, neither of these arrangements were systematically imposed. The Venezuelan constitution of 1961 granted a president autonomy in determining the executive branch and PR legislative elections eliminated the dependence of political parties on popular majorities to deliver electoral victories. Eventually, Venezuelan presidents asserted their prerogatives to independently direct the spoils of their office and two parties became dominant though unable to attract the support of electoral majorities. The inability to maintain the coalitions produced in parliamentary or plurality-presidential governments, coalitions that could represent the interests of a majority of Venezuelan voters, led to surges of inter-branch conflict and resulted in the destabilization of the democratic regime.

¹⁷⁰ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 196–97.

This chapter discusses the evolution of political culture in Venezuela, beginning before the establishment of democracy to show how Venezuela's dominant party system was born. After initial failure, a system of compromise and consultation was developed by party elites to ensure an inclusive political arrangement that would safeguard democracy. Eventually the political incentives of the presidential system came to dominate, raising the stakes of the presidential race and causing the multiparty system to condense toward a two-party system, occasionally producing governing and opposition coalitions more common to plurality-presidential systems. When post-election coalitions were guaranteed, like common to a parliamentary system, or when two-leading parties competed for electoral majorities like in a plurality system, Venezuelan democracy thrived. However, as neither of these arrangements were protected by Venezuela's political system, both would eventually fail.

A. EARLY STRUGGLES: THE PATH TOWARD VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY

Many of the features that would become central to Venezuelan democracy were born from the lessons learned during the nation's initial struggles with democratic expression and rule. *Acción Democrática* (AD), the political party that would most influence Venezuelan politics during the democratic era, emerged well before the nation's first national elections. Formed in the 1930s, AD was a product of a repressive political environment fostered by the nation's military dictators.¹⁷¹ General Juan Vicente Gómez consolidated power through the destruction of opposition groups and had effectively extinguished organized political opposition through the earlier part of 20th century.¹⁷² In order to avoid political persecution from Gómez and the military regimes that followed, AD grew as an underground movement where secrecy and strict obedience to party

¹⁷¹ Brian F. Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," in *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 164.

¹⁷² José Molina and Carmen Pérez, "Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 40, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 5, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/59879034/>.

leadership were essential to organizational survival.¹⁷³ AD quietly built up a nation-wide political resistance and, in 1945, its disciplined approach paid off. In support of mid-level military officers, AD mobilized its partisans to assist the overthrow of General Isaías Medina Angarita, seizing police stations and armories across the country on the orders of party leadership.¹⁷⁴ What followed would be Venezuela's first ever democracy, a short-lived, three-year period commonly known as the *trienio*.

The early political success of AD furthered the cause of highly disciplined parties. New parties that emerged to compete in the 1947 elections, such as COPEI (the Christian Socialist party), copied the hierarchal structure that had allowed AD to thrive.¹⁷⁵ Electoral rules developed for the 1947 elections further favored centralized parties through the adoption of a closed-list, proportionally representative system to select legislators. Under this system, voters would state their preference for the Senate, Chamber of Deputies, state legislative assemblies, and (through 1979) municipal councils with a single vote for a political party, with a simultaneous but separate vote for presidential candidates.¹⁷⁶ While presidential ballots included a picture of the candidate, a single, smaller ballot that included just a party's name, color, and symbol was used for all the remaining offices.¹⁷⁷ Selection of the actual legislators was the result of a ranked list made by the party's central leadership, ensuring that congressional representatives would be more tied to party bosses than to the voting public.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Michael Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," in *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, ed. Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 401.

¹⁷⁴ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 162; Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 401.

¹⁷⁵ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 401.

¹⁷⁶ Coppedge, 401.

¹⁷⁷ Brian F. Crisp and Juan Carlos Rey, "The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela," in *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems the Best of Both Worlds?* ed. Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 176; Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 401.

¹⁷⁸ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 196.

Although AD was extremely successful in the nation's first national election, leading Venezuela's first democratic government proved to be more of a challenge. The 1947 election was a landslide victory for AD, which won over 70 percent of the vote for both presidential and legislative elections. In response, the party governed as the dominant single-party that the system indicated it was. The government pursued a zealous program, implementing reforms without regard to the increasing reservations of other powerful social sectors. However, AD leadership misinterpreted its wide electoral victory for unopposed support and, in doing so, the democratic government quickly made enemies with a range of civil institutions, the church, and the military.¹⁷⁹ In eschewing the feedback of civic society, AD pushed forward not realizing that a growing opposition was questioning the legitimacy of not only the government but the very democratic institutions that had allowed AD to operate unchecked.¹⁸⁰ The consequences were devastating for the country's nascent democracy. In 1947, the military, with the support of the main political opposition parties COPEI and URD (Democratic Republican Union), reasserted its control over the country. The church praised the "divine" intervention of General Marco Pérez Jiménez and the democratic experiment was abandoned.¹⁸¹

The ten-year interlude between democratic regimes reinforced the importance of party discipline in Venezuela, but also forced the party elites to understand that inter-party cooperation was required for democratic consolidation in the country. Political repression under Jiménez again became severe. AD and the PCV (Venezuelan Communist Party) were outlawed, their leadership persecuted, arrested, and exiled.¹⁸² However, even COPEI and URD were placed under strict surveillance and had their operations forced to the shadows by the military regime. The common political persecution of the major parties ended up easing the divides between the rivals and opened avenues for cooperative connections

¹⁷⁹ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 162; Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 399.

¹⁸⁰ Coppedge, 399.

¹⁸¹ Coppedge, 399.

¹⁸² Molina and Pérez, "Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993," 7.

though underground movements. The major parties soon agreed that the reestablishment of the nation's democracy was their priority interest.¹⁸³

B. DEMOCRATIC SURVIVAL: PARLIAMENTARY COALITIONS DURING THE ERA OF TRANSITION

In 1958, another coup returned democracy to Venezuela and, this time, the country's leading parties were determined not to waste the opportunity. Despite the acknowledgement that a more conciliatory approach was necessary to sustain the democratic regime, cooperation was easier in theory than it was in practice. Initially, the party elite tried to secure a political consensus by nominating a common candidate for president. However, months of back and forth on potential candidates without any agreement only highlighted the disunity of the major parties. "For two full months of a six-month campaign," writes Michael Coppedge, "reports of these partisan disagreements and maneuvers were making front-page news every day, contradicting in practice the unity that was being claimed in principle."¹⁸⁴ Unable to compromise and form a pre-electoral coalition, the parties ended up nominating their own choices and committed instead to a broad coalition government after the election.

At the suggestion of AD's Rómulo Betancourt, the leader of Venezuela's still most popular political movement, the three leading parties from the 1947 election agreed to establish a unity government following the 1958 election. The Pact of Punto Fijo was created to ensure the types of executive compromises more commonly seen in a parliamentary system of government. The Pact arranged that cabinet posts, congressional leadership positions, and governorships (which the president had the right to appoint) would be divided proportionally among the three parties regardless of which party won the upcoming elections.¹⁸⁵ A common political program was also adopted to secure against extreme partisanship, and pledges for inclusionary commissions and decentralized public

¹⁸³ Molina and Pérez, "Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993," 7.

¹⁸⁴ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 404.

¹⁸⁵ Coppedge, 399.

administration were made to ensure that the interests of civil society were reflected in the government.¹⁸⁶ The impasse in finding a common presidential candidate was resolved by limiting the stakes of the presidential contest with the guarantee of a broadly representative coalition government after the election.

Despite the country's significant plurality influences, Venezuela initially remained a multiparty system under this parliamentary-style arrangement. The parties, sure that they would be proportionally rewarded in both the executive and legislative branches of the government, did not need to coalesce to oppose AD. Instead, the Pact ensured that the government would include a representative coalition even if the leading party won a narrow victory. The new democracy received an overwhelming popular endorsement in the elections of 1958, with a 92-percent voter turnout and with over 90 percent of voters supporting the signatory parties of the Pact of Punto Fijo. And, although AD won narrow majorities in both houses of congress and the presidency with just under 50 percent of the vote, Betancourt built an inclusive executive as promised to ensure the support of the other leading parties.

Envisioning a continuation of this parliamentary-style of government, the 1961 constitution consciously devalued the presidency.¹⁸⁷ The Venezuelan president was granted among the most limited legislative powers of any presidential system in Latin America;¹⁸⁸ his veto could be overridden by a simple majority congressional vote (the same requirement to send the law to the president's desk in the first place), a tool made even more feckless by the traditionally tight party discipline that made individual defections from the established party line unlikely. In effect, the president's legislative program was dependent upon a congressional majority, theoretically tying the two branches together to promote a cooperative and consensual government. As Shugart and

¹⁸⁶ Coppedge, 399; Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 163.

¹⁸⁷ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 195.

¹⁸⁸ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 179; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 156, 177, 195, 279.

Carey describe, “the presidency in [Venezuela] was intended to be little more than an arbiter of multiparty coalitions expressed through a powerful congress.”¹⁸⁹

The conception of this design was to further the executive’s dependence on legislative coalitions, similar in style to that of a parliamentary model. For the first ten years of the new democracy, the observance of the Pact of Punto Fijo made this arrangement successful. Election results would determine the share of executive cabinet positions, building a governing coalition among minority parties that could represent the majority interest. Even with this initial spirit of unity, however, the multiparty coalition was difficult to maintain without more systematic ties. Almost immediately in the Betancourt administration, the decision to compromise drove away some of the AD’s younger and more fervent legislators, leading to two splits in the party.¹⁹⁰ By January 1962, these splits, along with one in the URD, left the administration with a majority in the Senate but only 57 of the 129 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁹¹ The lack of a working majority in a true parliamentary system would normally have produced new elections. However, with fixed term limits, Betancourt’s agenda simply stalled in the face of a majority opposition. It was not until a terrorist attack in September 1963 that the majority coalition reunified, called together again by the higher purpose of preserving the fledgling democracy.¹⁹²

The 1963 elections reflected a much more equally divided electorate among the leading parties, with AD candidate Raúl Leoni winning with only 32.8 percent of the presidential vote while AD, COPEI, and URD took 32.7, 20.8, and 17.4 percent of the small ticket vote respectively.¹⁹³ Following the election, the ambitions of COPEI’s leadership, along with an improving security situation, led the party to leave the Punto Fijo

¹⁸⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 279.

¹⁹⁰ Coppedge, “Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism,” 406.

¹⁹¹ Coppedge, 411.

¹⁹² Coppedge, 410–11.

¹⁹³ José Molina and Bernard Thibaut, “Venezuela,” in *Elections in the Americas: Volume 2 South America*, ed. Dieter Nohlen, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 570.

alliance.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Leoni was still able to build a majority coalition by granting cabinet positions to partisans from both the URD and the National Democratic Front (FND).¹⁹⁵ This coalition lasted through the beginning of 1968, when both coalition partners left the alliance and AD experienced its third and most severe party split. Following the loss of the consensual majority, the democracy again limped forward, dealing with stalemate and parliamentary crisis that resulted in a much more contested political environment.¹⁹⁶

Despite not uncommon strains, the parliamentary coalitions built during this first decade carried Venezuela's democracy through transition. As Shugart and Carey note, "From 1958, the date of the founding of the Venezuelan democratic regime and of its first elections, until the inauguration of the president elected in 1968, Venezuela was governed by coalitions."¹⁹⁷ Despite three coup attempts, a guerrilla campaign led by Venezuela's communist party, and violent terrorist attacks, this informal arrangement prevented the partisan excesses that undermined democracy during the *trienio* not long before.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the system won broad popular support. Calls for abstention from Venezuela's leftist insurgency were ignored and voter participation in all three elections from 1958–1968 remained above 90 percent.¹⁹⁹ However, the lack of a more systematic embrace of a parliamentary government meant that Venezuelan democracy teetered on the edge each time its majority coalitions broke down, which they commonly did. Although the imperative to protect the democratic system rescued majority coalitions and prevented more disastrous crisis during this first decade, there was nothing to preserve the spirit of political compromise once the country's democracy was no longer fundamentally threatened.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Eder, "Coalition That Ruled Venezuela Comes Apart," *New York Times*, March 10, 1964, 12, ProQuest.

¹⁹⁵ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 184.

¹⁹⁶ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 412.

¹⁹⁷ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 195.

¹⁹⁸ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 411.

¹⁹⁹ Molina and Thibaut, "Venezuela," 569–83.

C. AN ALTERNATE COMPETITION: POLITICAL INCENTIVES AND THE BREAKDOWN OF PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

For the first years of the Venezuelan democracy, the common need for broad coalitions to ensure the survival of the democratic regime had made them nearly as automatic as in a multiparty parliamentary regime—in both, the preservation of the executive (in Venezuela’s case, the preservation of the entire system) depended on a consensus backing. A system built around inter-party cooperation nevertheless fell short of embracing the parliamentary system that would ensure the continuation of this form of government. The spirit of unity that propelled Venezuela’s coalition governments through its stormy first few years collapsed in 1968. By then, Venezuela’s democracy appeared much more secure, allowing presidential incentives to dominate. COPEI’s first president, Rafael Caldera, responded to those incentives and, despite only winning 29 percent of the vote, asserted his presidential prerogative to select a single-party cabinet.²⁰⁰ “But by that year,” as Michael Coppedge describes, “the democratic regime had been consolidated. Coup attempts from within the armed forces had ceased; the guerrilla war was over, and its combatants amnestied; and *Acción Democrática* had lost an election (by the narrowest of margins) and handed over power to an opposition party.”²⁰¹ With the security of Venezuela’s democracy on firmer footing by 1968, the multiparty democracy broke down, giving way to the political incentives that would shape Venezuelan politics for the next twenty years.

The newly asserted independence of the executive from the legislature altered the Venezuelan political landscape. The president was no longer just the “arbiter of multiparty coalitions” as Shugart and Carey described it was intended to be, or simply “above politics” as Coppedge claims was the founder’s intent.²⁰² The parliamentary arrangement that had

²⁰⁰ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 196; Molina and Thibaut, “Venezuela,” 569–83; Coppedge, “Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism,” 400.

²⁰¹ Coppedge, “Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism,” 400.

²⁰² Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 195, 279.

fostered multiparty legislative competition and shared executive power was pushed aside. What had been a four-party system in 1958 transitioned toward a two-party system by 1973, as segments of political society coalesced to contest what had become a much more consequential presidential election.²⁰³

However, the electoral results of 1968 preceded this new political reality. Instead, the 1968 election again produced a multiparty system, only this time without any attempt to form a post-election coalition. Caldera's COPEI, with only 31 and 28 percent of the seats in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies respectively, was far from being singularly able to control a legislative majority.²⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the system also did not produce a stable legislative coalition among other parties, despite AD's narrow seat lead in the body and potential partners with similar programmatic positions. Without the executive catalyst to solidify political alliances, coalitions within the legislature instead became ad hoc and largely unreliable.²⁰⁵ The result under Caldera was the sort of "alternate" design, multiparty presidential outcome that is typically destabilizing to democratic regimes:

Led by AD, congressional opponents assailed the presidency at every opportunity: they removed the executive's right to appoint members of the judiciary (except on the Supreme Court) and placed it in the hands of a special panel dominated by opposition parties; they limited government borrowing to two-year periods; and they passed a law forcing all autonomous institutes and corporations with a majority of shares held by the government to appoint union representatives to their boards (AD's strength in the union movement surpassed that of COPEI). AD tried briefly to persuade Congress to make Venezuela's governors elective rather than appointed officials, and at one point seriously discussed the possibility of changing the constitution itself to a parliamentary system. Because of the standoff between the legislature and the executive, Venezuelan politics deteriorated into petty wrangling. Bitterness, fragmentation, and empty rhetoric became the rule, while the country drifted. Things got so bad that there were rumors of "restlessness" in the military.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 406.

²⁰⁴ Molina and Thibaut, "Venezuela," 569–83.

²⁰⁵ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 409.

²⁰⁶ Franklin Tugwell, *The Politics of Oil in Venezuela* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 103.

Without a binding arrangement between the executive and legislature, the government found itself constantly in crisis. Both COPEI and AD were unable to work with minor parties to build a functional legislative coalition, despite the significant autonomy of the congress. Instead, as Coppedge describes, “stalemate was the fundamental reality of politics during the Caldera government.”²⁰⁷ Only when the democratic institution began to feel fragile again did Caldera relent to form an informal accord with AD (beginning a tradition of bypassing minor parties) that in effect “meant only that AD would no longer only obstruct its own legislative program.”²⁰⁸ Without a formal arrangement, political incentives during the Caldera years followed the skeptical predictions of Arturo Valenzuela: political parties standing to get little credit for successful policies under a president would rather deny him political gain than risk being attached to his failure.²⁰⁹

D. INSUFFICIENCIES IN REPRESENTATION IN AN INCOMPLETE PLURALITY SYSTEM

With the guarantee for executive power-sharing abandoned under Caldera, Venezuelan politics came to be dominated by the plurality incentives that governed presidential elections. A near two-party system emerged despite the PR incentives in the legislature due to a combination of concurrent presidential and legislative elections, a D'Hondt electoral system with a low district magnitude (two for Senate races), and a constitutional guarantee for minority party representation that impeded the cohesion of a third party. By 1973, only AD and COPEI could claim a nationwide organization, propelling them to the dominant positions among Venezuela's political parties.²¹⁰ However, the combination of PR elections and a closed-list system limited ideological diversity within these two dominant political expressions. Though initially the incentives to win the plurality-determined presidency encouraged the broadening of the two main parties and the incorporation of a breadth of civil society, the legislative parties themselves

²⁰⁷ Coppedge, “Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism,” 414.

²⁰⁸ Coppedge, 414; Tugwell, *The Politics of Oil in Venezuela*, 104.

²⁰⁹ Valenzuela, “Latin American Presidencies Interrupted,” 13.

²¹⁰ Molina and Pérez, “Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993,” 12.

would never be dependent on electoral majorities without plurality elections for legislators. The inability of the parties to adapt to remain representative of the majority interest would have severe consequences for the democratic system.

Initially, in response to the plurality requirements of the now more meaningful presidential contests, the two leading parties worked to build broader bases of support. “Though AD and COPEI had previously penetrated the rural zones [through the 1960s],” describe José Molina and Carmen Pérez, “now they broadened their reach throughout the country. The two parties worked actively to develop affiliations, taking advantage of their participation in government to build clientlist networks.”²¹¹ The increasing competition for influence was particularly acute in civil organizations, requiring parties to be responsive to the interests of civil society and turning these interest groups into an integral party of the policy-making process itself.²¹² By the 1973 election, “Representation was reasonably efficient because parties encapsulated nearly all relevant organizations and interests in society,” Michael Kulisheck and Brian Crisp write.²¹³ “Groups that expressed political demands were quickly integrated into party structures and became almost corporative parts of [AD] and COPEI.”

The emergence of an attenuated two-party system in 1973 made single-party legislative majorities possible and reinforced the alternating cycle of presidential leadership, hallmarks of a plurality-presidential system that brought some stability back to Venezuela’s democracy. Despite the initial vision of broad, multiparty coalitions, two of the next three elections produced an AD president with single-party legislative majorities in both chambers of congress. With such a disciplined congress, the president could effectively guarantee his party’s support for his legislative agenda. As Shugart and Carey

²¹¹ Molina and Pérez, 10.

²¹² Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 165, 168.

²¹³ Michael R. Kulisheck and Brian F. Crisp, “The Legislative Consequences of MMP Electoral Rules in Venezuela,” in *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?* ed. Matthew Shugart and Martin P. Wattenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 427.

note, “In the end then, Latin America’s most majoritarian—and one of its most stable—democracies developed largely unintentionally.”²¹⁴

However, the lack of plurality legislative elections obviated the need for the parties to compete for electoral majorities and reduced the frequency that Venezuelan governments could claim coalitions similar to those produced in plurality-presidential systems. Although AD at times built a base of electoral support broad enough to translate into legislative majorities, COPEI’s support was always far more limited. COPEI’s most successful legislative election was in 1978 but, even then, the party won less than 40 percent of the vote. While COPEI often led a robust opposition and presented a threatening political alternative when AD was governing, it was not able to build its own internally backed majority while in power itself. Rather than uniting as would typically be forced by plurality elections, the opposition to AD remained fractured both for elections and during COPEI-led governments. Venezuela thus could be said to approach a plurality system when a broadly backed AD leadership secured a legislative majority and a COPEI-led opposition provided a meaningful alternative, but it fell much shorter of the mark when this was not the case.

Rather than further broadening their positions by absorbing developing political movements into their platforms, Venezuela’s two leading parties relied on systems that excluded alternative political expressions. The governing class was able to use the revenue from Venezuela’s oil economy to create a system of patronage that tied society to the political establishment. The main parties also benefitted from a law that allocated state funding to political parties based on previous electoral performance, helping to perpetuate the establishment’s advantage while facilitating the suppression of burgeoning political movements.²¹⁵

Perhaps most consequentially, the constitutional protections for minority party representation fragmented the development of political alternatives. The 1961 constitution

²¹⁴ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 279.

²¹⁵ Julia Buxton, “Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela” (paper presented at the 2000 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, FL, March 16–18, 2000), 4.

called for the “proportional representation of minorities,” through a system that would provide additional legislative seats based on national vote tallies.²¹⁶ In the Senate, where only the top two parties in each district would receive seats, this provided an “additional” seat if a party won 2.38 percent of the national vote; in the Chamber of Deputies, the threshold for additional seats was reduced to 0.55 percent of the national total.²¹⁷ The low threshold for representation, combined with the high barriers imposed by the leading parties for both regular district seats and especially the presidency, discouraged small parties from uniting to challenge the dominance of AD and COPEI.

Venezuela’s political system struggled to balance two-party stability with a PR system that depended on multiple parties to express ideological diversity. As described above, Caldera relied on AD instead of minor parties to break stalemate during his administration; neither COPEI nor AD were able to form a stable governing coalition through minor party inclusion despite each holding over 40 percent of the seats in the congress during the Herrera administration from 1979–1984; and, although Carlos Pérez implemented a neoliberal package created by independents during his second administration, his government ruled without explicit accords with other parties (though a late alliance with COPEI in an attempt to shore up waning support would prove disastrous for both parties’ electoral chances in 1993 and beyond).²¹⁸ Without a parliamentary mechanism to force majority coalitions, minority party protections led primarily to the exclusion of minority parties from the governing conversation.

E. UNWILLING TO CHOOSE: THE FAILURE OF ELECTORAL REFORM AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ALTERNATE DESIGN

Venezuela’s democracy became stuck between two systems. Majorities would not be represented by legislative party coalitions because of the winner-take-all incentives of the presidency, and PR legislative elections allowed two parties to dominate without

²¹⁶ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 175.

²¹⁷ Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 169.

²¹⁸ Crisp, 183–84.

forcing them to compete for electoral majorities. The result was a crisis of representation and growing demands for political reform.

Without political incentives to force change, Venezuela's leading parties proved unable to adapt to an increasingly complex civil society.²¹⁹ As Jana Morgan describes, "AD and COPEI were hierarchical organizations in which certain established interests, especially business and labor, were well represented and given privileged status. Labor union and professional association members were therefore integrated into the party system and able to find effective avenues for their voices to be heard. But people outside these established functional groups, such as the urban poor and informal workers, did not have a formal connection to the old parties."²²⁰ Toward the end of the 1960s, the urban middle class began to form neighborhood associations, groups "developed outside the sphere of political parties and [that] challenged the traditional system of clientelistic service delivery."²²¹ These associations opened space for political discourse free from the nationalized party structures. However, because AD and COPEI were able to maintain their relative positions without incorporating these new actors, the parties also avoided needing to be responsive to them.²²²

Rather than reacting to the changing interests of their constituents, individual legislators were also more attuned to the interests of intractable party leadership than the voters they were elected to represent. Because ballots endorsed only parties, not candidates, and because the party leadership determined the rank order of the electoral list, parties controlled a legislator's electability far more than the individual voters. As Crisp describes:

because votes are pooled within each state for candidates on a closed list, national-level party elites have strict control over who runs on the party label and, more particularly, the order in which candidates appear, so individual members of congress have every incentive to promote the party line and ignore parochial issues...Rare breaches of discipline are almost

²¹⁹ Crisp, 163.

²²⁰ Jana Morgan, "Partisanship During the Collapse of Venezuela's Party System," *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 1 (January 2007): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2007.0009>.

²²¹ Crisp and Rey, "The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela," 179.

²²² Buxton, "Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela," 8.

always met with very rancorous and public expulsion from the party. These factors work to ensure strict discipline within the legislative delegation, which in turn assures voters that programmatic promises can be met by the governing party.²²³

This was true especially after the party splits observed in the early 1960s and often meant that individual votes were not even taken, with records only noting whether an item passed based on the positions of the parties and their relative strength in the congress.²²⁴

Extreme party discipline prevented any intraparty diversity. While this ensured a programmatic party, it also meant that representation suffered in a two-party dominant system. As Shugart and Carey have described, “Electoral systems may be scaled by the degree to which they represent diversity. That diversity may be expressed in geographic terms as the parochial interests of localities, or it may be expressed sectorally as the narrow interests of groups within the society...If representation is to be based on group interests, such as clashing ideologies or distinct ethnic or religious segments, it need not be at all local in nature. It must, however, be a form of proportional representation (PR) based on party lists.”²²⁵ In Venezuela, centralized control and PR elections made the representation national and based on group interests; however, without a mechanism to force a post-election majority coalition, representation in the government was also generally controlled by dominant but narrowly defined minority parties.

The deficiencies in representativeness were clear to party leaders quickly after the end of the parliamentary era. Voter participation, which had been used as an indicator of democratic support since the beginning of democracy, had been resoundingly high through the Punto Fijo era’s first four elections—in 1973, abstention was only 3.5 percent. However, by 1978, voter abstention surged to over 12 percent, an early indicator of voter frustration with the system.²²⁶ Opinion polls increasingly expressed voter discontent with

²²³ Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 171.

²²⁴ Crisp, 172.

²²⁵ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 9.

²²⁶ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 180.

the unrepresentativeness of the parties; a poll in the early 1970s demonstrated that 81 percent viewed parties as instruments of “powerful minorities.”²²⁷ Rising urban unrest made all parties, including AD and COPEI, aware that reform was required to increase constituent responsiveness.²²⁸

The first reforms came in 1979, notably before the collapse of oil prices that would severely damage the Venezuelan economy during the 1980s. These initial reforms targeted municipal elections, providing a distinct ballot and separate election dates to decouple their results from national races.²²⁹ Though limited, these reforms paved a path to a constitutional amendment in 1983 that opened the possibility for municipal council and state assembly elections to use something other than the closed-list, PR system still mandated for national elections.²³⁰ As Crisp and Juan Carlos Rey describe, “The process that led to the approval of the amendment would never have been possible without the endorsement of the parties, especially [AD] and [COPEI]. They perceived the public discontent with the manner in which government affairs had been managed and the extremely dominant—and some would say asphyxiating—role that parties had played.”²³¹

The political elite understood the need for electoral reform. By 1983, surveys showed that party affiliation had dropped significantly.²³² Under pressure from civil society, AD president Jamie Lusinchi formed an independent commission in 1984 to “democratize the democracy,” pursuing an effort toward reform that would make the parties more transparent and the government more accountable to the people.²³³ The issue continued to be pressed through the 1988 presidential election. Seven presidential

²²⁷ Buxton, “Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela,” 5.

²²⁸ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 179–80; Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* 198.

²²⁹ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 178.

²³⁰ Crisp and Rey, 180.

²³¹ Crisp and Rey, 180.

²³² Buxton, “Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela,” 5.

²³³ Molina and Thibaut, “Venezuela,” 540; Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 194.

candidates, including Carlos Pérez of AD and Eduardo Fernandez of COPEI, pledged to support a “national agreement” to enact political reform that would include separate ballots for Chamber of Deputies and Senate elections and separate electoral timing for national races.²³⁴

Table 7. Evolution of Citizen Alignment with Political Parties in Venezuela (percent of respondents).²³⁵

Year	1973	1983	1990
Militants/sympathizers	48.7	38.4	32.4
Independents	19.2	38.0	47.0
Not Interested	32.1	23.6	20.6
Number of respondents	1,500	1,780	1,500

New legislation did allow for direct election of state governors and other municipal positions in December 1989. While municipal councils were decided by an open-list system, elections for state governors were determined by plurality rule. For the first time since the establishment of the two-party dominant system in 1973, statewide pluralities by parties other than AD and COPEI were won and three governorships were taken by alternate parties. As Matthew Shugart describes, “the plurality system for these offices encouraged broad coalition-building and resulted in normally competitive partisan forces coalescing to ‘gang up’ on the AD. The long-suppressed resentments against the major parties that exploded in the rioting were translated into some palpable changes by the first direct elections for governors.”²³⁶

However, entrenched political interests limited the extent of national-level reform. The new congress of 1989 took up electoral reform with support split for remedies among the parties. With a broad base of popular support, President Pérez, convinced his party to

²³⁴ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 186.

²³⁵ Adapted from Molina and Pérez, “Evolution of the Party System in Venezuela, 1946–1993,” 16.

²³⁶ Matthew Shugart, “Leaders, Rank and File, and Constituents: Electoral Reform in Colombia and Venezuela,” *Electoral Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 1992): 34, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-3794\(92\)90023-Y](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-3794(92)90023-Y).

support a plurality system.²³⁷ COPEI, which had initially supported a plurality system, switched its support to a mixed-member proportional system (MMP), while the Movement toward Socialism (MAS), which had become the third largest party, advocated for an open-list system.²³⁸ In the end, the political establishment chose reform that could satisfy the demands of the reformers without endangering the dominant positions of the major parties and their leadership.²³⁹ Reforms resulted in a MMP system during elections for the Chamber of Deputies, where one half of the deputies would be elected from single-member districts and the other half would come from closed party lists.²⁴⁰

However, this compromise approach improved neither sectoral nor parochial representativeness. In practice, national party leadership still determined the all candidates, even those running in single-member districts, keeping ties to central leadership stronger than ties to constituents.²⁴¹ And though this continued to reduce voter support for the major parties, the PR system promised to cushion the blow. Furthermore, these limited reforms did little to mitigate the crisis. Instead, as Crisp and Rey surmise, “The failure [of parties] to behave differently probably contributed to escalating voter frustration, the election of Hugo Chávez, and the further decline of the two parties most closely associated with the old system, AD and COPEI.”²⁴² The parties had proven unable to provide meaningful reform from inside the system, opening new space for voters to demand reform from an external actor.²⁴³

Despite the acknowledged need for change, parties continued their traditional practices because reform did not force them to behave differently. Representation was not mandated institutionally and lack of representation was not severely punished electorally.

²³⁷ Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 186.

²³⁸ Crisp and Rey, 187.

²³⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 198; Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 192.

²⁴⁰ Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 194.

²⁴¹ Crisp, “Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995,” 170; McCoy, “From Representative to Participatory Democracy?” 269.

²⁴² Crisp and Rey, “The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela,” 193.

²⁴³ Buxton, “Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela,” 9.

Venezuela neither embraced a parliamentary system that would create legislative majority coalitions and make executive cabinets responsible to more diverse sectoral interests, nor a plurality system that would promote parties both more attached to local interests and internally diverse themselves. Lack of progress on these fronts only caused increased voter disenfranchisement with a system not interested in translating majority opinion into its governing institutions.

F. POPULAR PRESIDENTS AND UNPOPULAR CONGRESSES: WHEN INTER-BRANCH CONFLICT TURNS TO INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

While the legislature became increasingly unrepresentative, the ties of the president to civil society encouraged the rise of populism and a disparity in the political mandate between the branches. Unlike the legislature, the president was not responsible to his party's central leadership. The president was instead responsible to a plurality of voters for his office, encouraging him to maintain much closer connections to civil society than the legislature could match.²⁴⁴ Not only did these ties give the president increased influence over civil interest groups and a better understanding of the "pulse of the population," civil society also looked to the executive branch as the political institution that would be most responsive to their own needs.²⁴⁵ Despite the constitutional constraints on Venezuela's executive, these closer popular ties gave the president significant power over the legislative agent of the electorate.

The presidents that followed took advantage of this power disparity. Rafael Caldera was elected president in 1993, this time running as "someone with the moral force to clean up the current system, do away with corruption, and break the stranglehold of the increasingly unpopular 'political class'."²⁴⁶ On the legislative side, the results of the 1993 election looked more like the multiparty results of 1968 than those of the two-party system of the past two decades. With unpopular parties in a fractured congress, Caldera looked to

²⁴⁴ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 175.

²⁴⁵ Crisp, 175, 193.

²⁴⁶ Crisp, 195.

bypass legislative checks and appeal directly to the masses to advance his program.²⁴⁷ Crisp describes the emergence of an increasingly populist strain in the Venezuelan president:

In June 1994 [Caldera] suspended a number of constitutional guarantees, including several individual rights, the right to economic liberty, and the right to property. Suspension of guarantees gives the president the right to issue decrees with the force of law regulating any activity related to these rights... Approximately a month later, Congress, with a majority composed of AD, COPEI, and Causa R, reinstated all the constitutional guarantees, except the right to economic liberty. In an apparently unconstitutional move, Caldera immediately resuspended the same guarantees and threatened to appeal to the people, again an apparently unconstitutional act, if the congress did not back down. After this ultimatum AD dropped its support for reestablishing the guarantees in order to avoid a constitutional crisis.²⁴⁸

When a group of law professors challenged Caldera's move in the Venezuelan Supreme Court, Caldera again threatened to mobilize the masses against the other branches of government.²⁴⁹ As Crisp describes, "He was able to do this, despite his electoral coalition's minority status in congress, because he had implicitly threatened legislators with an *autogolpe* legitimized by some form of appeal to the masses... Caldera's solution has been institutionalized—permanently shifting the balance of power among branches."²⁵⁰

The lack of representativeness in the Venezuelan congress resulted in a lack of legitimacy of the institution, empowering the presidency as the true voice of the people. With the congress unable to claim its own clearly delegated majority mandate, presidents became free to exert their leverage with direct appeals to the electorate. In 1998, an even more populist and transformative president came to office. Rather than using his popularity to build a legislative coalition he could work with, Hugo Chávez won a popular referendum

²⁴⁷ Crisp and Rey, "The Sources of Electoral Reform in Venezuela," 192.

²⁴⁸ Crisp, "Presidential Behavior in a System with Strong Parties: Venezuela, 1958–1995," 195–96.

²⁴⁹ Crisp, 196.

²⁵⁰ Crisp, 197.

to reform the constitution and concentrate power around the executive, leading to the end of Venezuela's representative democracy.²⁵¹

G. CONCLUSIONS

After 40 years, Venezuelan democracy became vulnerable to collapse not because its citizens tired of free political expression, but because their established democratic institutions no longer adequately voiced Venezuela's popular will. Although PR elections were maintained as a "general principle" of Venezuelan democracy meant to mandate political inclusion, in practice the system led to the fracturing and exclusion of alternative political visions by the governing elite. Deficiencies in representation created a crisis of legitimacy for the Venezuelan congress, reducing public attachment to the institution and creating an environment that would allow for the dismantling of one of South America's most venerated democracies.

The Venezuelan case study shows the difficulties in forming representative, multiparty coalitions in presidential systems. Even in a democracy born out of the failures of unilateralism, one that prioritized consensus and consultation, post-electoral coalitions consistently fractured before the end of the elected term. The glue of the system was the common understanding that cooperation was required to preserve democracy (and the elected positions of the political class). However, the political incentives of presidential politics won out as soon as democratic backsliding no longer seemed likely. Common to presidential systems, Venezuela's executive came to assert its independence from the legislature to fulfill its own electoral mandate. Without an executive predisposed to bind together a governing legislative coalition, Venezuela's political elite struggled to unite disparate parties into majority governments, even with strong partisan pluralities in the legislature and a congress that could legislate independently of the president's interests.²⁵²

Although the development of a near two-party system encouraged both alternation of governing parties and semi-regular majority governments that stabilized Venezuela's

²⁵¹ Buxton, "Realignment of the Party System in Venezuela," 21.

²⁵² Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 280.

presidential democracy, the plurality nature of the system was incomplete. PR elections for the Venezuelan congress did not demand that parties compete to represent the majority of the electorate. Instead, as a result of its PR system, AD and COPEI were allowed to dominate despite being ideologically and sectorally exclusionary, rather than parties forced to build broad alliances and accept increased internal party diversity.²⁵³ Centralized control and strict party discipline limited the ability of individual legislators to adapt to grassroots movements and to incorporate the changing interests of civil society into the government. As an AD party leader later explained, in reaction to the changing electorate, AD “was completely unprepared and did not try to include new people or new groups.”²⁵⁴ But the proportional system did not substantially punish parties unable to represent the broad interests of society on their own. Although AD occasionally built a broad popular backing that, against a significant COPEI-led opposition, allowed plurality characteristics to stabilize the presidential government, this relationship was not electorally developed into a mature plurality system. Instead, civil society advanced and, without electoral incentives to force more change, AD and COPEI’s inability to incorporate new political interests led an increasingly disenchanted public to look elsewhere for representation.

Centralized control and extreme party discipline also ensured that the legislature remain an expression of national interest, built to be responsive to the same constituency that elected the executive branch.²⁵⁵ Not only did this reduce the ties to local constituents that could make the parties more responsive, it made both executive and legislative branches subject to the same source for their democratic legitimacy. While this facilitated cooperation between president and congress when the two were aligned, it also gave recourse for popular, anti-establishment presidents to claim to represent the true will of the people over a politically divided legislature.

²⁵³ Shugart and Carey, 222.

²⁵⁴ Morgan, “Partisanship During the Collapse of Venezuela’s Party System,” 85.

²⁵⁵ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 205. As described here, this outcome, according to James Madison, undermined many of the benefits of the separation of powers by denying a competing check of one branch on another’s power.

Democracy coalesced in Venezuela when majority-backed post-electoral coalitions formed the government. It stabilized as a presidential system when two major parties broadened their bases to make possible near-majority support, alternating governments, and single-party congresses. However, because proportional electoral reward did not force parties to compete for majority electoral backing and because presidential independence did not mandate the development of majority post-electoral coalitions, Venezuela was unable to guarantee the arrangements that supported its democratic regime. Each time the governing interests narrowed, either through the collapse of a political coalition or the inability of the governing party to attract a broad base of support, the weakness of Venezuela's democracy was exposed. In short, democracy in Venezuela thrived when its presidential system most closely reflected that of a parliamentary system or that of a plurality system. However, when it got stuck between those more stable positions, Venezuelan democracy teetered toward collapse.

V. IN SEARCH OF MORE RELIABLE DEMOCRACIES

In Latin America, the arrangement that a government uses to determine its governing coalitions plays a significant role in determining the stability of that nation's democracy. Some of the region's presidential systems find success by building broadly backed coalitions through the inclusion of multiple legislative parties into the executive cabinet, similar to a parliamentary system. Presidential systems that utilize pre-electoral coalitions to incorporate diverse political interests into a single party or political pact, forming an essentially two-party system, generally create an even more stable solution. However, a presidential system that determines its legislature using proportional representation does not systematically encourage these types of broadly backed coalitions. Instead, without electoral incentives to coalesce policy visions before elections or institutional mechanisms to ensure the formation of a majority coalition after the election, PR-presidential systems more often create multiparty outcomes that are especially prone to inter-branch conflict and political crisis.

The near universal incorporation of proportionally representative legislatures in presidential democracies has made it difficult to determine the effect that PR has on presidential system stability. With the United States and the Philippines as the only two presidential nations that use plurality rule for legislative elections, and with most PR-presidential regimes not yet considered to be stable democracies, many who analyze how electoral systems influence democratic stability draw their conclusions from an almost exclusively parliamentary data set.²⁵⁶ Of course, parliamentary regimes systematically incorporate multiple parties into a governing coalition in a way that presidential systems do not. Moreover, plurality rule also interacts very differently with a legislative system that inherently becomes nationalized as the formulator of the executive than it does with one in which the executive is independently derived. Instead, plurality legislative elections in

²⁵⁶ Both Lijphart and Powell use omit PR-presidential systems from their analysis. Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1991.0011>; G. Bingham Powell, *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*, 28.

presidential systems characteristically promote the expression of local interests and political parties that *internally* accommodate a range of diversity typically represented by multiple parties in a parliamentary system.²⁵⁷ Without a way to further differentiate between presidential governments, many critiques of presidentialism draw general conclusions without addressing the institutional variations that can make presidential systems as capable of representing a majority consensus as parliamentary regimes.²⁵⁸

Both parliamentary and plurality-presidential governments promote the formation of majority governing coalitions. Parliamentary systems build an executive branch that is produced by, and responsible to, a legislative majority. The winner-take-all stakes of plurality elections characteristically result in the formation of a broad, popular coalition to back a leading candidate and a single, coalesced opposition that forms behind a principal challenger;²⁵⁹ in plurality-presidential governments, this produces a two-party system with both the president and the majority legislative contingent electorally dependent upon broad popular support. As a result, coalitions representative of a democratic majority (or at least a near majority) are required either institutionally (in parliamentary systems) or electorally (in plurality-presidential systems).

A system that combines proportional representation and presidentialism, however, discourages majority coalitions electorally and does not demand them institutionally. Proportional electoral reward removes the need for legislative candidates and parties to form majority-backed coalitions before elections; however, without the need to create a majority coalition to determine the executive, there is also little to tie a majority governing coalition together after an election. An independently elected president is not responsible to parties other than his own for his election, and politicians outside of the president's party are not responsible for the success of the executive government. The result is often minority

²⁵⁷ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 10.

²⁵⁸ Such critiques can be found in: Arturo Valenzuela, "Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government"; Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?"

²⁵⁹ Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, 209.

government with increased tension between the branches and increased popular discontent with democratic outcomes.

To better distinguish between the variety of presidential systems, this thesis advances a new method of classification for presidential democracies. This method considers the diversity within PR-presidential systems, differentiating between regimes based on the plurality, parliamentary, or alternate coalition forces that determine the government. This classification system allows for a more nuanced comparative analysis of presidential systems and accounts for distinctions within constitutional systems as well as between them. By accounting for this diversity, political scientists can better understand which institutional arrangements contribute to democratic success and better predict when democratic systems may be at an increased risk of political crisis and, potentially, regime breakdown.

The results in this thesis indicate that institutional design is tremendously consequential in determining democratic stability. Through the analysis of the Latin American region, as well as through a more detailed look at two of Latin America's notable, long-lived democracies, democratic systems are shown to have less inter-branch conflict and be less prone to institutional breakdown when they are subject to the same coalition incentives that are *forced* in parliamentary or plurality-presidential systems. Unfortunately, in Latin America's presidential systems, like most presidential systems around the globe, the combination of proportional representative legislative elections and the independent election of the executive often impedes the formation of the type of majority coalitions favorable to democratic success.

A. WHEN PRESIDENTIALISM FAILS

The experiences described in the preceding chapters show the perils of not formally institutionalizing arrangements that produce broadly backed political coalitions. Both Chile and Venezuela instead relied upon special circumstances to achieve results otherwise readily produced by plurality and parliamentary systems. For some time, the distinct parochial interest of legislative politics allowed the plurality incentives of Chilean presidential elections to shape the country's national political expression into two broad

competing visions. Venezuela, on the other hand, relied on a cooperative pact to form parliamentary-style coalitions after elections. Without institutionalizing these coalitions by embracing either a plurality or parliamentary system, however, the countries also made it more likely that these arrangements would collapse. In Chile, the lack of plurality incentives in the legislature gave room for a more fractured and polarized political expression as the legislative interest was nationalized. In Venezuela, presidential incentives came to dominate, breaking-down the tradition of post-electoral coalitions that initially secured its democratic regime. Over time, these once stalwart democracies became increasingly susceptible to the political conflict and democratic instability commonly associated with multiparty presidential systems.

While plurality elections for the president may encourage broader electoral coalitions for presidential contests, regimes that have popular presidents but maintain fractured congresses nevertheless also appear more crisis prone than two-party systems. Both the comparative analysis in Chapter II and the discussion of Venezuela in Chapter IV indicate that, when the popular mandate of the president significantly outstrips that of any single party in the legislature, there is an increased likelihood of populist, anti-establishment presidents and a resulting increase in the risk of inter-branch conflict and institutional breakdown. The Chilean experience discussed in Chapter III indicates that a system that combines significant multiparty expression in the legislature with plurality presidential incentives may only be stable if the two branches are responsible to distinct constituencies—in effect if legislative races remain dominated by parochial interests while plurality presidential elections are capable of independently determining national-level coalitions.

Even when the plurality effects of presidential contests filter into legislative elections, the risk of inter-branch conflict appears to increase substantially if this influence is short of what is typical for a plurality-presidential design. Chapter II indicates that the rates of inter-branch conflict and political crisis increase if the top two parties in a presidential system are together unable to win 80 percent of the legislative vote. Additionally, contrary to the views of many scholars, a system that protects for minor party representation in a two-party dominant system may neither provide increased flexibility

for the leading party nor increased representation through minor party participation in governing decisions.²⁶⁰ Instead, as observed in the Venezuela case analysis, minor parties may rarely be incorporated in the government as part of a compromise majority coalition. Although minor parties can provide space for ad hoc coalitions on particular issues, the lack of minor party incorporation in Venezuela meant that stalemate was still common, even when the leading party was just short of a majority in the legislature.²⁶¹

B. WHEN PRESIDENTIALISM SUCCEEDS

Although the challenge of presidential democracy is clearly illustrated in these pages, it also appears clear that the types of coalitions that do promote democratic stability can be institutionally driven in a range of political environments. Political movements in both case studies showed a ready ability to adapt to the incentives that determined whether or not majority-producing coalitions were produced. The results from this thesis indicate that, even when ideological or sectoral cleavages do not favor a two-party outcome, electoral and institutional rules and agreements may be able to bridge what otherwise appear to be rigid social divides.

The evidence from both Chile and Venezuela shows the particular importance of institutional mechanisms in determining the development of political coalitions and demonstrates how democratic stability varied as a result. Chile's democracy was stable when it was able to overcome the traditional tripartite splits of society to build broader popular coalitions behind two leading presidential candidates. Plurality incentives in Venezuela also were sufficient to coalesce a multiparty system into one dominated by two parties, increasing the stability of the democracy though PR legislative elections prevented a more thorough consolidation. The Venezuelan experience additionally demonstrates the perseverance and potential strength of a multiparty system when political elites subscribe to a parliamentary-style power sharing agreement, but the fragility of such a system when they do not.

²⁶⁰ This approach is advanced by Mark Jones, in *Electoral Laws and the Survival of Presidential Democracies*, and Matthew Shugart and John Carey in *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, among others.

²⁶¹ Coppedge, "Venezuela: Democratic despite Presidentialism," 411–15.

Significantly, political coalitions in these case studies were not fractured by already established crisis but instead broke down as a result of deliberate actions initiated by political leaders. The Chile case tells a story of gradual reform that reduced the plurality influence of presidential elections on national politics and inadvertently limited the ability of politicians to bridge ideological divides. The Venezuelan experience describes how a lack of formalized arrangements allowed established coalitions to atrophy, first as presidents discarded legislative coalitions and then as parties neglected electoral ones. However, political actors could only abandon these majority-producing arrangements because their PR-presidential systems did not systematically demand them. In both Chile and Venezuela, political conflict resulted in democratic crisis only *after* their governments came to better reflect the “alternate” design more typical of Latin American systems.

Observations both across the Latin American region from 1978–2002 and from the two case studies presented in this thesis indicate the importance of systematically encouraged coalitions in determining stable democratic governments. Consistent results are noted throughout this analysis, suggesting that the positive relative effects of plurality or parliamentary coalition types are present despite variation in levels of presidential strength and independent of other cultural or socio-economic factors.

C. LESSONS LEARNED

Broad and representative political coalitions make democratic success more likely. However, it is not only parliamentary regimes that can produce such coalitions. Plurality elections stabilize presidential systems because, like parliamentary arrangements, they build into the government coalitions that are generally representative of the preferences of the majority of the electorate. Systems that build governments unable to ensure such representation are more likely to find friction between branches and reduced levels of popular support for their democratic institutions.

Plurality-based presidential systems have the ability to moderate governing outcomes and represent a diverse range of local interests. Arturo Valenzuela considers the “politics of accommodation” that had allowed Chilean political coalitions to survive to be

a mere accident of centrist politics.²⁶² However, this spirit of compromise was not the altruistic pursuit of Chilean politicians but the result of an electoral reality that demanded that presidents appeal to interests beyond their own narrow ideological bloc. Additionally, plurality legislative elections in presidential systems not only encourage legislative bargaining and policy compromise that further reduces polarization, they also help provide the legislature with a distinct constituent responsibility that eases the tension between executive and legislative branches. Venezuela's political institutions came under attack when the president became significantly more popular than any unified opposition in the legislature; Chile's institutions came under attack when a unified opposition became significantly more popular than the president. However, distinct constituencies reduce the direct competition over the same popular mandate. Instead, the separate responsibilities of the Chilean congress earlier in its constitutional era show how distinct popular legitimacies can safeguard branches from extra-constitutional encroachment. It is when one branch can claim to be clearly more representative than another among the same constituency that inter-branch conflict can quickly turn into more volatile political crisis.

Presidential systems are often dismissed as unreliable and plurality elections are often assumed to be unrepresentative. However, the experience in Latin America shows that presidential systems can be stable and ideological divisions can be bridged when representative, two-party systems emerge. Though proportional representation ensures a greater number of parties, in presidential systems, plurality elections are more likely to ensure a more diverse governing coalition. For democracy to succeed, this diverse representation is required. Unfortunately, for the vast majority of presidential democracies, proportionally representative electoral systems make this outcome less likely. Many U.S. alliances around the world depend on the success of a partner nation's democratic institutions. Democracies that seek stability while balancing proportional representation in a presidential system may be in for an uphill fight.

²⁶² Valenzuela, "Party Politics and the Crisis of Presidentialism in Chile: A Proposal for a Parliamentary Form of Government," 168.

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APPENDIX. CHAPTER II POLITICAL SYSTEM CLASSIFICATION AND CONFLICT DATA

COUNTRY	PRESIDENCY	TERM	TYPE OF GOVERNMENT	PostEle Cabinet Majority Coalition	Top 2 Con Votes (Upper)	Top 2 Con Seats (Upper)	Top 2 Con Votes (Lower)	Top 2 Con Seats (Lower)	Leading Party/Bloc	Pres Party	Top 2 Pres	Type	CONFLICT INDEX	EARLY TERMINATION	
Argentina	Alfonsín	1983-1985	Strong Plurality		0		87.9	94.5	UCR	UCR	87.9		0.049079755	0	
		1985-1987	Weak Plurality				78.2	91	UCR					0	
		1987-1989	Weak Plurality				81.5	87.8	PJ					1	
Argentina	Menem I	1989-1991	Alternate	0			73.5	82.6	PJ	FREJUPO	80		0.089285714	0	
		1991-1993	Alternate				69.2	77.8	PJ					0	
		1993-1995	Alternate				72.7	82.1	Justicialista					0	
Argentina	Menem II	1995-1997	Alternate	0			64.7	77.5	Justicialista	PJ	79.2		0.145454545	0	
Argentina	Menem II	1997-1999	Alternate	0			72.7	72	Justicialista	PJ	79.2		0.037037037	0	
Argentina	De la Rúa	1999-2001	Weak Plurality	0			79.7	84.8	TJE	TJE	87.1		0.1224898	1	
Bolivia	Siles Zuazo	1980-1985	Alternate	0		74	58.9	62.4	~UDP	UDP	58.9		0.166666667	0	
Bolivia	Paz Estenssoro III	1985-1989	Alternate	0		96.3	63.2	64.6	MNR-MNR	MNR	63.2		0.204545455	0	
Bolivia	Paz Zamora	1989-1993	Parliamentary	1		62.9	50.8	60	MNR-MNR	MIR	50.8		0.117647059	0	
Bolivia	Sánchez de Lozada I	1993-1997	Parliamentary	1		92.6	56.7	66.8	MNR-MNR	MNR-MNR	56.7		0.071428571	0	
Bolivia	Báñez	1997-2001	Parliamentary	1		62.9	40.5	44.6	AND-AND-	AND-NFR-I	40.4			0	
Bolivia	Sánchez de Lozada II	2002-2003	Parliamentary	1		70.3	43.4	48.4	MNR-MNR	MNR-MBL	43.4		0.210526	1	
Brazil	Collor de Mello	1990-1992	Alternate	0		51.6	31.7	38.2	PMDB+PFI	PRN	47.7		0.206521739	1	
Brazil	Cardoso I	1994-1998	Parliamentary	1	31.8	46.3	33.2	38.2	PMDB/PMI	PSDB	81.3		0.122699387	0	
Brazil	Cardoso II	1998-2002	Parliamentary	1	40.1	62.9	34.8	39.8	PMDB/PFL	PSDB	84.8		0.061643836	0	
Chile	Aylwin	1989-1994	Strong Plurality	0	89.6	100	85.5	97.6	Concentr+C	Concentr	84.6		0.097826087	0	
Chile	Frei	1994-2000	Weak Plurality	0	92.9	100	91.9	100	Concentr+P	Concentr	82.4		0.081395349	0	
Colombia	Turbay	1978-1982	Strong Plurality	0	95.2	99	94.6	97.4	PL/PL	PL	96.1		0.034782609	0	
Colombia	Betancur	1982-1986	StPl/Parliamentary	1	96.6	98.1	96.7	99	PL/PL	PC/MN	87.8		0.046153846	0	
Colombia	Barco	1986-1990	Strong Plurality	0	86.5	88.5	84.7	89.4	PL/PL	PL	94.7		0.028571429	0	
Colombia	Gaviria	1990-1994	Alternate	0	18.3	63.7	68.4	70.7	PL/PL	PL	72.1		0.067961165	0	
Colombia	Samper	1994-1998	Alternate	0	74	74.5	73	78.1	PL/PL	PL	90.3		0.067961165	0	
Colombia	Pastrana	1998-2002	Alternate	0	61.9	61.8	65.1	68.7	PL/PL	PL	68.4		0.033707865	0	
Costa Rica	Carazo	1978-1982	Weak Plurality	0			82.3	91.3	P. Unidad	P. Unidad	94.3		0.073170732	0	
Costa Rica	Monge	1982-1986	Strong Plurality	0			84.3	89.5	PLN	PLN	92.4		0.04	0	
Costa Rica	Arias	1986-1990	Strong Plurality	0			89.2	94.8	PLN	PLN	98.1			0	
Costa Rica	Calderín	1990-1994	Strong Plurality	0			88.1	94.8	PUSC	PUSC	98.7			0	
Costa Rica	Figueroa	1994-1998	Strong Plurality	0			85	93	PLN	PLN	97.3			0	
Costa Rica	Rodríguez	1998-2002	Weak Plurality	0			76	87.8	PUSC	PUSC	91.6			0	
Dom. Rep.	Balaguer (1986)	1986-1990	Weak Plurality	0		93.3	80.8	86.6	PRSC/PRSC	PRSC	80.8			0	
Dom. Rep.	Balaguer (1990)	1990-1994	Alternate	0		93.3	67.3	70.9	PRSC/PLD	PRSC	69.3			0	
Dom. Rep.	Balaguer (1994)	1994-1996	Weak Plurality	0		96.7	81	89.2	PRD/PRD	PRSC	83.9			1	
Dom. Rep.	Fernández Reyna	1996-1998	WkPl/Parliamentary	1						PLD	84.8			0	
Dom. Rep.	Fernández Reyna	1998-2000	Weak Plurality	0		93.3	82.7	88.6	PRD/PRD	PLD				0	
Ecuador*	Roldós	1979-1981	Alternate	0			49.3	50.2	CFP	CFP	51.6		0.347826087	0	
Ecuador	Fehres	1984-1988	Alternate	0			37.4	41.9	ID	PSC	55.9		0.265625	0	
Ecuador	Bojía	1988-1990	Alternate	0			38.1	33.4	ID	ID	42.1		0.230769231	0	
Ecuador	Bojía	1990-1992	Alternate	0			39.2	43.3	PSC	ID			0.346153846	0	
Ecuador	Durán Ballén	1992-1996	Alternate	0			41.3	44.2	PSC	PCE/PUR	56.9		0.242424242	0	
Ecuador	Bucaram	1996-1997	Alternate	0			50.8	46	PSC	PRE	53.5		0.230769231	1	
Ecuador	Mahad	1998-2002	Alternate	0			42.8	48.4	DP-UDC	DP-UDC	61.5		0.076923077	1	
El Salvador	Duarte	1985-1988	Alternate	0			90.4	96.7	PDC	PDC	73.2		0.05	0	
El Salvador	Duarte	1988-1989	Alternate	0			83.2	88.4	ARENA				0.074074074	0	
El Salvador	Cristiani	1989-1991	Weak Plurality	0					ARENA	ARENA	90.3			0	
El Salvador	Cristiani	1991-1994	Alternate	0			72.3	77.4	ARENA					0	
El Salvador	Calderón/Flores	1994-1999	Alternate	0			66.4	71.4	ARENA	ARENA	73.9			0	
Guatemala	Cerezo	1986-1991	Alternate	0			58.8	73	DCG	DCG	58.8		0.12	0	
Guatemala	Serrano	1991-1993	Alternate	0			49.8	58.6	UCN	MAS	49.8		0.1	1	
Guatemala	Arzú	1995-1999	Alternate	0				80.1	PAN	PAN	58.5			0	
Honduras	Suazo Córdoba	1982-1986	Strong Plurality	0			95.5	95.2	PL	PL	95.5		0.085714286	0	
Honduras	Aceona	1986-1990	Strong Plurality	0			96.5	97	PL	PL	96.5		0.119047619	0	
Honduras	Calléjas	1989-1993	Strong Plurality	0			96.6	99.3	PN	PN	96.6		0.033333333	0	
Honduras	Reina	1993-1997	Strong Plurality	0			96	98.5	PL	PL	96			0	
Honduras	Flores	1997-2001	Strong Plurality	0			91.1	95.5	PL	PL	95.5			0	
Nicaragua	Barrios	1990-1996	Strong Plurality	0			94.7	97.8	UNO	UNO	95.6		0.292682927	0	
Nicaragua	Alamán	1996-2001	Weak Plurality	0			82.6	83.9	AL	AL	88.8			0	
Panama	Pérez Balladares	1994-1999	Alternate	0			37.4	65.2	PRD (APU)	PRD (APU)	32.4			0	
Peru	Belaúnde	1980-1985	Parliamentary	1	68.5	63.3	65.4	86.6	AP	AP	72.1		0.105263	0	
Peru	Alan García	1985-1990	Alternate	0	76.5	75.1	74.5	86	PAP	PAP	77.8		0.153409091	0	
Peru	Fujimori I	1990-1992	Alternate	0	57.4	50	55.1	47.2	PAP	C90	61.7		0.212121212	1	
Peru	Fujimori II	1995-2000	Alternate	0			64.7	70	C90/NM	C90/NM	85.8		0.042105263	0	
Peru	Fujimori III	2000-2000	Alternate	0			65.4	67.5	Peru2000	Peru2000	90.1		0.25	1	
Uruguay	Sanguinetti I	1984-1989	Weak Plurality	0	76.1	80	76.2	76.8	PC	PC	76.2		0.132352941	0	
Uruguay	Lacalle	1989-1994	Parliamentary	1	69.2	70	69.2	69.7	PN	PN	69.2		0.205128205	0	
Uruguay	Sanguinetti II	1994-1999	Parliamentary	1	63.4	67.7	63.4	63.6	PC	PC	63.5			0	
Venezuela	Herrera Campins	1978-1983	Weak Plurality	0			95.4	79.5	86.4	AD	COPEI	89.9		0.141414141	0
Venezuela	Lusinchi	1983-1988	Weak Plurality	0			95.4	78.6	86.5	AD	AD	91.9		0.09090909	0
Venezuela	Pérez II	1988-1993	Alternate	0			91.3	74.4	81.6	AD	AD	93.3		0.253164557	1
Venezuela	Caldera I	1994-1999	Alternate	0	46.9	60	45.9	53.2	AD	Convergencia	54.1		0.102564103	0	
Venezuela	Chávez I	1998-2000	Alternate	0	44.2	53.7	44	46.4	AD	MVR	96.2		0.194444444	1	

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