

**THE EMERGENCE OF ELECTORAL REFORMS
IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA**

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1. Introduction¹

The electoral system² constitutes a key institutional element of the basic framework in which the political life of any system operates. The importance of electoral systems as an objective of study in democratic systems is reflected in the continuous increase of scholarly knowledge on this topic in the past several decades. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Mark J. Jones (1995), the transition to democracy of most Latin American countries since the beginning of the 1980s, has not been accompanied by a similar growth in research on electoral rules in this region. Moreover, while most Latin American countries were and are undertaking important changes in the electoral laws of their recently established democratic regimes -many of them actually carried out several changes in a relatively short period of time- the literature focuses instead on the impact of electoral systems in the middle to long run. However, the salience of the electoral reform issue in Latin America manifests precisely the necessity to incorporate electoral reforms and their emergence, into the political scientists' research agenda.

Focusing on Western developed countries, Norris (1997) points out that until recently, electoral systems have overall proven remarkably resistant to radical reform. With few exceptions, since the emergence of these countries as liberal democracies, the basic electoral system has persisted without fundamental change. As there has been little discussion of changing the electoral system, most of the scholarly literature based on Western developed countries has focused so far on the consequences of alternative electoral systems rather than on the question of why they were changed or adopted in the first place. Voting systems are, thus, usually treated as independent variables. This widely accepted perspective of electoral systems as "constants" or "near-constants" instead of variables has been dominating in the literature (Lijphart, 1985: 6).

In the last decade, the pattern of stability regarding electoral systems has been broken by the ongoing efforts to reform electoral laws not only on the recently democratized Latin American countries, and lately in the newly emerging systems of Central and Eastern Europe, but also in a number of established democracies such as France, Britain, Italy or New Zealand. Therefore, during the 1990s, debates about when, why and how the electoral systems change also moved from the margins to the mainstream of the political agenda in Western Developed countries. In spite of these changes, we still lack a theoretical framework to understand how political systems reform their basic institutional principles. What explains the fundamental reform of electoral systems? What are some of the factors driving the reform movement?

The usual perspective is thus reversed: in this essay the electoral system is treated as the *dependent*, not the independent variable. The existence of so many reforms and reform debates over the last decade and into today in Latin America, presents a valuable opportunity to observe these processes and to evaluate and refine previous literature in the light of new evidence.

The paper is structured in four main parts. First, several theoretical arguments on institutional change and electoral reform processes are reviewed, focusing particularly on the contrasts between the

historical and rational choice variants of the so called new institutionalism. The potential convergences of these two approaches are taken as a point of departure for the development of an analytic framework of electoral reform processes. Second, a brief overview of four cases will be presented: first, the Uruguayan, Venezuelan and Mexican electoral reform processes will be examined to provide empirical evidence for the theoretical arguments discussed beforehand; and then, the Chilean case will be discussed, where in spite of several reform attempts, a substantial electoral reform process has not actually taken place. Including cases in which reform did and did not occur may help to provide better insights regarding the emergence of electoral reform processes. Finally, the theoretical framework will be reexamined in light of the empirical analysis and several conclusions will be drawn.

I. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESSES

Since the late 1970s, explicit attention to institutions grew out of a critique of the behavioral emphasis of American and comparative politics in the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis was on how institutions shape political strategies and influence political outcomes. However, the so called new institutionalism does not constitute a single and coherent body of theory but comprises many streams of argument and debate (Lowndes, 1996; Immergut, 1998). In this paper, I will single out two rather different approaches that may both be considered “new institutionalism” (Steinmo and Thelen, 1992): one historical³, and the other, a more formal “rational choice” perspective⁴.

The critical difference between these two approaches lies in the question of preference formation. In contrast to the rational choice institutionalist approach, the works developed within this tradition take actors' goals, strategies, and preferences as something to be explained rather than something to be assumed. Preferences are therefore considered as endogenous, and consequently, socially and politically constructed (Steinmo and Thelen, 1992).

Rational choice analysis may be understood as a broad term for approaches which assume that actors make choices in the light of assessment of costs and benefits (Collier and Norden, 1992: 229). Rational choice deals with preferences at the level of assumptions, by considering them as exogenous, and therefore largely ignoring the issue of preference formation; actors are rational and will invariably act to maximize their self-interest. More often than not, politicians are assumed to be not only rational thinkers but also short-term thinkers: "they often make institutional choices based on immediate electoral calculations with little regard for, or understanding of, their probable long-term effects" (Geddes, 1996: 33)⁵. Within rational choice analysis, explanatory arguments will differ depending on what the particular goals of political actors are assumed to be, and on the number and rigidity with which rational choice assumptions are made. Two examples of the most common approaches with regard to electoral reform are the following:

a) *The maximization of legislative representation.* Electoral laws are the product of negotiations between incumbents and their opponents, each of whom is trying to maximize their legislative representation (Baen, 1992; Brady and Mo, 1992). Support for the reform comes, thus, from those who as a consequence will increase their strength in Congress. Self-interested, seat-maximizing parties are

emphasized in these explanations. The argument that the electoral system is a product of party politics is supported by three assumptions: the party is the primary actor in electoral systems choice; each party is a unitary actor; all parties are motivated by a single primary goal: to win elections and to maximize the number of legislative seats they win. From this perspective, in countries undergoing democratic transition, the kind of electoral system adopted depends on the party leaderships' expectations about where their electoral strength lies (Ishiyama, 1997).

However, the pursuit of partisan self-interest does not invariably mean that parties will always try to maximize their own representation. In the Mexican case, for example, it was in the self-interest of the PRI to dominate, but without completely excluding the opposition. Yet, explaining institutional design exclusively in terms of politicians' and parties' self interest presents logical limitations. Had the Mexican party tried to establish a pure one-party system without even a weak opposition, this goal could have been explained just as plausibly in terms of partisan self-interest (Lijphart and Waisman, 1996).

b) *The protection and furthering of politicians' political careers.* According to this second subset of arguments, electoral law preferences are driven by the desire of politicians to protect and further their careers. Thus, for instance, deputies dependent upon corrupt political machines for election to Congress would vote against a bill that threatened to eliminate electoral fraud. This argument does not necessarily assume that each party is a unitary actor, since the electoral system change is the result of the behavior of each political actor involved seeking to further his or her political career.

The influence of the standard rational choice approaches on the literature on electoral reforms has led to the hypothesis that "the longer the incumbents have been in power, the less likely they are to be willing to reform political arrangements that preserve their influence on the executive and legislative branches of government" (Lehoucq, 1995: 24). However, the emergence of far reaching reforms such as those of Venezuela, Mexico and Uruguay indicates that hegemonic parties can be forced to accept unpalatable institutional changes. Why?

Within the rational choice tradition, there are some authors that are willing to relax the rationality assumption and consider that individuals are motivated by a complex mix of sometimes conflicting preferences. The concept of "bounded" or "procedural rationality" has been posed as more compatible with economic-cum-social structural perspectives (Kato, 1996). For example, the level of uncertainty is actually a powerful source of change in the course of action for rational individuals. The uncertainty of a political situation is itself a primary factor in determining political elites' strategic responses. Under conditions of uncertainty, the perceptions and historical baggage carried by politicians are more likely to shape their decision-making.

Therefore, structural-historical analysis is not necessarily incompatible with the assumption of rational (self-interested) behavior. Rather, both types of approaches are concerned with the difficulties of determining what are the interests of political actors that lie behind an expression of their preferences that is strongly affected by the institutional context in which those preferences are voiced (Immergut, 1998: 25). The emphasis on institutions as patterned relations that lies at the core of a historical institutionalist approach does not replace attention to other variables: the players, their interest and strategies, and the distribution of power among them (Steinmo and Thelen, 1992). Reproducing changing definitions of

interests through time and space, the process of electoral reform can be addressed without necessarily imposing arbitrary and a priori definitions of those interests. In this vein, Herbert Kitschelt argues that the standard rational choice accounts do not perform very well when they are applied to situations in which relatively little information about the actors' payoffs is available and in which strategic interaction may be rather complicated across sectors over time. The best option, according to this author, is to complement rational-choice accounts with sociological and historical explanatory variables⁶. Immergut's recent work also stresses the potential for broader crossing and fruitful combination between these perspectives (Immergut, 1998: 28). In sum, at the risk of losing parsimony, I believe it is important to better understand what drives the manipulation of institutional forms and how actors' means and ends vary over time and space.

1. Explaining 'critical junctures' versus accounting for the particular institutional choice made

In order to generalize about the common elements that drive electoral reform, a clear distinction should be made -a distinction that is far from clear in the literature- between the primary factors to be considered as explanations of the particular choice of institutions that is finally made in the electoral reform process, and the conditions that make substantial reform more likely, regardless of the particular institutional choice made. Structural approaches provide us with the explanatory elements that account for institutional change, that convinced established elites of the need to change existing institutions. But this realization itself does not precisely determine the direction of change. We could further improve the explanation of why these elites selected particular institutional arrangements from a variety of possible responses to the crisis, by taking into account the pre-existing institutions, the elites' interests (as understood by them) and their knowledge of both the situation and the likely consequences of alternative courses of action (Lijphart and Waisman, 1996). Therefore, we should examine how social-structural constraints shape the preferences of politicians confronted with the choice of maintaining or transforming electoral laws.

2. The combination between long-term factors and short-term catalysts

I argue that in order to study the emergence of electoral reforms in Latin America, it may be useful to distinguish between long-term facilitating conditions and short-term catalysts contributing towards change. Long-term conditions -such as economic conditions, institutional arrangements and changes in the established party systems- create the potential for change, whereas short-term conditions include the particular circumstances, leaders and events surrounding reform (Norris, 1995: 7).

3. Long term factors opening the possibilities for reform

3.1 *Economic constraints and the perception of a crisis of efficacy*

The perceived crisis of efficacy and a growing perception that this crisis of efficacy is directly related to the specific institutional arrangements of democratic competition, increases the likelihood of a situation in which electoral reform might be advocated. Economic factors and the blaming of institutions could become powerful contributors to the development of "strategic openings" where social and political actors' mobilization could bring about institutional change (Steinmo y Thelen 1992: 7). I do not expect

electoral reform processes to be always coincident with economic crisis, but rather that economic conditions should be taken into account -for their relationship to the growth of opposition forces for example- in order to better explain the development of critical junctures in which an electoral reform process is likely to take place. Economic constraints together with the institutional context in itself, help to better explain strategic interactions leading to electoral reform (Haggard and Kaufman, 1995; Linz and Stepan, 1996: 163). Moreover, economic hardship also seems to constrain strategic interaction by creating less predictability about which parties will consolidate their mass support, as voters punish one set of incumbents after another (Geddes, 1996: 34).

3.2 *Institutional arrangements*

The institutional context in itself remains a powerful explanatory variable to understand the strategic interactions leading to electoral reform. Within this context, I argue that the existing electoral system and the legal requirements to its transformation should be emphasized.

a) The existing electoral system

In order to clearly establish the point of departure and the magnitude of the electoral change, we need to first outline the features of the electoral system prior to reform. Thus, any analysis of the evolution of an electoral system must begin by making reference to different national contexts, and by realizing that options for change are usually limited by the existing principle of representation and its historically strong perseverance (Ishiyama, 1997).

b) The legal requirements to reform the existing electoral system

The consideration of these institutional arrangements requires primarily the distinction between those electoral systems whose transformation requires constitutional change and those which might be changed simply by legislation. The former situation, specially if the electoral reform is embodied in a broader constitutional change, posits difficulties to narrow rational choice institutionalist approaches, since the design of electoral laws often involves actors competing in a variety of arenas that may generate contradictory choices, where they must make less than ideal trade-offs among choices over institutional arrangements beyond the electoral arena (Lehoucq, 1995). In spite of this, what should not be underestimated is the fact that electoral systems embodied in constitutions are less likely to be changed or will pose more resistance to change than those which are not. In the same vein, within both sets of electoral systems -within and out of the constitution- those that incorporate more complex legal requirements for change or need greater majorities, are less likely to be reformed.

Nonetheless, it should not be forgotten that unlike the theoretical predictions based on Western developed countries, constitutional change has been fairly common in Latin America. Thus, notwithstanding the key relevance of the particular characteristics of the prevailing electoral system and the legal requirements to reform it, I will argue that the relevance of institutional constraints often goes beyond these two factors to the overall importance of the formal institutional framework; that is, the extent to which formal institutional rules are enforced and obeyed, and furthermore, the structure and nature of the overall institutional framework in which the electoral system operates. As will be seen for the case of Chile, there might be other institutions, apparently delinked from those directly related to the operation of electoral process, that nonetheless impinge on the electoral system. The analysis of each

country, and particularly the Mexican and Chilean cases will better illustrate this point. But as Blum clearly states it: “Experience teaches that political change is most difficult when it must confront a well-structured and robust institutional context” (Blum, 1997: 29).

3.3 Changes in the established party system

Electoral systems are usually criticized by those parties and groups that are in a most disadvantaged position, which undoubtedly stimulates the debates over electoral systems. Party systems in Latin America have not been “frozen” but rather have suffered significant transformations that sometimes made the “disadvantages” of electoral systems important obstacles for the effectiveness and quality of the democratic political process. The transformation of the established party system thus, could become a very important determinant of electoral system change, regardless of whether it is the result of fragmentation of one-party dominant systems, the weakening of party loyalties due to decades of dealignment, or the emergence of minor parties (Norris, 1995).

These three factors -economic constraints, changes in the established party system and the institutional arrangements- in one way or another relate to the fact that changes in society confront an unchanged electoral environment, thus contributing to the development of social and political opposition to the institutional establishment.

4. The moment of the reform effort: electoral reform during the authoritarian period, transitional electoral system choice, and post-transitional electoral reform

For a better understanding of the process of electoral reform, it may also be necessary to determine the moment in which it takes place: that is, electoral reform during the phase of liberalization before the actual democratization has taken place, during the transition process itself, or post-transition. This distinction could be important to assess the potential for change that the transition brings about, given that the rules are more in flux than in any other period, which might facilitate the conditions for electoral reform. Notwithstanding the potential for institutional change that transitions to democracy bring about, they are not the only such opportunities and it is important to examine more broadly when, why and how substantial electoral reforms can take place. Moreover, when electoral debates or designs took place at the time of the transition to democracy, they were mostly focused on the national level. Local electoral laws were generally not definitively settled at this time, which implied the existence of a potential for change and left open the possibility for future electoral reform.

During the authoritarian period and the democratic transition, actors other than political parties -especially in countries that have experienced a long period of authoritarian rule with strong debilitating effects on political parties- may also play a key role during the electoral reform process. Although this approach does not contend that parties play no role, they may be secondary to other actors. From this perspective, the transitional electoral system produced is not so much a product of party politics, but rather a reflection of the long-term interests of other non-party political actors -such as the bureaucracy, the military, and the semi-opposition (Schmitter, 1992)- who select the rules to maximize their goals, which are often fundamentally different from those of the vote and seat-maximizing parties. Political

parties might be more important in post-transitional periods and in countries in which authoritarianism did not have such devastating consequences for political parties.

5. The major actors involved in reform: their interests and the power distribution among them

Finally, any study of electoral reforms should identify the main actors involved, their interests, and the power distribution among them. As Steinmo and Thelen point out: “Political actors are not unaware of the deep and fundamental impact of institutions, which is why battles over institutions are so hard fought” (Steinmo and Thelen, 1992: 9). The long term factors stated above should help to better understand the “give-and-take” of the particular power struggles among the actors involved to insure their stake in the new design.

In summary, first, the framework within which the emergence of electoral reforms in Uruguay, Venezuela and Mexico will be analyzed in this paper consists of the combination of long-term conditions (economic constraints, changes in the established party system and institutional arrangements) and short-term catalysts creating the potential for change. Second, the moment of reform attempts and the major actors involved in the electoral reform process, their interests and the distribution of power among them will also be discussed. The combination of these variables creates the critical junctures in which external social and political pressures develop and an electoral reform is more likely to take place.

Out of the four cases under analysis here, Uruguay, Venezuela and Mexico did experience substantive electoral reforms. The examination of these processes will be complemented with the discussion of the failed attempts to electoral reform in Chile. I will consider that an electoral reform has occurred when substantive changes in any of the different aspects of the electoral rules that will be summarized below take place. The electoral reforms under analysis differ both in the scope and the magnitude of the changes. A table will be presented at the beginning of each case analysis, which provides a rough assessment of the scope and magnitude of the reform in each case. These tables constitute a valuable tool to compare electoral reforms. The focus of this paper is on the emergence of electoral reform processes, and therefore predictions regarding the particular scope and intensity of the reform play a less prominent role in this essay. Nonetheless in the concluding section of the paper, several hypothesis will be drawn regarding these two dimensions of the electoral reform processes. Thus, five sets of electoral rules will be taken into consideration to assess the scope and magnitude of the electoral changes⁷:

1.- Presidential election rules.

1.1.- Single/Dual ballot system⁸

1.2.- The length of the presidential term and the possibility of reelection.

1.3.- Presidential and legislative election timing.

2.- Legislative election rules

2.1.- Changes in parties' nomination procedures.

2.2.- How citizens vote and how their votes are counted.

2.3.- District structure.

2.4.- Electoral formulae.

2.5.- Thresholds and bonuses⁹.

3.- *Political decentralization*

3.1.- Previously appointed positions now open to election.

3.2.- Changes in the local election rules.

4.- *Rules concerning the general concept of 'free and fair elections'*

4.1.- Access to mass media.

4.2.- Campaign financing rules.

4.3.- Electoral fraud related rules.

A fifth category related to the direction of the change is also incorporated: *the interactive effect between these rules*. This category aims to reflect the direction in which changes are made, that is, whether the electoral reform as a whole was intended to increase the overall strength of the legislature by facilitating the entrance and representation of opposition parties, or on the contrary the goal was to strengthen the figure of the presidency, by facilitating the majority of its party in the legislature or by reducing the entrance of opposition parties in the legislature. It will also be considered the possibility that where important changes occur in the legislative and presidential electoral rules in opposite directions, such reforms might actually cancel each other. The analysis of the particular cases below will clarify this point.

II. THE ELECTORAL REFORMS IN URUGUAY, VENEZUELA, MEXICO AND CHILE

1. The 1996 electoral reform in Uruguay

1.1 *Introduction*

Uruguay underwent a significant electoral reform in 1996, which will be analyzed under the previously described theoretical framework. Table 1 provides a summary of the scope and magnitude of the 1996 electoral reform. The electoral reform in Uruguay, as shown in Table 1 below, changed several key aspects of the “presidential”, “legislative” and “political decentralization” regulations of the electoral system. The changes in the “presidential” and “legislative” election rules were overall assessed as high in intensity (**H**) and were accompanied by small changes in the electoral rules and the local level (**L**)¹⁰.

1.2 *Long-term factors opening possibilities for reform.*

Economic constraints and the perception of a crisis of efficacy

Notwithstanding the stability and durability of democracy in Uruguay, Linz and Stepan find that two of the fundamental factors that make them consider the Uruguayan democracy today as a “risk-prone-democracy” are the perception of a crisis of efficacy and the increasing perception that this crisis of efficacy is directly linked to the democratic institutional arrangements (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 162). The level of economic development in Uruguay, compared to the rest of Latin American countries, was always exceptional. But since the 1950s, the country has experienced a relative economic stagnation. While Uruguay in 1980 had a gross national product (GNP) per capita income higher than in Argentina,

Brazil or Chile, the highest literacy rate of the four countries (94%) and probably Latin America's best income distribution, the country has been in a relative decline since the mid-1950s (González, 1995).

In the context of economic stagnation, there is an increasing perception of a crisis of efficacy of the governmental activity. This crisis of efficacy was increasingly associated with the existing political institutions, and particularly the electoral system. This was because the obstacles in generating majorities and stable legislative coalitions were producing executive-legislative conflicts which, in turn, were posing difficulties for an effective governmental action to address the economic stagnation. The governability problems facilitated the generation of the consensus required to carry out the constitutional reform.

Institutional arrangements

a) The previous electoral system

The electoral system that prevailed until the 1996 reform was known as the "Ley de Lemas", and had provided the framework for party politics since 1910. Under this very peculiar system, voters elected both the president and legislators by choosing simultaneously among parties (*Lemas*) and among competing lists within parties (*Sublemas*). Presidential, legislative, and municipal elections are held concurrently every five years. The closed list system adopted in 1937 established that each sublema would provide its own list to the leadership of the party, which, in turn, would elaborate the general party list. Voters cast their vote in two separate sheets (*Hojas de Votación*), one concerning national representatives, the other regarding municipal ones. However, the system requires the voter to choose the same party in both sheets, although within the chosen lema, they are free to cast their vote among the different sublemas¹¹. Thus, for the election of municipal representatives, voters are allowed to choose a sublema different from that selected at the national level. Executive office both, at the local and national levels, was elected by simple majority of votes in a single round, and for the Congress and the Senate, a proportional system was applied¹². The winning lists were those that receive the most votes within the party that received the most votes. That is, the candidate with the most votes accumulated also receives the votes of his party's other lists¹³.

b) The legal requirements to reform the electoral system

The electoral system in Uruguay is the most difficult to reform in terms of legal requirements, of the four cases analyzed in this paper. The electoral rules are included in the constitution and bills have to be submitted as constitutional laws which not only require approval by two thirds majority in both chambers, but also a later popular ratification by plebiscite. This latter provision caused for example the failure of minor electoral reform attempt in 1994. Representatives of all political parties had agreed on a 'mini-reform' of the constitution that was to include an amendment separating national and municipal elections, allowing Uruguayans to vote for presidential and mayoral candidates of different political parties. Uruguayans were asked to approve or reject the reform in a plebiscite that was held simultaneously with several proposed changes in the state pensions and social security system. The reform package was doomed to failure from the moment that organizations representing pensioners recommended that they vote 'no'¹⁴. Thus, the required ratification by plebiscite not only makes electoral rules more difficult to change than in any other country under analysis here, but also makes unexpected obstructing public responses such as that of 1994, more likely to appear.

Changes in the established party system

The two traditional catch-all parties, Blancos (Partido Nacional) and Colorados are among the oldest in Latin America, their roots going back more than a century and a half. They never received less than 75% of the total vote in any presidential election. Since 1971, the dominance of the two traditional parties has been challenged by an alliance of leftist parties known as the Broad Front.

The party system in Uruguay has always been strongly factionalized, but this factionalism has been increasing stimulated by the electoral system. As a result, the promotion of institutional reforms aimed at obtaining majorities for the winning party, started to develop. The number of parties, intraparty factions, and presidential candidates have been increasing since 1960¹⁵. Thus, the party system has been suffering a long-term process of transformation, most evident since the emergence of the Broad Front in 1971 as a strong political force. The prevailing electoral system was designed for a two party system that no longer exists in Uruguay, which arguably creates an important potential for electoral change.

The key characteristic of the 1994 election was not the defeat of the Blanco party and their main candidate Alberto Volonté, but rather, the continued growth of the Broad Front within the leftist alliance of Encuentro Progresista (see Table 2). The result of the elections meant the definitive breakdown of the historical two-party system in Uruguay. The elections virtually produced a draw between the three parties, for the first time in the history of the country. I argue that this 1994 election was the critical short-term catalyst of the electoral reform.

The moment of the reform effort: authoritarian period, transition period, post-transition period

The authoritarian regime in Uruguay began in 1973 and lasted eleven years. However, the key role played by the two traditional parties in the political life throughout the twentieth century and the tradition of high party identification, helps to explain why, although the military repressed political parties, they did not dare to displace them. The traditional parties emerged from the transition with a renewed strength and self-confidence in their legitimacy. At the time of the transition, thus, they had no interest in electoral reform. The electoral reform took place in the post transition period and the main actors were political parties.

The electoral reform process: major actors, their projects and interests and the power distribution among them

In the early years of the transition, the balance of power among the contending parties was virtually identical to the one that had prevailed prior to the onset of the dictatorship in the early 1970s. The Colorados won the 1984 election with almost the same share of the vote as in 1971, although this time, it was the moderate Batllist sector that put up the candidate with the most votes: Julio María Sanguinetti. Therefore, during the early years of the transition, the balance of power changed mainly within parties: the pro-military lists within Colorados and Blancos were resoundingly defeated in the 1982 primaries and the moderate and centrist factions within the parties regained predominance¹⁶. The legislative seats of the more conservative lists, dropped from 28% in 1971 to only 6% in 1984. The Broad Front was also able to maintain the 20% share of the electorate it had established in the early 70s, although it also faced strong incentives to move towards the center. However, Colorados and Blancos continued to dominate the presidency in spite of the presence of this important third force within the

system. It was not until the 1994 election that, as I mentioned before, this power distribution changed, spurring a concentrated effort at reform which finally succeeded.

The constitutional reform was approved by the political elites in November 20, 1996 and by national plebiscite on December 8. The new legislation has introduced internal party elections, the non-concurrency of the elections at the national and department level, and a second round or *ballotage* for the presidency (see summary of the reforms in Table 1). Under the new system, parties can only present a single candidate for the presidency and vice-presidency of the Republic (reform of the constitutional article 151). Mayoral candidates will also have to be chosen through internal party elections. The accumulation of votes by sublemas will be eliminated (art. 88) and the candidate with an absolute majority of votes in the internal party elections will be nominated directly as a candidate. To win the presidential contest, a candidate must attract at least 51% of the votes in the first run. Should no candidate achieve this, a second round will be held to select between the two candidates with the most votes. The system for the election of Parliament will remain proportional (art. 151). In sum, this radical reform eliminates the *Ley de Lemas*, which had regulated the electoral process in Uruguay for decades.

The parties have been negotiating since 1980s to change the 1967 constitution, pressured by growing social and political unrest regarding the inability of different governments to reverse the economic situation and the increasing difficulties for the coalition making process that was necessary to effectively address the national socioeconomic problems. The three-way draw in the 1994 elections added urgency to the conversations, finally enabling the proponents of reform from the Broad Front, representatives of New Space and within the two traditional parties, to overcome the objections of factions in the two main parties¹⁷. The three-way draw posed an even more difficult situation in Congress regarding coalition making, and consequently the efficacy with which governments were to address the national problems. Sanguinetti referred to the 1994 elections as “the most hotly disputed elections in our history”. He also said that the Uruguayan political system “obliges us to make great efforts to attain governability and so enable our democracy not only to guarantee freedom but also to be effective and functional”¹⁸.

The process of electoral reform then, officially started in March 1995, when the four main political parties agreed to begin negotiations on devising a new electoral system that was described by president Sanguinetti as “democratic efficiency”. The shared goal was to create disciplined party structures and avoid the increasing extreme fragmentation²⁰. The initial campaign for the abolition of the *Ley de Lemas* was most actively promoted by the Broad Front and the social-democratic New Space. The Blancos were strongly opposed to the elimination of the *Ley de Lemas*, until July, 1995. Rafael Michelini, leader of New Space, threatened to collect signatures to force a referendum on a constitutional amendment imposing the change if the Blancos continued to block the elimination of the multiple candidate system²¹. The establishment of the internal elections was also agreed upon by all parties in the negotiations that took place in July 1995.

However, the traditional parties introduced a run-off provision for the presidential elections. As a consequence, the Broad Front split regarding its view of the reform, which previously it had favored so strongly. The moderate side of the Broad sustained that the second round was an acceptable risk, and that

the Front should be celebrating the victory it has already achieved, namely that Colorados and Blancos agreed, at long last, to get rid of the *Ley de Lemas*. However, the left-wing of the Broad Front (led by the Socialists, Communists and the former Tupamaro guerrillas) announced their rejection of the second round provision. They claimed that the second round was a trick devised by the Colorados and Blancos in order to deny the Broad Front access to the presidency, should it only attract a plurality, but not a majority of the votes. With the second round provision, if the Blanco and Colorado voters join against the Front, the latter will always be defeated. The promoters of the reform were confident that the visible split within the Broad Front would ensure a majority in favor. Colorados and Blancos agreed to reform the system for the sake of governability, to permit the development of majorities capable of governing, but in exchange, they got the second-round provision²⁰.

The reform bill comfortably passed the Chamber of Deputies with 67 votes supporting it and 31 votes opposing it. In favor were the ruling Colorados, the Blancos and New Space; opposing were the left-wing coalition of the Broad Front and a single rebel Blanco.

1.5 Conclusion

As is shown in the analysis above, the debates regarding the electoral rules of the country resulted in a substantial electoral reform in 1996 (high in intensity and medium in terms of scope; see Table 1). The long-term process of economic stagnation coupled with the party system transformation from bipartism to a moderate pluripartism (four relevant parties) posed strong pressures for change over an already highly criticized electoral system. Up to 1996, the previous electoral rules had proved very resistant to change due to the legal requirements to transform it and the powerful position of Colorados and Blancos who were the main beneficiaries of the status quo. The three-way draw resulting from the 1994 elections acted as a short-term catalyst for the emergence of the electoral reform process that emerged in 1995 and culminated with the 1996 reform.

As was indicated in Table 1 at the beginning of the analysis the introduction of the second-round is evaluated as a change of high magnitude which is likely to facilitate the pull of the two traditional parties in the presidential contest if they decide to coalesce. However, the abolition of the *Ley the Lemas*, was also intended to avoid extreme fragmentation in order to bring about more internal party discipline and to improve the efficacy and public esteem of Congressional activity. Thus, given that both changes seem to go in opposite directions, the magnitude of the formal changes may not actually be translated into de facto significant differences; the reforms appear to cancel each other (interactive effect in table 1 “0”), and hence, in spite of the magnitude of the changes, they might not make much of a difference on the electoral framework in which Uruguayan political life has so far been operating. Whether or not these changes actually produce any effect on the Uruguayan political system is not the subject of this paper.

2. Venezuela: the 1988-1989 package of electoral reforms

2.1 Introduction

For decades, Venezuela has been one of the most politically stable countries in Latin America and one that has enjoyed a long democratic tradition. The transition to democracy took place in 1958 with the withdrawal of Gen. Marcos Pérez Jiménez from power after ten years of dictatorship, via a negotiated

pact between the key parties. The initial democratic formula for governability in Venezuela that produced satisfactory results throughout the 1970s was built around what sometimes referred to as a *partidocracia* (partyarchy), given the pivotal role played by the country's two largest political parties²². Since the 1970s, the Venezuelan party system has traditionally been dominated by two highly disciplined and multiclass parties: the center-left party Democratic Action or AD (*Acción Democrática*), and the Christian Democratic COPEI (Committee for Political Organization and Independent Election or *Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente*). Since the 1973 election until 1988, the two parties polled from 80 to 90 percent of the valid vote even though several other parties appeared on the ballot²³. The degree of penetration and control over the organized social life by these political parties -mostly through patronage and co-optation- has been so high in Venezuela that some scholars have referred to the nature of the Venezuelan parties as "Leninist"²⁴. The leadership of almost every organization in society -with the exception of the Church and private sector associations- was chosen in elections using slates identified with AD and COPEI (Coppedge, 1996: 5).

The first seriously threatening signs of strain started in the 1980s, and by the end of the decade both economic and political crisis were evident. The emergence of the process of electoral reform is hard to disentangle from the emergence of a broader process of reform that emerged as a consequence the 1980s crisis. Nonetheless, as with the previous case, first long-term factors creating the potential for electoral reform and then the short-term precipitating ones will be discussed. Table 3 provides the summary of the 1988-1989 electoral reform package in Venezuela in terms of its scope and intensity.

2.2 Long-term factors opening possibilities for reform.

Economic constraints and the perception of a crisis of efficacy

The oil bonanza that Venezuela enjoyed throughout Pérez's government (1974-1979) facilitated the growing tendency of the two traditional parties to rely on material incentives to maintain party cohesiveness. The debt crisis of the 1980s, followed by the emergency economic program instated by President Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1989 "brought to the surface the many flaws in the country's economy and exacerbated the profound institutional weakness that had been blurred or minimized by the illusion of a smoothly operating political system" (Goodman et. al., 1995: 6). The year of 1989 showed the worst economic performance since the Depression, with an 8.3% drop in production and inflation approximating 80% (Coppedge, 1996: 10).

The economic decline of 1979-1990 was thus a key factor in the development of strong opposition to the establishment. Party leadership had primarily been relying on material incentives as instruments of cohesion, persuasion and control over the membership (Goodman et al., 1995: 15). Hence, the debt crisis and the fall of oil prices, particularly after 1985, reduced the political parties' capacity to control civil society. Simply, there were fewer resources for patronage and for meeting the state's routine obligations; public services declined and infrastructure deteriorated. For most of the decade of the 1980s, public discontent was channeled through the electoral process. However, two events transformed this trend and translated protest into anti-system opposition: first, the 1989 structural adjustment measures of Carlos Andrés Pérez and its devastating consequences for the middle classes and the poor, which produced unparalleled public demonstrations (most dramatic were the three days of looting and riots known as the *Caracazo*) and second, the corruption scandals that surfaced in 1989-1990 (Coppedge,

1996). In summary, "the establishment was blamed for corruption, impunity, and the economic crisis itself" (Coppedge, 1996: 11).

Institutional arrangements

a) The previous electoral system

The electoral rules installed at the beginning of the democratic system established a closed list proportional representation system -d'Hondt rule and an average district magnitude for the chamber of deputies of about seven (Shugart, 1992: 26)-. The Senate was also elected by proportional representation (d'Hondt formula). Presidential and congressional elections occur simultaneously. Additional provisions exist both in Congress and in the Senate, to ensure some representation for minor parties. Presidents are elected for a five years term by plurality, and they have to wait two presidential terms before seeking reelection. Both chambers were elected by the same ballot; each voter cast two votes: one for the president and the other for all remaining elected offices -Chamber of Deputies, Senate, state legislative assemblies, and before 1979 city councils too²⁵-. The second vote, known as the "small card" was cast for a closed party list. The closed list system gave extraordinary leverage to the "cogollos" (parties' inner circles) in determining which candidates and in what order would appear in the lists, which in turn contributed to the sense of a closed partyarchy in Venezuela.

The closed list system in Venezuela was even more strict than the Uruguayan system; the latter allowed voters to choose among different factional lists, whereas in the Venezuelan list system not even candidates' names were ever listed on the ballot. The above mentioned "small-cards" showed only the party's name, symbol and colors (Coppedge, 1995: 178). Therefore, the electoral system established with the emergence of democracy in Venezuela strongly reinforced the power of national party leaders and structures (Levine and Crisp, 1995: 230).

Under this system, thus, the parliamentary party is clearly subordinated to the extra-parliamentary party leadership, and party discipline in Congress and the Senate became virtually perfect -to the point that votes in Congress were not even counted or recorded²⁶-. The consequence of such a degree of party discipline in Congress was that when a president enjoyed a majority of seats in Congress, the activity of the latter constituted no check on the executive power -as was mostly the case under the presidencies of Rómulo Betancourt (1958-1963), Carlos Andrés Pérez (1974-1979) and Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989)-. Of course, the other side of the coin was that when presidents lacked a clear majority in Congress, the Venezuelan partyarchy contributed to stalemates that sometimes even led to regime-threatening confrontations (Coppedge, 1995: 179-182).

b) The legal requirements to reform the existing electoral system

The Venezuelan electoral system has its main principles established in the constitution -e.g., mandatory voting, the length of presidential and legislative terms, and proportional representation- although several other characteristics are established on the basis of ordinary legislation. The legal provisions to amend the constitution require absolute majority approval by Congress and ratification by absolute majorities of state legislatures in two-thirds of the states. Thus, the legal requirements to carry out major electoral reforms in Venezuela are not very rigorous, they are even less strict than those in Mexico. However, the Venezuelan constitution of 1961 has so far been amended on only two occasions.

This constitutional resistance to change is partly due to the fact that formal institutional rules have been enforced and respected to a greater extent in Venezuela than they have been in Mexico. Thus, the Venezuelan constitution has proved to be more resistant to change than the Mexican constitution has ever been, although not as resistant to change as the Uruguayan one.

The electoral reform efforts have also seemed doomed to limited success from the very beginning because of the reform strategy in itself, which discredited the process in the eyes of the discontented civil society. The Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State (COPRE), with which the political reform debates started, was created by presidential decree and its members were solely appointed by and responsible to the president (Crisp, 1997).

Changes in the established party system

The transformation of the party system in Venezuela has been a long-term process in which the increasing insulation of the party elite from constituent pressures (partyarchy) has played a critical role. The electoral system reinforced this concentration of power while providing few opportunities for the articulation of local or constituent interests (Shugart, 1992: 26). The main goal of the two major political parties, AD and COPEI, became consensus building and regime stability, taking preference over incorporating new groups and resolving political conflicts (Crisp, 1995).

By the end of the 1980s, the two traditional parties had lost most of their capacity to penetrate and control civil society. The greater the gap between grass roots and party elites, the greater the decline in party loyalties. Growing voter abstention, public protests, escalating violence and decaying coherence in the political parties beginning in the 1980s, were signaling the emerging challenges to the legitimacy of the system, that were to be critical for the unleashing of electoral reform (Levine and Crisp, 1995: 225). The increase in abstention -in a country in which the act of voting is mandatory and has for a long time been considered a civic duty- has been seen as a matter of serious concern, and a reason for electoral reform in the belief that change was needed to bring about greater participation by the electorate (see Table 4).

Venezuela never had a perfect two party system, but the long-term growing support for smaller parties in opposition to AD and COPEI -especially for Causa R and Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)- became most evident in the local elections of December 1992, and in the 1993 elections at the national level. This improved position of third parties was critical for the emergence of the electoral reform process. Reformist pressures emerged to a great extent from third parties; in particular MAS, that made electoral reform a popular campaign issue (Shugart, 1992: 40)²⁷.

In the 1992 elections for governors, mayors and city councils, AD and COPEI remained dominant, with COPEI capturing over 40% of the total vote and AD continuing to show its decline at the regional and local levels. The 1992 election appeared as the election with the largest number of electoral alternatives ever presented in Venezuela. It was also the first election in which voting for candidates by name (*uninominalidad*), rather than by party affiliation, was allowed. Thus, electoral reforms at the municipal level, as will be shown below, had important effects that translated into changes in the

established party system by allowing split ticket voting, and the emergence of new parties and electoral groups (Coppedge, 1996: 12).

In the 1993 elections (see Table 5), Rafael Caldera, former COPEI leader, won the presidency through a coalition between his newly created *Convergencia and Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)* and several other minor parties which together controlled barely a quarter of the seats in Congress. The electoral results for the *Causa R* both in congressional and presidential elections also underlined the growing support for opposition parties at the national level. Although AD and COPEI remained the two major political forces, there was a visible shift in favor of smaller parties which helped place legal reform and institutional engineering on the political agenda (Levine and Crisp, 1995: 230).

2.3 The moment of the reform effort

The critical situation in which the electoral reform took place in Venezuela -once considered a consolidated democracy- facilitated the reopening of debates regarding the overall quality of the democratic process, which is also reflected in the reforms (see Table 3). The strong political crisis also made short-term seat-maximizing calculations among political parties a secondary factor in the debates over the electoral reform. Rather, the main concerns were with the promotion of consensus regarding the goals of political participation, a better identification between elected representatives and their constituents, political stability and the preservation of democratic rule. Political parties have for most of Venezuelan history played a key role in politics and the process of electoral reform is no exception²⁸.

2.4 The electoral reform process: major actors, their projects and interests, and the power distribution among them

The discourse of electoral reform in Venezuela has been circulating at least since the mid-1980s. At first, AD, which was the governing party throughout the electoral process, resisted all the major reforms which were finally implemented²⁹. In particular, president Lusinchi publicly manifested opposition to the direct election of governors, arguing that this would encourage the development of regional *caudillos* and might lead to anarchy (Ellner, 1993: 6). However, three events punctuated the process and helped the idea of electoral reform to regain urgency: 1) "Black Friday" (February 18, 1983) -when the bolivar collapsed initiating a long period of inflation and stagnation- which was the precipitant of president Lusinchi's decision to start a political reform process. 2) Urban riots in February 27, 1989 that arose in response to the structural adjustment package of the new government, and 3) the two attempted military coups in 1992³⁰. These three events signaled the undermining of economic strength (a key pillar of the traditional political system) and of the parties' capacity to channel and control participation (Kornblith and Levine, 1995: 38).

President Jaime Lusinchi started the process of reform in 1984 with the creation of a bipartisan commission, the Presidential Commission for the Reform of the State (COPRE), and President Carlos Andrés Pérez continued the process. COPRE's projects of reform were reaffirmed in the *Pacto para la Reforma del Estado*, signed between the major parties in September 1990. COPRE's functions were the discussion and evaluation of the following objectives: political reforms, decentralization, administrative modernization, modernization of the legal system, the development of civil society (Martz, 1995: 41). For the purpose of this paper the emphasis will be on the electoral reform processes; COPRE's debates helped

to place the electoral reform on the national agenda. When COPRE completed its examination, and as would be expected from the analysis above, its report identified *partidocracia* as one of the central problems facing Venezuela (Coppedge, 1995: 175). COPRE's conclusion was that making participation more meaningful and decentralizing authority would restore legitimacy to the democratic regime (Crisp, 1997).

To address the lack of identification between elected representatives and their constituents, two electoral reforms were finally approved in 1988 and 1989:

1) First, as a result of COPRE's activities, the Municipal Regime Organic Law and the Law for Election and Removal of State Governors were approved in August 1988. These reforms allowed the direct election of state governors and mayors for the first time in 1989. Under the previous system, governors were appointed by the president and the position of mayors did not exist³¹. The rules for the election of *concejales* (town councilors) were changed to permit the introduction of open lists at the local level -*panachage* system-. Voters can now choose to cast a party-list vote or to cast votes for individual candidates³². Gubernatorial and municipal terms of office were also reduced to three years.

The wide-spread manifestations of social and political discontent with the economic conditions, political institutions and traditional parties throughout the 1980s, forced the latter to re-examine their stands. The long-suppressed resentments against the major parties that exploded in 1989 were translated into palpable changes at the first direct elections of governors and mayors that took place that same year. Had this provision of the electoral system not been changed the local articulation of common goals that took place in the 1989 and 1992 elections would not have been feasible under the previous system. Nonetheless, AD and COPEI remained in a better position than any other party (Shugart, 1992: 35).

2) Second, the Organic Suffrage Law was revised in September 1989 to stipulate that approximately half of the national deputies were to be elected by plurality vote in single-member districts -that is through a first-past-the-post system. The other half of the deputies would continue to be elected by the traditional closed list-method of proportional representation³³. Thus, under the new law, voters have two votes: one for a district representative and the other for a party list. The creation of single-member districts was the first step towards more political accountability (Goodman et al., 1995).

Concerned with both the problem of political accountability and its own partisan interests, COPEI pushed strongly for the implementation of a plurality system, conscious that its position as the largest and best established alternative to AD would make it the greatest beneficiary if plurality elections in single-member districts were finally enacted. MAS was also a strong supporter of this option, given that any reform whose expected practical effects were the reduction of party elites' control over their party members, was to benefit the MAS by opening the possibility of coalitions between MAS and portions of other parties (Shugart, 1992).

2.5 Conclusion

In Venezuela, the traditional democratic formal procedures retained a high degree of exclusionary features and the electoral system came to symbolize an unpopular political regime, so that politicians faced intense pressure to rewrite the code (Cox, 1997: 18). The 1979-1990 process of

economic decline in Venezuela highlighted the existing flaws in the country's economy, exacerbated the profound institutional weaknesses, and contributed to the development of a strong opposition to the establishment. Institutional factors and changes in the established party system also contributed to set up the conditions that created the potential for electoral change.

3. Political liberalization and electoral reforms in Mexico

3.1 Introduction

Since the establishment of a single-dominant party in the 1920s, Mexico has represented one of the most enduring regimes in Latin America. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) embodied and monopolized all possible forms of political action in Mexico. The governing revolutionary coalition remained linked by an overarching consensus on the broad norms of political participation and on the shared goal of economic development. Elections have traditionally played an important role as a legitimating source; both as the formal validation of popular consent and as a means of periodical mobilization of popular support (Middlebrook, 1986; Haggard and Kaufman, 1995).

However, since the 1970s, the Mexican regime has suffered important transformations, to the point that the mid-term congressional and gubernatorial elections in July 6, 1997 are posited by several authors as the end of the Mexican's hegemonic party system, and the definitive move toward democracy (Lawson, 1997: 13). The 1997 elections meant the PRI's failure to retain its majority in Congress and the lost of its two-thirds majority in the Senate, both unprecedented. Throughout this process of political opening and democratization, several electoral reforms were carried out in 1977, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1994 and 1996 which are now examined (see Table 6).

3.2 Long-term factors opening possibilities for reform.

Economic constraints and the perception of a crisis of efficacy

For many years, the Mexican state-oriented economic policies led to a rapid economic growth³⁴. This period has come to be known as "the Mexican miracle", which brought about industrialization and rapid social changes (Blum, 1997: 35). The turning point occurred in 1968 when the government brutally repressed massive student-led protests in Tlatelolco Square in Mexico City, that were challenging the economic model of development³⁵. The event convinced many sectors that the system had entered a crisis of legitimacy that required extensive social and economic reforms. The policy responses under Presidents Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) and José López Portillo (1976-1982) brought the old political era to a close (Haggard and Kaufman, 1995).

The economic conditions of the 1970s demonstrated the exhaustion of the import-substitution model of industrialization; huge governmental deficits, imbalances in the current account and a stagnant economy were among the most severe signals (Bailey and Valenzuela, 1997: 46). At the same time, income and regional inequalities, unemployment and underemployment, inflation and foreign indebtedness worsened. This situation was especially threatening for the Mexican system, given that its legitimacy stemmed to a great extent from the overall evaluations of government performance, more than on governmental adherence to particular procedural requirements (Middlebrook, 1986: 123-126).

The deterioration of economic conditions also contributed to the growth of political opposition groups. Voters' anger at economic downturn and governmental corruption, both worked decisively against the PRI (Lawson, 1997). With increased financial backing from business and support from middle-class groups and the Catholic Church, the conservative National Action Party (PAN, 1939) began to acquire a significant presence as regional opposition in the Northern states³⁶. Similarly, the Party of the Democratic Revolution or PRD was able to capitalize on the discontent with the social consequences of the economic austerity and market-oriented reform of Salinas' (1988-94) and Zedillo's (1994-2000) administrations, which eroded part of the left-wing groups' affinity for the PRI. Thus, under the leadership of Cárdenas, the PRD was formed in May 1989 and its program can roughly be characterized as nationalistic, popular and democratic³⁷.

Institutional arrangements

a) The previous electoral system

Legislative electoral formulas in Mexico have been based on the principles of differentiation and segmentation. Thus, electoral formulas are, on the one hand, divided into two sets of rules, one that applies to certain parties and the other to the remaining ones (differentiation). And on the other hand, segmentation refers to the fact that in principle any party is allowed to obtain seats in the first-past-the-post segment of the chamber, although in practice the PRI has won most of them until the 1977 elections (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 141). From 1963 to 1976, the system in force was known as *sistema de diputados de partido* (party-seats system) in which a maximum allocation of twenty complementary seats were given to the parties that were defeated in the single-member districts. The 1946 electoral law had made it very difficult for opposition parties to operate legally. The government and the PRI had complete control over the Federal Electoral Commission (CFE or Comisión Federal Electoral), and a confirmation of both presidential and legislative elections had to be made by the two chambers assembled as an electoral congress. With regard to the executive, presidents in Mexico cannot be reelected and the length of the presidential term has been for six years. Federal, local and state elections are non-concurrent, and hence an election is always taking place somewhere in the country, although some states have synchronized their electoral calendar with their local and the federal ones (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 155n1).

What is important to highlight here is that the multiple electoral reforms that occurred after 1977 had the cumulative effect of substantially reforming the electoral system. As it was summarized in Table 6, the electoral reform process in Mexico has been marked by a succession of low-medium scope electoral reforms and counter-reforms (1982 and 1986 primarily) whose overall outcome has been a substantial transformation of the Mexican electoral system. In general, the post-1977 electoral reforms tended increasingly to facilitate the formation and legalization of political parties (particularly the 1977, 1993 and 1996 reforms) which in turn helped to highlight the relevance of the electoral arena and increased citizen's interest in the electoral process. The limited openings made available to the opposition parties through the successive electoral reforms helped to build their strength and to increase their presence and representation in the chamber of deputies, which in turn, contributed to the strengthening of the pressures for further reform. Tinkering with electoral rules extended the belief among opposition

parties that it was not very difficult to bring governments to negotiations over electoral reforms, in which political trade-offs became fairly common.

b) The legal requirements to reform the existing electoral system

Most electoral reform in Mexico has required an accompanying amendment of the constitution, which can only be approved by a two-thirds majority in both Congress and the Senate³⁸. In a few cases, though, particularly the 1990 reform, electoral change has not required constitutional reform. The transformation of the electoral law requires a majority vote in Congress. The constitution has traditionally been reformed a lot and hence, the fact that some electoral reforms required an accompanying constitutional reform did not really imply a strong impediment for the former to take place (at least not until the late 1980s). Until the 1988 elections, the PRI enjoyed a large enough majority of legislative seats to reform the constitution without requiring the support of any opposition party.

Changes in the established party-system

As pointed out in the introduction, Mexican politics has been dominated by one party (PRI) since 1929. However, it is important to highlight at this point that the Mexican political system has never been a perfect single-party system. The PRI always allowed limited opposition, with the ultimate purpose of protecting the PRI from internal splintering and promoting political stability³⁹.

Since the 1968 student-led strike and the Tlatelolco massacre, the Mexican hegemonic system started to be contested by growing popular protests and guerrilla movements, that played a critical role in the emergence of the 1977 electoral reform process. The party system started to have difficulties in controlling this rise in radicalism.

The emergence of several opposition parties outside the officially recognized party system, reinforced the growing difficulties that the PRI and the established opposition parties were having in incorporating important sectors of the population. From a hegemonic party system, Mexico was slowly moving to a system in which three parties effectively competed for power at all levels of government. The country's severe economic problems mentioned above helped to accelerate the process of dealignment (Klesner, 1997).

It was not until the Mexican party system underwent those significant transformations that meaningful and substantial electoral reforms actually took place. Furthermore, it was Cárdenas' defection from the PRI and the results of the 1988 elections, as it will be discussed below, which were the critical short-term precipitating events for those reforms. After the 1988 national elections, president Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced that "the era of the virtual one-party system (in Mexico) has ended", leading to an era of "intense political competition"⁴⁰. The 1988 electoral results thus demonstrated an unprecedented reversal for the PRI, whose presidential candidate was officially elected with just half of the vote (see Table 7).

The changes in the party system made the emergence of new electoral processes in which the PRI had a lot to lose unavoidable. Thus, the electoral reforms of 1977, 1982, 1986 and 1989 were very different from those of 1990, 1993, 1994 and 1996.

3.3 The moment of the reform effort

Undoubtedly, as in the case of Chile, the electoral reform processes in Mexico cannot be delinked from the broader processes of liberalization and democratization. The immediate implication of this is that actors other than political parties -as they are conventionally understood in democratic contexts- had high leverage to interfere in the electoral reform processes. In the case of Mexico, up to the 1977 Reforma Política, and to a lesser extent from then to 1988, the authoritarian character of the system enabled party bosses and local caciques of the PRI to exert certain leverage in the electoral reform processes. Therefore, the resulting electoral systems were not so much the result of party politics in which several vote and seat-maximizing political parties try to maximize their goals, but rather a reflection of the PRI's long term political interests of hegemony and political stability. Moreover, it could also be argued that the PAN's strategies in this authoritarian environment more likely resembled those that prioritized long-term gains regarding the overall democratic quality of the electoral process, even if it was at the expense of short-term electoral benefits. The main points here are that the role of political parties as critical actors of the electoral reform process became more prominent only after 1988, and that their preferences could not simply be reduced to the goal of short-term seat maximization.

3.4 The electoral reform process: major actors, their projects and interests, and the power distribution among them

The electoral reform debates in Mexico have been criss-crossed by two main cleavages: the issue of democratization and the debate over the degree of representation of the political system⁴¹. The democratization issue put forward in the political agenda focuses on general procedures for and the monitoring of the electoral process: vote counting mechanisms, the overall transparency of the electoral process, access to the mass media, campaign finance rules and governmental control of the official electoral organs. As regards the latter, a key issue for the opposition has been the demand for non-partisan, professional electoral authorities, and the availability of mechanisms to reduce electoral fraud (Klesner, 1997: 9-10).

Since the 1933 electoral reform, in which immediate reelection of all federal, state and local elected offices was prohibited, Mexico has been constantly revising its electoral rules. For the purpose of this essay, the emphasis will be placed on those electoral reforms that took place after the 1977 reform, given that prior to that, the electoral reforms were only part of an overall process of centralization of power and the development of the PRI as the hegemonic political force. Thus electoral reforms up to 1977 were primarily concerned with addressing the internal factionalism of the PRI and with the establishment of high barriers and entry costs to the electoral arena, so that no other political party would be able to threaten the hegemony of the PRI (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996). The 1977 electoral reform is generally considered as the starting point of the process of political liberalization in Mexico⁴². Nonetheless, the 1977 reform still remained under close executive control, and there is no evidence that opposition parties' participation in the Federal Electoral Commission's discussions of the reform had any significant effect on the final draft of the electoral law (Middlebrook, 1986: 134; Klesner, 1997).

The electoral reform enacted on 31 December 1977 liberalized procedures for political parties' recognition, reformed the composition and election rules for the Federal Chamber of deputies and slightly

expanded party access to mass communications. Thus, the size of the chamber was increased to 400 members, and a two-tier electoral structure was created; under the new electoral rules, 300 deputies were to be elected by simple majority in single-member districts -or first-past-the-post system- and the remaining 100 were proportionally distributed in multimember districts under a closed-list system. Each elector cast two votes: one for the single-member districts seats, the other for the proportional ones.

The objective of the PRI was to increase the participation of the left in the electoral arena in order to counterbalance the opposition of the PAN, while simultaneously reducing the rate of abstention (Craig and Cornelius, 1995). The reform facilitated the formation and legalization of several political parties, mostly on the left (Klesner, 1997: 10). Nonetheless, electoral fraud remained a serious obstacle to opposition political activity and the PRI remained the hegemonic political force in the system. Moreover, in January 1982, the López Portillo administration (1976-1982) modified the law, raising again the barriers to electoral participation, in order to prevent the formation of a large number of small parties⁴³.

Since the 1977 electoral reform, the contradictory objective of the PRI has been to liberalize the electoral system without actually liberalizing the political system. The general purpose of the PRI was thus to expand the party system in an attempt to revitalize an opposition that was losing credibility. However, at some point in the process, as it will be argued below, the PRI actually lost its capacity to control the process, becoming increasingly constrained by external (societal and opposition party) pressures to reform. Electoral pressures from the opposition were growing so strong that the PRI leaned again in 1986 toward more restrictive laws. The reform was imposed by the president and it strengthened the executive control over the electoral reform process (Klesner, 1997: 16). Thus, the aims of the 1986 reform were to obstruct the growing electoral opposition and to ensure the majority of the PRI in Congress through the establishment of a governability clause through which even if a party won only a plurality of votes it would still be provided with the majority of seats in Congress. The constitution was amended, so that the chamber of deputies could be enlarged to 500 seats, and the distribution between plurality and proportional (Hare quota, largest remainder) seats was made 300 and 200, respectively⁴⁴. Obviously the PRI feared that it was not going to be able to win more than 51% of the votes, and the reform ensured its absolute majority in Congress. The major opposition parties, including the satellite ones, clearly rejected the reform, given that in practice, the new law did not increase the opposition representation in proportion to its potential expected vote. Nonetheless, the reform went through because the PRI at that point enjoyed enough seats to reform the constitution without requiring the approval of any other opposition group. The voting system was also changed so that each voter voted only once on a straight party ticket. As a consequence of the reform, the Asamblea de Representantes del Distrito Federal was also created. It was composed of 66 representatives directly elected by popular vote of residents of the Federal District. However, the Assembly had no legislative authority; it was only entitled to make recommendations and develop initiatives for programs and policies administered by the government of Mexico City. The governor of the Federal District was presidentially appointed (Craig and Cornelius, 1995: 295-296).

Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and some other members of the Corriente Democrática's (Democratic Current) defection from the PRI in 1988 acted as a short-term catalyst for the acceleration and growing significance of the electoral reforms that were to follow. Cárdenas and the other PRI defectors, were able

to attract the support of the satellite parties and of several other left and center-left organizations (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 146-147). What is critical about Cárdenas' defection from the PRI -as opposed to previous ruptures within the party elite that also led to the formation of new political parties in the past- is that the Cardenistas had a clear different political and economic agenda, as well as a social base that included key elements of the PRI's traditional constituencies (i.e. peasants and urban workers). Cárdenas' defection thus posed one of the most significant threats to the PRI ever (Craig and Cornelius, 1995).

The results of the 1988 elections that followed this event, with the strong electoral showing of the PRD, directly provoked a new electoral reform in 1990 to reinforce the governability clause⁴⁵. However, I will argue that from this point on, the PRI lost both the initiative and control over the electoral reform processes and became severely constrained by the social and political opposition's pressures to reform. Quite simply, due to 1988 election results, all subsequent electoral reforms now require the approval of an opposition party if an amendment of the constitution were necessary. One of the signs of how critical the situation was at this point is the fact that in 1989 the PRI unexpectedly introduced a constitutional amendment by which the authority to oversight elections was transferred from the chamber of deputies to a special electoral court -something unsuccessfully demanded for many years. The change was unexpected because the opposition parties had not made any new movement that further pressed for such a reform; it was the new conjuncture created by Cárdenas' defection and the change in the balance of power that the 1988 electoral results made evident, which produced the 1989 constitutional amendment⁴⁶.

One of the puzzles of the 1990 electoral reform was that the PAN ultimately decided to vote for it, given that Salinas' government did not require PAN's support to pass the law, because it did not require a constitutional reform. The most plausible explanation to account for the PAN's behavior is that the party was obtaining political trade-offs out of its cooperation with the PRI to support the electoral reform; in exchange, the PAN was obtaining the government's agreement to improve the overall democratic quality of the electoral process. Salinas, in turn, pursued the support of the PAN because he sought to produce a "credible" (legitimizing) reform. Indeed, in 1990 the PRI granted some of PAN's demands for a more free and fair electoral process; the traditional mechanism for overseeing elections and adjudicating electoral disputes, the Comisión Federal Electoral (CFE), was replaced with a new entity, the Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE), in which no party would have a majority control⁴⁷. However, the PAN's support for this reform was at best partial, and disappointed a significant group of party leaders of long militancy in the PAN (Klesner, 1997: 15-16).

Both the PAN and PRD, given the results of the 1991 federal elections, in which the PRI won 61% of the vote, realized the necessity to bring Salinas back to the bargaining table on electoral reform⁴⁸. This goal was facilitated by the PRI's fears that the post-elections negotiations that had become common to clear up conflicts over electoral fraud -as was the case in Guanajuato and San Luis de Potosí in 1991- could seriously undermine the legitimacy of the PRI in the upcoming 1994 presidential elections, if the opposition continued to follow this strategy (Klesner, 1997: 17).

Thus, the 1993 electoral reform proved to be especially concerned with the procedures and monitoring of the electoral process, although the PRI also made concessions regarding representation. Thus, the resulting law reduced the maximum number of seats the winning party could have, and

provided new rules for the Senate which benefited minority parties (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 145-150)⁴⁹. The support of the PAN was ensured through the PRI's promise that a constitutional amendment would be made in order to allow Mexican citizen's of foreign-born parents to stand for the presidency⁵⁰. The recently created IFE (Instituto Federal Electoral) -which was in charge of organizing the elections- was also charged by the 1993 electoral reform with the task of setting campaign spending limits -though still unspecified- and the parties were required to provide public annual reports on their spending⁵¹. Some aspects regarding access to broadcast media were also addressed. Hence, the most important results of the 1993 electoral reform were the PRI's concessions regarding the overall democratic quality of the electoral process.

The 1994 electoral reform, in turn, had two short-term catalysts: the rebellion in Chiapas that emerged in January 1994, and the March assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio. Both events acted as precipitants of the 1994 electoral reforms and of an urgent concern with political stability; the latter proving to be increasingly related to the integrity of the electoral process, given that the Chiapas uprising was a demonstration that political opposition outside the electoral arena was indeed a real threat. Not surprisingly, the 1994 electoral reform "centered almost exclusively on issues related to the integrity of the electoral process, with the PRI making concessions in terms of its control of electoral authorities so as to sustain the legitimacy of the process" (Klesner, 1997: 18). PAN's behavior in the 1994 electoral reform strongly resembled previous situations. In exchange for the PAN's support for the law, the government strengthened the judicial settlement of electoral disputes -it actually completely excluded the Chamber of Deputies from the process.

Finally, in the aftermath of the country's worst economic crisis over 1994-1995, what became to be known as the "definitive" electoral reform, took place in 1996. The four parties in Congress -PRI, PAN, PRD and the Labor Party (Partido del Trabajo, PT)- agreed to support the reform, which required 18 changes to the constitution. This time the PRI overtly manifested its internal divisions when the party amended the electoral reform supported by President Zedillo in important ways. The new law further increased representation; conditional registration was eradicated, and a 2% threshold was established. The introduction of a proportional electoral formula for one-fourth of the Senate in a single national constituency was also established. Moreover, the overrepresentation of the majority party was reduced to 8% above the total national vote obtained, and no party would be allowed to win more than 60% of the seats in Congress. In addition, the 1996 reforms provided for the direct election of the head (Jefe) of the Federal District and the mayor of Mexico City, for the first time since 1910. The reform also provides for limits on campaign finance, greater opposition access to the mass media, and permits Mexicans living outside the country to vote for the presidency. Most importantly, the reform takes the final right of review of electoral disputes away from local electoral tribunals and gives it to the federal judiciary. The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), the body charged with resolving electoral disputes, came under the control of nine citizen councilors chosen by consensus among the parties represented in Congress. The IFE allocated campaign funds among the main parties and monitored the 1997 elections campaign coverage by the broadcast media⁵².

3.5 Conclusion

The processes of electoral reform in Mexico, cannot be completely disentangled from the overall process of democratization in the country, which undoubtedly complicate the analysis. The analysis presented above therefore points to the conclusion that up until 1988, electoral reforms took place in Mexico primarily at the initiative of and under an almost complete control of the PRI; the federal executive retained extensive control over the process, and the participation of opposition parties had very little significance. Nonetheless, these electoral reforms should not be ruled out of the analysis, because the gradual and limited concessions of the PRI reached a point in which the governing coalition had yielded so much, that it no longer controlled the electoral reform process, and the events that took place in 1988 became critical precipitants of more substantive electoral reform processes; the PRI became increasingly constrained by the pressures for electoral reform brought by the growing social and political opposition. Both economic circumstances and political institutions help to explain this outcome; political reforms and the consequences of economic reforms disrupted the adequate functioning of the traditional institutional environment.

The long-term deterioration of economic conditions and the loss of popular support that the consequences of Salinas' (1988-1994) and Zedillo's (1994-2000) economic reforms meant for the PRI, left the PRI only with the electoral reforms as tools to increase its legitimacy. The failure to provide such reforms would have threatened the PRI with even further discrediting of the electoral process, further depleting the loyal opposition (as demonstrated by the Zapatista insurgency), and affecting its loss of legitimacy even further.

4. The failure of electoral reform attempts in Chile

4.1 Introduction

Chile is considered one of the most stable multiparty democracies in Latin America. As in Uruguay, well-institutionalized parties have played a key role in Chilean politics throughout history. Chile's return to democracy in March 1990 came together with the reemergence of the party system that still retained many of the features that characterized it during the pre-authoritarian period, especially in terms of major parties and the nature of the most significant social cleavages (Siavelis, 1997b).

In spite of the several reform attempts that have taken place in the 1990s, Chile has not so far carried out a significant electoral reform. The following analysis aims to utilize the theoretical framework presented early to explain why this has been so.

4.2 Long-term factors

Economic constraints and the efficacy of democratic institutions:

The first democratic government headed by Patricio Aylwin (1989-1993) inherited a healthy economy in fiscal balance; at the same time, Aylwin and his minister of finance Alejandro Foxley committed themselves to maintaining macroeconomic stability and a strong degree of continuity in economic policy-making (Siavelis, 1997a). The average growth rate of the Chilean economy was more than 6%, and by the end of this first democratic period, almost every economic indicator pointed to the conclusion that the Chilean economy was performing extremely well⁵³. The economy's strength increasingly generated legitimacy for the new democratic institutions. Moreover, though far from

completely regaining the enormous social debt acquired during the military dictatorship, the Aylwin government and the following Frei administration made important progress in the emergence of a more equitable distribution of the wealth generated by the economic growth (Scully, 1996: 102).

As opposed to the Uruguayan case, in terms of executive-legislative relations, interbranch cooperation was impressive, though facilitated by the modesty of the programs of reform presented by the government. Governability was also favored by the fact that the style of party competition encouraged by the existing electoral system eliminated the traditional problem of *doble minoría*, that is, presidents elected with less than 50% of the vote that lack majority in Congress⁵⁴. Hence, consensus over economic policymaking has existed, and the government has been able to effectively implement its policies (Scully, 1996: 99).

Institutional arrangements:

a) The existing electoral system

In March 1989 the Chilean authoritarian government issued "The Law that Establishes Norms to Determine the Results of the Elections of Senators and Deputies and in the Plebiscites and that Establishes the Electoral Districts"⁵⁵, establishing a proportional system with a two-member district magnitude (Jones, 1995; Cox, 1995).

Hence, under the so called *Binomial System*, which regulates both congressional and senate elections, each party or coalition presents lists that include two candidates for the two seats to be filled (two-member district) under a d'Hondt allocation rule. Therefore, electors may choose a single candidate from a series of two-candidate open lists. The first seat corresponds to the highest polling candidate of the party or coalition list that receives a plurality of votes. The leading party gets both seats only if it polls twice as many votes as the second party (i.e. two-thirds of the vote if there were two parties). Thus, the system tends to favor the second-largest list precisely because of this high percentage of votes required over the next most voted party to win the second seat⁵⁶. Presidents are directly elected by the voters and if none of the candidates achieves more than 50% of the vote, a second-round will be held fifteen days later.

By far the most controversial feature of the electoral system in force is the existence -in addition to the 38 elected members of the Senate- of nine "institutional" senators appointed by the outgoing military regime. The existing rules state that the president appoints two of these nine senators, one required to be a former university president, and the other a former minister of state. The Supreme Court names three and the National Security Council⁵⁷ designates four -each of whom has to be a former commander of the Army, National Police (Carabineros), Navy and Air Force who has held that post for at least two years (art. 70) (Siavelis, 1997a: 331)-. In addition, ex-presidents of the Republic are granted membership for life in the Senate (art. 45). The 1980 constitution, also gave General Pinochet the prerogative of unremovability (*inamovilidad*) as chief of the army, until March 1998, and the same prerogative for the other Junta members of the navy, air force, and police. All four also have the right to voice and vote in the eight-person National Security Council (Scully, 1996: 111). In summary, institutional senators have given the right de facto veto power in the upper house during the two post-authoritarian governments of presidents Patricio Aylwin and Eduardo Frei.

An important characteristic of the prevailing Chilean electoral system that should be highlighted is the existence of two levels of elections each based on a different principle of representation: the national level, which employs the above described binomial system for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and the local level, which employs a proportional system. This has contributed to the maintenance of the traditional party loyalties, in spite of the development of bipolar coalitional politics at the national level. Since the restoration of democracy in Chile, the existing electoral system has been constantly criticized by the Concertación, but none of the major electoral reform attempts could count on the support of the right opposition, and hence have been rejected as it will be discussed below.

b) The legal requirements to reform the existing electoral system

As argued by Linz and Stepan, the most constraining constitutional formula for a new democratic government is one where the democratic government has to deal with an authoritarian constitution crafted by an outgoing authoritarian regime (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 206-207). As pointed out above, the electoral system in Chile is included in a number of “organic laws” issued by Pinochet in 1989. Any change in the constitution or in the “organic laws” requires a 60% vote in both houses and has to be previously approved by the Constitutional Court, whose functions and composition were established by the 1980 constitution in a way that insulated it from democratic pressures⁵⁸. The regulation of the nine institutional senators, as was described above is embedded in the constitution, which makes it harder to reform than if it had been in a separate body of legislation.

Changes in the established party system

The party system in Chile presents both critical elements of continuity with regard to the pre-authoritarian period as well as important discontinuities. The most recent parliamentary elections in 1989, 1993 and 1997 (see Table 12 in Appendix) demonstrated that the Christian Democrats, the Party for Democracy, and the Socialist party (of the Concertación alliance) and the Independent Democratic Union and the National Renovation Party (of the Democracia y Progreso alliance) continue to be, as they were in the pre-authoritarian period, significant parties in terms of platforms, political interests and party subcultures (Siavelis and Valenzuela, 1996; Siavelis, 1997). The effective average number of parties in the lower house before the authoritarian period was 5.45 which appears to be very similar to the 4.91 average for the period since the return to democracy (Siavelis, 1997a: 345).

At the same time, however, there are important changes that should be pointed out. According to Scully, for example, several changes in the dynamics of the party system -such as the emphasis of party leaders on the centrist nature of their position and programs, especially within the majority of the socialists, which have become closer to the current, more liberal outlook and policies of the Spanish socialists- lead to the conclusion that the contemporary Chilean party system is no longer characterized by the same sharp ideological cleavages as was the case before the 1973 breakdown, and therefore is not currently subject to the centrifugal pulls of polarized pluralism (Scully, 1996: 104). The 1989 elections did demonstrate something of a bipolar dynamic -with moderate party competition between an alliance of the Center-Right and alliance of the Center-Left-.

This permanence of the party system constitutes a significant force pushing and setting up the conditions for the rise of an electoral reform process. Thus, given this continuity in the structure of the

party system, if an electoral reform eventually occurs, it would partly be the consequence of the imposition of new electoral rules over an unchanged party system, rather than a reform responding to significant changes in the party system -as was the case in Uruguay, for example-. However, the new bipolar dynamic and the parties' ideological movement toward the center arguably indicate a certain degree of adjustment to the new rules of electoral competition, which to some extent decreases the external pressures for change that the continuity of a polarized pluralism otherwise would have posed over the electoral system. It should also be highlighted that given that Chile will not see its democratic transition process completed until it removes the authoritarian vestiges prevailing in the political system, the democratization process in itself constitutes one of the main driving forces toward the emergence of the electoral reform process.

Nevertheless, two final considerations should be made. First -and notwithstanding the relevance of the continuities in the party system as a factor that might make the electoral reform more likely to occur- as was described in the exposition of the theoretical argument, party system transformations are not the only variable that accounts for the emergence of electoral reform process. Secondly, given the temporal proximity of the transition process, the party system in Chile might be in flux, and therefore, it might be still too soon to make definitive statements about the nature of the party system and whether the changes outlined above will endure (Siavelis, 1997: 669).

4.3 The moment of the reform effort: authoritarian period, transition period, post transition period

The Chilean electoral system actually in force was installed by the military government. Reformers rejected Chile's traditional proportional representation system (d'Hondt formula) with multimember districts, which was established in the 1925 constitution. Hence, the electoral system did not emerge as a result of negotiations and choice by political parties themselves but rather as imposed by an outgoing military regime. The electoral system was thus primarily designed to achieve two goals:

(1) the short-term goal of assuring overrepresentation for pro-governments forces of the right (i.e. Democracia y Progreso alliance) in the first 1989 congressional elections; indeed, the system enables the right to win one of the two congressional seats in each district (50% of the seats) with only 40% of the vote. Moreover, under the current system, because only two seats are available in each district, small nonaligned parties are barred from legislative participation, and parties that receive a significant share of the national vote might not win representation in Congress (Siavelis and Valenzuela, 1996: 82, 92; Siavelis, 1997a: 657-659).

(2) the longer-term goal was to fundamentally transform the nature of the party system through electoral engineering; the authoritarian government sought to create a two party system, which military authorities and their civilian advisors considered a more stable alternative to the often polarized multiparty system that had characterized much of Chile's preauthoritarian history (Siavelis, 1997).

Therefore, military reformers were not guided uniquely by short term purposes, nor they were always self-interested, in the sense that they cared for democratic stability and governability in the future. Following short-term thinking, the military rejected the possibility of adopting an Anglo-American, single member district system; the reason being the belief that the political right could only count on 40% of the votes, and if the opposition forces were successful in forming a broad-based coalition, they would be barred from obtaining seats in Congress. By instituting the *Binomial* system, the military thought that

"they could achieve both the long term goal of party system transformation and at the same time, guarantee representation and legislative veto power for the political right" (Siavelis, 1997: 657).

As opposed to the circumstances under which the prevailing electoral system was imposed, if an electoral reform eventually takes place in the future, political parties will play a greater role in the process and the new system will be the outcome of bargaining and collective negotiations among them.

There is still an overriding concern with the power of the authoritarian elements which remain; this issue could be leading parties to cooperate under the current rules even in ways that may not necessarily maximize each party's electoral position individually. Given that it was not possible during the transition process, and still remains difficult due to the institutional legacies from the authoritarian period, an electoral reform is only likely to take place as the shadow of the authoritarian regime fades and the regime cleavage that led to the creation of the current heavily consensual democracy becomes less important (Siavelis, 1997a: 355).

4.4 The electoral reform attempts: major actors involved, their projects and interests and the power distribution among them

Although no substantive electoral reform has so far taken place in the recently re-established Chilean democracy, electoral reform attempts have not been absent and deserve some attention (See Table 8).

Repeated efforts by the Aylwin and Frei administrations to remove nonelected members of the Senate failed to gain the support of the Right. If the designated senators were eliminated, given the Concertación's majority in Congress, the government would be freer to enact its legislative agenda (Scully, 1996: 111). One of the arguments that has been posed in defense of the nine institutional senators has been that they ultimately contribute to the quality of legislation; the fact that they do not have to respond to the demands of any particular constituency and the lack of restraints imposed by reelection has been argued as an advantage in terms of the quality of legislation, since it gives appointed senators more time to study and reflect upon proposed legislation (Siavelis 1997a: 333). Of course, the other side of the coin is the lack of democratic accountability. It should also be pointed out that given that the institutional senators have their political career granted, the explanatory models based on the assumption that the main political actors' goal is to get re-elected or to further their political careers, does not help much to explain appointed senators' behavior regarding their degree of cooperation or opposition with governments legislative initiatives. Indeed, despite initial expectations that the institutional senators would always side with the opposition for key votes, they have also been willing at times to reach agreements with the government in order to pass vital legislation (Siavelis, 1997a: 353).

Yet, between the institutional senators and those representatives of the right, electoral reform remains stagnated in the Senate. For example, on January 1993, the Senate rejected an electoral reform bill which had been approved by the chamber of deputies in October 1992. The bill was designed to remove two of the legacies of the Pinochet era; one was the *Binomial* electoral system, and the other, the nine designated senators. Had the senate been composed only of elected senators, the ruling Concertación which attracted 54% of the vote would have had a six-seat majority (22, for the Concertación *versus* 16

for the right). As it is, the opposition then had a two-seat edge thanks to the designated senators (of whom only eight remained as one of the original nine died in 1991). Indeed, the vote on the electoral reform bill was lost by two votes. However, the actual tally was 18-16, which means that neither side turned out in force, and that had the Concertación ensured a better turnout without the right doing so, it could have won⁵⁹. Regarding the replacement of the *Binomial* system, the chamber of deputies voted for a proportional representation system with larger district magnitude, that was also rejected.

A minor electoral reform was overwhelmingly approved in February 1994 which reduced the presidential term of office from eight to six years (the reform is summarized in Table 9). The 1980 constitution and the following “organic laws” established an eight-years presidential term. However the 1989 negotiations of the transition agreed that a four-year term was to be established for the first democratic government. The 1994 electoral reform shown in Table 9 was the consequence of the necessity to definitively settle the length of the presidential terms (Rabkin, 1996: 340)⁶⁰.

In February 1994, the Chilean Congress also revived the debate about the elimination of the institutional senators, which so far has been the more critical issue regarding electoral reform debates. In spite of the previous failed attempts to reform this aspect of the electoral system, the expiration of the mandates of the eight designated senators at the end of 1997 was considered a new opportunity to rise the issue again. Taking into consideration that the opposition would not vote for the full package of constitutional reforms approved by Congress in October 1992, the Frei government in order to avoid conflictive proposals, concentrated in the reforms that they believed could get the support of the opposition (thus reducing the scope and intensity of the electoral reform project). President Frei did not want to lose time on reforms that he knew would not be approved and his new strategy was to introduce a “phased” reform in four stages⁸⁶. The package would not include “hard” and “conflictive” proposals, among which was the composition of the National Security Council and the restoration of the president's power to appoint and dismiss the military commanders, both of which in turn affect the nomination of the institutional senators⁶¹. In sum, what is implicit in these debates and proposals is that the elimination of the nine designated senators (a would be medium intensity and low scope reform) would reduce the opposition to introduce an electoral reform of much broader scope and intensity.

In October 1995 President Eduardo Frei submitted to the Senate a proposal to carry out the constitutional reform that he had been announcing since 1994. Among the issues included in the document were the elimination of the institutional senators, the restructuring of the constitutional tribunal and the National Security Council, and the granting of greater oversight powers to Congress. The proposal was the result of an agreement with part of the right-wing opposition -mainly Renovación Nacional (RN)- and generated disputes within both the right and the Concertación coalitions. Moreover, it generated strong disputes within RN, when seven senators belonging to this party announced that they would not support the package of constitutional reforms. Needless to say, that this meant the rejection of the proposed amendments. Their position is supported by the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) and the Unión de Centro-Centro Progresista (UCCP)⁶³. The RN leadership agreed to the proposal under the fear that the coming expiration of the designated senators' mandates at the end of 1997, would enable the government to appoint some of them which would reduce to some extent the current supremacy of the right in the upper-chamber. The more radical members of the Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI)

strongly opposed the reform proposal and referred to it as “destroying Chile's institutional framework” and “endangering the stability of the country”⁶⁴. In the end, the reform was rejected by the Senate in April 1996⁶⁵.

4.5 Conclusion

As discussed above, several electoral reform attempts have been made in Chile without success. Among the most common elements in which the electoral reform proposals have been focused, the institutional senators have proved critical, primarily because their removal from the political scene -if the Concertación maintains its electoral support- would likely provide the votes necessary to implement broader electoral reforms. The elimination of the Binomial system has been the second major effort of the reform efforts.

It becomes clear from the analysis above that institutional arrangements in Chile are critical to account for the electoral system's resistance to change; first, because of the existing legal requirements to reform the “organic laws” containing the electoral rules, and second, and most important, because of the broader authoritarian design. The “organic laws” are only part of a very well structured and robust institutional network that Pinochet so effectively managed to establish, and within which the National Security Council, the Constitutional Court and the appointed senators are critical components.

Moreover, the good performance of the economy, as opposed to the situation of the other three cases analyzed here, has discouraged the social and political criticisms directed toward the electoral system on the basis of inefficacy. On the contrary, the strength of the economy increasingly generated legitimacy over the new democratic institutions. Secondly, the capacity of the political parties of the center-left to successfully adjust to the new electoral rules has also alleviated the political pressures over the imposed electoral rules. And finally, given that the electoral reform is so intertwined to the overall process of democratization, it seems that an electoral reform is only likely to take place as the shadow of the authoritarian regime fades.

IV. CONCLUSION

Now that the contemporary electoral reform processes in the four countries under consideration have been analyzed, we can summarize the reforms as shown in table 10 below, based on the previous tables compiling the scope and intensity of the reforms in each country and the discussion above. The table aims to highlight the variation in scope and intensity of the electoral reforms that were carried out in Uruguay, Venezuela, Mexico and Chile within the period under analysis⁶⁶.

The four cases included in the analysis vary from those generally considered as consolidated democracies, such as Uruguay and Venezuela -the later facing severe problems-, to those recently democratizing or redemocratizing as is the case of Mexico and Chile. In Mexico and Chile, the emergence of the electoral reform process cannot be delinked from the overall process of democratization, as was shown throughout the empirical analysis. The implication of this is that to some extent, we are dealing with two dependent variables or at least one, with two subcategories: the

emergence of an electoral reform process within the process of democratization or the emergence of an electoral reform as a completely separate event. Further reflections on this topic would be very desirable. Nonetheless for now, I believe that the variables included -particularly the contextualization of the stage of reform pursuit, and the category of “free and fair elections” as relevant dimensions of electoral systems- provide enough flexibility to more or less successfully incorporate this variation.

One of the main caveats of this analysis is that there are too many variables for the four cases under study. Thus, the incorporation of more cases would be necessary for a more thorough testing and evaluation of the model presented here. At the same time, it appears that the model does help to answer the original question with which I started this paper: when are electoral reforms more likely to take place? This analysis suggests that the convergence of strategic and structural approaches to this issue provide a better explanatory framework to address these questions. History and political-economic structures, provide us with the important pre-conditions that create the potential for change, contributing to a better understanding of the struggles for political power that bring about a new electoral design. This paper has identified three pre-conditions for the emergence of electoral reform as critical: 1) institutional arrangements, particularly the legal requirements to reform the electoral rules but also the overall characteristics, the degree of enforcement and respect for the formal constitutional and legal framework; 2) economic constraints that helped to erode the confidence in the political system and contributed to the development of opposition groups and 3) significant changes in the established party system, including the fragmentation of one-party systems, the weakening of party loyalties, and the rise of minor parties. However, the analysis also incorporates the players, their interests and strategies, and the distribution of power among them. Thus, the political decisions that ultimately unleash the emergence of electoral reform processes, emerge from a combination of both long-term factors setting up the conditions for change, and short-term catalysts that precipitate the reform. As Immergut phrases it, this combination of factors "include both systematic features of political regimes and ‘accidents of the struggle for power’" (Immergut, 1998: 26). Tables 10 and 11 summarize the theoretical framework provided in this paper.

In one way or another, what this paper is referring to is the fact that changes in society confront an unchanged electoral environment, whose resistance to the external (societal and political) pressures to change varies according to the nature and structure of the legal requirements for institutional change, and the ability to resist of the political actors favored by the status quo. The sheer number and scope of the institutional changes over recent years indicates we should not overemphasize the stability of the institutional framework that arises out of the democratic transition processes. By not assuming that Latin American countries' institutional design reached an “equilibrium” at the point of the transition to democracy, explaining institutional change becomes less of a problem.

The analysis above has also pointed toward some hypotheses regarding the intensity and scope of electoral reforms. In the cases in which the electoral reform took place within broader process of democratization, we would expect the scope of the reform to be broader than in those in which electoral reforms were carried out as a completely separate event, simply because the democratization of an electoral process is likely to require transformations of a broad range of features of the electoral system. This of course assumes that the electoral reform process does in fact emerge. As has been shown in the case of Chile, the designs of the reform proposals under Presidents Aylwin and Frei administrations were

rather broad in scope. If the institutional framework had been less strict and if the external (social and political) pressures had been greater as was the case in Mexico, Venezuela and Uruguay, we would probably have faced a broader reform of the electoral rules. A different situation was that of Mexico, where the external pressures to reform were stronger than they were in Chile. Why, then, do we nonetheless get a number of low scope electoral reforms in Mexico? Obviously the Mexican case is rather exceptional in the Latin American context because of the hegemonic nature of its party system. However, it was precisely the characteristics of this type of regime, the power distribution among parties that it entails and its long term process of transformation, which made for a long time the formal constitutional and legal order in Mexico less resistant to change than the Chilean one. Thus, what we find in Mexico is that multiple electoral reforms had the cumulative effect of a broad scope transformation of the electoral rules. Had the process of electoral reform emerged in the context of a formal constitutional and legal order harder to reform, there would probably have been less electoral reform processes and broader in scope. Where there exist severe institutional and legal obstacles to change the electoral system, once the reform process is open, it is likely that all changes perceived as necessary would be discussed precisely to avoid the continuous tinkering with the constitutional and legal order.

Hence, we could summarize this argument as shown in Table 12.

A secondary factor that would also influence the scope of the electoral reform would be the particular element of the electoral system that is subject to change. If the particular element is interconnected with other elements or dimensions of the electoral system, the scope of the reform would be broader than if it is not. For example, if the reform project aims to change the length of the presidential term, the scope of the reform would likely be smaller than if it is the electoral formula what is subject to change, since the latter would probably also require the transformation of other aspects of the electoral system such as district magnitude or citizen vote procedures.

Regarding the intensity of the reform, in general, we would expect that the greater the gap between the external sociopolitical changes and the prevailing electoral system, and the greater the extent to which the electoral system is perceived to be obstructing an effective functioning of the political system, the greater the intensity of the reform is likely to be. However, the empirical analyses also suggest a second, no less critical factor: the greater the degree of conflict over the rules governing the electoral process, and the greater the ability of the political actors favored by the status quo to resist change, the lower the intensity of the electoral reform is likely to be. As opposed to those analyses which predict that the likelihood of significant electoral reforms increases when a certain nation is almost at the verge of collapse, the Chilean and the Mexican cases show that where a high degree of conflict over the electoral rules combines with powerful political groups representing the status quo, we should expect lower intensity in the reform projects, precisely in order to increase the likelihood of consensus and approval of the particular changes proposed. The degree of conflict over the electoral rules in Mexico was also high, but nonetheless the overall intensity of the post-88 reforms was higher than in Chile, which arguably responds to the fact that the PRI was in a weaker position than that of the right in Chile to maintain the status quo. Similarly, the degree of conflict over the electoral rules was higher in Venezuela than in Uruguay, and AD and COPEI retained higher leverage over the electoral process than did their

counterparts Colorados and Blancos in Uruguay, which partly accounts for the differences in the intensities of the reform processes between these two countries (higher in Uruguay than in Venezuela).

A lot of work remains to be done for a further understanding of the emergence of contemporary electoral reform processes in Latin America. If this paper serves the purpose of at least manifesting the necessity to incorporate the electoral reforms and their emergence into the political scientists' research agenda, a very important goal would have been achieved.

Table 1
The 1996 electoral reform in Uruguay: scope and intensity

Presidential election rules	2H
Nomination procedures	1H
Single/Dual ballot system	1H
Term length and reelection	0
Presidential-Legislative election timing	0
Legislative election rules	2H
Nomination procedures	1H
Citizen vote procedures	0
District structure	0
Electoral formulae	1H
Thresholds and bonuses	0
Political decentralization	1L
Previously appointed positions now open to election	0
Changes in local level election rules	1L
Free and fair elections	0
Access to mass media	0
Campaign financing rules	0
Electoral fraud and the oversight of elections	0
Interactive effect	0

Keys to the table: 1= reform, 0 =absence of reform. L= low intensity, M= medium intensity, H= high intensity. The negative sign indicates that the reform went in the opposite direction if compared to the previous one. C= the overall reform strengthens the legislative control, E= the overall reform strengthens executive control, 0 (throughout the row of "interactive effect")= the reforms tend to cancel each other. Detailed descriptions of the reform in the text.

Table 2
Uruguayan 1984, 1989 and 1994 electoral results

Election results %	1984	1989	1994
Colorado party	41.25	30.29	32.5
Blanco party	35.05	38.86	31.4
Encuentro Progresista	--	--	30.8
Broad Front	21.26	21.2	--
Civic Union	2.54	--	--
New Space	--	8.98	5.1

Source: 1984 and 1989 election results, from Luis Eduardo González and Charles Guy Gillespie: "Presidentialism and Democratic Stability in Uruguay", in Linz, J.J. and Valenzuela, A.: *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*. Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. The 1994 election results, from *Latin American Regional Reports-Southern Cone*, February 1995, p. 7.

Table 3
Electoral reforms in Venezuela: scope and intensity

	1988	1989
Presidential election rules	0	0
Nomination procedures	0	0
Single/Dual ballot system	0	0
Term length and reelection	0	0
Presidential-Legislative election timing	0	0
Legislative election rules	0	5H
Nomination procedures	0	1L
Citizen vote procedures	0	1L
District structure	0	1M
Electoral formulae	0	1M
Thresholds and bonuses	0	1L
Political decentralization	2H	0
Previously appointed positions now open to election	1H	0
Changes in local level election rules	1H	0
Free and fair elections	1L	0
Access to mass media	0	0
Campaign financing rules	1L	0
Electoral fraud and the oversight of elections	0	0
Interactive effect	C	C

Keys to the table: 1= reform, 0 =absence of reform. L= low intensity, M= medium intensity, H= high intensity. The negative sign indicates that the reform went in the opposite direction if compared to the previous one. C= the overall reform strengthens the legislative control, E= the overall reform strengthens executive control, 0 (throughout the row of “interactive effect”)= the reforms tend to cancel each other. Detailed descriptions of the reforms in the text.

Table 4
Venezuela: abstention rates

Local elections	Abstention rates %
1979	27.1
1984	40.7
1989	54.8
1992	54.8
National elections	Abstention rates %
1978	12.4
1983	12.1
1988	18.3

Source: Levine and Crisp, 1995: 230

Table 5
Venezuela: distribution of legislative seats in the 1993 election

	Chamber of deputies		Senate	
	N	%	N	%
AD	56	27.9	18	34.6
COPEI	54	26.9	15	28.8
CAUSA R	40	19.9	10	19.2
MAS and Convergencia Nacional	51	25.4	9	17.3
TOTAL	201	100.0	52	100.0

Source: Coppedge, 1996: 14

Table 6
Electoral reforms in Mexico: scope and intensity

	Mexico							
	1977	1982	1986	1989	1990	1993	1994	1996
Presidential election rules	0	0	0	0	0	1L	0	0
Nomination procedures	0	0	0	0	0	1L	0	0
Single/Dual ballot system	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Term length and reelection	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Presidential-Legislative election timing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legislative election rules	5L	-1L	-3ML	0	-2H	2L	0	3H
Nomination procedures	1L	0	0	0	-1L	0	0	0
Citizen vote procedures	1L	0	-1L	0	0	0	0	0
District structure	1L	0	1L	0	0	0	0	1L
Electoral formulae	1L	0	0	0	0	1L	0	1L
Thresholds and bonuses	1L	-1L	-1H	0	-1H	1L	0	1H
Political decentralization	0	0	1L	0	0	0	0	1H
Previously appointed positions now open to election	0	0	1L	0	0	0	0	1H
Changes in local level election rules	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Free and fair elections	2L	0	1L	1H	1H	3L	1H	3H
Access to mass media	1L	0	0	0	0	1L	0	1H
Campaign financing rules	1L	0	0	0	0	1L	0	1H
Electoral fraud and the oversight of elections	0	0	1L	1H	1H	1L	1H	1H
Interactive effect	C	E	E	C	0	C	C	C

Keys to the table: 1= reform, 0= absence of reform. L= low intensity, M= medium intensity, H= high intensity. The negative sign indicates that the reform went in the opposite direction if compared to the previous one. C= the overall reform strengthens the legislative control, E= the overall reform strengthens executive control, 0 (throughout the row of "interactive effect")= the reforms tend to cancel each other. Detailed description of the reforms in the text

Table 7
Mexico: 1988 elections

Congressional elections	votes (%)
PDM	1.3
PAN	17.3
PARM*	5.9
PRI	49.2
PPS*	9.2
PST* later PFCRN	9.0
PCM, later PSUM, later PMS	4.3
PRT	0.5
Others and annulled ballots	3.8
Presidential elections	%
Votes for PRI candidate	50.7
Votes for PAN candidate	16.8
Votes for all others	32.5**

Source: Craig and Cornelius (1995: 258 and 274).

*Allied with the PRI before 1988.

**Includes 31.1 percent officially tabulated for Cardenas.

Full names of parties in the order listed: PDM, Partido Democrático Mexicano; PAN, Partido de Acción Nacional; PARM, Partido Auténtico de la Revolución; PRI, Partido Revolucionario Institucional; PPS, Partido Popular Socialista; PST, Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores; PFCRN, Partido del Frente Cardenista de Reconstrucción Nacional; PCM, Partido Comunista Mexicano; PSUM, Partido Socialista Unificado de México; PMS, Partido Mexicano Socialista; PRT, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores.

Table 8

The 1994 electoral reform in Chile: scope and intensity

	Chile 1994
Presidential election rules	2L
Nomination procedures	0
Single/Dual ballot system	0
Term length and reelection	1L
Presidential-Legislative election timing	1M
Legislative election rules	0
Nomination procedures	0
Citizen vote procedures	0
District structure	0
Electoral formulae	0
Thresholds and bonuses	0
Political decentralization	0
Previously appointed positions now open to election	0
Changes in local level election rules	0
Free and fair elections	0
Access to mass media	0
Campaign financing rules	0
Electoral fraud and the oversight of elections	0
Interactive effect	C

Keys to the table: 1= reform, 0= absence of reform. L= low intensity, M= medium intensity, H= high intensity. The negative sign indicates that the reform went in the opposite direction if compared to the previous one. C= the overall reform strengthens the legislative control, E= the overall reform strengthens executive control, 0 (throughout the row of "interactive effect")= the reforms tend to cancel each other. Detailed descriptions of the reforms in the text.

Table 9

Overall scope and intensity of the reform

Scope	Intensity		
	Low	Medium	High
Low	Mx82 Ch94	Mx86	Ve88 Mx89 Mx90, 94
Medium	Mx77	Ve89 Mx93	Ug96 Mx96
High			

Table 10

Long-term factors opening the possibilities for electoral reforms

	Uruguay	Venezuela	Mexico	Chile
Economic Constraints	High	High	High	Low
Changes in the established party system	High	High	High	Medium
Institutional Constraints	High	Low	Medium	High
External (social and political pressures)	High	High	High	Low

Table 11
The likelihood of electoral reform

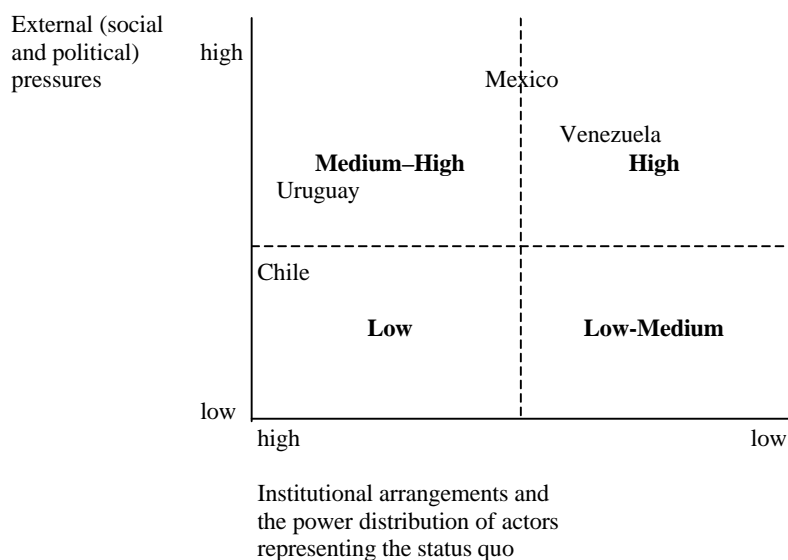


Table 12
Hypothesizing the scope of electoral reforms

		Institutional framework (resistance to change)*	
		Low	High
Electoral reform and the process of democratization	Simultaneous	Low-medium scope (Mexico)	Medium-high scope (Chile)
	Independent	Low scope (Venezuela) ⁶⁷	Low-medium scope (Uruguay)

* Institutional obstacles and legal requirements to reform the electoral system

NOTES

1. This paper comes out of a wider research work carried out in 1997 and 1998 at the Political Science Department of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. I specially thank Prof. Jonathan Hartlyn for his advice and enthusiasm with this project, which under his direction became my Master Thesis at this University.
2. From this point on, I will use the concept of electoral systems “in a broad sense” (Nohlen 1996), that is, as the methods employed to govern how citizens vote and how this votes are translated to fill offices. Boix’s definition accurately appears to reflect this perspective: “Electoral systems are the composite of different rules regulating the access of citizens to suffrage, the number of votes voters have, and how the latter can use the former, the number and magnitude of electoral districts, the introduction thresholds and bonuses, and the allocation mechanisms employed to transform votes into seats” (Boix, 1997: 15).
3. See for example, Katznelson, 1997; Steinmo, 1992 and 1993; Steinmo and Thelen, 1992; Lowi, 1982; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Collingwood, 1993.
4. See for example, Riker, 1980; Knight, 1992; Bawn, 1993; Geddes, 1990 and 1996, Elster, 1997; Ishiyama, 1997.
5. Short-term preferences are fairly commonly assumed in rational choice based arguments on institutional change. However, this is not a requirement of these types of arguments. A rational choice type of argument could also be applied by taking into consideration long-term preferences. However, when long and short term goals are conflicting, the analysis in terms of the maximization of interests increases in complexity since it would require an explanation about on what bases do political actors decide on some preferences over others.

Such an analysis is of course much closer to the more complex “historical-institutionalist” perspective.

6. Kitschelt, Herbert: "Explaining the choice of electoral laws in new democracies", 1992. Paper presented at the Eighth International Conference of Europeanists.
7. The selection of the different elements that should be taken into account within these five categories has been partly based on Cox's description and classification of electoral systems (Cox, 1997, specially p. 1-69).
8. An within dual-ballot systems, changes regarding what a candidate must do to win the first round, and what candidates are eligible to compete in the second round absent a first-round winner.
9. This category will also include the general laws regarding party formation and legalization.
10. Where the electoral reform affected one of the different dimensions encompassed under the main four sets of rules taken into consideration -“presidential” and “legislative election rules”, “political decentralization” and “free and fair elections”- the table shows 1. Similarly, where there was no change in those features of the electoral system, the table shows 0. The numbers and letters that appear in bold, within the four rows corresponding to the four major sets of rules, represent an overall assessment of the scope and intensity of the electoral reform regarding that set of rules. The number that appears in the first place represents the total number of elements that were modified, and the latter, an assessment of the intensity of the change. The assessment of the general scope of the reform was made on the basis of the range of electoral system's components that were changed; out of the fourteen possible dimensions of the electoral rules that are shown in the table, if the number of modifications is less than half of all possibilities, the scope of the reform was assessed as “low”. If the total number of aspects reformed approximates half of all possible dimensions, the scope of the reform was considered as “medium”, and if the changes covered more than a half of all different elements, the scope of the reform was considered “high”. In the cases in which democracy is consolidated, we would not expect significant changes in the “free and fair elections” category, and thus, I evaluated the scope of the reforms in Uruguay and Venezuela without taking into consideration this dimension of the table. The letters that appear beside each “1”, represent some rough evaluation of the intensity of the reform: “L”, “M” and “H” indicating low, medium and high respectively. As in the case of the scope, an overall assessment of the magnitude of the change regarding each major set of rules appears also in bold. In the “interactive effect”, the “C” represents a tendency to increase the counterbalancing power of the legislature, and “E” indicates the strong pull of the executive. Moreover, if in the same process of electoral reform, there exist important changes in the legislative and executive election rules in opposite directions, such reforms may likely cancel each other, in which case, the cell corresponding to “interactive effect” will show “0”, meaning there is no clear direction in the changes of the electoral reform, and the status quo is likely to be maintained. A summary of these evaluations of the scope and intensity of the reform, and the status quo is likely to be maintained. A summary of these evaluations of the scope and intensity of the reform is provided in the conclusions.
11. A proposal to reform the constitution in order to allow voters to choose among different political parties at the national and municipal level was rejected in August 1994 (Rial, 1996: 141 n 31).
12. Seats are allocated to each faction using first a quotient and then a modified d'Hondt formula (Rial, 1996: 140).
13. For a detailed description of the Uruguayan electoral system, see Alcántara and Crespo (1992).
14. *Latin American Regional Reports-Southern Cone*, September 1994.
15. González provides striking data regarding the fractionalization of the major parties. Taking the number of competing lists within the two major parties as an indicator of fractionalization, the data shows that the average number of lists nationwide for the lower chamber from 1925 through 1931 was 143, and from 1946 through 1931 was 143 and from 1946 through 1971 was 314. By 1971 there were 590 lists (Luis E. González, 1995: 147).
16. The 1982 primaries were considered as a preliminary test of coming general elections that would take place in 1984. The purpose was to assess the electoral support of each party and factions within parties. The primaries were a consequence of the *Fundamental Law no. 2* agreed between the outgoing military authorities and the party elites that participated in the negotiations with them. The election results would also determine what party leaders would constitute the *Convención*, which was meant to be the party's organism entitled to nominate candidates for the national elections and elaborate the general programmatic guidelines of the party. For more detailed information about the 1982 primaries, see Alcántara and Crespo (1992).
17. *Latin American Regional Reports-Southern Cone*, August 1995: 7.
18. *Latin American Regional Reports-Southern Cone*, 29 December 1994: 6.
19. *Latin American Regional Reports-Southern Cone*, April 1995.

20. *Latin American Weekly Report*, 27 July 1995: 327.
21. *Latin American Weekly Report*, 12 December, 1996: 575.
22. Michael Coppedge defines "partyarchy" as "the degree to which political parties interfere with the requirements for polyarchy". This author also highlights that Venezuela "is more partyarchic than any other democracy" (Coppedge, 1995: 176).
23. Martz, 1995: 32; Ellner, 1993: 1; Coppedge, 1996: 5.
24. Levine and Crisp, 1995: 226; Shugart, 1992: 26.
25. Municipal elections were separated in 1979 with the passage of the Ley Orgánica de Régimen Municipal (LORM). Since then, a separate municipal election takes place one year after the presidential election, although the ballots still show only parties (Ellner, 1993: 5; Coppedge, 1995: 179; Shugart, 1992: 26)
26. The fact that members of Congress are eligible for immediate reelection also reinforced party discipline in the legislative branch. See Crisp 1997.
27. MAS separated in 1971 from the Communist Party, and since then has become the major Venezuelan third political force (Ellner, 1993).
28. For a more detailed analysis regarding the concerns over regime preservation, see Martz, 1995 and Crisp, 1997.
29. AD's presidents in this period were Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989) and Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1994).
30. Kornblith and Levine, 1995: 38; Levine and Crisp, 1995: 226.
31. See Coppedge, 1995: 179, and also Levine and Crisp, 1995: 230.
32. Nonetheless AD was able to reform this provision of the electoral system again in 1992. Under the new rules, two-thirds of the council members of each municipality are elected by the uninominal method, and the remaining third by party list. AD emphasized the benefits of the new rules for accountability and the identification between constituents and representatives (Ellner, 1993).
33. Coppedge, 1995: 179; Crisp, 1997. The Senate continues to be elected by partisan vote.
34. From 1940 to 1970, the Mexican economy grew at a 6% rate (Bailey and Valenzuela, 1997: 46).
35. For a description of the Tlatelolco Square massacre, see Lindau, 1996.
36. For a thorough discussion of the emergence of the PAN, see Craig and Cornelius, 1995.
37. For a detailed description of the emergence of the PRD see Craig and Cornelius, 1995.
38. This was the case for example, in the 1977, 1986, 1989 and 1993 electoral reforms.
39. Some of these opposition parties were actually promoted by the PRI itself; primarily the Partido Socialista and the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana became so dependent on the PRI that scholars refer to them as "parastatal parties" or "satellite parties" (see Molinar Horcasitas, 1996; Klesner, 1997).
40. Quoted in Craig and Cornelius, 1995: 249).
41. Molinar Horcasitas (1996) points to the existence of two main cleavages: one concerning the issue of democratization, and the other regarding the electoral formula (proportional vs. majoritarian). I decided to broaden the scope of this second cleavage by referring to it as the debates concerning the degree of representation of the Mexican political system.
42. Molinar Horcasitas, 1996; Middlebrook, 1986; Craig and Cornelius, 1995.
43. The 1977 law stipulated that officially recognized parties would lose their registry if they failed to win 1.5% of the national vote in three consecutive elections. The 1982 modifications established that any party that failed to achieve that 1.5% of the votes in any given election would automatically lose its registry (Middlebrook, 1986: 138).
44. In the Mexican electoral jargon, the establishment of a governability clause means "a legal and explicit

provision for manufacturing majorities in the chamber of deputies" (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 156 n 14).

45. Under the 1990 law -known as the Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures (Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales or COFIPE)- if the winning party gets only 35% of the vote, it will automatically get 51% of the seats in Congress. If the winning party gets less than 35% of the vote, it will get a proportional share of the seats (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 147; Klesner, 1997: 15; Craig and Cornelius, 1995: 297).
46. "Only two years before, in 1986, the PRI passed a bill that strengthened the majoritarian nature of the self-certification process and rejected amendments offered by the opposition that would have led to the creation of a judicial institution to settle electoral disputes" (Molinar Horcasitas, 1996: 157 n 27).
47. Nonetheless, IFE members included the PRI satellite parties, which meant that the PRI still enjoyed some leverage to manipulate the institution. See Craig and Cornelius, 1995.
48. The recovery of the PRI in the mid-term congressional elections was the result of a reinvigoration of presidential rule, an improving economy, and new government distributive programs -particularly the antipoverty program called National Solidarity (Craig and Cornelius, 1995: 250)-.
49. The Senate was doubled in size to four senators from each state. The leading party in each of the four-member districts would get three seats, and the remaining seat would go to the strongest minority party (Blais and Massicotte, 1996; Craig and Cornelius, 1995).
50. This amendment enabled PAN's Vicente Fox to be eligible for the 2000 presidential election (Klesner, 1997: 17).
51. Klesner, 1997: 17; Craig and Cornelius, 1995: 287.
52. *The Economist*, August 10, 1996, p. 32; Klesner, 1997: 19; Lawson, 1997: 15.
53. The level of inflation was 11.5%, unemployment 4.6%, investment in fixed capital 27.2% of GDP, domestic savings 21% of GDP, productivity and wage rates, both grew more than 4.5% annually (Scully, 1996: 100).
54. Both president Aylwin and Frei were elected with a level of support over 50% -55.17% and 58.01% respectively (Siavelis, 1997a: 338)-.
55. "*Ley que establece formas para determinar los resultados de las elecciones de senadores y diputados y en los plebiscitos y fija los distritos electorales*" (Caviedes, 1991: 47).
56. In a two-party or two-coalitions competition, the percentage of votes required for the leading party list to win the first seat would be 33.4%, whereas to win both seats, the percentage rises to 66.7% of the vote.
57. Of the eight positions of the National Security Council, four are to be occupied by the heads of the army, navy, air force and national police. Two other members were named indirectly by General Pinochet before leaving office (Scully, 1996: 107). It is also important to note that the National Security Council also designates two of the seven members of the Constitutional Court.
58. "Further, the constitution mandated that the incoming democratic president could in the future nominate only one of the Court's seven members, even when they were eventually renewed. Two would be nominated by the National Security Council, three by the Supreme Court (most of whom in 1990 were Pinochet appointees) and one by an absolute majority of the Senate (where due to designated senators, the democratic government did not have a majority)" (Linz and Stepan, 1996: 209).
59. *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 1993.
60. Though intended to add increased flexibility to the presidential system by allowing the early removal of an unpopular president, the reform creates other problems in terms of the timing and sequencing of elections. Instead of every eight years, congressional and presidential elections will now be held concurrently every twelve years, and all presidents will now be subject to at least one congressional election during their term in office, since all deputies and half of the senators are elected every four years (Siavelis, 1997: 350). As argued by Shugart (1995) non-concurrent elections contribute to party system fragmentation, which is likely to reinforce the continuity of the traditional party system and hence the pressures for electoral reform.
61. First, the elimination of the designated senators. Second, reforms to the municipal regime, introducing the direct election of mayors. Third, the replacement of the current Binomial system by a proportional one with higher district magnitudes, a new regime for parties, and the introduction of rules to ensure the transparency of the party founding. Fourth, reforms granting the legislature greater supervisory powers, changes in the structure

of the Constitutional Court and the introduction of presidential recourse to plebiscites in case of intractable differences with the legislature (*Latin American Weekly Report*, October 1994: 473).

62. *Latin American Regional Report-Southern Cone*, November 1994.
63. *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 1996, p. 64.
64. *Latin American Weekly Report*, November and December 1995: 526 and 569.
65. *Latin American Regional Report-Southern Cone*, May 1996.
66. As the table highlights, high scope electoral reforms (meaning reforms in which almost every element of the electoral system is transformed) are theoretically possible though empirically unlikely.
67. I placed Venezuela within the category of weaker legal requirements to reform the electoral system to highlight the differences with Uruguay. However, Venezuela of course has legal requirements harder to change than any country in which the electoral rules are completely included in ordinary legislation. It should also be notice that Venezuela has less strict legal requirements to transform the electoral system than Mexico.

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