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Historical Timing and Party Building in "Third Wave" Democracies: The Latin American Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Theorists of democracy routinely assert that party systems perform a series of vital functions for representative governance. If that is the case, "third wave" democracies—those born through the spread of representative institutions to new countries and regions since the mid-1970s (Huntington 1991)—would appear to be in serious trouble, as many are characterized by weak, volatile, or fragile party systems. At the elite level, political entrepreneurs in many "third wave" democracies form, discard, and switch parties at a dizzying pace, offering voters little continuity on the "supply side" of the political marketplace. At the mass level—the "demand" side—voters often neither trust nor identify with political parties, and they refrain from developing durable partisan loyalties, much less joining party organizations. Not only are voters "mobile," switching their partisan preferences from one election cycle to the next, but in many contexts they are prone to support independent "outsiders" or populist figures whose primary appeal seems to be their detachment from established party organizations. Not surprisingly, prominent voices have expressed concerns that weak party systems may jeopardize the stability of new democratic regimes or at least diminish the quality of democratic representation (Mainwaring and Zoco 2007).

It is possible, of course, that party system weakness is a temporary phenomenon that is destined to pass as new democratic regimes consolidate and partisan loyalties congeal over time. Much theorizing on the subject suggests that this should be the case. Converse (1969), for example, argues that party system stability only develops over time as political learning and socialization occur, allowing voting behavior and partisan identities to become "habituated" (see also Zuckerman, Dasović, and Fitzgerald 2007). Recent research on new democratic regimes and party systems in post-communist Eastern Europe lends some support to this proposition, as electoral volatility in the region tapered off over time after reaching exceedingly high levels in the early election cycles that followed regime transitions (Powell and Tucker 2009).

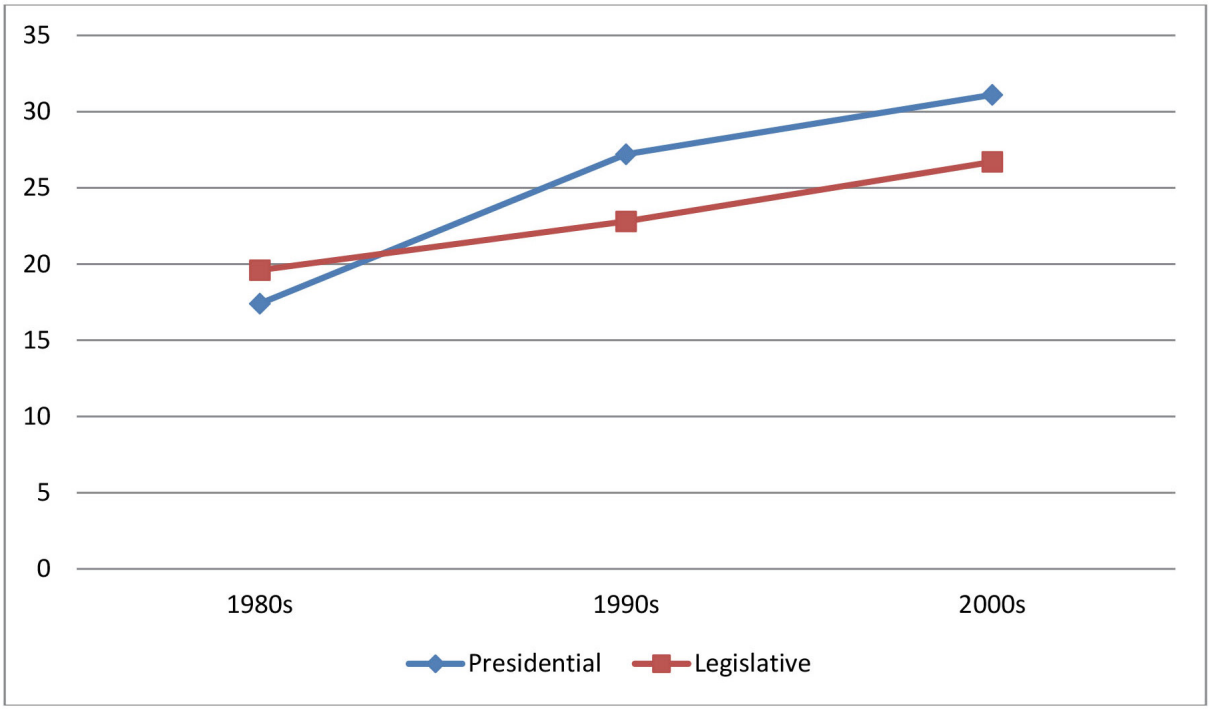
The Latin American experience during the "third wave" of democratization, however, casts a dark cloud over such guardedly optimistic expectations. Partisan instability in the region

during the first decade of re-democratization in the 1980s was hardly unexpected; after all, party systems had to be revived or, in some cases, reconstituted following extended periods of political proscription and often violent repression in the 1960s and 1970s. Traditional partisan networks had been deactivated or shredded by military repression, and large numbers of new voters entered the electorate in the 1980s without established partisan identities. Adding to the tumult, the region experienced its most severe economic crisis in half a century during the 1980s, forcing new democratic regimes and their party systems to grapple with the political costs of debt-induced recessions, hyperinflation, austerity measures, and market-based structural adjustments. The depth of the crisis made anti-incumbent voting patterns virtually universal in the region (Remmer 1991), and would have posed a serious challenge to even the most institutionalized of party systems. Given the region's historical pattern of pendular swings between democracy and authoritarianism, the most pressing issue in the 1980s was not whether party systems would stabilize but whether fledgling democratic regimes could withstand the economic hardships and social dislocations attendant to the crisis.

With relatively few exceptions, however, Latin America's new democratic regimes proved to be remarkably and unexpectedly resilient in the face of such challenges (Mainwaring, Scott and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán 2005). Given this resilience, scholars expressed optimism that party systems would stabilize as democracy itself consolidated and voters sorted themselves into rival partisan camps (Dix 1992). Economic recovery—in particular, the defeat of hyperinflation throughout the region by the early-to-mid 1990s—provided additional grounds for optimism about the potential for institutionalizing partisan competition. Paradoxically, however, democratic consolidation and economic recovery did *not* appear to stabilize party systems in the 1990s; to the contrary, electoral volatility actually *increased* across the region during the second decade of the "third wave." Further confounding expectations, as shown in Figure 1, volatility continued to increase during the first decade of the 21st century—that is, the third decade of the "third wave," a period of relative economic abundance thanks to a global commodity boom

and rapidly declining external debt. Entire party systems largely or completely decomposed in Peru and Venezuela in the 1990s and Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador in the early 2000s, with established parties being displaced by populist figures or new political movements with questionable staying power.

Figure 1: Average Electoral Volatility in Latin America, 1980-2010



Source: Author's calculations of the Pedersen Index of Volatility (1983) from data provided in Nohlen 1993; Nohlen 2005; and Georgetown University's Political Database of the Americas (http://pdba.georgetown.edu/).

In short, Latin America consolidated democratic regimes in the "third wave" and institutionalized electoral contestation as the route to political power, but party systems, on average, *de*-institutionalized over time. Converse's process of voter habituation clearly did not function as hypothesized. Neither did trends in the region conform to rational choice assumptions that voters would develop name-brand loyalties to established party organizations in order to provide information short-cuts and lower the costs of voting (see Aldrich 2011). And with electoral volatility rising over time, the fragility of ties between parties and voters could no longer be attributed to the short-term perturbations associated with the democratic transitions and economic hardships of the 1980s.

Latin America's puzzling rise in electoral volatility, however, seemingly lends credence to a provocative alternative explanation advanced by Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) for the instability of "third wave" party systems. This explanation centers on a reinterpretation of the relationship between partisanship and time. Time matters, they argue, not because its linear passage habituates voters and institutionalizes partisanship but rather because of the period and sequencing effects of party building activities at different moments in world historical time. Party systems born in the "third wave" are not fragile because they are young; they are fragile because they came along too late to develop the types of encapsulating mass party organizations that stabilized Western European party systems by the early decades of the 20th century. Such mass party organizations were anchored in social cleavages, and they integrated voters and social blocs into dense partisan and civic associations that forged strong collective identities, thus limiting individual voter mobility (Bartolini and Mair 1990).

Timing matters for Mainwaring and Zoco, however, because this integrative and encapsulating mode of partisanship is not universally available to party builders. Indeed, the model was specific to a stage of world historical development in which electoral mobilization was a labor-intensive affair that required mass-based organization, strong local branches, and extensive grass-roots participation. It thrived, then, in a period when labor movements were on the ascendance—providing the social and organizational bases for at least one side of the standard cleavage alignment—and telecommunications had not yet revolutionized electoral campaigns by reducing the dependence of political entrepreneurs on mass party organizations to mobilize voters. The sequencing of party system development in the "third wave," then, came too late to form encapsulating party organizations. So conceived, tenuous partisanship is a congenital defect of new party systems that will not be corrected with the passage of time; it is a function of period and sequencing effects rather than age per se. As Schmitter (2001) pithily stated, "parties are not what they once were."

Although Mainwaring and Zoco's argument is theoretically compelling and backed by considerable empirical evidence, this paper suggests that it is overly deterministic in its

sequencing postulates. The generalizable patterns that they identify mask considerable cross-national variation, and major anomalies to these general patterns reveal a number of important contingencies and conditional effects. Even if encapsulating mass party organizations are a relic of the past, it does not necessarily follow that party systems will be electorally unstable; the Latin American experience provides examples of several new, "third wave" party systems that have been electorally stable or have stabilized over time. Intriguingly, the region also offers examples of much older party systems with encapsulating traditions that quite suddenly broke down in the "third wave." To understand such anomalies, I argue, requires a basic shift in analytical focus: from the organizational properties and societal linkages of individual parties, to the competitive axes or cleavage alignments at the level of party systems.

More specifically, this paper suggests that the stability or volatility of party systems in Latin America's "third wave" was not predetermined by historical timing or sequencing effects. Instead, it rested on the more contingent effects of national critical junctures during the epochal "dual transitions" to political democracy and market liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Political battles over these dual transitions either aligned party systems programmatically between institutionalized partisan alternatives of the left and right—or it de-aligned them. Whereas programmatic alignment during the critical juncture produced institutional legacies of relatively stable partisan competition, programmatic de-alignment elicited highly disruptive "reactive sequences"—including mass social protest—and legacies of party system instability or breakdown. Causal processes are traced through a comparative historical analysis of these critical junctures in three "new" party systems—those of Brazil, Ecuador, and El Salvador—and one much older party system in Venezuela.

LINKAGES, CLEAVAGES, AND PARTY SYSTEM ALIGNMENTS

In an effort to understand stable partisanship, scholars have tried to identify different types of societal linkages that generate partisan identities and bind voters to specific party organizations. Kitschelt (2000), for example, identifies three principal types of party–voter linkages: those based on clientelism, programmatic preferences, and charismatic appeal (see also Lawson 1980).

Clearly, strong linkages can be a source of stable partisanship and may well be a precondition for it. In the process of forming societal linkages, however, parties inevitably construct cleavages as well; that is, they differentiate their supporters from those of their rivals, as parties, by definition, only represent a "part" of the body politic. If strong linkages are important to stable partisanship, so also are deep cleavages, for the simple reason that they limit individual voter mobility. The wider and deeper the divide between rival partisan camps, the less likely voters are to cross that divide from one election cycle to the next. For this reason, the classic scholarly work on the development of Western European party systems has emphasized the role of well-organized socio-political cleavages—especially those pertaining to social class—in the stabilization of partisan and electoral alignments (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair 1990).

Although the European scholarly tradition presumes that cleavages are rooted in sociological distinctions of class, ethnicity, religion, or region, partisan alignments in much of the rest of the world are often less clearly anchored in rival social blocs (Roberts 2002). That may be one of the reasons why party systems elsewhere have found it difficult to replicate Western European levels of electoral stability. Nevertheless, any competitive party system must "cleave" the electorate as rival parties mobilize support, and cleavages constructed in the political arena, without reference to social group distinctions, are not necessarily less stable alignments than those that are structured by social blocs. The absence of strong class cleavages has not prevented the U.S. party system from having a remarkably stable and durable competitive axis—or political cleavage—between Republicans and Democrats. Likewise, the Latin American experience—until quite recently—provided examples of highly stable competitive alignments between 19th century oligarchic parties that relied on clientelist linkages to mobilize relatively undifferentiated multi-class constituencies. In countries like Uruguay and Colombia, traditional oligarchic parties built exclusive clientelist networks that aligned and stabilized the electorate in the political sphere in the absence of well-defined social cleavages or programmatic distinctions (Gillespie 1991; Hartlyn 1988). Once voters are incorporated into a patronage machine and the social networks that help sustain it, crossing to the "other side" can be prohibitively costly.

In Latin America's "third wave" of democratization, however, partisan alignments grounded in exclusive clientelist networks have progressively weakened. Party systems with roots in 19th century oligarchic divides have broken down (Colombia) or been transformed by the rise of newer leftist rivals (Uruguay and Paraguay). Only Honduras retains a 19th century oligarchic party system, and it is increasingly under pressure from an emerging leftist rival. Indeed, the generalized strengthening of leftist alternatives in the region since the late 1990s—following the crisis-induced technocratic convergence around market liberalization in the 1980s and 1990s—has realigned partisan and electoral competition in many countries. Although this realignment has not always been grounded in well-defined, much less well-organized, class cleavages, it has clearly revived partisan competition around programmatic linkages and differences.

Party systems, however, have varied widely in their ability to manage and withstand this revival of left–right programmatic contestation. In some countries—most notably, Brazil—it has helped to stabilize party systems that were notorious for their fragility and inchoateness, or even newly formed during the "third wave" itself (see Mainwaring 1999). In others, like Venezuela, it contributed to the decomposition of long-standing and highly institutionalized party systems (Coppedge 1994). Such variation was not determined by the historical timing or sequencing of party system formation. Neither was it determined by deep historical development patterns associated with industrialization and the early construction of welfare states, which Kitschelt et al. (2009) see as the foundation for the programmatic structuring of party systems in the region. Instead, contemporary patterns have been heavily conditioned by the impact on party systems of two more recent, but fundamental, transitions in the 1980s and 1990s—regime transitions from authoritarianism to democracy and economic transitions from statist to neoliberal development models. These transitions shaped national critical junctures that either aligned or de-aligned party systems along a left–right axis of contestation during the "third wave." In the process, they bequeathed party systems that were more or less resilient in the face of strengthening societal pressures for redistributive measures and enhanced social citizenship rights in the aftermath

of market-based economic adjustment—that is, in the post-adjustment aftermath of neoliberal critical junctures.

CRITICAL JUNCTURES AND PARTY SYSTEM ALIGNMENT

Whether cleavages are anchored in social group distinctions or simply constructed in the political arena through partisan rivalries, they only possess meaningful programmatic content in the presence of three basic conditions: (1) individual parties adopt clear and relatively cohesive programmatic stands on issues that divide the body politic; (2) these programmatic stands differentiate a party from its competitors; and (3) parties elected into public office pursue policies that largely conform to the principles and platforms on which they ran. Slippage along any of these three dimensions will weaken programmatic linkages and make cleavage alignments more fluid. In short, slippage narrows the gulf between rival parties and makes individual voters more mobile, at least on the basis of their programmatic preferences. The opposite is true where programmatic differences crystallize, anchoring voters—those with programmatic preferences, at least—in their partisan camp. This can be readily seen in the recent U.S. experience, where the much-maligned ideological polarization between Republicans and Democrats—whatever its effects on effective governance—has increasingly "sorted" voters into rival camps, reduced the number of voters who are "in play" to be swayed by electoral campaigns, and ultimately stabilized voting behavior (Hetherington 2011; Aldrich 2011).

Clearly, the level of programmatic structuration varies across party systems and also across time in any given party system. It is not, in other words, a fixed property of party systems, even if it is conditioned by historical development patterns (Kitschelt et al. 2009). What determines, then, why some party systems are more programmatically aligned than others? And why does the level of programmatic structuration vary longitudinally in a given party system?

In Latin America, partisan alignments during the "third wave" were heavily shaped by forms of political contestation embedded in the two major societal transitions of the late 20th century—that is, the dual transitions to political and economic liberalism. These transitions were

profound in their effects and sweeping in their scope; between the late 1970s and 2000, every country in the region adopted market-based structural adjustment policies (Morley, Machado, and Pettinato 1999), and all except Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela experienced a regime transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Party systems mapped onto these transitions in strikingly diverse ways, however, generating well-defined left–right cleavages in some countries but diffusing or de-aligning such cleavages in others. These differences had major implications for successful party building and the long-term institutionalization of partisan and electoral competition.

In many countries, democratic transitions in the late 1970s and 1980s brought traditional political parties back onto center stage. In others, major new parties emerged during the transition period, and party systems were largely reconstituted. Whether party systems were old or new, however, regime transitions varied in the extent to which they cleaved partisan competition between authoritarians and democrats—or, at least, between supporters and opponents of authoritarian regimes. In some countries—primarily those where right-wing military dictatorships governed in the 1960s and 1970s[1]—authoritarian successor parties anchored one side of the central political divide following regime transitions. In Honduras, Paraguay, and, more ambiguously, Uruguay,[2] these were traditional parties of the right that had supported or collaborated with military rulers. In Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, and El Salvador, military rulers and their civilian allies forged new parties of the right during transition periods to safeguard the political and economic interests of authoritarian coalitions following the restoration of democratic competition. Such parties generally tried to defend elite economic interests and shield military institutions from political retribution or prosecution for human rights violations. As such, they sought to preserve the "reserve domains" of military influence or other

[1] The exceptions were Mexico and Panama, where successor parties were derived from authoritarian regimes that historically possessed both conservative and populist tendencies, thus diffusing left-right cleavages based on regime preferences. In Nicaragua, the regime transition that followed the 1990 defeat of the Sandinistas included a revolutionary successor party that aligned the party system on a left–right axis.

[2] In Uruguay, conservative sectors of the two traditional parties, the Colorados and Blancos, had collaborated with the military dictatorship after 1973, while other factions supported redemocratization. The leftist Frente Amplio was a staunch opponent of military rule and a target of its repression.

"authoritarian enclaves" that placed institutional constraints on popular democratic majorities (see Valenzuela 1992). These parties thus anchored the right side of partisan cleavage alignments following democratic transitions, in each case facing off against leftist rivals (of either social democratic or revolutionary proclivities) that were fierce opponents of military regimes (as were, less cohesively, centrist parties in these countries).

Authoritarian successor parties were not formed, however, in Peru and Ecuador, where left-leaning military regimes governed in the 1970s, or in Argentina, where the military's authoritarian project was too thoroughly discredited to spawn an electorally competitive conservative successor. In these latter countries, cleavages between authoritarians and democrats were not a major factor in aligning partisan competition following regime transitions. Even where major parties of the left and right existed—as in Peru and Ecuador—they tended to share an opposition stance toward military rulers, albeit for different reasons.

Although conservative successor parties were prevalent in the region, they did not always produce strong left–right programmatic alignments around regime preferences following democratic transitions. In Honduras and Paraguay, for example, leftist parties were miniscule and electorally non-competitive, allowing right-wing successor parties to compete in conservative-dominated regimes that reproduced much of the authoritarian political order. Where a major party of the left was present, however, to compete with conservative successor parties—in particular, in Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay—deep cleavages over regime loyalties reinforced left–right programmatic alignments that were grounded in economic ideology and rival preferences toward redistributive reforms. In these countries, authoritarian legacies weighed heavily on the partisan alignments that emerged during the regime transitions that ushered in the "third wave."

The second epochal transition of the late 20th century—from state-led import substitution industrialization (ISI) to market liberalism—also exerted profound but divergent effects on the programmatic alignment of partisan competition. Market reforms that were adopted by

conservative or centrist actors—whether parties or military rulers—and consistently opposed by a major party of the left helped to align partisan competition programmatically. This pattern of "contested liberalism" prevailed in the four aforementioned cases where strong left–right regime cleavages also existed—Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, and Uruguay. Contested liberalism made conservative actors the champions and defenders of market reform, while channeling dissent from market orthodoxy toward institutionalized partisan outlets on the left.

Conversely, where structural adjustment policies were enacted by center-left or populist parties—as in Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Venezuela—or by an independent populist figure like Alberto Fujimori in Peru, market liberalization de-aligned party systems programmatically. These "bait-and-switch" patterns of market reform were led by political actors who campaigned on other platforms and criticized neoliberal adjustment measures before assuming office, producing a reform dynamic that Stokes (2001) called "neoliberalism by surprise." In so doing, they left party systems without an effective institutional channel for societal opposition to the neoliberal model. In contrast to the aforementioned alignment of contested liberalism, bait-and-switch reforms produced a pattern of "neoliberal convergence," in which all the major parties led or supported the process of market liberalization.

In the short term, this policy convergence may have ameliorated partisan conflict and broadened the political base for technocratic market reforms. Over the longer term, however, it stripped much of the programmatic content from partisan competition, thus de-aligning party systems programmatically. Indeed, it left party systems vulnerable to forms of social and political backlash by marginalized groups that lacked institutionalized channels for the articulation of dissent from neoliberal orthodoxy. Such backlashes—the "reactive sequences" (Mahoney 2001) to neoliberal critical junctures—took a variety of different political forms, from mass social protest to electoral protest movements, including the election of anti-establishment populist outsiders or new "movement parties" that emerged organically from protest cycles.

These reactive sequences could be highly destabilizing for party systems—both old and new—that were not programmatically aligned along a left–right axis of competition during the dual transitions to political and economic liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. Where such alignment occurred, however, reactive sequences in the aftermath to market liberalization were moderated considerably; as societal resistance to market insecurities intensified, it strengthened established parties of the left, rather than anti-systemic populist and leftist alternatives. The fate of party systems, then, hinged more on the aligning and de-aligning effects of these dual transitions than on the age of party systems or the historical timing and sequencing of their formation. The consequences of programmatic alignment and de-alignment are illustrated below through a comparative perspective on party systems during the "third wave" of democratization in Latin America.

PROGRAMMATIC (DE-)ALIGNMENTS AND PARTY SYSTEM INSTITUTIONALIZATION: BRAZIL, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, AND VENEZUELA

Latin America's political landscape during the "third wave" of democratization provides examples of both relatively stable and unstable party systems. This variation, however, does not readily map onto the categories of "old" and "new" party systems or to any historical periodization of formative experiences. Of the four countries analyzed here, only one—Ecuador—conforms to expectations of organizational volatility and inchoateness for party systems formed during the "third wave." The other three cases defy the hypothesized relationship in fundamental but different ways: Venezuela, because an older and highly institutionalized party system decomposed during the 1990s, and Brazil and El Salvador, because new party systems progressively consolidated and stabilized over the course of the "third wave." Although these divergent outcomes cannot be explained by party system age or founding periods, they correspond closely to patterns of programmatic alignment and de-alignment during the dual transitions to political and economic liberalism of the late 20th century.

Of the four cases, only Venezuela entered the period of the "third wave" with an intact party system. Indeed, Venezuela was not, properly speaking, a case of "third wave" democratization, as its democratic transition occurred earlier, in the late 1950s. When other Latin American countries were struggling to restore democratic rule in the late 1970s and 1980s, Venezuela stood out for the strength and stability of its democratic institutions, and its earlier "pacted transition" often served as an implicit model for aspiring democratizers in the region (Karl 1987; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Venezuela's party system dated to an earlier episode of post-war democratization in the late 1940s, during the period that Mainwaring and Zoco (2007) characterize as the global high point of mass party organization. In the other three cases, party systems were largely reconstituted during the "third wave" itself and are thus paradigmatic examples of the new party systems that Mainwaring and Zoco allege to be singularly prone to under-institutionalization.

The dual transitions to democracy and market liberalism during the "third wave" aligned (or de-aligned) these four party systems in strikingly diverse ways, however. Clearly, the "third wave" did not generate a regime cleavage in partisan competition in the Venezuelan case, given the longstanding character of the country's democratic regime and the close collaboration of the two leading parties—Democratic Action (AD) and COPEI—in forging the political and economic pacts that undergirded the 1958 democratic transition. Although these parties were at loggerheads in the 1940s, when COPEI emerged as a conservative response to the left-leaning, labor-backed government of the AD between 1945 and 1948, ten years of military dictatorship drove the two parties into a tacit alliance in support of a democratic transition in the late 1950s. The two parties moderated their ideological differences and formed the organizational linchpin of the post-1958 democratic regime, increasingly dominating the electoral arena and alternating in national executive office until their demise in the 1990s (Coppedge 1994).

Likewise, Ecuador's democratic transition in the late 1970s did not forge a well-defined regime cleavage in partisan competition. In contrast to most countries in the region, Ecuador—

like Peru—experienced a socially reformist, left-leaning period of military rule in the 1970s, and the military regime did not spawn a civilian successor party to defend its legacy under democratic rule. Conservative political and business elites distrusted the military regime and generally supported a regime transition, as they opposed the military's statist policies and chafed at their exclusion from policymaking arenas (see Conaghan and Malloy 1994). Populist and leftist actors also chafed at their exclusion and hoped to capitalize on a restoration of democratic channels for participation and representation. Consequently, although parties differed on the precise formula for democratization, all the major actors supported regime change. These actors were organizationally fragmented and inchoate, however, as Ecuador entered its 1978-79 democratic transition with a party system in a state of considerable flux. The traditional oligarchic conservative and liberal parties were nearing the end of a secular decline, and the aging populist *caudillo* and five-time president José María Velasco Ibarra was at the end of a storied political career that left no significant partisan descendant. A fluid set of relatively new parties emerged as the democratic transition got underway, including the conservative Partido Social Cristiano (PSC), the centrist Democracia Popular–Union Democrata Cristiana (DP–UDC), the populist Concentración de Fuerzas Populares (CFP) and Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE), and the leftist Izquierda Democrática (ID). No central cleavage between authoritarians and democrats structured partisan competition, however.

As in Ecuador, party systems were also reconstituted during "third wave" democratic transitions in Brazil and El Salvador. In contrast to Ecuador, however—not to mention Venezuela—these new party systems were sharply cleaved by a central divide between erstwhile supporters and opponents of military regimes. Conservative successor parties were founded in both Brazil and El Salvador to defend the legacies of military regimes and protect the interests of their elite supporters following the restoration of democratic competition. Similarly, major parties of the left emerged in both countries out of the social movements and activist networks that had been the primary targets of military repression.

In Brazil, the 1964-1985 military regime dissolved established political parties, repressed those with populist and leftist tendencies, and created an "official" two-party system out of the state and local political networks of the more conservative traditional parties. As stated by Power (2000: 55), the military regime's institutional manipulation forged "a political cleavage that would characterize Brazilian politics for a generation or more: authoritarians versus democrats." Brazil's party system would eventually be reconstituted around the axis of competition formed by this central cleavage. During a protracted democratic transition, the official pro-military party ARENA—which dominated most state and local governments and their patronage networks under the military regime (Hagopian 1996)—gave birth to a series of conservative successor parties that culminated in the foundation of the PFL (Partido da Frente Liberal). The PFL consolidated a position as the most important party on the conservative side of the political spectrum. Pro-democratic forces, on the other hand, joined the official "opposition" party to the military regime, the Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (MDB), which became the centrist catch-all party PMDB during the democratic transition and spawned a major spin-off, the Partido da Social Democracia Brasiliera (PSDB), in the late 1980s. Meanwhile, the labor and social movements that protested against military rule formed a new partisan vehicle of the socialist left, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), which steadily grew over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Brazil's newly reconstituted party system, therefore, was built around a central cleavage that demarcated the supporters and opponents of military rule and sorted them into rival ideological camps. Although the political salience of the regime cleavage gradually faded following the restoration of democratic rule, and the combination of coalitional politics and market liberalization eventually repositioned the partisan center, the basic configuration of conservative, centrist, and leftist blocs was an important institutional legacy of Brazil's military regime.

In El Salvador as well, a regime cleavage forged by authoritarianism and civil war spawned a new party system during the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to the 1979-1992 civil war, party system development was hamstrung by virtually uninterrupted military rule and highly irregular

electoral competition; the traditional right-wing party was allied to military rulers, while a centrist Christian Democratic Party led opposition forces. During the civil war, as direct military rule gave way to a U.S.-backed civilian government, these parties were overtaken by new party organizations that grew directly out of the rival armed combatants. On the right, ARENA (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*)* was formed in 1981 out of the military intelligence and death squad networks organized by former army major Roberto D'Aubuisson, with financial backing from Salvadoran business elites at home and abroad (Wood 2000: 67-70; Stanley 1996). On the left, an umbrella revolutionary movement known as the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) was founded in 1980 and subsequently transformed into a party of the same name as it negotiated its entry into the political system at the end of the civil war. These two parties, firmly located on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, would dominant the electoral arena following the inauguration of a more inclusive democratic regime in 1992.

The regime cleavages between authoritarians and democrats—or revolutionaries—that initially structured partisan competition along a left–right axis in El Salvador and Brazil progressively faded in significance as new democratic regimes were consolidated. Crucially, however, the left–right cleavage was subsequently reinforced in both countries by the alignment of partisan actors around the process of market liberalization. In both countries, conservative parties or coalitions with strong business support led the process of market reform, while a major party of the left was present to channel popular resistance. In Brazil, tentative market reforms began, in a hyperinflationary context, under President José Sarney of the PFL in the late 1980s. More ambitious structural adjustment measures were then adopted by the maverick conservative leader Fernando Collor and finally consolidated in the mid-1990s by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of the PSDB, who governed in alliance with the PFL and other centrist and conservative parties. The labor-backed PT spearheaded opposition to neoliberal reforms, with its leader Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva finishing second in three consecutive presidential elections in 1989, 1994, and 1998. In El Salvador, neoliberal reforms began when ARENA first captured

the presidency behind the leadership of businessman Alfredo Cristiani in 1989. The model continued under his three ARENA successors, with the FMLN positioned on the left at the head of opposition forces.

Partisan alignments around the process of market liberalization in Venezuela and Ecuador were strikingly different. Venezuela was an archetypal case of bait-and-switch market reform—not once, but twice. The first major attempt at structural adjustment began in 1989 following the election of Carlos Andrés Pérez of AD—a populist figure from a traditionally labor-based, center-left party. A second major push occurred over the second half of the administration of Rafael Caldera and his Planning Minister Teodoro Petkoff from 1996 to 1998. Although Caldera was a historic leader of the conservative party COPEI, he broke with the party to run an independent campaign for the presidency in 1993, adopting a highly critical stance toward the neoliberal reforms implemented under Pérez. Petkoff, meanwhile, was the historic leader of the former guerrilla movement and leftist party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). Both reform episodes, therefore, were launched in contravention to the electoral mandates and programmatic commitments that ushered leaders into office.

In Ecuador, a succession of political leaders from across the ideological spectrum tried to impose market reforms—often with limited success—between the mid-1980s and early 2000s. Although conservative presidents like León Febres Cordero and Sixto Durán Ballén were ambitious reformers, major liberalization initiatives were also adopted by presidents from the country's leading leftist (Rodrigo Borja of ID) and populist (Abdalá Bucaram of the PRE) parties, as well as by the independent populist figure Lucio Gutiérrez after 2002, who had been elected with the support of the left-leaning indigenous party Pachakutik. As such, bait-and-switch reform dynamics were also prevalent in Ecuador, undermining any left–right programmatic structuring of partisan and electoral competition.

In short, party systems in both Ecuador and Venezuela were programmatically de-aligned by the process of structural adjustment and essentially left without an institutionalized partisan

vehicle for the articulation of dissent from market orthodoxy. In contexts of de-alignment, societal resistance to market liberalization was more likely to be channeled into extra-systemic forms of social and/or electoral protest—the "reactive sequences" (Mahoney 2001), so to speak, to neoliberal critical junctures. In Venezuela, this took the form of the mass urban riots known as the *caracazo* that greeted the initial adoption of adjustment measures by Pérez in February 1989, unleashing a powerful process of political de-institutionalization from which the party system—and the post-1958 political order—never recovered. Pérez weathered two military coup attempts before being impeached on grounds of corruption in 1993, and voters abandoned the two major parties to support a series of independent and leftist "outsiders"—first Caldera and the leftist La Causa R in 1993 and finally Hugo Chávez in 1998.

In Ecuador, an indigenous movement that adopted a staunch anti-neoliberal line gathered steam over the course of the 1990s, eventually joining forces with other popular actors in a series of mass protests that directly or indirectly toppled three consecutive elected presidents in 1997, 2000, and 2005 (Yashar 2005; Silva 2009). Established parties were displaced after 2000 by independent populist figures, culminating in the election of the left-leaning populist outsider Rafael Correa in 2006. Similar patterns of bait-and-switch reform also culminated in mass protest movements, the overthrow of elected presidents, and partial or complete party system decomposition in Bolivia and Argentina, providing further evidence of the unstable institutional legacies of neoliberal critical junctures that programmatically de-aligned partisan systems. In Bolivia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, the election of populist outsiders or new leftist "movement" parties led to plebiscitary expressions of popular sovereignty that produced sharp breaks with regime institutions as well as major departures from neoliberal orthodoxy. New leftist leaders convoked constituent assemblies, re-founded regime institutions, and experimented with a broad range of statist, nationalist, and redistributive development policies.

Reactive sequences to market liberalization in Brazil and El Salvador were far less institutionally disruptive. Both countries turned towards the left politically in the post-adjustment

period, but they did so by electing institutionalized and increasingly moderate parties of the left that had remained in opposition throughout the period of market reform. The PT and the FMLN provided institutional outlets for the articulation of dissent from market orthodoxy, moderating social protest movements and stabilizing their respective party systems. The "left turns" that occurred with the election of the PT in 2002, 2006, and 2010 and the FMLN in 2009 did not produce efforts to transform regime institutions, and new administrations adopted moderate redistributive social reforms without dramatic departures from macroeconomic orthodoxy. The same was true in Chile and Uruguay, where institutionalized parties of the left also strengthened and came to power in the aftermath of market reforms that had been adopted by conservative rulers.

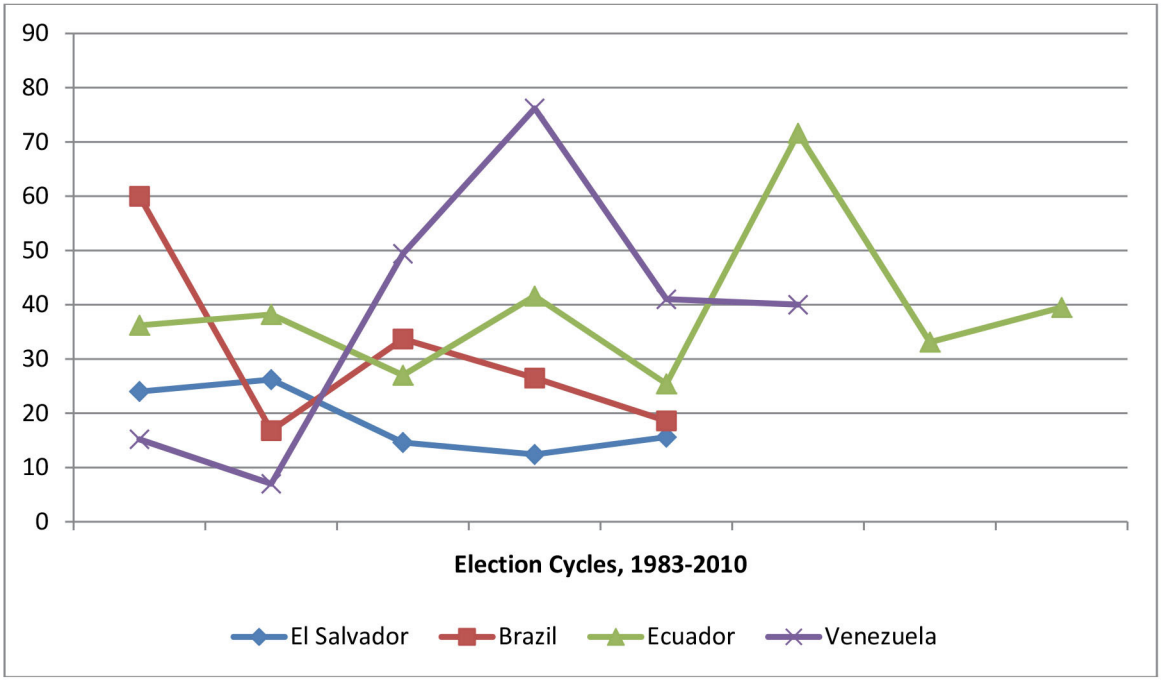
PROGRAMMATIC ALIGNMENTS AND PARTY SYSTEM STABILITY

The programmatic alignment and de-alignment of partisan competition during the dual transitions to political and economic liberalism had powerful implications for the stability of party systems in the aftermath of market reforms. Debt and hyperinflationary crises during the 1980s and 1990s had weakened labor unions, disarticulated popular movements, and limited the policy options of elected governments. Following structural adjustment and the stabilization of inflationary pressures across the region by the mid-1990s, however, diffuse societal opposition to neoliberal reforms often congealed around new forms of social mobilization and political articulation. The political channeling and party system effects of this opposition in the post-adjustment period varied dramatically, depending not on the age of party systems but rather on their programmatic alignment. As seen above, where bait-and-switch reforms de-aligned party systems, opposition was more likely to be expressed through mass social protest and anti-establishment forms of electoral protest that severely destabilized party systems. Conversely, where market reforms aligned party systems programmatically, opposition was channeled into institutionalized parties of the left rather than extra-systemic forms of social or electoral protest.

These distinct institutional legacies of reform alignments are readily apparent in the four cases analyzed here. As seen in Figure 2, longitudinal patterns of electoral volatility in the four

party systems diverged sharply. Venezuela's longstanding, highly institutionalized party system was electorally stable in the 1980s but increasingly volatile following its bait-and-switch process of structural adjustment. According to the Pedersen index of volatility, a basic measure of vote shifts from one election cycle to the next, volatility in Venezuelan presidential elections averaged a mere 11.1 percent in the 1980s, then jumped to 62.8 percent in the 1990s and 40.6 percent in the first decade of the 20th century. Volatility in Ecuador's much younger, de-aligned party system started high and then spiked when voters abandoned established parties after the mass protests that toppled President Jamil Mahuad in 2000. Volatility peaked in 2002 at 71.6 percent.

Figure 2: Electoral Volatility in Presidential Elections, 1983-2010
(Pedersen Index of Volatility)



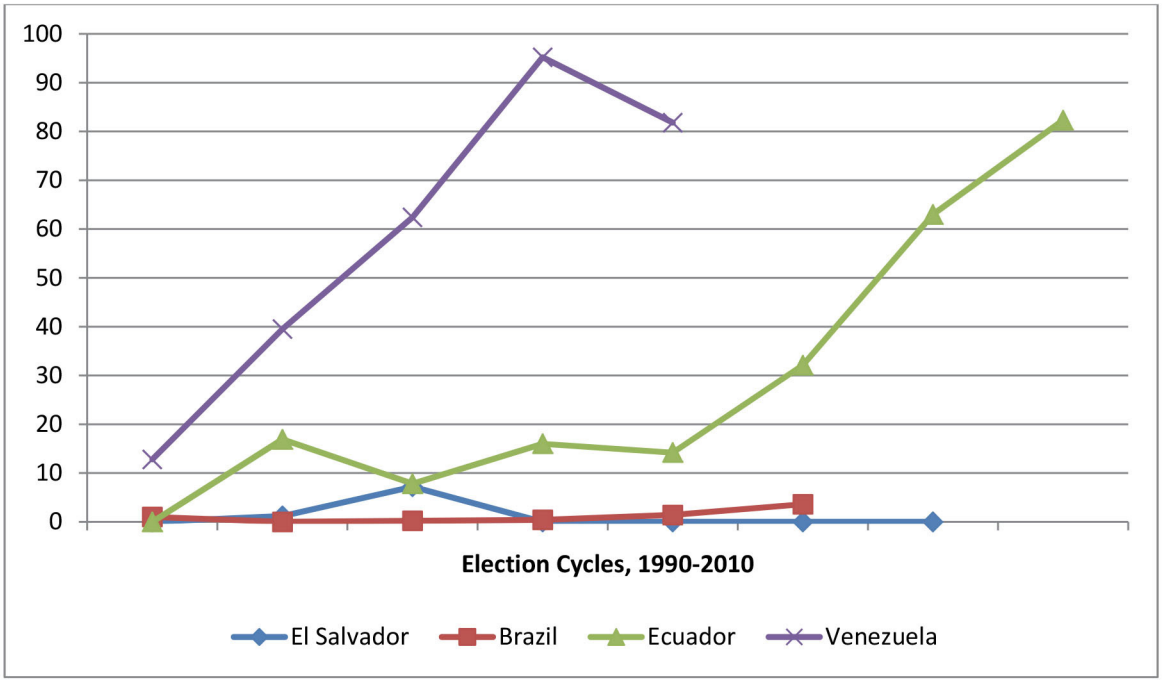
Source: Calculated from electoral data provided in Nohlen 2005 and Georgetown University's Political Dabase of the Americas (http://pdba.georgetown.edu/). The years of the first election cycle in each country varied with the timing of democratic transitions.

In El Salvador, on the other hand, the volatility trend line moved in the opposite direction from that in Venezuela and Ecuador: the new party system became *more* stable over time, once the FMLN was incorporated into the electoral process and partisan competition was clearly aligned along a left–right axis. Volatility in presidential elections averaged 25.1 percent

between 1984 and 1994, then dropped to an average of 14.2 percent between 1994 and 2009, well below the regional average. Indeed, electoral volatility in presidential elections in El Salvador after 2000 was the third lowest in Latin America, and the country boasted the lowest level of volatility in the region in legislative elections after 2000. Equally dramatic, in Brazil's new party system—once notorious for its fluidity and under-institutionalization (Mainwaring 1999)—electoral volatility was extremely high at the beginning of the democratic period but fell sharply after structural adjustment brought hyperinflation under control and reinforced left–right programmatic structuration. Brazil recorded a volatility score of 60 between the 1989 and 1994 presidential elections but more moderate scores of 16.8, 33.7, 26.5, and 18.6 thereafter. The Brazilian and Salvadoran cases clearly demonstrate that party systems founded during the "third wave" are not fated to remain volatile and weak where they are cleaved along a left–right axis of competition marked by meaningful and consistent programmatic distinctions (see Hagopian, Gervasoni, and Maraes 2009).

The very high levels of electoral volatility recorded in Venezuela and Ecuador are even more striking when one considers that they became increasingly extra-systemic rather than intra-systemic. Volatility, that is, was not attributable to vote shifts from one established party to another. Instead, massive vote shifts occurred from traditional parties toward independent personalities or new political movements on both the right and the left. Indeed, the vote for independent figures or new parties formed after 1990 reached 100 percent in presidential elections in Venezuela after 2000 and in Ecuador (as well as Bolivia) in 2009. Even in legislative elections, where volatility based on leadership personality is lower and established parties are more likely to retain a hold on portions of the electorate, the shift away from traditional parties to new challengers was dramatic in Venezuela and Ecuador. This can be seen in Figure 3, which tracks the cumulative growth in the percentage of legislative seats captured by parties formed after 1990 across successive election cycles from 1990 to 2010. This percentage gradually rose, reaching over 80 percent in Venezuela after 2006 and Ecuador in 2009 as new parties and movements displaced traditional parties in national legislatures.

Figure 3: Percentage of Legislative Seats Held by Parties Formed after 1990



Source: Nohlen (2005) and Georgetown University's Political Dabase of the Americas (http://pdba.georgetown.edu/).

In Brazil and El Salvador's programmatically aligned party systems, on the other hand, the trend lines for this indicator were remarkably flat. Indeed, the vote for parties or movements formed after 1990 as part of a backlash against neoliberalism was virtually non-existent; post-1990 parties averaged a mere 1.8 percent of legislative seats in Brazil after 2000 and zero in El Salvador during the same period. Clearly, parties formed during the democratic transitions of the 1980s consolidated their positions and closed off the electoral marketplace to new competitors. Rather than triggering an electoral backlash against the established party system, societal resistance to market liberalization translated into a progressive strengthening of institutionalized leftist parties, the PT and FMLN. Furthermore, centrist and conservative parties that led the process of market reform in these two countries remained major power contenders, even after losing ground electorally to their leftist rivals in the post-adjustment period. ARENA and the PSDB, in particular, continued to represent business and middle-class interests that supported market liberalization, placing significant institutional constraints on new

leftist governments. This was in sharp contrast to the pattern in Venezuela and Ecuador, where conservative parties abdicated leadership of the market reform process to a bewildering array of populist, leftist, and personalist alternatives and were subsequently swept aside in the generalized societal backlash against a de-aligned partisan establishment.

It is important to note, then, that programmatic alignment and de-alignment were *systemic* phenomena, referring to the presence or absence of programmatically coherent and differentiated parties to anchor voters on rival sides of the competitive axis. The destabilizing reactive sequences that followed in the wake of de-aligning structural adjustment did not simply undermine the individual parties or leaders that implemented bait-and-switch reforms; bystanders who stood on the sidelines and watched or cheered lost their hold over voters as well when partisan competition became detached from programmatic alternatives during a period of fundamental policy change.

CONCLUSION

Although the era of mass party organizations with encapsulated voters anchored in social cleavages may have passed, it does not necessarily follow that new party systems formed during the "third wave" of democracy are destined to be fragile and volatile. The recent Latin American experience suggests that the stability of party systems is not strictly determined by their age or historical period of foundation. Indeed, more contingent patterns of cleavage alignment or de-alignment during recent periods of regime transition and market-based structural adjustment often trump the effects of historical period or timing effects. Well-defined left–right cleavages forged by the alignment of partisan competition around regime loyalties and economic policy preferences can exert a stabilizing effect on party systems—even relatively new ones formed during the "third wave." In Latin America, at least, the relative volatility of party systems during the "third wave" is less a function of their age, or the age of the democratic regimes in which they compete, than it is a function of widespread programmatic de-alignment during the dual transitions to political and economic liberalism. Such de-alignment is neither permanent nor

irreversible, however, providing a ray of hope for those who believe that strong political parties are vital for democratic governance but fear that the historical opportunity for the construction of such parties lies in the distant past.

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