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Political Parties and Redemocratization in Uruguay

Luis E. Gonzalez
Yale University

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Abstract

This essay probes some aspects of the effect the Uruguayan party system might have on the country's redemocratization process by discussing the characteristics of the party system before the 1973 coup and the role of the parties with regard to the political opening from 1980 to the present (August 1984). A prospective exercise will end the analysis, suggesting some institutional engineering to strengthen the possibilities of the democratic restoration. The whole discussion is concerned with only one dimension of the redemocratization process. This means that even if the main points of the argument (and the suggested policies) were right, no precise predictions on the actual redemocratization process would follow. The rightness of a partial analysis such as the present one is always ceteris paribus, that is, if the context experiences changes important enough, these may neutralize or even reverse any trend resulting solely from the partial study. Nevertheless, a partial analysis may be better than none. This is particularly so if, as it will be seen, some of the relevant issues have already been on the political agenda and probably will be back on it in a relatively near future. Decisions will have to be taken -- by action or omission. Because of that, and at least from a normative point of view, the possibility of contributing to the redemocratization debate is worth attempting the present discussion.

The Uruguayan Democracy

An important preliminary point is the following: if the current process ends in democracy, it will be a restoration in the full sense of the word. The Uruguayan polity was uncommon in the Latin American context. It was at least a quasi-polyarchy since 1918, and a polyarchy since the 1940s through the 1960s.[1]

This polity was built upon other peculiarities. The country was colonized very late, in the first half of the eighteenth century. Before then it was only scarcely populated by tribal societies that did not know agriculture, so that the present population is mostly Spanish, with a strong Italian component, and completely homogeneous. There are no socio-ethnic cleavages. At the beginning of this century the per capita income was comparable to that of Canada. The country lost that position in the past 80 years, but the relative affluence accumulated throughout one century is still reflected in its present social and economic indicators. The distinctiveness of the Southern Cone Countries in the Latin American context is a well known fact, but Uruguay fares well even by comparison with this special subset. According to a recent source, Uruguay's GNP per capita (US$ 2,820 in 1981) ranked high within the world's upper middle-income countries -- seventh in 21 -- and it was higher than those of Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The adult literacy rate (94 percent) and the number enrolled in secondary school as a percentage of the age group (60 percent) were also higher in Uruguay than in the other three countries. Life expectancy at birth (71 years) was equal to Argentina's, and higher than in Brazil and Chile; the Uruguayan infant mortality rate (39 per thousand) was the lowest of the four countries. Urban population as percentage of total population (84 percent) was the highest. The Uruguayan income distribution probably is still the most egalitarian among the four nations.[2]

Uruguayan democracy also fares well in relation to the rest of the Southern Cone. Comparing democratic performance is not as simple as comparing, say, per capita GNP. Nevertheless, the distance between the Uruguayan and the Argentinian and Brazilian historical records is large enough to make detailed examination unnecessary. This is not so with regard to Chile. For the present purpose, however, it may suffice to note that (i) during the present century the Uruguayan military was effectively subordinated to civilian rule until 1973 (even during the de facto regime in the 1930s), which was not the case in Chile; (ii) both in Chile and Uruguay the rights actually granted to political opposition seem to have been approximately equivalent,[3] and (iii) the franchise widened consistently earlier in Uruguay than in Chile: illiterates and 18-to 21-year-olds can vote since 1918 in Uruguay, and since 1970 in Chile; Chilean women first voted in 1952, whereas the Uruguayans could do so since 1934. As a result, extensive suffrage in Chile "is a very recent phenomenon; the enfranchised portion of the population . . . fluctuated between 7 and 15 percent from the 1880s to the 1940s,"[4] whereas in Uruguay it surpassed 20 percent in 1920. Thus, taking into account Dahl's dimensions of polyarchy -- participation and opposition -- and a more regional criterion -- military subordination to civilian rule -- it seems that by the mid-1960s Uruguay probably was the most democratic polity in South America.[5]

In short, Uruguay was a polyarchy during a relatively long period of time: the only Latin American country where the demise of the old oligarchical order

brought about a real democratization from the beginning of the twentieth century.[6] The Uruguayan polity had, in principle, all the elements of a mature polyarchy. This included, as it will be seen later, a party system older than most of the contemporary Western ones. Exceptional by Latin American standards, that political system was not so surprising in view of the characteristics of Uruguayan society, which fulfilled most, if not all the conditions usually mentioned as prerequisites of democracy.[7]

By the 1960s, however, the general feeling was one of stagnation. The economy did not grow, stagflation became the rule, and the successive governments of the two main parties were unable to reverse the situation. It was in this context that the social and political unrest which ended in the 1973 coup emerged.[8]

Origins and Development of Uruguayan Political Parties

There is no general, comprehensive history of the Uruguayan political parties. Scholarly literature on parties is scarce; probably the pre-1930 years have been better studied than the later period. Nevertheless, the general traits are well known.[9] The core of the party system, the Blanco (White) and Colorado (Red) parties, is about 150 years old, as old as the country. Certainly in the past century they were not political parties in the present sense of the term, but they were strong political organizations with mass following (and even armies), and they survived uninterruptedly to the present. These parties, also called "traditional" parties, were born out of the following of the leading caudillos in the post-independence years. An early civil war, the Guerra Grande, was a decisive moment in their development. As a result of the characteristics of the war (and the participation Argentinians and Brazilians had in it), it may be said that Uruguayan parties preceded the truly unified nation-state. At least until the turn of the century, the parties enjoyed more loyalty from a considerable mass of citizens than the political institutions that embodied the state. Some of the main traits that were to characterize the traditional parties until the present also took form during the Guerra Grande and its aftermath. The Colorados became the Uruguayan version of Latin American Liberal parties: more liberal, cosmopolitan, urban-centered and anti-Church than the Blancos, who became the Uruguayan conservative party. But the differences were a matter of degree; both parties were complete cross-sections of the Uruguayan society. Each party had the support of half the country. Not even foreign nationals -- at least the biggest communities -- were indifferent to them: Spaniards tended to be Blancos, Italians and Frenchmen Colorados.

These traits proved enduring and have survived up to the present. Religious matters being particularly non-conflictive in Uruguay, the only relevant social cleavage associated to some extent with the opposition between the traditional parties is the rural-urban one. They have been multi-class based since the beginning, and their followers cover a relatively wide ideological spectrum, especially during this century. This blurs even more the possibility of making clearcut distinctions between them on objective grounds. Hence the emphasis in most, if not all, descriptions of the traditional parties on their personalistic character and on the relative subtlety of the differences capable of distinguishing a Colorado from a Blanco. Often it is said that such differences can only be really perceived by direct participants in the Uruguayan political culture.

Blancos and Colorados usually won about 90 percent of the vote until 1971, the last general election so far, when they obtained 82 percent. Several parties shared the remaining 10 percent between them. After World War II the Blancos held office from 1959 through 1966, while the Colorados governed the remaining years until the 1973 coup. Thus, the rotation in office of two large parties controlling 90 percent of the electorate and the fact that the remaining 10 percent was divided among several minor parties, none of which ever entered -- or was asked to enter -- in coalitions with the governing major party defined, in principle, a two-party system. Nevertheless, throughout the present century the traditional parties have been, and still are, highly fractionalized.[10] In fact, most of the time both parties have been loose coalitions of fractions. Frequently the ideological distance between certain fractions of different parties -- measured against the left-right continuum -- turned out to be smaller than the one existing between fractions within each party. Stressing the ideological undifferentiation of the traditional parties, a keen observer wrote in 1930 that within them,

> they can accomodate individuals who support all kinds of ideas, even the most disparate among them . . . , thus, the case of the coexistence of two opposing groups [i.e. fractions belonging to rival parties] both professing, however, exactly the same ideals.[11]

As a result, it has been said that this apparent bipartism badly disguises an actual multiparty system. One of the most forceful arguments is Lindahl's. He wrote that the Colorado fractions during the 1920s were parties because "they all had independent party organizations and because there was no common, permanent organization for all the Colorado parties," and, even though Colorados claimed to have a common program, "this was more a way of speaking." From the vantage point of the early 1960s he concluded, with regard to both traditional parties that "a multiparty system [had] been in existence in Uruguay for four decades."[12]

Leaving this discussion aside for a moment, it may be noted that, apparent or real, this bipartism has survived the historical attacks against it, for the attempts to create a third alternative have failed so far. In the past century the Unión Liberal (1855), the Partido Radical (1873), and the Partido Constitucional (1880) were short-lived. This century's attempts have been far more long-lived, but they vegetated in an electoral ghetto. The Partido Socialista (PS) was born at the turn of the century. It split in 1921: the left wing became the Partido Comunista (PC). The Unión Cívica was born in 1910; half a century later it split too, its left wing majority becoming the Democracia Cristiana (DC). This completes the set of parties existing during the 1950s and 1960s that proved capable of winning any parliamentary representation. They still exist, though the PC now is underground.

In the context of the mounting social and economic crises associated with the exhaustion of the import-substitution industrialization, several alliances were attempted in an effort to break Blanco and Colorado predominance. Minor parties and small groups from the traditional parties formed two coalitions, the Unión Popular, dominated by the PS, and the FIDEL (Frente Izquierda de Liberación), dominated by the PC. In electoral terms the latter did far better than the former, but neither was really successful. A wider coalition, the

Frente Amplio (FA: Broad Front), was constituted in 1971. The FA included the PS, PC and DC parties, plus several dissident fractions from the traditional parties. Both in its composition and its advocated policies the FA was more center-leaning than the Chilean Unidad Popular. In the last Uruguayan general election, in 1971, the FA won 18 percent of the national vote, and 30 percent in Montevideo, the capital city that concentrates roughly half of the electorate. This was the first relatively serious inroad into the old status quo.

Going back to the discussion on two-versus-many parties behind the facade of the traditional parties, what can be said with the hindsight of the more than twenty years since Lindahl's writing? Since the 1982 internal elections within the parties, carried out in fulfillment of a new law enacted by the military regime, the parties are supposed to have "a common, permanent organization," invalidating one of Lindahl's premises. But this is a trivial refutation. It is too early to perceive the real consequences of this law; parties do not appear nor disappear overnight because of legal reasons. The fractionalized structures of both traditional parties have not been affected so far; what was indeed affected was the relative weight of the fractions, because the votes they received changed the relative strength they had as of 1971. But this change occurred as in any general election.

On the other hand, there are several important arguments that run against the "disguised multipartism" case. Let us examine first its ideological side. Fractions within the same party may be ideologically very different, whereas the parties themselves may exhibit, on the whole, little difference; hence, it is said, we actually have two coalitions of parties. This is not necessarily so, however. In fact, this may be expected when two large catch-all parties -- in Otto Kirchheimer's sense -- compete against each other.[13] But the idea, if not the name, of both traditional parties as catch-all parties has been long established. Early observers like Luis Melián Lafinur in 1918 and Ariosto González in 1922 described them as unprincipled, with few ideological differences -- or directly as non-ideological -- vote maximizers; both writers lamented, as Kirchheimer did, this de-ideologization of politics. Needless to say, most students of Uruguayan politics would agree that these characteristics were accentuated, if anything, during the following half century.[14]

Second, even if Lindahl is right in his point of the lack of organization, there existed an important link between the fractions: the process that decided which fractions could run together under each party label. This process was normally directed by the fraction or coalition of fractions which presumably controlled a majority of each party's votes. Nevertheless, it was not an arbitrary process, because tradition set limits on the permissible outcomes and the minorities, as will be seen below, usually had real leverage.[15] The output of this process was relevant in two senses: whether an agreement was reached or not proved sometimes decisive in winning or losing a national election; besides the agreement itself has obviously a crucial step in the nomination of candidates. But this nomination is precisely what emerged "as the most important function of the present day catch-all party."[16] Party lines were relevant for the nominees actually elected. Under normal conditions there were no inter-party alliances for conducting regular government business; ministers belonged to the party in government, even though they could belong to different fractions. Fractions and parties defined, then, frontiers of a different kind. There are two qualifications to this statement. A minor one refers to Congressmen's behavior: there was little parliamentary discipline. Nevertheless, "[u]nlike Columbia, where

dissident factions from both major parties often formed a legislative alliance to oppose the factions supporting the regime, there were no such permanent divisions in the Uruguayan Congress. Individual members could cross party lines in voting, as they do in many countries, but it was an ad hoc process."[17] The second qualification: under exceptional circumstances (as the 1933 coup) alliances that crossed party lines did appear. This is, in my view, the exception that confirms the rule, because it points out that heavy pressure was needed to break party lines. It seems clear that these links do not look as a definite organization; they are too unstructured. Nevertheless, it seems equally difficult to consider the historical continuity of these links merely as a series of coalitions among minor parties. They rather seem to suggest that the traditional parties were indeed parties, even though particularly loosely structured.[18]

Third, and very important, the view Uruguayans themselves had on this also supports the latter suggestion. Lindahl was aware of this fact: "for a Uruguayan," he wrote, "it is natural to regard the various traditional parties . . . as factions of the Partido Colorado and the Partido Nacional [Blanco]." But he dismisses the point: "[t]his is due to the power of language over thought," without further comments.[19] The fact that voters indeed perceived them as parties throughout several generations, however, goes a long way towards concluding that they were actually parties. Finally, most foreign students of Uruguayan politics have shared this view, as Lindhal himself recognized:

> Nearly all foreign writers on Uruguay seem to have regarded the Colorado Party and the Nationalist Blanco Party as united parties with several factions. Particularly since 1919, this view is obviously erroneous. . . . This is understandable in North American observers, accustomed to the rudimentary organization of the American parties, and the poor unanimity in political questions on the Congress level.[20]

I think the last commentary is revealing. The case against the traditional parties being such is in fact a definitional problem. In Lindahl's view, certain types of catch-all parties simply are not parties at all. Real de Azua pointed out the same "definitional" character of several criticisms of the traditional parties:

> it appears obvious, in short, that those who denounce the non-existence of parties in Uruguay are appealing to a model whose lack of relevance can be seen, not only in all of the Latin American nations, with the possible exception of Chile and Venezuela, but in societies with party systems as old as the United States.[21]

Within the more developed nations, Italy and Japan, besides the United States, exhibit an "unusual and somewhat extreme standing in fractional and factional performance."[22] Both the Italian DC and the Japanese Liberal Party have been described as federations or coalitions of subparties. From a comparative

perspective, if we consider these (as well as U.S. Democrats and Republicans) as parties, the rationale for denying such a condition to Blancos and Colorados is not clear.[23] In the end, as Sartori wrote precisely on the Uruguayan case, "[t]he question is, then, whether [Uruguay's] parties . . . are significant units."[24] I have attempted to show that this has been indeed the case.

Thus, Uruguay had a two-party system at least until 1971. Both parties, Blancos and Colorados, were loosely structured catch-all parties. The party system was very stable in comparative perspective, particularly taking into account that there were no relevant, clearly marked social cleavages capable of explaining its formation. The Frente Amplio, born in 1971, was a coalition, not a party. Nevertheless, perhaps precisely because of the vaguely structured character of the major parties, it was quickly perceived as a party-like entity, the unified Left. The 1971 electoral result suggested, then, that the system was evolving towards a two-and-a-half condition. The new fact was the existence of a third force that, even if incapable -- at least by the time being -- of replacing any of the leading forces, was already capable of altering the balance of power. In a Congress divided into 40-40-20 percent shares, the FA's 20 percent was enough to decide any tie within the traditional political leadership, both when the latter was divided following party lines and when the division ran across the parties.

The conclusion on the historical bipartism of the system seems important to me because of two reasons. First, many Uruguayan students of the traditional parties, especially from the Left, have emphasized their internal heterogeneity, frequently suggesting that they are not parties in any reasonable sense of the word. But the consequences this would have on the nature of the party system are seldom, if ever, made explicit. As a result, it is not clear, even within the academic community, which has been the real structure of the party system.[25]

The second reason is that this is not a merely terminological matter. During the fifteen years preceding the breakdown, the Uruguayan party system worked essentially with a two-party logic, soft-pedaling cleavages and exerting a moderating, centripetal effect on political competition, even under extreme pressure.[26] This may appear somewhat doubtful for an observer whose attention is restricted to the Uruguayan case, particularly taking into account the conflictive period 1968-1973. Nevertheless, the point appears clearly, I think, when looking at the parallel Chilean experience -- a particularly appropriate term of comparison. The behavior of the political forces prior to and during the breakdown, particularly from the Center through the extreme Right, was very different in the two cases. The Chilean Right had been knocking at the doors of the barracks, and the Center welcomed the coup. This was clearly not so in Uruguay; as late as February, 1973, President Bordaberry, who later would agree to the coup, was attempting to resist the mounting military pressure. The political Centers' responses to the coup were different. The timing of both coups was -- at least in part -- decided by parliamentary votes, but the Chilean one (condemning Allende's administration) may be seen as an invitation to the coup, whereas the Uruguayan one attempted to stop the military.[27] The difference epitomizes the present point. That the relevant actors were rival parties in Chile, whereas in Uruguay the Right was allied with the Center -- even as uncomfortable partners -- within each traditional party is <u>one</u> of the factors that explain the difference.[28] The appropriateness of Chile as a term of comparison -- besides the similarities mentioned above -- lies in the fact that if the Uruguayan traditional parties were alliances of minor parties, this would give no less than five parties, on the average,

for the post-World War II period, and perhaps as many as eight by 1971. Adding to this the increasing ideological polarization experienced during the years preceding the coup, the result should have been, in Sartori's terms, a situation of polarized pluralism, which was precisely the Chilean case. In my view, what actually happened was that this ideological polarization was added not to a multi-party context, but to a system which had had an essentially two-party logic and still retained much of it -- even though increasingly embattled, as the 1971 election showed. Thus, the results were different, at least to a certain extent, because of the differences between the party systems.

The Traditional Parties: Two Contradictory Models

The preceding discussion suggested a solution to a nagging problem. I hope that in so doing it also summarized the main characteristics of the Uruguayan party system. Assuming the conclusion of the two initial sections are right, then, by the end of the 1960s the Uruguayan polity was: (a) a relatively mature polyarchy, built upon the earliest democratization process in South America, and (b) the only party system in the Southern Cone deeply rooted in the past century consisting of two catch-all parties.

When asking about the eventual role of Uruguayan parties in the redemocratization process, the relationship between (a) and (b) above is the historical starting point. In this section I will sketch two contrasting views on this relationship. My discussion will be confined to the political aspects of the problem. This selectivity is, in part, a consequence of the purpose of this essay. But it also reflects the fact that most modern Uruguayan thinking on the party system and its relationship to polyarchy has focused essentially on political variables -- except in some very schematic accounts. This does not necessarily mean that socio-economic factors are irrelevant. It may rather reflect the view that such variables define at most a set of necessary but not sufficient conditions. Once they are given, the remaining variance -- whether democratization actually occured -- must be explained in different terms. This was the point of the first section: a set of minimal conditions has existed for a relatively extended period in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, but their democratic performances differ significantly. Affluence is not an explanation: Argentina was richer than Uruguay. And so it is for other relevant social factors. It seems natural, then, to look for political explanations, even if merely partial ones. My discussion will have a second limitation as well: it will be confined to relatively recent thinking -- approximately the last twenty years -- both because of reasons of time and space, but also because by then polyarchy had already reached its peak, the party system's main characteristics had fully matured, and it was increasingly clear that harder times had come. Taking into account these two limitations in scope, I hope that most students of Uruguayan politics will agree that the two polar types I will now summarize do reflect the essentials of the existing ideas on the subject. Many of these are dispersed mainly in journalistic writing, thus complicating somewhat the endeavor.

On the one hand, there exists a rather optimistic view of the historical role of the traditional parties. This is probably the majoritarian view within the center of the political spectrum, and -- at least in the last twenty years -- it has been expressed mainly through the press and political propaganda. According to it the emergence of the traditional parties -- i.e., <u>these two</u> particular

parties -- resulted from historical accident. Not so their permanence. They enjoyed real popularity because they expressed the feelings and needs of the population at large. Throughout a difficult learning process, they became convinced of the virtues of peaceful political life under democratic institutions. From then on, the stability of the party system is essentially a consequence of the traditional parties' capability of expressing people's aspirations, eventually evolving and modifying themselves in the process. The two traditions were accumulated into two distinct, even though not antagonistic, historical identities.[29] They were catch-all parties because they truly reflected Uruguayan society: there existed no contradictory ideologies, no deeply rooted divisions; as a result, both the Blanco and Colorado followings were recruited independently of existing social cleavages. Even fractionism has its logic:

> the justification for the traditional parties -- which exists, like it or not -- makes a virtue of necessity and maintains that, being "parties of free men," all "legitimate differences" fit "within" them (as opposed to "among" them. . .).[30]

In short, the essential traits of this view are the adaptability, dynamism and responsiveness of Blancos and Colorados. Uruguayan democracy was born and matured to a good extent <u>thanks to</u> the traditional parties.[31]

On the other hand, the dominant view at the extremes of the political spectrum is far more critical. It has received more attention from the intellectual community as well. It's central tenet is perhaps the characterization of the Uruguayan political system as a "non policy-oriented system," that is, a system in which "the stakes tend to be personal and private satisfactions of motivations (e.g., jobs, favors)."[32] Somewhat caricaturizing the position, Uruguayan politics appear as a giant patronage system. Political entrepreneurs exchange private favors for votes and political loyalities. On ideological issues, politicians' stands do not matter very much, as long as favors continue to be delivered. The main political parties are then cooperatives of political entrepreneurs seeking to maximize their vote-collecting capabilities. These themes have appeared repeatedly in the best literature available on the Uruguayan traditional parties. Solari wrote about its "extremely important non-political functions" fulfilled by these parties and, in particular, the characteristics of the patronage system built upon the creation of jobs in the public sector, which contributed to create and maintain electoral clienteles and to mitigate social tensions.[33] According to Weinstein, these traits were as old as polyarchy itself. Writing about the elections during the 1920s, he observed that,

> the close victory margins and the frequency of elections made for a frenetic search for votes. It was soon apparent to all that political patronage would now make the difference between victory and defeat. The growing state bureaucracy . . . was both a source of votes and a payoff for the loyalty of party fractions.[34]

Besides the clientelistic issue, the critical view has a second component: the role assigned to electoral legislation. The traditional parties built a very particular electoral system indeed. Voters choose among closed-list ballots; each list includes all the posts in dispute. Parliamentary seats are assigned by proportional representation. But voters may choose among several different candidates for each office, even the presidency, <u>within</u> their preferred party. It is the

equivalent of running primaries and the actual elections at the same time, to put it in U.S. terms. This is known as "double simultaneous vote" (DSV; that is, the voter chooses one party and a particular set of candidates within this party), and was established at the beginning of this century. The most notable feature of the system is perhaps that with regard to the presidency the winner is not necessarily the most voted candidate, but the most voted candidate within the winner party.

This electoral legislation has been held responsible for preserving the dominant role of the two traditional parties and for their fractionalization. A recent writer put it concisely:

> The predominance of the two traditional parties was assured through complicated electoral legislation which stimulated factionalism, even as a means for expanding the "hunting ground" of each party, and blocked the emergence of of a multi-party system. . . Thus, a biparty system -- product of the formal restrictions on party competition -- was the axis around which the political system was articulated.[35]

The "clientelistic" and the "electoral legislation" arguments complement each other. Historical accident produced two main parties which once they reached a certain critical point without competition, established a duopolic control over the resources that sustained patronage, thus precluding new entrances to the main scenario. The electoral legislation, enacted by its beneficiaries, contributed to stabilize the duopoly by further elevating the entrance barriers. It allowed fractionalization while at the same time avoided serious splitting. As both parties have been historically close to obtaining half of the votes, experience showed that even minor dissidences voting outside the party could transform victory into defeat. This developed a constant pressure towards at least a formal cohesion of the parties, pressure that did not operate in a vacuum: both parties had long traditions of internal loyalty developed throughout the civil wars of the past century, and heroes and martyrs too. In fact, it would seem natural that the duopolic power-holders designed an institutional setting fit to their needs -- even though this does not imply a full awareness of the dynamics of the existing structure and a purposeful action to sustain it. In the end, this resulted in a situation in which the smaller parties divided the minority of strongly ideologized voters among them, remaining in electoral ghettos.[36]

We are now very far from the conclusions of the "optimistic" view on the traditional parties. Corrupt political machines self-perpetuating themselves by tampering with electoral legislation and clientelistic devices do not look as strongholds of polyarchy. The emergence, and especially the maturing of Uruguayan democracy would seem to have occurred in spite of, rather than thanks to the traditional parties.

The Uruguayan Party System In Historical Perspective

Both the "optimistic" and "critical" models have more than some grains of truth. The optimistic view if only because, as Solari wrote twenty years ago,

> The idea that religion is a fraud invented and maintained by the priests for their own benefit, has long been abandoned as an explanation for the phenomenon of religion, even by the most recalcitrant atheists. Nevertheless, a large part of the Uruguayan Left refuses to abandon an analogous principle to explain the survival of the traditional parties . . . believing that they exist and are maintained primarily by means of an immense fraud effected for the good of the politicians themselves.[37]

Maybe some tricks helped, but undoubtedly the Uruguayan bipartism enjoyed the voters' support for a long time. The traditional parties were indeed popular, and they, after all, created the Uruguayan democracy. But these points, besides being rather obvious, are too general. Ascertaining the grains of truth of the critical view is a more difficult task, but more rewarding as well.

The clientelistic argument does not look very promising as an explanation of the stability of the party system or even as a factor which normally decides electoral outcomes. Solari pointed out that, as a system for generating electoral support, clientelism is self-defeating: the more institutionalized the system becomes, the more the citizens will tend to perceive it as a right that does not actually generate political loyalties. This seems all the more true when voting has the apropriate procedural guarantees, as in Uruguay. Gillespie has argued that no simple model of patronage can explain landslide shifts of votes such as the 1958 Blanco victory, nor the poor performance of old clientelistic factions in later elections, nor the survival of the parties' appeal after eleven years of authoritarian order during which they did not have access to the resources needed to allow patronage.[38] In fact, the groups that did have some access to these resources were the big losers in the 1982 intraparty elecciones internas. Moreover, the arguments are not restricted to the relatively recent past. The Blanco electoral strength during the 1920s would be utterly incomprehensible after more than 40 years in the opposition, if patronage had had a decisive importance. It has been said that clientelistic practices peaked, at least in relative terms, during the 1930s. But then they should not be a permanent trait of the system; what is more, if it were argued that clientelism during the 1930s and 1940s helps to explain why the Colorados were very close to being a predominant party until 1954, then it would be difficult to understand their 1958 debacle. In short: the point is not to deny the existence of such practices; they did so, sometimes blatantly. They even had political relevance. What seems untenable in face of the available evidence is to assign to them a decisive role in stabilizing the party system or winning elections.

The electoral legislation issue offers a priori more interesting possibilities. It is widely accepted now that "the electoral system may determine the number of parties -- and to some extent their coherence and their structure,"[39] which is precisely the contention of the "critical" view. On this point, some theoretically sound hypotheses have found consistent empirical support. It might happen, then, that Uruguay just fits into one of these hypothesis. Or perhaps there exists a convincing explanation specific to the Uruguayan case. The available literature is not very explicit, however; in fact, sometimes it seems as if the writers had applied the general dictum above to the Uruguayan case without probing into the concrete mechanisms at work. Some of the authors simply state the conclusion, without really attempting an explanation.

Let us start with an obvious fact: the number of parties and their internal fractionalization are distinct problems. With regard to the first, Castellanos and Pérez observed that the first Uruguayan Constitution (1830-1918) contributed to the consolidation of bipartism, because it established a first-past-the-post system. Since the 1918 Constitution, however, the system turned to proportional representation. So, when the "critical" view argues that Uruguayan electoral laws maintained bipartism, this implies that a proportional representation system is responsible of blocking the emergence of multipartism. This is not a hypothesis currently accepted; in fact, it is the opposite of Duverger's Law. Empirically, the association proportional representation-bipartism is extremely rare in stable polyarchies.[40] Thus, not only the Uruguayan case does not fit into the available hypotheses, but its anomalous character should be explained instead.

Some authors have perceived the problem.[41] As far as I am aware, the best analysis is Pérez Pérez's. Noting the apparent contradiction with Duverger's Law, he observed that the closed-list system in use makes electors choose parliamentary and presidential candidates of the same party and at the same time. Thus,

> Parliamentary representation applies integral proportional representation and this causes, in its basic elements, our political life to effectively register a plurality of independent 'parties' within itself. But, at the same time . . . the presidential election takes place, in which a majority system governs in only one ballot, and this maintains the appearance of 'parties': in reality, in this case, in name only . . . that does not recoup a barely unified reality, rather a grouping of really internal, independent parties electorally group together by a common historical origen.[42]

This seems to me the correct explanation of the long run effect of the Uruguayan electoral laws on the party system, although it needs two qualifications. Due to the closed-list system, the voter chooses executive authorities (during this century this meant either a president, or an executive committee, or a mixed form) and parliamentary representatives with a single ticket. The most important part of the ticket is obviously the executive candidacies. A simple plurality system decides which is the winner party. Thus, the logic is equivalent to the one of Duverger's Law and, accordingly, the long-run effect of such a system in a truly competitive context is bipartism. The Uruguayan common parlance is well aware of this; it is called the voto útil (useful vote) issue. In short: Uruguayan electoral laws do strengthen bipartism because of the joint effect of (a) a closed-list system, and (b) a simple plurality rule for the presidential competition. Notice that the DSV does not appear here.

This leads to my first qualification. In actual practice, the DSV device, which is irrelevant for the theoretical conclusion above, opens the possibility of competing, stimultaneous candidacies within the same party. This introduces an empirical impurity, so to speak, in the model. For, if there are several competitive candidacies within the parties, either the voter still prefers any of his or her party candidates to all the candidates of the rival party, or

the logic of the model is broken. A strong party identification can have the first effect and, indeed, Uruguayan voters have had strong party identification. The electoral laws have an indirect effect on party identification, because they can strengthen and stabilize the party system, which in turn increases party identification at the mass level. But the link is indirect and can be expected to work only in the long run. In the short run, if the voter sees his vote contributing to the election of a candidate of his own party whom he dislikes, as it might well happen in a situation of increasing ideological polarization, then the net effect could be to weaken the voter's party identification. An obvious example is the last general election. Bordaberry won because his party won a very close election; as a candidate he lost to the Blanco Ferreira Aldunate. But Bordaberry was the Colorado right wing; probably many Colorados would have preferred Ferreira's victory. Repeated exposure to such situations should conceivably weaken these voter's party identification.[43]

My second qualification is that Pérez Pérez considers the two-party effect of the electoral laws as a mere juridical fiction. This is not a consequence of his analysis of the electoral laws. He sees the traditional parties as fictitious, and accomodates his conclusions accordingly. I do not criticize the accomodation as such. But what seems relevant in the present context is that the pure logic of the electoral mechanism supports indistinctly two contradictory possibilities: we have either a multiparty system plus two juridical fictions, or a fractionalized two-party system. The examination of this mechanism cannot establish per se which is the correct interpretation.

The analysis of the consequences of Uruguayan electoral laws began stating that the number of parties and their internal fractionalization were different problems. The fractionalization issue is not polemic; it is widely agreed that Uruguayan electoral laws provoke party fractionalization because of the DSV regulation. As different candidates could compete for the same posts without wasting votes (since all were added under the party's label), in organizational terms the crucial point was that the system enabled the would-be leader to skip one step in the party hierarchy, opening a parallel candidacy or candidacies. Within certain limits, the higher bosses (and the party) always benefitted. They gained very little by attempting to "discipline," and risked losing votes instead. The holders of the right to use the party's name and symbols could deny it, risking an exit that added to the already existing competition and a loss of votes that, even if small, could be decisive. In the long run, then, the trend was to expand the number of candidates through a series of trial-and-error tests that demonstrated the dynamics of the system.

The learning process occurred in the 1920s. In 1925 the Colorados lost the Consejo Nacional de Administración (CNA: an executive committee) election because the Vierista fraction voted outside the party. The numbers are explicit: the Colorados obtained 116,000 votes, the Blancos 119,000, and the Colorados Vieristas 7,000. In 1926, Herrera (and the Blancos he led) lost the presidency to the Colorados because the Blancos Radicales voted outside the party. This time the figures were even closer: 141,500 votes for the Colorados, 140,000 votes for the Blancos, and 4,000 votes for the Blanco dissidents. Almost the same figures appeared again in 1928, when the Blancos lost the CNA election because of the Blanco Radical dissidence. The Colorados learned their lesson somewhat more quickly than the Blancos. The Blancos paid Herrera's intransigence with Blanco minorities by remaining for a long time out of the highest office; the Colorados "bought" it through democratic bargaining with their own minorities -- the bargaining being expensive to the majority but beneficial to democracy within the party.

This points out a second, very important consequence of the DSV. As the theory of coalitions suggests and historical records confirm, bargaining in these conditions was bound to provide the minorities with a negotiating leverage out of proportion to their electoral strength. The minorities, precisely for being so, did not risk the biggest prize. The majorities wanted it -- and had to pay accordingly.[44] Thus, by stimulating the organization of minorities the DSV considerably strengthened internal party democracy. There was no central party machine overpowering the minorities; the access to leadership was, at least in relative terms, extremely competitive, and the decisive admittance ticket was paid in votes. The democratization of the parties which were to control the State apparatus was obviously positive for the consolidation of democracy even if it involved some important deficiencies.

But the DSV did far more than democratize the parties. By making the minorities vitally interested in clean electoral practices -- because their power was in their votes -- and, more generally, in the strengthening of fair democratic procedures, it provided a powerful stimulus to democracy. Its contribution to the relatively early elimination of electoral fraud under a widely extended franchise is particularly evident. The dynamics of the DSV made all but the majority within the winner party directly interested in la pureza del sufragio. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of such self-sustaining mechanisms in the early phases of consolidation of democracy.

A detailed historical appraisal of the consequences of Uruguayan electoral laws on the party system cannot be presented here. The argument on bipartism does not fit the 1918-1933 period exactly because some elections were only for the Lower Chamber. Nevertheless, most of them coincided with the partial renovation of the CNA, thus fitting into the pattern.[45] During this period, however, other reasons were probably far more important than the laws to explain the electoral strength of the traditional parties. The last civil war had ended in 1904, with its aftermath of charged political passions; both parties were led by their most important leaders during the present century, Batlle y Ordóñez and Herrera, and, above all, it was probably the most dynamic period in the whole history of the country. During these years democracy and a modern welfare state were born, and the traditional parties led these developments.[46]

The de facto period (1933-1942) is not relevant for the present purposes.[47] The logic of the arguments on bipartism and fractionalization works well from 1942 onwards. The only variation was that the 1954, 1958 and 1962 elections chose a pluripersonal executive (the CNG).

Parties, Authoritarianism and Democracy

Forty years after the dynamic 1920s, things were very different. The two decades that preceded the 1973 coup were of economic stagnation and slowly but steadily growing social unrest. A relatively strong union movement contributed to it, although it did not express its power in electoral terms. Stagnation and unrest, plus other, more general reasons, led the political gravity center of the system towards the right. The ambitious and successful reforms of the first third of the century produced a broad middle class whose culture and values permeated the whole society. Their very success produced,

> as in all revolutions, industrial-strength numbers of conservatives: conservatives of the new, established order, people who find that an adequate level has been reached and believe that everybody benefits from it.[48]

The traditional parties in part contributed to, and in part followed effortlessly this drift to the right. The fractions that abandoned them since 1962 onwards all belonged to their left wings: the Blancos Erro and Rodríguez Carusso; the Colorados Michelini and Roballo, among others, led these fractions.[49] The only relevant group that was incorporated into the traditional parties was the Ruralismo (allied to the Blancos, it contributed to their 1958 victory), a conservative, Poujadiste social movement.[50] With very different styles, the Blanco government 1959-1962 and the Colorado government from 1968 onwards expressed this shift.

The fractions who quit the traditional parties by their left doors formed a coalition with the loyal and disloyal left opposition to form the FA. Thus, most of the traditional parties' leadership, with the significant exception of the Blanco Ferreira Aldunate, did their best to alienate the bulk of the FA voters during the 1971 electoral campaign. As a result, the party system experienced two important changes. Its shape now looked like a tuning fork extended along the left-right axis; its shortest extreme, the FA, pointed to the left; its longest, parallel arms -- one for each traditional party -- to the right.[51] On the other hand, the system was increasingly polarized: both the intensity of the oppositions and the distance between the opponents, as measured against the left-right dimension, grew considerably.

In spite of this transformation, the configuration of the party system helped to avoid things becoming even worse than they actually did. I argued above that because the party system still retained much of a two-party logic a polarization like the Chilean one did not happen in Uruguay, neither in intensity nor in ideological distance. This had positive consequences for the restoration process which are now visible. It is also important to note that because the two main parties were the long, parallel arms of the tuning fork, they helped to avoid a bipolar confrontation like the one Republican Spain experienced at so high a cost.[52] This, in turn, was possible because both traditional parties were catch-all parties (if not, they would not have been able to cover such a broad sector of the ideological spectrum, from the center-left to the extreme right) and because of the comparatively strong party identification of Uruguayans (if this were not so, such a parallel configuration could not have been stable).

What the parties could not do was to establish any coherent, legitimate set of policies. This was essentially a responsibility of the traditional parties, because they alone were successively in charge. Surely there are different relevant factors but I think that an important part of the explanation of this failure is directly related to the processes I described in the two preceding sections. First, the theoretically predicted trend to expand the number of running candidates built into the DSV rule proved very real. From 1946 to 1971

both traditional parties presented, on average, three different candidacies to the executive (either for president or tickets for the CNG): as if the Democrats made Hart, Jackson and Mondale together and add their votes, and the Republicans did likewise. The number of listas (tickets) for the Lower Chamber (nationwide) was 153 in 1946 and 459 in 1966. A Montevideo citizen, in particular, had to choose one lista for the Lower Chamber among 39 in 1946, and one among 110 in 1971, and this without taking into account the minor parties.[53] Each of these 110 different listas could, in principle, elect as many as 43 representatives. It looked as if the parties themselves were denying voters even the possibility of a more or less rational choice. Second, and linked to the former point, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the government to obtain parliamentary support. In 1972 this led to an unusual pact between the Blanco right wing and the (governing) Colorado center and right wings.[54] Third, intra-party fractionalization no longer was a matter of clear majorities negotiating to retain equally clear minorities under the party label at the polls; the new pattern tended to be an alliance between two or three fractions of relatively comparable electoral strength and increasingly ideologically differentiated. As a result, voting was becoming a lottery. In the former pattern, a vote for a party's minority was precisely so: the voter could be perceived as consciously strengthening the position of a minority within his party. In the new pattern, the elector who had voted a middle-of-the-road Colorado, for example, could see how his or her vote had helped to elect a right wing Colorado President, while he might have greatly preferred a centrist Blanco.[55]

My point should be clear by now: what is at the roots of these problems is the fractionalization of the traditional parties. They were no longer capable of performing any expressive function. We do not even know if a stalemate existed at the voters' level, because the parties' mediation tended to confuse, instead of clarify, as they are supposed to do, the signals from the electorate. As a recent writer put it, such a fractionalized system has

> great difficulty in forming majorities, for the fomulation of political projects with broad backing and viability, and yet still, it falls easily in the small pact, in mutual concessions among reduced fractions, and ultimately, in "small politics" and in inefficiency.[56]

It is essentially in this sense that it may be said that the traditional parties share responsibility in the breakdown. They certainly stimulated a process that later they could not control.[57] Nevertheless, they did attempt to control it. The attempt failed for several reasons, the timing included, but the parties neither knocked at the barracks nor acquiesced to the coup.

When the breakdown finally occurred, the traditional parties could not do much more than they actually did: retreat and wait. The "colaborationist" fractions (the Colorado majority and Blanco minority) did not embark in enthusiastic support of the coup. As soon as Pacheco -- the main leader of the Colorado majority -- publicly endorsed the coup, even though in relatively cautious terms, many of the remaining leaders of the fraction broke with him. In fact, these fractions did not take any formal role in the de facto government. The right wing politicians who participated in it did so in personal terms.

The parties waited until 1980; the space for their existence, however, was never entirely suppressed. The main parties were "suspended," not dissolved, and the most critical instance came in 1976, when a civilian offensive against them was discarded by the military. Since the beginning of the political opening in 1980, the military have accepted, in principle, the growth of this space. At first, they considered the parties as second-class policy makers, whereas presently the only area they would like to keep out of their reach seems to be the army itself. Limitations were not imposed directly on the parties, but on the new institutions the military attempted to establish. Control would have been exerted mainly through a Consejo de Seguridad Nacional -- COSENA -- dominated by the military whose functions were defined vaguely enough as to cover whatever they wanted. As the parties were the only legitimate actors within these "democratic institutions" (according to the military's own view), the limitations above amounted to a very general "tutelege" on the parties. Thus, at first (in 1980) the subordination of the parties appeared as a curtailment of their decisional capabilities on almost all policy areas. This initial position of the military evolved to the present one (as of August, 1984), which seems to boil down to a guarantee of a certain level of autonomy for the armed forces from an eventually reconstituted civilian government.

The political opening began with the military's failure to obtain a plebiscitarian legitimation for their project in 1980. Their defeat marked the beginning of a four-year process which now seems about to culminate. The 1982 elecciones internas within the parties increased the leverage of the opposition. They were regulated by a new act passed by the military regime. The oppositionist fractions' victory within both traditional parties meant that they were the only valid government interlocutors within the regime's own legality. This completes a case of Reforma Pactada, in Linz's sense, mixed with what Stepan called extrication, led by the "military as institution." Linz pointed out why this makes the process more difficult: it is not enough to obtain the military's acquiescence, but concrete, explicit decisions are needed, and,

> although social scientists are prone to forget it, there is a fundamental difference between informal and formal power, between influence and formal authority.[58]

I think that the reasons that have made the process possible so far are, at root, the same reasons that explain why the military felt compelled to bring their project to a plebiscite in the first place, and later to accept their defeat. I have already attempted to explore this problem, and I will not repeat my conclusions here.[59] Nevertheless, a partial aspect of one of these reasons -- the impact of the national political culture on the military -- deserves further attention for the present purpose.

The political discourse of the military after the coup was very critical of the parties. They thought it necessary to "fortify" the political parties by means of specific legislation, one of whose points would have been the harsh requisite of having as many adherents as a full 15 percent of the citizens. Besides these direct regulations on the parties, they believed that the electoral laws had to be changed. Thus,

> they announced the criterion to eliminate the principle of the double simultaneous vote (and the Ley de Lemas) instituting "only one candidate per party for the Presidency of the Republic."[60]

This position, publicly assumed by the military in 1974, was included in the constitution repealed by the 1980 plebiscite. Two years later, this time taking into account several suggestions from the traditional parties, the government passed a law on political parties which differed from their former views. With regard to the electoral rules, the new act maintained the DSV, even though limiting the number of parallel candidacies each party could present: up to two for President, and up to six for each seat in the Lower Chamber. It also established, however, that for the projected 1984 national elections these figures could be three and nine respectively. All of these candidacies would have to be proposed by the party authorities.[61] Nevertheless, this was not their final word on the matter. In April, 1984, the government passed a new law modifying its own 1982 act. In essence, the modifications allow far more candidacies, thus enabling the pro-government minorities within the traditional parties to run their own candidates. The Directorio of the Blanco Party declared that the amendment

> does not persue any objective beyond favoring the interests and electoral expectations of the pro-government sectors of the political parties.[62]

Three months later, the Blanco minority announced the presidential candidacy of the Intendente of Montevideo, supported by another five Intendentes.[63]

During six years (1974-1980), then, the military maintained a principled, hard line against the DSV rule and, more generally, no other issues concerning parties and electoral laws. After their 1980 defeat, two years were enough to change their minds and adopt the position they had so harshly criticized. It might be argued that they did so as a concession to the traditional parties, in order to reach a global political agreement. But this cannot explain that two years later they again changed the rules of the game, this time under the scornful eye of the very inventors (in the military's view) of electoral malpractices. It seems, simply, that the military learned the old-fashioned tricks of the Uruguayan political game very quickly.

They know that the most probable result of open elections will be that their political support will be reduced to the minorities of the traditional parties. As a result, they need to maximize the parliamentary representation of these minorities, which in turn requires presidential candidates capable of giving a definite political image to the candidates to Congress. Reasonably large parliamentary minorities, occupied with requisites of special majority voting in several central issues, may give them a quasi-veto power in the next legislature -- which also, so it seems, will be in charge of preparing a new constitution next year. If this plan is reasonably successful, they may concede more on paper than what they will lose in practice. Thus the need to change their own law, in order to assure "their" presidential candidacies, and the obvious importance of the Intendencias as political platforms for their

candidates. Some would add that they can provide time-honored patronage resources; but even if this were not so, they command a precious amount of political visibility.

All of this, however, may be favorable for the redemocratization process. The old-style Uruguayan politics can perhaps grant certain minimal assurances to the present powerholders without which they would need explicit guarantees from the expected winners of the next elections. But probably these guarantees could not be given without sacrificing basic principles too explicitly; probably they would not be conceded at all. If this is so, the political techniques that more than sixty years ago helped to instore democracy would now contribute to restore it.

After the Restoration

At the time of writing this, the bargaining process between military and opposition is still going on, and of course there remain many obstacles ahead.[64] Nevertheless, the process has already gone very far. Now it is difficult to predict details, some of them very important indeed, but the safest forecast seems to be the following: Uruguay will have elections, one of the traditional parties will win, and within the winner party, in turn, the winner fraction will be the democratic opposition. The new government will not have an easy time. The military did not really solve any of the problems the country had, and added several new ones instead.[65] The military themselves, of course, will be part of the problem. The democratic opposition will have a reasonable parliamentary majority, however, and the memory of the recent past will be a powerful stimulus to vote together whenever it is really needed. Thus, the short-run forecast is moderately optimistic, at least for democracy.

The medium range forecast is certainly another matter. During 30 years -- a whole generation -- the country has been unable to find even partial solutions for its deepest problems. The international context will probably be harder than in the past for a country like Uruguay. It is no surprise, then, that many fear what is called (at least in Uruguay) "the Argentinization of politics": a cyclical pattern alternating civilian and military governments. I do not have a medium range forecast of my own, but I do realize that the case for a negative one is strong. I do not believe in the inevitability of medium range predictions, either. It is clear, then that for those who share this belief and who think that the institutions of liberal democracy are possible and desirable in Uruguay, the question is how to stall off the pessimistic forecast. This is not an easy task. Democrats will differ, sometimes considerably, on the solutions for the whole range of substantive problems the country confronts. They will surely agree only on some very general values and basic rules which make them democrats.

This essay has dealt with some characteristics of the party system; this is a question more general than punctual problems, but less so than the democratic ethos. Because of its intermediate level of generality -- it deals with the ways of reaching decisions rather than with concrete decisions -- it is perhaps possible to reach some reasonable agreement on it, leaving aside party lines and other differences. I do not think a doctrinal approach, from the general theory to the particular case, is useful here for there is no agreement about such theory, that is, about the nature of the best party

system. On the other hand, for a country with a long democratic tradition of its own, some solutions that proved good in other cases may not work, simply because they are alien to the national tradition. A parliamentary system may be excellent, but it seems to me that its eventual advantages would be more than offset by the costs of its implementation. In short: the best we can do is a reasoned appraisal of the Uruguayan historical experience.[66] This is what I attempted.

My conclusions may be summarized as follows. Starting from the central topics in the available literature, I found that the party system has shown two stable characteristics during the present century: (a) it has had a two-party format and logic, Blancos and Colorados always being the main parties, and (b) the parties have been highly fractionalized.

I did my best to disentangle the consequences of each of these structural traits for democracy. With regard to the first, bipartism, I concluded it has had a positive effect. It helped to build the first democratization process in South America. Sixty years later it was not able to avoid the polarization and, in the end, the breakdown of the system; but bipartism probably contributed to spare Uruguay from some of the harshest extremes its neighbors experienced, therefore easing the bargaining that precedes democratic restoration. It is difficult to go further because bipartism has been a constant during the whole period considered, but these crucial points allow comparisons with other countries' experience.[67] Bipartism is, in the end, the framework within which Uruguayan democracy developed. The analysis of the consequences of fractionalization was somewhat easier, because it actually varied during this century, but resulted in more complex conclusions. In spite of its eventual inefficiences, fractionism was clearly positive in the early stages of the consolidation of democracy. It may still be useful, even though for different reasons, during the transition from the authoritarian regime. But with the passing of time its negative consequences become increasingly clear: it inhibited the formulation of coherent policies, it confused the electorate,[68] and it forbade the parties to perform basic expressive functions, with regard to the future these are the relevant factors, because the conditions which caused the final, not the initial stage, still prevail -- and will continue prevailing in the foreseeable future. In short: bipartism is probably positive and fractionalization clearly negative, for the prospects of Uruguayan democracy.

As for the causes of these traits, I found that the electoral laws did have a significant long-term effect on bipartism and fractionalization, as most of the relevant literature has argued.[69] Electoral laws (a) maintained and reinforced bipartism because of the joint effect of the closed-list system and a simple plurality rule for the presidential competition and (b) stimulated fractionalization because of the DSV rule.

If these findings are right, there are some direct implications on institutional engineering. The goals should be: (i) to promote a party system with a small number of parties, and (ii) to inhibit party fractionalization. The first without the second is merely the preservation of the status quo or an equivalent condition; the second without the first would be only a partial improvement, and perhaps a simultaneous worsening as well. This is so because an extreme multipartism reproduces some of the disadvantages of a fractionalized system like the present one, and may contribute to the development of

polarized pluralism, as in Chile. The first goal cannot be attained by direct legislation on parties without seriously damaging basic freedoms. The second goal may be attained only in a very limited sense by direct legislation, although for different reasons. Fractions may comply formally with lots of regulations, if it is in their interest to do so, without altering their basic traits. The only way of really discouraging fractions is by affecting the context within which the parties compete in such a way as to make them interested in controlling fractionalization. Thus, the main instrument for the attainment of both goals is the electoral law.

To deter party fractionalization, then, it is necessary to suppress the DSV. The critics of such a measure point out, correctly, that these would increase the power of the parties' central authorities. But this objection may be easily surmounted by a judicious choice of the mechanisms designed to attain the remaining goal, that is, to avoid extreme multipartism. The most effective method to do this is to couple unipersonal constituencies with a first-past-the-post system. This is too big a leap from Uruguayan practice, particularly with regard to the representation of minorities.[70] Intermediate systems, like the French second ballot technique or the German mixed system would seem preferable. These systems provide more leverage to the candidates and, consequently, less power to central party machines. In fact, I think that this alone would be enough to leave the party apparatuses as weak as at present. In particular, constituencies which elect a large number of parliamentarians, thus making those who decide the candidacies especially powerful (like Montevideo for the Lower Chamber or the whole country for the Senate), would be eliminated. The fact that each parliamentary candidate has to fight for his or her own election has other important advantages as well. If this does not seem enough to counterbalance the influence of party authorities, it is always possible to use primaries, like in the United States.

This is not the place for a detailed proposal. I simply want to point out that there are solutions for the existing problems, that these solutions have been tested and look sensible in comparative perspective, and that they do not involve a radical breakdown with the most important Uruguayan traditions in the matter.

In recent times, only two proposals have tackled directly the fractionalization problem. One was the solution the military included in the repealed 1980 constitution. I think it was perhaps preferable to the status quo,[71] but as it did not provide substitute mechanisms for the positive functions fulfilled by the DSV, it involved, appearances notwithstanding, a more radical departure from the substance of Uruguayan tradition than the methods mentioned above. Another relevant view is Jorge Batlle's, who stated explicitly that he was opposed to the DSV.[72]

Neither Pérez Pérez's proposals nor the traditional parties' suggestions to the military in 1982 solve the problem. The idea of limiting the number of permissible parallel candidacies cancels some of the most baroque extremes of the past (e.g., innumerable listas), and leaves intact the central defects of the system. If the limitation allows a relatively large number of fractions, then the change is merely cosmetic. If the number is really small, say two or three, then the result is even worse, because without the possibility of "tirarse con lista propia" (which is no less important as a bargaining instrument than as a real practice), the power of fractional leaders would increase

and the fractions would actually become quasi-parties. Partial solutions of this kind will probably accelerate the erosion of party identifications presently under way.

In the end, the gravest problem is that many sincere democrats still believe in the virtues of the DSV:

> if the parties function as such, I am a supporter of the double simoultaneous vote . . . which is neither bad nor good in itself, but is a direct result of the organization of the parties.[73]

This is exactly the point. I have attempted to show that the long-run effect to the DSV impedes the parties from "working as such," because it fractionalizes them. It is not possible to have "real parties" and DSV at the same time. In Sartori's words,

> [b]eyond a certain point of mishandling, once that the jar is broken the chances of successful manipulation are low. But if broken jars cannot be repaired, surely future breaches in new jars can be prevented if a manipulative foresight is applied at the proper time.[74]

Notes

[1] In this essay, "democracy" means "polyarchy" as defined by Dahl (1971).

[2] World Bank (1983), Tables 1, 25, 23, 22 and 27 respectively. The Uruguayan income distribution data are in Melgar (1981); the statement above is tentative because Uruguayan figures are only from Montevideo (about half of the country), whereas the rest are national data.

[3] This statement holds only for purely political organizations (Unions' and workers' lives were harder in Chile). Neither is it very precise; this would require explicit, comparable criteria. I believe that until the end of the 1960s most operationalizations of opposition would give Uruguay a somewhat better record (the problems the Chilean Communist Party experienced had no equivalent in Uruguay), but in the final five years preceding the 1973 coups the opposite was true. A comparison of this kind, in fact, may be impossible, or at least have little meaning. When one regime in a given moment ranks better than the other along the opposition dimension, but worse in the participation dimension, we cannot compare "polyarchycal" performance unless we are willing to lose the bidimensionality of the concept by computing a single index from the two dimensions. This theoretical difficulty is compounded when the comparison is intended not on a single moment but throughout a period, as is the present case. In such a situation the only viable comparison seems to be on Paretian terms, that is, when one of the cases is in as good a position as the other in <u>all</u> the involved dimensions, and better off in at least one dimension.

[4] Valenzuela (1976), p. 10. The evolution of Uruguayan early figures (before 1925) is in Regalatti (1982).

[5] This is, as a minimum, a defensible proposition, though for the present purpose it is not very important whether Uruguay was exactly £1 or £2 in the ranking of South American democratic performances.

[6] Cavarozzi (1981), pp. 9-13.

[7] As stated, for example, in Dahl (1971).

[8] In my view, a convincing account of the Uruguayan breakdown has not been published yet. Two useful books which include bibliographies are Kaufman (1979) and Weinstein (1975). The only aspect of the breakdown that will be dealt with below is the role the parties had.

[9] This is not the place to list an adequate bibliography on the Uruguayan political parties. The only general overview is perhaps Taylor (1960), which also includes a useful bibliography. The crucial first third of the present century is covered in Barrán and Nahum (1979- , esp. 1982), Lindahl (1962) and Vanger (1963, 1980), who also provide references. Jacob (1983) describes the de facto regime of the 1930s, and Zubillaga and Pérez (1983) update the story. The best essay on the years preceding the 1973 coup is, in my opinion, Real de Azúa (1971).

[10] I retain Sartori's (1976, pp. 71-74) neutral term, "fraction." His argument seems convincing to me. Besides, in Spanish, like in English, "facción" (faction) has a pejorative connotation, whereas "fracción" (fraction) does not. Uruguayans, and politicians in particular, use "fracción," not "facción,"

thus making natural Sartori's proposal. This does not deny, of course, that perhaps most of the Uruguayan historical fractions have been indeed factions (in the pejorative sense), but surely not all of them were. This is, in the end, an empirical matter, not a terminological one.

[11] Martínez Lamas (1946), pp. 116-117 (trans., the Wilson Center)

[12] Lindahl (1962), pp. 40 and 273, respectively.

[13] Kirchheimer (1966).

[14] Melián Lafinur (1918), A.D. González (1922). Martínez Lamas's comments quoted above make the same point. Blancos and Colorados did not evolve from former class-mass or denominational parties, and their followers had strong, enduring party identifications. These traits are not supposed to be typical of catch-all parties, or at least of the kind of parties that initiate a process of transformation in that direction. But these points also apply in the United States, "still the classical example of an all-pervasive catch-all party system" (Kirchheimer, 1966, p. 185).

[15] On the limits set by tradition it may suffice to note that fractions might appear or disappear, might even abandon the party; but a fraction of one of the traditional parties never became a fraction of the other.

[16] Kirchheimer (1966), p. 198. And not only of catch-all parties; this may even be used to define political parties. Cf. LaPalombara (1974), pp. 509-510.

[17] McDonald (1978), p. 236.

[18] In fact, Lindahl's emphasis on the organizational criterion is not taken for granted in later literature: "the distinction between party and faction has often been drawn, in the past, along organizational lines, under the asumption that the party is the organized and the faction the organizationless body. By now we know not only that the party subunits can be powerfully organized, but that the party might even compare with its subunits as the lesser organized entity." (Sartori, 1976, p. 76).

[19] Lindahl (1962), p. 269

[20] Id., p. 340, fn. 32.

[21] Real de Azúa (1971), p. 230 and passim (trans., the Wilson Center)

[22] Sartori (1976), p. 92.

[23] Sartori's description of the Italian DC (1966, esp. p. 151) is particularly stricking because of its parallelism with the Uruguayan cases.

[24] Sartori (1976), p. 215, fn. 127.

[25] Neither have comparativists had an easy time with Uruguay. In a footnote to a passage quoted above on the parties' possibility of being as organizationless as their own fractions, Sartori wrote: "the extreme case appears to be Uruguay, whose (dubious) two party system is . . . only an electoral facade

with respect to the real actors, i.e., the . . . sub-lemas of the Blanco and Colorodo parties" (Sartori, 1976, p. 107, fn. 11). Nevertheless, his implicit but unequivocal position is that they are (or were) indeed so: he describes the Uruguayan party system as having a two party format (p. 188).

26 According to Sartori, Uruguay was a case of a predominant-party system within a two-party format (id., Section 6.5, passim, esp. p. 197). He states the Colorados were predominant since 1868 to 1959, and again since 1967. Using his definitions -- authentic electoral competition plus at least three consecutive absolute majorities in the Lower Chamber (id., p. 195 and 199) -- this is untrue because: (i) real electoral guarantees came in 1918; several writers consider that cheating in elections ended as late as 1925; (ii) from 1926 to the 1933 coup the Colorados never had absolute majority in the Lower Chamber; (iii) the de facto period may be considered completely cancelled by 1942; the four elections since then (1942, 1946, 1950, 1954) were all won by the Colorados, but in 1946 they failed to win absolute majority in the Lower Chamber; (iv) they lost the two following elections (1958 and 1962); and (v) they won the two last general elections so far (1966 and 1971); in the latter they won a very close election, obtaining only 41 percent of the seats in the Lower Chamber. In short: although the 1946 election cut the three consecutive majorities required in the definition, during the 1942-1958 period the Colorodos could be considered a predominant party. Neither before nor after was this true. The last third of the past century, in particular, should be considered as a failed Colorado attempt to become an hegemonic party (in Sartori's sense).

27 Valenzuela (1978); González (1983b).

28 Needless to say, I am not suggesting that the differences in the party systems are the only or even the most important factor in such an explanation. In my view, the best account of the dynamics involving this type of variables in the Chilean breakdown is Valenzuela (1978).

29 Suggestive summaries of these differing historical identities may be found in Real de Azúa (1971), p. 226, and Zubillage and Pérez (1983), p. 107.

30 Real de Azúa (1971), p. 302, fn. 79 (trans., the Wilson Center) Again, this is not an Uruguayan peculiarity. The argument that fractionism is a product of internal democracy is very frequent. Samuel B. Barnes reported that 90 percent of his sample of members of the Italian Socialist Party "agreed with the fact that currents are an 'instrument of democracy'." (Sartori, 1976, pp. 105 and 115, fn. 73). As Sartori concluded, "those who practice fractionism are bound to justify it" (loc. cit.).

31 Nevertheless, by 1971 both traditional parties and almost all their relevant fractions perceived the need of reforming their internal structure. This was stated more or less vaguely that year's electoral campaign; it seems to me that it was more than a mere propaganda device and that most politicians did feel that it was a real problem. De Sierra et al. (1972, passim) provide a good sample of these worries.

32 Biles (1972), p. 441. This includes patronage and clientelism. In the following I will use one or the other term meaning both, to avoid tedious repetition. A cursory review of the references cited below shows that most authors writing on the "particularistic" traits of the Uruguayan polity have both in mind -- and tend to follow the present practice as well.

[33] Solari (1964), p. 147; Solari (1967), p. 147 and passim.

[34] Weinstein (1975), p. 67. Aguiar (1983), pp. 15 and ff., provides the most recent discussion and useful references.

[35] De Riz (1983), p. 5 (trans., the Wilson Center). In the same sense, and to mention only a small sample, McDonald (1971), p. 122; Real de Azúa (1971), pp. 213 and ff., and Rial (1984a), p. 14 bis.

[36] The minor parties are indeed known in Uruguay as "parties of ideas," as opposed to the "traditional" parties.

[37] Solari (1964), p. 147 (trans., the Wilson Center).

[38] Solari (1967), pp. 162 and ff., and Gillespie (1983), pp. 13-14 and 30.

[39] Butler (1981), p. 11.

[40] The only case of bipartism in Rae's data was Austria (Rae, 1971). Proportional representation may coexist with a two-party system because, strictly speaking, it is "neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the insurgence of new parliamentarian parties" (id., p. 149). Analogously, plurality systems cannot be said to cause bipartism, but they are "always associated with two-party competition except where strong local minority parties exist," as in Canada (id., p. 95).

[41] McDonald (1978, pp. 238 and 243, fn. 40) mentions this "paradox"; Gillespie (1983, p. 8) wrote that the DSV exerted a "moderating" effect on "the tendency for proportional representation . . . to produce a multiplication of parties."

[42] Pérez Pérez (1970), p. 66 (trans., the Wilson Center) Cf. also Real de Azúa (1971), pp. 212-214.

[43] Historical records are unanimous about the strength of Uruguayans' party identification. The word "correligionario" (i.e., "of the same religion") is still used to refer to other supporters of one's own party. Contemporary survey research has established that "Uruguayans show an even stronger tendency than do North Americans to remain with their party throughout their lives and to vote consistently for it" (Biles, 1972, p. 121). This is what one should expect taking into account the stability of the party system: even leaving aside the whole past century and choosing 1918 as the starting point. Uruguay fulfills Converse's theoretical requisites for a mature rate of party identification (Converse, 1969). The regional comparison seems consistent with all of the above: Kalman Silvert contrasted the strength of Uruguayan party identification to the weaker Chilean pattern (Silvert, 1961, pp. 145-146), and Snow pointed out "the low level of party identification" in Argentina (Snow, 1979, p. 49).

[44] This is, of course, a well-known fact. A Blanco writer put it concisely with regard to one particular case: "el riverismo (a Colorado minority) abusó siempre de su condición de minoría decisiva que daba al Partido Colorado el carácter de mayoría o se lo quitaba si retiraba su apoyo" (Calatayud Bosch, 1971, p. 131). There are several notable examples, among which the "handicap" episode (Lindahl, 1962, pp. 154-159) was particularly notorious

45 The 1918 Constitution divided the executive between a president and a committee (the CNA). The later Consejo Nacional de Gobierno (CNG) was a pure pluripersonal executive.

46 Let us remember briefly the timing of some of the political events. The first DSV act was passed in 1910. It was initially conceived, presumably, to solve short-run difficulties, even though it also had doctrinal support (Pérez Pérez, 1970, p. 6). The first important Colorado dissidence appeared in 1913; the first election with reasonable guarantees and secret vote was in 1916; these guarantees were definitively established in the 1918 constitution; finally, according to many, the turning point at which electoral fraud was practically eradicated was in 1924-1925. Thus, the DSV act preceded the emergence of the first relevant dissident fraction within the Colorados, and fractional conflict was familiar when electoral cheating finally ended.

47 But see Pérez Pérez (1970).

48 Real de Azúa (1971), p. 170 (trans., the Wilson Center). For further comments on the issue and references to the available evidence on it, p. 285, fn. 26.

49 The Colorado leader Jorge Batlle said in a recent interview that Michelini (former Colorado leader, later FA Senator, assassinated in Buenos Aires with the acquiescence -- to say the least -- of the Argentinian military government) was "the Domingo Arena" of his times within the Colorado Party. Arena was a famous progressive Colorado politician, Batlle y Ordóñez intimate friend. The different destinies of the two men illustrate my point. The interview was published in Guambia (Montevideo) I:15 (1984).

50 Jacob (1981) studied the Ruralismo and its leader, Benito Nardone.

51 This is not to say, however, that the voters' distribution along the left-right continuum within each traditional party was the same. The late Blanco leader Fernando Cliú argued that since 1970 the centro izquierda position belongs to the Ferreira Aldunate fraction, the Blanco majority; before then it had belonged to Batllismo (Colorado). Interview in Guambia (Montevideo) I:3 (1983). If this were right, then the mode within each party would be relatively close to the center-left for the Blancos, and to the Center-right for the Colorados.

52 Linz (1978), pp. 24-25.

53 Aguiar (1983) presents a fascinating compilation of these data.

54 Zubillaga and Pérez (1983), p. 115.

55 This could have happened in Bordaberry's election in 1971. It is almost certain that Bordaberry would have lost under a ballotage system.

56 Filgueira (1984), p. 20 (trans., the Wilson Center).

57 That is, they gave the military free hand to suppress the urban guerrilla (the Tupamaros). That they had to suppress it is out of the question.

[58] Linz (1982), pp. 49-50; Stepan (1982).

[59] González (1983a).

[60] Zubillaga and Pérez (1983), p. 116 (trans., the Wilson Center).

[61] More presidential candidates were allowed, provided that they were supported by at least 3 percent of the party affiliates, but parties do not have registers of affiliates yet.

[62] Búsqueda (Montevideo) XIII, no. 234 (25 April to 2 May, 1984).

[63] Intendentes are the equivalent of Provincial Governors.

[64] One of these, as it has been noted, is that the bargaining and an unofficial electoral campaign are in fact running together (Rial, 1984b. p. 32).

[65] Cf. Martorelli (1984), esp. pp. 14 and 11.

[66] On the cross-national association between political culture and constitutional arrangements, Powell (1982), pp. 66-69.

[67] For another crucial point I did not deal with in my essay, the de facto regime of the 1930s, it has been argued that the tenacious Uruguayan bipartism helped to discard monocratic temptations (Weinstein, 1975, p. 72).

[68] According to Gallup Uruguay, by 1982, 56 percent of Montevideo adult population preferred one presidential candidate by party, and only 29 percent preferred more than one candidate. Gallup Uruguay, OP no. 321.

[69] As I said above, however, most of the literature states this without specifying the relationship. My own analysis follows Pérez Pérez's, but only till a certain point; the different specifications, in turn, lead to different suggestions for improving the system, as it will be seen below. This debate has suffered from two confusions in the literature, which is often very explicitly political more than academic. The first is confusing bipartism with the present main parties. A system which favors bipartism makes more difficult the access of a third party to one of the two central positions, but once this is done, one of the former main parties loses its dominant position. The British and U.S. systems are far more effective than the Uruguayan in strengthening bipartism, but even in these cases the main parties have changed, as the U.S. Republicans in the past century and the British Labor in the present one can attest. The second confusion assigns the permanence of Blancos and Colorados not to the effects described above, but to other particularistic biases favoring them. Legal manipulations on the borderline of fair democratic practices, often directly unfair, have indeed existed and perhaps still exist; they should be removed. But they are comparatively minor obstacles, incapable of arresting real change in the political mood of the population. Nor are they an Uruguayan peculiarity. The two confusions sometimes give moral overtones to the debate.

70 The recent case of the Alliance in Britain would be, I think, inadmissible in the light of Uruguayan traditions.

71 Needless to say, I am not referring to the constitution, which was not democratic, but merely to the electoral rules.

72 In the interview quoted above.

73 Carlos Julio Pereyra, Blanco leader, in an interview in Guambia (Montevideo) I: 16 (1984). (trans., the Wilson Center).

74 Sartori (1966), pp. 175-176.

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