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Legislative Preferences, Political Parties, and Coalition Unity in Chile

Eduardo Alemán and Sebastián M. Saiegh

Government coalitions are a common feature of Latin American presidential democracies. However, the politics of coalition formation and coalition unity have only recently begun to be scrutinized.[1] Since the last wave of democratization Chile has enjoyed the most stable multiparty coalition in Latin America. During the last fifteen years the presidency has been under the control of the *Concertación por la Democracia,* which has also controlled a majority in the chamber of deputies, while the opposition has in recent years coalesced into an alternative coalition called *Alianza por Chile.* Competition between these two multiparty coalitions has dominated contemporary electoral and legislative politics. However, despite the novel stability of the two coalitions, several scholars dispute the claim that a fundamental change has realigned the party system. The point of contention is whether a bipolar pattern has replaced the three-way split (*tres tercios)* in political competition that traditionally characterized the Chilean party system. For example, according to John Carey, Chile has a de facto two-party system, with the *Concertación* and the *Alianza* each behaving like a single political party. In contrast, Peter Siavelis claims that the two major coalitions are merely opportunistic marriages of convenience that may possibly break up in the near future, making way for new and different partnerships.[2]

The stability and unity of Chilean multiparty coalitions have profound implications for the workings of Chilean democracy and, more generally, for an understanding of political parties and coalition building in presidential democracies. Given the deep divisions that characterized the Chilean party system in the period before the military coup of 1973, a bipolar realignment would be an impressive break with the past. It would also be significant because in multiparty presidential systems stable legislative coalitions play a vital role in providing effective government.

Therefore, a key question is whether the current Chilean coalitions are not only electoral but also policy-based alliances. To answer this question, analysis of the voting records of Chilean deputies can test alternative hypotheses about the cohesion of parties and coalitions in the legislative arena. While previous studies have found some support for the view that the two main coalitions adopt distinct positions, they do not permit the rejection of the trimodal (*tres tercios)* view of partisan alignment or of the hypothesis that moderate members of "centrist" parties vote as a distinct bloc in the legislature.

Bayesian Markov chain simulation statistical methods can be used to estimate the ideal points of Chilean legislators. The analysis reveals a bipolar distribution of legislative preferences, where coalition membership rather than independent parties dictate policy choice.

Moreover, although Chilean parties can be ordered along a left-right dimension, a relevant centrist bloc does not exist. The two parties that are ideologically adjacent but belong to different electoral coalitions, the Christian Democrats and National Renewal, do not constitute a distinctive policy coalition (that is, a centrist bloc). The results indicate that Chilean legislators are grouped into two cohesive blocs, with little overlap in preferences, and that the distribution of preferences inside each coalition is unimodal. These findings imply a convergence among *Concertación* parties that reflects institutional incentives as well as a fundamental reorientation of social conflict.

The Chilean Party System: Bipolar Competition or *Tres Tercios?*

Since Chile's return to democracy in 1990, two legislative coalitions have captured virtually all the seats in the chamber of deputies. The *Concertación,* comprised of the Socialist Party (PS), the Party for Democracy (PPD), the Christian Democrats (DC), and the smaller Radical Social-Democratic Party (PRSD), has held the majority in the lower chamber of congress and the presidency of the country since redemocratization. The opposition, made up of the Independent Democratic Union (UDI), the National Renewal Party (RN), and the smaller Centrist Union (UCC), has also coalesced into a formal alliance, now called *Alianza por Chile.*[3]

The pattern of alliances that emerged at the onset of democratization followed partisan positions with regard to the referendum on the continuation of the military government of General Augusto Pinochet. The traditionally centrist DC entered into an alliance with most parties on the left, with which it shared an opposition to Pinochet's regime and a desire for rapid democratization. These groups had been previously at odds. Most leftist leaders belonged to parties that in the early 1970s endorsed Marxist ideals and supported deposed president Salvador Allende, who was adamantly opposed by the DC. By the late 1980s, however, programmatic differences between the center and the left appeared to have been subordinated to achieve a common front in the yes/no referendum on regime change.[4] After Pinochet's defeat in the plebiscite, these parties renewed agreements to support a single presidential candidate and establish a multiparty coalition government. The two main parties that supported a continuation of Pinochet's regime (RN and UDI) also entered into a formal electoral coalition and fielded a common presidential candidate.[5]

In addition to partisan positions over the military regime, broader policy goals also appear to have been a factor in choosing partners. Both Chilean coalitions, the *Concertación* and the *Alianza,* consist of parties with contiguous ideological positions

(connected coalitions). There is consensus about how Chilean parties are ordered on the main left-to-right axis of political conflict: the left is comprised of socialists (PS) and moderate leftists (PPD); Christian Democrats (DC) occupy the center; and the right is comprised of former nationalists who endorsed, albeit sometimes critically, Pinochet's regime (RN) and supporters of free market policies linked to the former military regime (UDI). Yet it remains unclear how close coalition partners are to each other and, more important, whether these alliances represent a substantial realignment of the party system.

The existence and durability of the coalitions have been seen by many observers of Chilean politics as a sign that a new political landscape has emerged in the post-Pinochet era.[6] However, this view has been contested by those who claim that the three-way competitive dynamic that has traditionally characterized the Chilean party system continues to persist both at the electoral and elite levels.[7]

A bipolar view of partisan competition has been advanced by both institutional and social studies. Institutional analyses were the first to claim that the two member district electoral reform encouraged the reorganization of the party system into two blocs.[8] Under the binomial system (open list proportional representation with sixty districts of magnitude two) voters pick one candidate from one list; list totals determine how the two seats are allocated among lists; and rank within a list determines how seats are awarded to individual candidates. Parties or electoral alliances can present two candidates per list in each district, but they can win the two available seats only if they win a plurality that doubles the vote of the list coming second in the district. As scholars have noted, the establishment of this voting system in a country characterized by four to five main parties encouraged the immediate formation of electoral pacts.[9] Advocates of the bipolar view also stress that coalition labels are meaningful to Chilean voters and that legislators concerned with keeping a seat in congress know that dropping out of one of the two main coalitions entails significant electoral risks.[10]

In addition, other authors predict bipolar competition and centrifugal positioning as a result of the binomial system. Both Magar, Rosenblum, and Samuels and Dow construct formal models of party competition in which each individual candidate competes for votes even at the expense of the other coalition candidate in a particular district.[11] These models seek to highlight the tension between coalition competition and intralist competition and to show why two member districts differ from plurality rule in terms of the expected position of candidates. The main argument is that centrifugal forces, rather than Downsian moderation, dominate coalition strategies. The lack of centripetal incentives seems consistent with the fact that most legislators win seats with a minority share of the vote and thus candidates do not need to appeal directly to the center of the voter distribution. Moreover, under reasonable assumptions regarding candidate mobility these models predict that candidates from the same coalition would tend to support similar (noncentrist) policies, implying a fairly cohesive center-left *Concertación* and a fairly cohesive center-right *Alianza.*

The view that a profound realignment has occurred in the Chilean party system is also advanced by noninstitutional perspectives. The focus in this case is placed on the legacy of the military dictatorship and the role of political elites in affecting social conflict. According to Tironi and Aguero, the legacy of military rule and the characteristics of the transition period have made the authoritarian-democratic cleavage paramount in the contemporary period.[12] Torcal and Mainwaring report that attitudes toward democracy profoundly divide supporters of the governing coalition and the conservative opposition.[13]

Regarding the heterogeneity of the governing coalition, Torcal and Mainwaring provide evidence that supporters and voters of the DC and PS differ little in terms of class, rural-urban residence, and religiosity.[14] Thus, they conclude that sociological differences between the center-left and the DC have withered away. If this conclusion is correct, as Tironi and Aguero also suggest, then constituent pressures may act to reinforce unity among the *Concertación* elite.[15] Although Torcal and Mainwaring argue strongly for the reshaping of the party system, they are cautious in their predictions and suggest that enduring coalitions are still unlikely.

Contrary to the bipolar view, a number of scholars argues that the underlying patterns of party competition and voter support that characterized Chilean politics for decades before the military regime are resistant to fundamental change.[16] Most scholars emphasizing party system continuities tend to focus on the lasting effects of deeply rooted social cleavages rather than on the effects of institutional engineering. This view often stresses the long-term effects of sociological differences and is consistent with the notion that Latin American dictatorships are often powerless to change voter preferences from before to after democratization.[17] This perspective has been reinforced by the media's portrayal of public disagreements between coalition partners over public policies and the occasional political scandal.[18]

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Chilean party system was divided among well-defined class and religious cleavages.[19] The tripartite view (*tres tercios)* highlights patterns of continuation in the historical competition between ideological pillars of the right, center, and left. For example, Alan Angell argues that both the division of opinion among right, center, and left and the proportion of the vote cast for the three different positions in the political spectrum have been relatively stable since the 1930s.[20] Other proponents of the tripartite view acknowledge that some actors deviate from the historical pattern of party competition at the elite level but still emphasize the effects of continuity in electoral support. For example, Valenzuela and Scully concede that *Concertación* leaders share closer preferences than *Concertación* voters but argue that vote-seeking leaders have to be responsive to their constituents and are thus limited in terms of the policies they can support.[21]

The claim that the three-way competitive dynamic persists also stems from an institutionalist perspective. In fact, a serious challenge to the bipolar view comes from Peter Siavelis' observation that, although the electoral formula increases the incentives for

coalition formation, the effect on the number of electoral alliances is not so clear. As he correctly points out, following Cox's analysis of the reductive effect of district magnitude on the number of political parties, when the district magnitude is one, it is correct to expect a bipolar competition. However, with a district magnitude of two, the electoral incentives favor an upper bound of three parties/alliances and not two. Hence the binomial system seems perfectly compatible with a three-way political competition.[22] Siavelis also points out the lack of "vertical integration": despite electoral coalition formation, parties in Chile continue to have distinct platforms and separate organizations with independent party offices and distinct leadership and decision-making strategies.

The following analysis speaks to the main points of contention in this debate from an empirical point of view. While the characterization of the party system as bipolar or tripartite refers both to voter attachments and to legislative behavior, this analysis addresses the latter. Thus, the voting records of Chilean deputies are analyzed to test whether partisan differences override electoral alliances and drive legislative behavior. The following hypotheses derived from the debate on Chilean coalitions will be addressed.

Hypothesis 1a: If two unified coalitions structure policy choices, then the distribution of legislators' voting scores should be bimodal, with each coalition having a noncentrist unimodal distribution.

Hypothesis 1b: If the *tres tercios* perspective holds, then the distribution of legislators' voting scores should approximate a trimodal distribution, with a salient centrist group.

Hypothesis 2a: If two unified coalitions structure policy choices, then legislators from the same coalition should cluster together, apart from legislators of the opposing coalition. The typical *Concertación* member should have a significantly different voting score than the typical *Alianza* member.

Hypothesis 2b: If the *tres tercios* perspective holds, then there should be substantial overlapping of policy preferences across coalitions, mostly driven by centrist Christian Democrats.

Hypothesis 3a: If two unified coalitions structure policy choices, then within each coalition individual preferences should reflect a high degree of cohesion and few legislators should adopt positions that differ from the typical coalition position.

Hypothesis 3b: If the *tres tercios* perspective holds, then the heterogeneity of preferences within each coalition should result in a substantial proportion of legislators' adopting positions that differ from the typical coalition position.

Hypothesis 4a: If two unified coalitions structure policy choices, then the partisan differences between Christian Democrats and Socialists should not be significant, with the typical Christian Democrat legislator being close to the typical Socialist legislator.

Hypothesis 4b: If the *tres tercios* perspective holds, then the partisan differences between Christian Democrats and Socialists should be significant, with the typical Christian Democrat legislator having a clearly different policy position from that of the typical Socialist.

Estimating Legislators' Ideal Points

The use of roll call votes to analyze lawmakers' behavior has become a common practice not only in the study of the U.S. Congress, but also in comparative politics.[23] However, as Londregan and Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers note, the use of standard techniques to estimate legislators' ideal points can be problematic.[24] The main pitfalls associated with a widely used estimator such as NOMINATE have to do with the inability to recover good measures of uncertainty (that is, reliable standard errors) and the potential for identification problems in the case of lopsided votes and/or short voting records.[25]

Ignoring the uncertainty associated with the scores may have important theoretical consequences when trying to adjudicate between the rival views on the Chilean party system. For example, to test whether the partisan differences between members of the DC and of the major moderate party on the right are not so pronounced as to preclude the formation of a center-right policy coalition in the legislature, estimates of both voting scores and associated confidence intervals are needed to establish whether legislators with adjacent voting scores have statistically significant partisan differences or not.

Roll call vote data are employed to recover estimates of legislators' latent preferences or ideal points, presumed to underlie the observed votes, as posited by a Euclidean spatial voting model.[26] The intuition behind these statistical models of legislative voting is that each roll call presents each legislator with a choice between a "yea" and a "nay" position. Legislators are presumed to vote for the position most similar to their own ideal policy position.[27]

To generate these preference estimates, Bayesian Markov chain simulation statistical methods are used. This approach treats the unknown ideal points, bill parameters, and legislators' utilities as random variables and conditions upon the observed roll call data. The strategy is to impute values to these variables and estimate by regression the ideal points and bill parameters. The MCMC algorithm repeatedly performs these imputations and regressions and generates a large number of samples from the posterior density of the model parameters.[28] Using this estimation procedure, summary statistics used for inference (that is, legislators' mean and median ideal points and their 95 percent posterior confidence intervals) are obtained.

The dataset comprises voting decisions recorded in the chamber of deputies' *Boletín de Sesiones* between June 1997 and January 1998 (under Frei's administration) and between June 1999 and September 2000 (under both Frei's and Lagos's administrations). The set of votes that is analyzed reflects final choices on policy changes to the status quo. The data exclude votes on things other than laws, such as procedural motions, impeachments, candidate selection, constitutional reforms, and changes to the chamber's rules, as well as votes requiring supermajority thresholds. This selection helps to minimize the effect of strategic behavior and allows the derivation of a legislator's position from decisive policy choices. As a result, the sample of roll call votes is different from most published work on floor votes in Latin American legislatures. It is

also different from "final passage votes" in the U.S. House of Representatives because in Chile (as in most Latin American countries) final passage votes are usually taken on different parts (for example, articles and chapters), without a final vote on the bill as a whole.[29] A separate dataset that includes all roll call votes taken in 2004 will check the robustness of the findings.

Legislators' votes are coded $y_{iv} = 1$ if legislator i votes yes on roll call v, and $y_{iv} = 0$ if he or she votes no. A one-dimensional model is fit to these data, and the MCMC scheme is implemented using a Gibbs sampler. All legislators are set to have a prior on their ideal points with mean zero and standard deviation one. Missing votes are discarded from the analysis. Normal priors $N(0,10^2)$ are given for the bill-specific parameters.[30]

Empirical Results

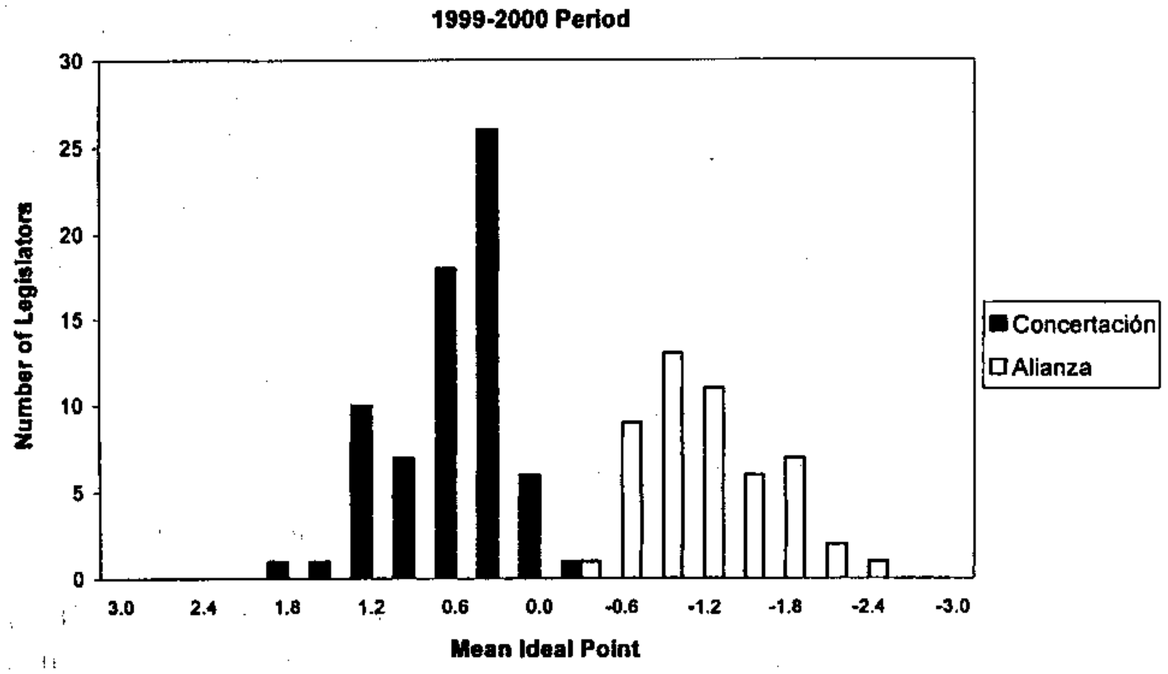
On the question of dimensionality, legislators' ideal policy positions are estimated in a one-dimensional setting to avoid identification problems. Nonetheless, the results make it possible to tell whether a higher dimensional setting is more appropriate for Chile. If a particular issue that was put to a vote taps a second dimension, it will be reflected in the discrimination parameters.[31]

The analysis shows that a one-dimensional model provides a good characterization of these roll call data. For the 1997–1998 period, fifty-six of the sixty-two roll calls (90.3 percent) discriminate with respect to the single latent dimension. For the 1999–2000 period, fifty-seven of sixty-one roll calls (93.4 percent) discriminate with respect to the recovered dimension. In interpreting this recovered dimension, it can be thought of as a continuum running from left to right.[32] Also, the recovered ideal points were normalized such that deputies with more "leftist" voting histories have positive scores, and deputies with more "rightist" voting records have negative scores.

Test of Hypotheses 1 and 2: Intercoalition Heterogeneity To assess the validity of the first two hypotheses, the overall distribution of legislators' ideal points is first focused on. The histogram presented in Figure 1 helps evaluate whether the center of the distribution is well populated and to what degree coalitions have noncentrist unimodal distributions. It summarizes the recovered ideal point of every legislator along the latent dimension of political conflict. Each bar represents the number of legislators that share positions within a 0.3 interval on this dimension. Black bars represent *Concertación* legislators, and white bars represent *Alianza* legislators.

The histogram shows that the distribution of preferences for each coalition is unimodal, with peaks to the center-left for the *Concertación* and to the center-right for the *Alianza*.[33] The distribution is right-skewed for *Alianza* legislators and left-skewed for *Concertación* legislators. It is also evident that the center of the distribution is relative-

Figure 1 Distribution of Ideal Points inside Coalitions



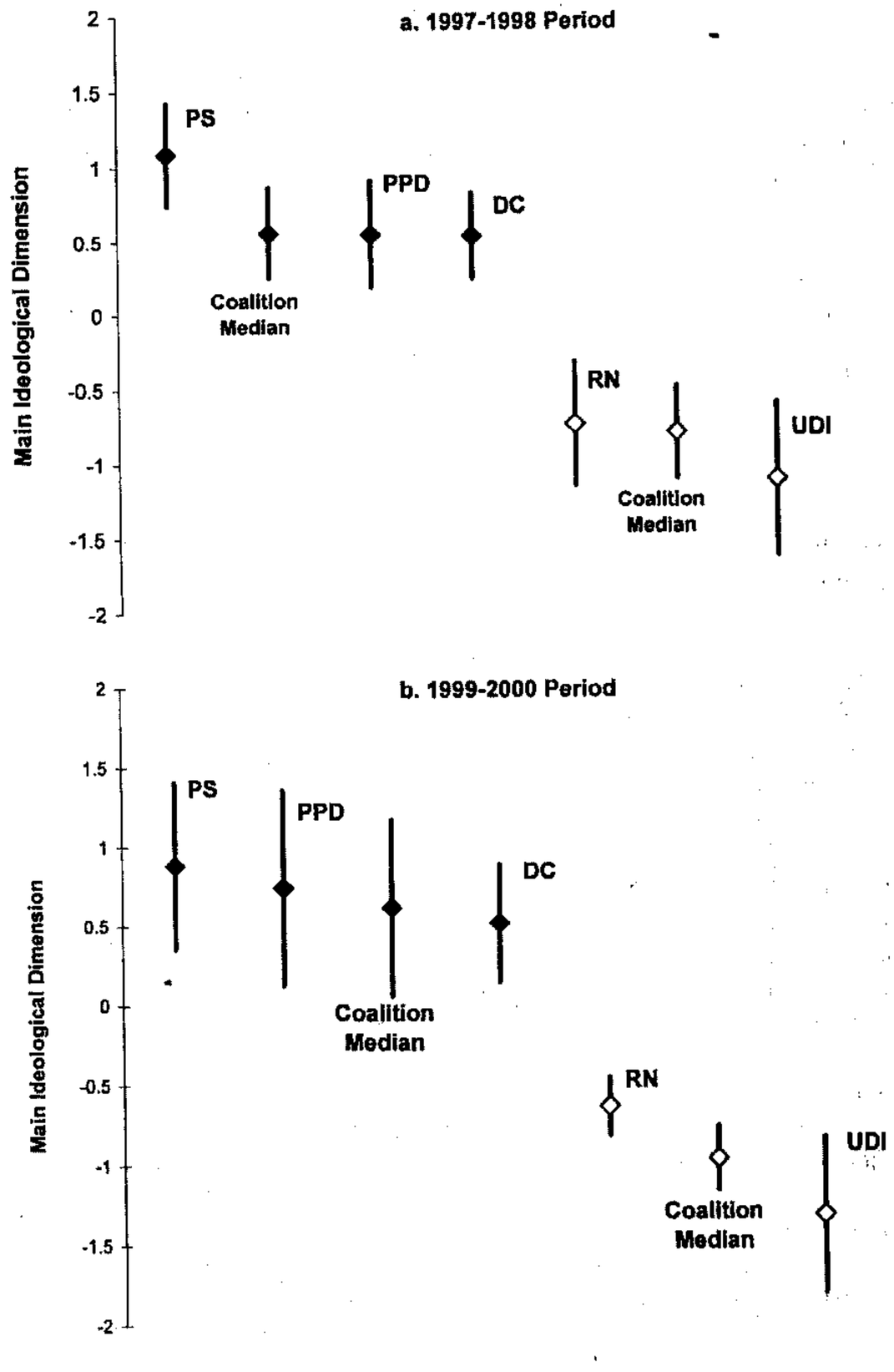
ly empty and that the ideal points of legislators from different coalitions do not tend to overlap.

Another way to compare coalition differences is to concentrate on the median legislator within each coalition and examine whether their positions overlap. If they do, it would mean that coalition medians are statistically indistinguishable. Coalition medians are more than a proxy for "typical" members. They are important theoretically because any proposal that carries majority support within the coalition has to pass with the support of the coalition median. The median's support implies coalition support. In Figure 2 estimated ideal points for the median legislator of each coalition (solid points) are plotted, along with a 95 percent confidence interval for each ideal point (vertical bars).

Figure 2 shows that for both periods the median from the *Concertación* and the median from the *Alianza* are significantly different from each other. Confidence intervals associated with each ideal point never overlap. The median for the *Concertación* for the 1997–98 period is located at 0.56, and for the 1999–2000 period at 0.61. The median for the *Alianza* for 1997–98 is located at -0.79, and for 1999–2000 at –0.97. The distance between medians of opposing coalitions appears more pronounced in the 1999–2000 period.

To further explore differences between the coalitions, the medians for the parties are found, and it is determined whether they differ from both the median from the opposing coalition and the medians from the parties that belong to the opposing coalition. The estimated ideal points and confidence intervals for party medians are also

Figure 2 Party and Coalition Medians



shown in Figure 2. They make it possible to evaluate if parties are clearly distinctive from the whole and the parts that make up the alternative coalition.

The results reinforce prior findings of intercoalition heterogeneity: party medians are always distinguishable from the median of the opposing coalition. Moreover, party medians are always statistically different from the medians of those parties that make up the opposing coalition. Figure 2 also reveals that the recovered partisan positions along the main ideological dimension coincide with the way parties have been typically ordered.

Finally, intercoalition heterogeneity is examined through comparison of the ideal points of each legislator with the ideal point of the median legislator of the opposing coalition. If the confidence intervals overlap, they are indistinguishable. During the 1997–1998 period only two *Concertación* deputies had ideal points that could not be distinguished from the *Alianza*'s median. During the 1999–2000 period none of the *Concertación* deputies had ideal points indistinguishable from the *Alianza*'s median. The number of deputies from the *Alianza* coalition with positions that are indistinguishable from the *Concertación* median is two during 1997–1998 and during 1999–2000.

To sum up, the empirical evidence reveals that the legislative positions taken by Chilean coalitions are substantially different. Regardless of whether the focus is on the whole coalition, parties, or individual legislators, there are clear differences between the positions taken by each coalition.

Test of Hypotheses 3 and 4: Intracoalition Heterogeneity Figures 1 and 2 also make it possible to examine coalition unity. In Figure 2, inside both coalitions, party medians are always indistinguishable from the coalition median. More important, in both congressional periods the party medians inside the *Concertación* coalition have a nontrivial degree of overlap.[34] Inside the *Alianza* there is less unity in the latter period. The positions of the RN and UDI medians overlap in 1997–1998, but during 1999–2000 there is a very small gap between the confidence intervals. Still, *Alianza* parties stand close to each other.

Cohesion inside each coalition can also be assessed by examining individual members. One simple way is to compare the standard deviation of the mean positions within each coalition. The results also show that in both congressional periods the *Concertación* is more united than the *Alianza*. The standard deviation of the estimated ideal points for 1997–1998 for *Concertación* deputies was 0.44, and in 1999–2000, 0.39. The estimates for the *Alianza* are 0.60 in 1997–1998 and 0.46 in 1999–2000.

For a more precise assessment, the position of each legislator is examined to identify how many individuals have positions that are statistically different from their own coalition median (shown in Figure 2). During the 1999–2000 period all *Concertación* legislators exhibit policy positions that are indistinguishable from the coalition median. During the 1997–1998 period the *Concertación* has four legislators (5.7 percent) with positions that are statistically different from the position of the coalition median, all four

of which are Christian Democrats. With regard to the *Alianza,* the numbers of legislators whose ideal points are statistically different from the coalition median are four (8 percent) for 1997–1998 (two RN, one UDI, and one independent ally) and seven (14 percent) for 1999–2000 (all RN legislators).

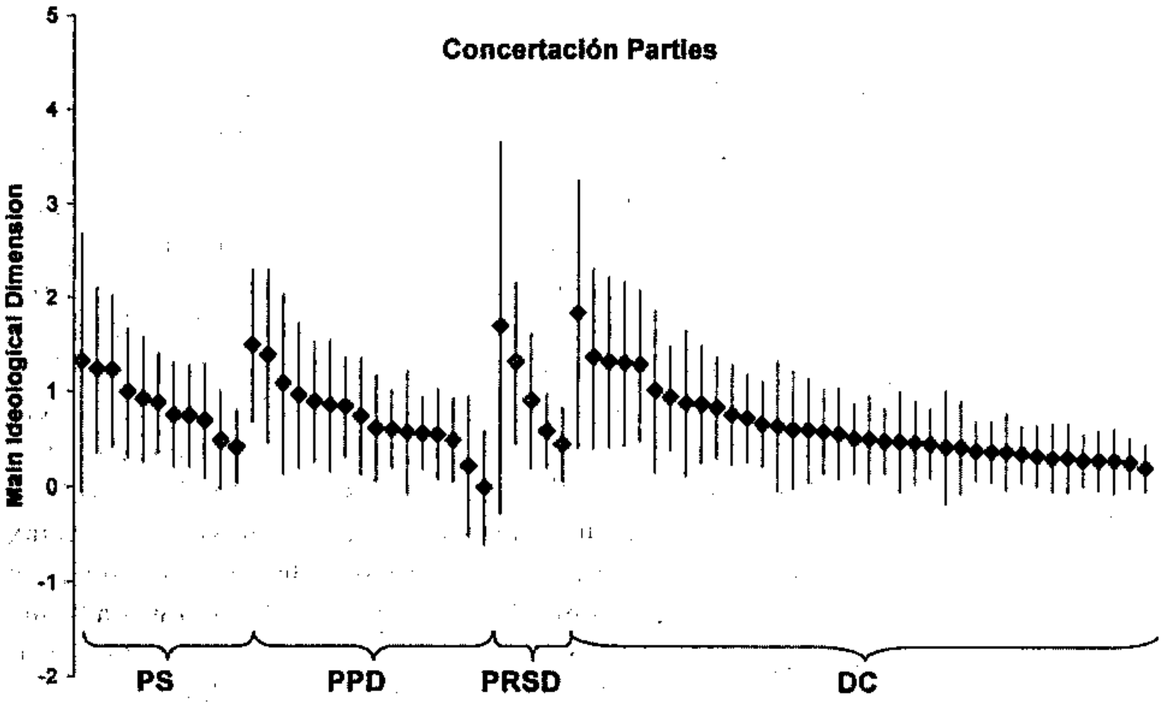
This group, made up of dissident legislators from both coalitions, is quite revealing. Of those who belong to the *Concertación* coalition, only one has a position that is indistinguishable from the *Alianza* median. This deputy, Ramón Elizalde, eventually left his party (DC) and ran for reelection as a candidate of RN on an *Alianza* list. The data and statistical analysis show that Mr. Elizalde voted as a member of the opposition long before switching parties. Within the group of dissident *Alianza* deputies, only one deputy, Alberto Espina Otero (RN), appears indistinguishable from the *Concertación* median, but only for the 1999–2000 period (right before he successfully ran for the senate). His position in the 1997–1998 period was that of a typical *Alianza* deputy. The rest of the dissidents actually form a distinct block: they are all statistically different from both coalition medians, and they are indistinguishable among themselves. This group, which can be said to constitute a unique centrist alternative, had five members in 1997–1998 and six in 1999–2000. In the latter period the dissident faction was actually a purely RN faction. Thus between 96 and 95 percent of Chilean legislators adopt positions that are clearly aligned with one of the two distinct ideological poles.

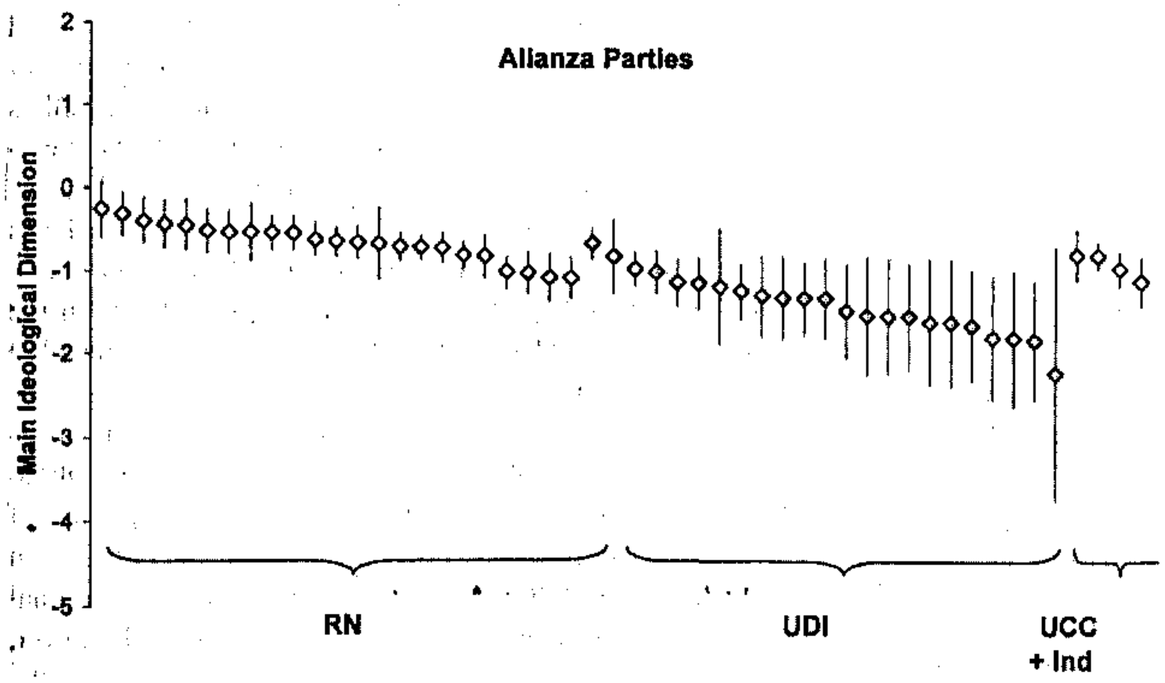
For an alternative look at coalition unity, the distribution of partisan preferences within each coalition can be examined. Figure 3 presents the estimated ideal points and confidence intervals for legislators in each coalition, grouped by party. The depiction of the *Concertación* membership in Figure 3 shows differences between parties as well as outliers inside each party. Interestingly, PS legislators do not take positions that are evidently different from the median DC legislator. The number of DC legislators that significantly differ from the PS median is eleven (less than one-third of the DC's membership) in 1997–1998 but zero in 1999–2000. Although the results from the earlier period reveal some differences, the overall pattern is one of harmony between the positions taken by PS and DC legislators. Also, within the *Concertación* the PPD appears less cohesive than the PS and the DC.

In regard to the *Alianza* membership, none of the UDI legislators is positioned significantly differently from the RN median in 1997–1998. However, a majority (about three-fifths of UDI's membership) is in 1999–2000. Four RN legislators (17.4 percent of the party's membership) adopt positions significantly different from the UDI median in 1997–1998, and eleven (47.8 percent) in 1999–2000. During the first congressional period legislators from both parties adopt almost indistinguishable positions. However, results from 1999–2000 reveal greater heterogeneity between the major partners in the center-right coalition. The later period shows that overall about one-third of all *Alianza* legislators have important differences with their main coalition partners.[35]

To summarize, the analysis of intracoalition heterogeneity provides evidence of two cohesive coalitions. In terms of their voting record, the *Concertación* appears to be more

Figure 3 Positions by Party (1999–2000)





unified than the *Alianza*. Although some divergence between Christian Democrats and Socialists was revealed, they are much more alike than different. In addition, there is a

distinct centrist group, which is clearly different from both coalitions. However, this group represents only a very small proportion of legislators.

Discussion and Robustness Checks

The analysis of legislators' ideal points presented in the previous section reveals that partisan differences do not override electoral alliances in driving policy-based legislative coalitions. The empirical evidence not only lends strong support to the bipolar hypothesis of political competition but also allows the rejection of the *tres tercios* view.

Ideology The mapping of legislative preferences confirms commonly held views regarding the ideological makeup of the Chilean party system. Nonetheless, the idea that voting scores reflect legislators' ideologies has been duly criticized by several scholars. These critics note that the use of actions (votes) to impute policy positions can be problematic. In particular, they claim that in order to assess the impact of ideology on behaviors such as roll call votes measurements of ideology that are constructed independently of the roll call votes themselves are required.[36] As Morgenstern notes, the source of this type of independent information would be a survey.[37]

Information on the ideological self-placement of Chilean legislators based on survey responses is included in the Universidad de Salamanca's *Parliamentary Elites of Latin America* project. The survey was given to eighty-nine legislators from the Chilean chamber of deputies during 1998 and thus serves as a good proxy of the legislators' beliefs during the times discussed in this article. Legislators were asked to locate themselves on an ideological scale ranging from 1 (Left) to 10 (Right).[38] The self-declared ideological placements match closely the distribution of preferences shown in Figure 1 (same time period). Hence this additional information further supports the findings.[39]

Type of Votes and Composition of the Legislature The analysis so far has been restricted to final passage votes, thereby excluding procedural motions, resolutions, elections, bills with high quorums, and other votes. It is worth considering whether the results would be significantly changed if they were calculated from a less restrictive dataset. Likewise, it would be interesting to find out whether the findings would change in a different time period. Siavelis and others have noted that the dynamics of party competition in Chile are somehow context dependent.[40] It is quite possible that as partisan differences become more pronounced, and as memories of the authoritarian period start to fade, a pattern of shifting alliance formation involving coalitions of the center and either the right or left may emerge. In particular, the *Concertación*'s cohesion may have changed in recent years when the coalition's legislative bloc was reduced to a bare majority of seats.

To address these questions roll call data were collected for 2004, a year when the seat difference between both coalitions narrowed somewhat. The analysis was also extended to include all roll call votes taken during that year.[41] The results confirmed the prior findings and are strikingly similar to those from the 1999–2000 period. As before, there is a noncentrist bimodal distribution of preferences with two distinct coalitions. The estimated ideal points reveal clear differences between *Concertación* and *Alianza* parties, as well as a high degree of cohesion within the governing alliance. These results, which are derived from a larger sample of legislative choices and an alternative period, lend further support to the conclusions.[42]

Dimensionality As indicated above, the one-dimensional model provides a good characterization of the 1997–1998 and 1999–2000 data, as 91.9 percent of roll calls discriminate with respect to the single latent dimension. The analysis of the 2004 roll call data yields very similar results: 189 of the 201 roll calls (94.0 percent) discriminate with respect to the recovered dimension.

To explore further the possible existence of a second dimension, the twenty-two votes that failed to discriminate with respect to the single latent dimension were looked at more closely. Qualitative examination of these votes in terms of the scope of issues addressed by the bills under consideration and the pattern of alliances in floor votes does not reveal an obvious second policy dimension.

The sample of these votes yielded bills covering environmental issues, traffic and speed regulations, economic benefits for public sector personnel, and the reorganization of the judiciary, as well as one part of a controversial initiative to legalize divorce. The topics addressed by these votes do not appear to represent a common policy theme. In addition, even though there are several votes in this sample (ten out of twenty-two) concerning social issues, there are far more votes on similar policy issues that were very well captured by the first dimension. With regards to voting behavior, there is no consistent pattern of alliances. In nine of the twenty-two votes a majority comprised of members from all parties votes against a handful of legislators also from all or most parties with legislative representation. In six votes a single-party majority was opposed by a minority composed of members of all other parties.[43] The remaining seven votes show some odd partnerships, with the UDI or RN allying with one of the parties in the *Concertación* against all the other parties. The only odd voting partnership repeated more than once is RN-PS. These parties voted together against other parties in two such votes.

Agenda Control The use of roll call votes as a manifestation of party and coalition cohesiveness has been criticized on the grounds that agenda manipulation and strategic voting tend to affect the inferences that can be made from the record of public votes.[44] In the case of Chile, it can be argued that majority leaders (and maybe the president) have purposely worked to keep issues that divide the coalition off the plenary

floor and that this manipulation of the agenda hides relevant divisions inside the *Concertación*. This manipulation could explain, for instance, why Londregan finds divisive social issues inside committee deliberations but this analysis does not find them in floor votes. The leadership of the *Concertación* in the chamber of deputies has several tools to shape the legislative agenda and thus the type of bills that reach a final vote on the floor.

Yet, even if it is conceded that agenda control translates into a biased sample of final legislative choices, it would be wrong to conclude that the governing coalition is only partially behaving as a cohesive unit. The main reason is that, in Chile, "negative" agenda control by the leadership—the ability to keep matters off the plenary floor—would be in itself an example of the power of coalitions. For instance, since the rules establish that a majority vote can quickly force debate on almost any bill, gatekeeping power by leaders who control the scheduling of legislation is the result of external enforcement by the majority coalition and not of codified prerogatives.[45] This argument implies not only that members of the majority coalition stand close to each other on those policy proposals that reach a final passage vote in congress, but also that they have an implicit agreement about the issues that the coalition should not confront on the floor of congress.

Agenda control, however, lies not only in the hands of legislative leaders, but also in the hands of the president. Several authors have highlighted the wide institutional powers of the Chilean president.[46] The question is whether the exercise of this authority ultimately acts as an enforcement on coalition unity or as a divisive force. The evidence above suggests that, even if presidents intervene to challenge proposals endorsed by agenda-setters in congress, they do not build an alternative majority by breaking up what has been an effective governing coalition but instead present alternative proposals that also carry support with the majority of all coalition partners. This view is supported by a recent study of the policymaking process in Chile. The authors examine in detail the passage of two very salient bills and show that in both cases the president could have formed a policy coalition with members of the opposition to push through reform without having to make expensive concessions to compensate the losers, but he refrained from doing so.[47]

Realignment Finally, there is the question of a historical realignment of the party system. The new evidence provided here supports the view that contemporary parties are clustered around two competing poles. However, as Carey points out, in order to make a conclusive case about changes in the party system, it would be necessary to provide analogous data for the pre-1973 period as well.[48] Unfortunately such data do not presently exist. In fact, the total number of recorded votes (including unanimous and near unanimous votes, procedural motions, and other nonpolicy decisions) was less than ten per year, whereas now the number is around two hundred per year.[49]

Nonetheless, an extensive literature addresses Chilean party politics in the decades prior to the military coup. This body of work provides a rich narrative that can help fill part of the void presented by the lack of systematic evidence regarding individual legislators' choices.

For example, several authors have pointed out that in the decades leading to the 1960s the center of the policy space was occupied by the "flexible" Radical party, which regularly sought to form alliances with parties on both sides of the political spectrum. This pattern changed in the early 1960s when the center was captured by the "ideological" Christian Democrats.[50] According to many of these accounts, the Christian Democrats resisted the idea of compromise and thus were not particularly inclined to bargain with conservative forces on the right and Marxist forces on the left. Despite this aversion to compromise, their minority status in the legislature forced them to seek different allies to pass major pieces of legislation.[51] The Christian Democrats' ideological rigidity apparently resurfaced when Salvador Allende reached the presidency.[52] Their unwillingness to compromise was further reinforced by the strategies adopted by Allende's government. As Radomiro Tomic, a close observer of the Chilean political process pointed out a few years after the coup, Allende's government eventually adopted a very sectarian stance, a "*patriotismo de partido.*" And this confrontational posture, in turn, generated the oppositional tactics adopted by the DC.[53]

As these examples show, the consensus on Chilean politics is that during the pre-1973 period the configuration of partisan alignments was clearly not bipolar. If this portrayal is accurate, then the evidence of partisan differences in the postauthoritarian period suggests that a realignment has taken place.

Conclusion

The nature of the current Chilean party system has been the focus of an intellectually stimulating and unresolved debate. The main point of contention is whether a bipolar pattern of political competition has replaced the *tres tercios* one that traditionally characterized the Chilean party system.

The empirical results presented in this article provide a rich portrait of similarities and differences between parties and coalitions. Overall, the data provide strong support for the notion that political competition is based on two noncentrist coalitions with very cohesive memberships. The results reveal a fairly homogeneous *Concertación* coalition. The evidence refutes both the notion of a relevant "third" centrist block in the legislature and the hypothesis that members of the DC and the RN are so close that they could readily form such an alternative policy coalition. Therefore, the Chilean electoral coalitions are not merely marriages of convenience. Rather, they constitute two distinct policy-based coalitions.

More generally, the stability and legislative cohesion of Chilean coalitions lend support to the view that multiparty presidential systems are not doomed to failure. The empirical evidence confirms that the *Concertación* is not only one of the longest lived multiparty electoral alliances in Latin America, but also a highly cohesive legislative coalition.

Theories that seek to explain legislative politics in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Uruguay, where multiparty electoral coalitions play a key role, also need to address the lawmaking capacities of such partisan agreements. For example, the debate presented in this article parallels a very similar one among Brazilian specialists over the strength of president-led coalitions in that country.[54] Such debates foster the accumulation of knowledge necessary to build new and improved theories of the workings of multiparty coalitions in presidential democracies. Work on this subject, based on different methodological perspectives and different evidence, is encouraging. Still, there is much improvement to be made in explanations of coalition politics in presidential democracies. An important and stimulating research program lies ahead.

NOTES

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1. For example, Jose Cheibub, Adam Przeworski, and Sebastián M. Saiegh, "Government Coalitions and Legislative Success under Presidentialism and Parliamentarism," *British Journal of Political Science,* 34 (2004), 565–87; Octavio Amorim Neto, "The Presidential Calculus: Executive Policy Making and Cabinet Formation in the Americas," *Comparative Political Studies,* 4 (2006), 415–40; David Altman, "The Politics of Coalition Formation and Survival in Multiparty Presidential Democracies: The Case of Uruguay (1989–1999)," *Party Politics,* 6 (2002), 259–83.

2. John M. Carey, "Parties, Coalitions and the Chilean Congress in the 1990s," in Scott Morgenstern and Benito Nacif, eds., *Legislative Politics in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 223, 253; Peter Siavelis, "Sistema Electoral, Desintegración de Coaliciones y Democracia en Chile: ¿El Fin de la Concertación?," *Revista de Ciencia Política,* 24 (2004), 58–80.

3. The opposition coalition, was named *Unión por el Progreso* and *Democracia y Progreso* in prior years. The junior partner, the UCC, joined the alliance in 1993.

4. Peter Siavelis, "Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System," *Comparative Political Studies,* 30 (1997), 651–74.

5. The only relevant national party excluded from either coalition was the Communist party.

6. Eugenio Tironi and Felipe Aguero, "¿Sobrevivirá el Actual paisaje Político Chileno?," *Estudios Públicos,* 74 (1999), 151–68; Carey, pp. 223–24.

7. Gerardo Munck and Jeffrey A. Bosworth, "Patterns of Representation and Competition: Parties and Democracy in Post-Pinochet Chile," in *Party Politics,* 4 (1998), 471–93; Siavelis, "Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System," pp. 655–70; Timothy Scully, "Reconstructing Party Politics in Chile," in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, eds., *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 100–37.

8. Eugenio Guzmán, "Reflexiones sobre el sistema binomial," *Estudios Públicos,* 51 (1993), 303–25; Rohda Rabkin, "Redemocratization, Electoral Engineering, and Party Strategies in Chile, 1989–1995," *Comparative Political Studies,* 29 (1996), 335–56; Lisa Baldez and John M. Carey, "Presidential Agenda

Control and Spending Policy: Lessons from General Pinochet's Constitution," *American Journal of Political Science,* 43 (1999), 29–56.

9. Siavelis, "Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System," p. 656; Cristóbal Aninat, John Londregan, Patricio Navia, and Joaquín Vial, "Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes, and Policy Outcomes in Chile," Research Paper, Inter-American Development Bank (Washington D.C.: 2004), available at http://www.iadb.org/res/laresnetwork/projects/pr226finaldraft.pdf

10. Carey, pp. 231–37; Rabkin, pp. 345–47.

11. Eric Magar, Marc R. Rosenblum, and David Samuels, "On the Absence of Centripetal Incentives in Double-Member Districts: The Case of Chile," *Comparative Political Studies,* 31 (1998), 714–39; Jay K. Dow, "A Spatial Analysis of Candidates in Dual Member Districts: The 1989 Chilean Senatorial Elections," *Public Choice,* 97 (1998), 119–42.

12. Tironi and Aguero, pp. 155–56.

13. Mariano Torcal and Scott Mainwaring, "The Political Re-crafting of Social Bases of Party Competition: Chile 1973–95," *British Journal of Political Science,* 33 (2003), 55–84.

14. Ibid., pp. 69–73.

15. Tironi and Aguero, p. 166.

16. J. Samuel Valenzuela and Timothy R. Scully, "Electoral Choices and the Party System in Chile: Continuities and Changes at the Recovery of Democracy," *Comparative Politics,* 29 (1997), 511–27; Siavelis, "Continuity and Change in the Chilean Party System," pp. 664–672; Munck and Bosworth, pp. 471–93; Scully, p. 136.

17. See, for instance, Barbara Geddes, "The Development of Party Systems in Latin America," paper prepared for the Western Political Science Association meeting, Portland, March 2004.

18. For example, in late 2002 and early 2003 a series of corruption scandals shook the Lagos government and political parties across the spectrum. See Patricio Navia, "Cruz de Lagos," *La Tercera*, Feb. 22, 2003; Jon Jeter, "Spate of Scandals Sullies Chile Squeaky-Clean Reputation," *Washington Post,* Apr. 22, 2003.

19. Robert H. Dix, "Cleavage Structure and Party Systems in Latin America," *Comparative Politics,* 22 (1989), 23–37; Scully, pp. 100–15; Maurice Zeitlin and James Petras, "The Working-Class Vote in Chile: Christian Democracy versus Marxism," *British Journal of Sociology,* 21 (1970), 16–29.

20. Alan Angell, "Party Change in Chile in Comparative Perspective," *Revista de Ciencia Política,* 23 (2003), 88–108.

21. Valenzuela and Scully, p. 525.

22. Siavelis, "Sistema Electoral, Desintegración de Coaliciones y Democracia en Chile," pp. 60–62; also, Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

23. See, for instance, John Londregan, *Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Morgenstern, *Patterns of Legislative Politics*; Mark P. Jones and Wonjae Hwang, "Party Government in Presidential Democracies: Extending Cartel Theory beyond the U.S. Congress," *American Journal of Political Science,* 49 (2005), 267–82.

24. John Londregan, "Estimating Legislator's Preferred Points," *Political Analysis,* 8 (2000), 35–56; Joshua Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers, "The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data," *American Political Science Review,* 98 (2004), 355–70; Joshua Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers, "The Most Liberal Senator? Analyzing and Interpreting Congressional Roll Calls," *PS,* 37 (2004), 805–11.

25. Londregan, "Estimating Legislator' Preferred Points," pp. 35–37. There are different ways to obtain useful estimates of uncertainty, though: For example, some of these problems can be mitigated by using Lewis and Poole's parametric bootstrap.

26. Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers, "Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data," p. 356. Simon Jackman, "Multidimensional Analysis of Roll Call Data via Bayesian Simulation: Identification, Estimation, Inference, and Model Checking," *Political Analysis,* 9 (2001), 227–41.

27. Given the multiple sources of influence on a legislator's vote, the estimated ideal points should not be treated as a measure of a legislator's personal ideology, but rather as a useful summary of the ideological content of his voting record.

28. Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers, "Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data," pp. 357–58.

29. The 1997–1998 data contain sixty-three nonunanimous votes taken by 120 legislators, and the data from the 1999–2000 session comprise sixty-one nonunanimous votes taken by 120 legislators. Thus, 7,560 and 7,320 individual voting decisions, respectively, are modeled.

30. The results were generated using IDEAL, a computer program developed by Simon Jackman (available at http://jackman.stanford.edu/ideal/). See Simon Jackman, "IDEAL Point Estimation and Roll Call Analysis via Bayesian Simulation" (mimeo, Department of Political Science, Stanford University, 2004). A more extensive explanation of the methodology employed in this study, including a discussion of identification, priors, and convergence, is available from the authors upon request.

31. The discrimination parameter increases in the distance between the yea and nay alternatives and decreases in the vote-specific variance of error; the higher the value, the more a vote distinguishes well between individuals with opposing ideal points.

32. The possible influence of a second dimension is addressed in the next section.

33. Results are shown for the 1999–2000 period, which are almost identical to those from the 1997–1998 period (available from the authors upon request).

34. However, one should be careful with the interpretation of these null results. The fact that the DC and PS medians have overlapping confidence intervals may not mean that the two parties are not distinct. A Wilcoxon rank sum test shows that these medians are statistically distinct. Therefore, the overlap between the confidence intervals may mean only that there is too much noise to find that they are distinct. The analysis of the overlap between the individual members of each party presented below, though, gives us more confidence in the accuracy of our estimates. We thank an anonymous referee for pointing this out.

35. These results are consistent with Londregan's analysis of right-wing senators in the Labor Committee of the Chilean Senate. See Londregan, *Legislative Institutions and Ideology in Chile,* pp. 122–45.

36. John E. Jackson and John W. Kingdon, "Ideology, Interest Group Scores, and Legislative Votes," *American Journal of Political Science,* 36 (1992), 805–23.

37. Morgenstern, pp. 162–63.

38. The question reads: "When people talk about politics, the expressions left and right are usually employed. The following card presents a series of cells going from left to right. In which cell would you place yourself taking into account your political ideas?" The survey was conducted between April 11 and July 31, 1998, so the legislators are the same as in our sample. Unfortunately, though, it is not possible to match the individual responses with our ideal point estimates, as the survey was anonymous.

39. In addition to Chilean legislators' ideological assessments, the results were also compared with W-NOMINATE scores for the Chilean chamber of deputies (1997–1998). There was no significant difference in those scores and our estimator, as the ideal point estimates correlate at 0.896. But, as expected, on average the W-NOMINATE pseudo standard errors were too small (by a factor of 1.73) in comparison to our estimates.

40. Siavelis, "Sistema Electoral, Desintegración de Coaliciones y Democracia en Chile," pp. 74–78; Aninat, Londregan, Navia, and Vial, pp. 30–32.

41. The 2004 data comprise 201 nonunanimous votes taken by 115 legislators for a total of 23,115 individual voting decisions.

42. Given space limitations, we can not present here a full discussion of the results obtained using the 2004 data. A complete survey is available upon request.

43. In only one of these votes does a majority of the DC face the rest of the parties.

44. Barry Ames, "Party Discipline in the Chamber of Deputies," in Morgenstern and Nacif, eds., pp. 185–221.

45. Chilean legislators can move to force the discussion of a bill with a discharge petition, which passes by majority vote. See Eduardo Alemán, "Policy Gatekeepers in Latin American Legislatures," *Latin American Politics and Society* (2006).

46. Carey, pp. 250–52; Baldez and Carey, pp. 32–34; Eduardo Alemán and George Tsebelis, "The Origins of Presidential Conditional Agenda Setting Power in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review,* 40 (2005), 3–26; Peter Siavelis, "Executive-Legislative Relations in Post-Pinochet Chile: A Preliminary

Assessment," in Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Soberg Shugart, eds., *Presidentialism in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 321–62.

47. Aninat, Londregan, Navia, and Vial, pp. 30–32. See also John Londregan, "Political Parties and Legislative Coalitions: Ratifying Chile's Relationship with Mercosur" (mimeo, Department of Politics, Princeton University, 2004).

48. Carey, p. 224.

49. Steven W. Hughes and Kenneth J. Mijeski, *Legislative-Executive Policy-Making: The Cases of Chile and Costa Rica* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1973), p. 24.

50. See, for instance, Timothy Scully, *Rethinking the Center: Party Politics in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Chile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); J. Samuel Valenzuela, "The Origins and Transformations of the Chilean Party System," Kellogg Institute for International Studies, Working Paper #215 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995); Juan Faundez, "In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932–1970," in Mainwaring and Shugart, eds., pp. 300–20.

51. Paul E. Sigmund, *The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964–1976* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 39.

52. See Luis Maira, "La Estrategia y la Táctica del la Contrarrevolución Chilena en el Ambito Político-Institucional," in Federico G. Gil, Ricardo Lagos E., and Henry A. Landsberger, eds., *Chile 1970–1973: Lecciones de una Experiencia* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1977), pp. 244–76.

53. Radomiro Tomic, "La Democracia Cristiana y el Gobierno de la Unidad Popular," in Gil, Lagos, and Landsberger, eds., pp. 215–43.

54. Barry Ames, *The Deadlock of Democracy in Brazil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Fernando Limongi and Argelina Cheibub Figueiredo, "Bases Institucionais do Presidencialismo de Coalizão," *Lua Nova*, 44 (1998), 81–106.

The Conflict of Conflicts in Comparative Perspective

Euthanasia as a Political Issue in Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands

Christoffer Green-Pedersen

In his seminal book, *The Semi-Sovereign People,* E. E. Schattschneider drew attention to the importance of the "conflict of conflicts."[1] It is as important to understand which political conflicts dominate democratic politics as it is to understand the outcome of the conflicts.[2] The conflict of conflicts is similar to what political science calls agenda setting, and Schattschneider's book has served as a foundation for the primarily American research tradition of studying agenda setting.[3] This tradition offers considerable insight into agenda-setting processes, but its weakness is its domination by studies of agenda-setting processes in the U.S.[4] Studies of the conflict of conflicts in a comparative perspective are rare, and political science does not provide much of an answer to a very basic question. Why do some issues become political in one country but not in another? This question is the focus of this article. It seeks to explain why euthanasia has become a political issue in the Netherlands and Belgium but not in Denmark.

An answer to this question contributes to more than agenda setting. For a long time, party systems continued to reflect the conflict of conflicts that had taken place in the early decades of the twentieth century, and the left-right conflict was the dominant political conflict in most countries. The left-right conflict is still crucial, but changes within the electorate, such as increasing electoral volatility and the growing importance of issue voting, have opened up party politics in many West European countries. Political conflicts around other political issues than traditional left-right issues are becoming more important, calling for political science interest in their dynamics.[5] An important element in analyzing the (re)emergence of the conflict of conflicts is to study it in comparative perspective. To know why an issue has become political in one country, comparison with a country where the issue could have but did not become political is an obvious research strategy.[6]

The extent to which an issue can be linked to an already existing conflict in the party system is important in explaining comparative differences in whether or not it becomes political. If an issue can be linked to an existing conflict in the party system, powerful political actors have an interest in politicizing the issue, and the issue can be framed in a way that makes it a case of an already well-established political conflict.