

Elections and Parties in Latin America: Ruptures and Continuities at the End of a Decade*

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(Alcántara, Manuel; Buquet, Daniel, and Tagina, María Laura. *Elecciones y partidos en América Latina en el cambio de ciclo*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2018)

The book 'Elecciones y partidos en América Latina en el cambio de ciclo', edited by Manuel Alcántara, Daniel Buquet and María Laura Tagina, and published in 2018 by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas in Madrid, Spain, is composed of 20 chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Most of the authors have received their PhDs from the University of Salamanca, and many of the chapters include sources of information produced in that institution. The project Parliamentarian Elites (PELA), by the Ibero-American Institute, is referred to in almost all the chapters. The ideological index classifying political parties within a left-to-right spectrum, in particular, is widely used by the researchers. It appears that the editors wanted to show the accumulation of knowledge by the Institute, a valid purpose per se, however the use of alternative sources and theoretical approaches would have further enriched the discussions on the book's topics.

As its title suggests, the book revolves around the electoral processes that took place in Latin American countries between 2013 and 2017. Each of the chapters deals with one Latin American country and analyzes its presidential, legislative and, in some cases, municipal electoral results. As the introduction points out, each chapter presents information related to the political configuration of party systems, and to legal dispositions that might impact the outcomes.

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Specifically, through the effective number of parties (ENP) index developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979), the authors show the level of party systems fragmentation in legislative bodies and, following Sartori, define those systems as two-party, limited pluralism or multiparty systems. The fragmentation in presidential elections is observed through the number of candidates, the level of competitiveness among candidates, and the presidential alternation between elections. Considering legislative and presidential electoral results, the authors observe whether the elected government has a majoritarian support in Congress. In each case, they hypothesize about the probabilities of governability: the larger the government coalition, the higher the likelihood of governability. This analysis is complemented by a look at the ideological placement of political parties, which provides information about the level of polarization in Congress (PELA, 1994-1998). In addition, the chapters show the levels of electoral participation and women's representation. Finally, each case presents a description of the legal provisions or electoral rules that determine or at least affect the results. All this information is used by the editors to elaborate an introductory chapter in which they compare different variables across 18 countries. The use of common indicators facilitates the comparisons and the placement of each country in different rankings. The editors show that there is a lot of variation in the characteristics of Latin American party systems. The chapters also compare the results of the latest election with past events. They do so in order to show continuities and ruptures inside the country from one moment to the next.

As the editors point out in the introduction, the book follows up on a series of works dealing with Latin American presidential and legislative elections which were published between 2013 and 2016. Thus, it adds to a relevant body of literature that analyzes political dynamics throughout the region. One of the book's most outstanding contributions is the significant amount of information that it accumulates about each country's electoral results, on political parties - old and new -, on electoral reforms implemented during the first two decades of the 2000s, and on citizens' participation levels, among other variables. In addition, the book contextualizes electoral results. Each chapter provides information on social and economic indicators (e.g., GDP, unemployment, inflation, GINI), and suggests connections between those indicators and the electoral results. For those interested in learning about Latin American political systems, this is an illustrative and informative book.

Its publication coincides with that of several other works related to the same subject. In particular, a work very similar in its scope is 'Party Systems in Latin America', edited by Scott Mainwaring in 2018. It also makes an effort to observe and compare Latin

American party systems' characteristics and indicators. The authors reassess the conclusions of the well-known book, coauthored by Mainwaring and Scully in 1995, 'Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America'. In this previous work, the authors offer a definition of the institutionalization of party systems and establish a way to operationalize and measure the concept. They compare 18 Latin American countries and rank each one of them according to an institutionalization index. In the new book (2018), Mainwaring refines the definition and operationalization of the concept, and invites country experts to analyze the cases and update the conclusions found in 1995. The framework is the same in all chapters, thus allowing for comparison between them.

It is important to mention Mainwaring and Scully's work (1995) because its topic is similar to that of Alcántara, Buquet and Tagina (2018). However, probably because both books were published almost simultaneously, the authors of one book do not mention or cite the works of those in the other book. The conceptual definitions and the theoretical formulation that Mainwaring and Scully (1995) introduce to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny (i.e., the institutionalization of Latin American party systems) would have been enlightening for Alcántara, Buquet and Tagina (2018). The identification of a 'regional problem' or of a common pattern concerning the party systems is absent from their book. For this reason, and although the chapters introduce some recurrent information, each of them revolves around the country's particularities. In spite of how informative the book is, a general research question or a focus on a specific problem would have been helpful in order to guide the chapters more clearly and allow some systematic and substantive comparisons. Many of the topics that are addressed in the book are interesting and provide ideas about the ruptures and continuities in Latin American political systems. The book's title suggests a change of cycle between 2013 and 2017, but it is not clear what this change refers to because the chapters present evidence related to different types of ruptures or continuities expressed by election results.

For example, Argentina and Brazil finished relatively long periods of leftist governments in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Kirchnerism/Peronism in Argentina came to an end (at least for now) with the election of the rightist Mauricio Macri of 'Cambiamos'. Similarly, Dilma Rousseff (Partido dos Trabalhadores) in Brazil had to step down from the presidency after facing a process of impeachment. The power was transferred to her vice-president Michel Temer, from the Movimento Democrático Brasileiro. The loss of power of parties that were majoritarian - or were at least in the lead - for more than a decade produced instability in the party systems. The emergence of new political parties contributed to an increase in electoral volatility, and probably to a decrease in the

levels of party system institutionalization. In Ecuador, the electoral decline that 'Alianza País' suffered in the provincial and municipal elections of 2014, and in the 2017 legislative and presidential elections, broke up the long chain of triumphs that it had had since 2007 and accelerated the weakening of the 'Revolución Ciudadana' initiated by Rafael Correa in his first term. In order to analyze and compare these cases, it is worth inquiring about the factors that explain the alternation in the executive power, after prolonged periods of kirchnerismo, petismo and correísmo. Do the governments' performances explain the changes?

Contrary to these cases, in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela the governments of Morales, Ortega and Maduro were re-elected in 2014, 2016 and 2018. As a consequence, the accumulation of power by the government and in the president's party - the Movement to Socialism (MAS), the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), and the PSUV-GPPSB -, has kept the opposition at bay. In these countries, especially in Nicaragua and Venezuela, the democratic nature of the regime has been questioned. Therefore, it would be interesting to inquire about the conditions under which these governments can be maintained in contexts of economic, political and social turmoil. In Paraguay and Panamá, the traditional parties 'Colorado' and 'Panameñista' recovered the presidency in 2013 and 2014, respectively. They had been defeated in 2008 and 2009, when the candidates of 'Guasú Front' (Fernando Lugo) and 'Democratic Change' (Ricardo Martinelli) prevailed in the elections. The return of traditional parties to presidential power interrupted a process of democratic opening that had begun in the 1990s (Panama) and the 2000s (Paraguay). The impeachment against Lugo in Paraguay, and corruption scandals associated with Martinelli in Panama may have had an influence on this outcome. These events suggest a research question related to the resilience of traditional parties. In a context in which traditional parties suffer a high level of distrust, what can explain their capacity to recover political power? In the Dominican Republic, these parties - Democratic Liberation Party (PLD) and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) - have retained the majority of power even after the beginning of the democratization process in the late 1970s.

Other chapters pay attention to institutional changes that took place in the period being studied. Electoral reforms were introduced in order to modify the configuration of the party systems. In Chile, for example, the transformation of the binomial system into one with larger electoral districts ended a legacy of the military dictatorship. The expectation was to increase the political competition and citizens' participation. Apparently, some changes (e.g., political fragmentation) occurred in the last elections

(2017). However, it is too soon to confirm that they are a consequence of the new rules. A question in these cases is whether there is really a break with the past and a change in the configuration of party systems as a result of the new electoral rules. In Costa Rica and Honduras, despite the fact that no significant reforms were introduced, important changes in the levels of party systems' fragmentation took place (e.g., more fragmentation in Costa Rica). The weakening of traditional parties and the emergence of new viable alternatives may have influenced this outcome. However, other variables may also be significant. What explains this? Is there an 'electoral realignment' or a change in the voters' behavior? This question is valid also in the case of Uruguay, where traditional parties have not been able to recover power since 2004, when they lost it to the 'Frente Amplio'.

Ideological polarization is observed in some cases. Clearly leftist and rightist parties, or leaders that represent one or other extremes in the ideological spectrum, competed in recent elections and divided the countries. This was the case in Colombia, El Salvador and Peru. In the first two cases, the ending of long-lasting armed conflicts and the possibility for the left to form legitimate parties have led to the radicalization of right-wing politicians and parties, and to a consequent polarization. Can ideological polarization be explained by the emergence of political parties created by previously excluded actors? In the Peruvian case, the polarization occurred around fujimorismo, represented by Keiko Fujimori (daughter of the former president), and 'anti-Fujimorism', represented by Pedro Pablo Kuczynski. Keiko won the election in the first round, but she was not able to gather enough votes in the second round; Kuczynski was elected president with a majority of only 40.000 votes. He lacked an organized and cohesive political party and faced strong opposition in Congress. After a year and a half in power, he resigned and left a political vacuum. As in Paraguay and Brazil, the interruption of government appears as a phenomenon that deserves attention due to the instability that it produces in the political system.

Summing up, many research questions might be formulated for a future research agenda based on the book 'Elecciones y partidos en América Latina en el cambio de ciclo'. As it is argued in many of the chapters, political configurations are going through a change of cycle in several Latin American countries. However, it is also clear that the changes are of different natures. Therefore, scholars on Latin American party systems may be interested in looking for causes that account for phenomena such as the alternation of governments or their prolongation over time, party system fragmentation, ideological polarization, the interruption of elected governments, among others. The 2017

and 2018 general elections, most of which are not included in this book, add cases of rupture or alternation (Chile, Mexico, Colombia, and possibly Ecuador), of continuities (Paraguay and Venezuela), and of the emergence of challenging alternatives (Costa Rica).

Revised by Priscilla Kreitlon

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