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The Theory of Partisan Alignments and an Empirical Exploration of Latin America

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Documentos de Trabajo

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Resumen: En este trabajo ofrecemos una evaluación teórica y empírica de la evolución de los alineamientos partidarios en América Latina desde el comienzo de la tercera ola de democratización. En primer lugar, identificamos una serie de limitaciones en la literatura existente sobre alineamientos partidarios, en particular su desinterés por los sistemas de partidos no institucionalizados. En segundo lugar, proponemos un marco teórico diferente que es más universalmente aplicable. Luego, operacionalizamos nuestros indicadores y aplicamos nuestro nuevo marco teórico a todos los países latinoamericanos. Esto nos permite generar un mapa de la evolución de las lealtades partidarias en América Latina en el período 1980-2012. Nuestro análisis revela que la visión que afirma que hay un desalineamiento partidario en toda la región es incorrecta.

Palabras clave: Sistemas de partidos, alineamiento, desalineamiento, realineamiento, América Latina.

Abstract: In this paper we provide a theoretical and empirical evaluation of the evolution of partisan alignments in Latin America since the beginning of the Third Wave of democratization. We first point to a series of limitations of the conventional framework of partisan alignments, namely their disregard of party systems that are only partially or non-institutionalized. Second, we propose a refined framework that is more universally applicable. We then operationalize our indicators and apply our new framework to every democratic country in Latin America to generate a map of the evolution of partisan loyalties in Latin America in the period 1980-2012. Our analysis reveals that the conventional view of widespread partisan dealignment in Latin America is largely inaccurate.

Key words: Party systems, alignment, dealignment, realignment, Latin America.

I. Introduction

Party systems in Latin America have undergone enormous changes since the beginning of the Third Wave of democratization. Once solid party systems have collapsed entirely (e.g. Colombia and Venezuela), while others have been reoriented in accord with the breakdown of some parties and the emergence of new partisan options (e.g. Argentina and Costa Rica). These transitions explain the focus on the weaknesses, collapse, failures (Tanaka 1998, Morgan 2011, Gutiérrez Sanín 2007), low levels of institutionalization (Mainwaring and Scully 1995), or the dealignment (Hagopian 1998, Klesner 2005, Morgan 2007) of party systems in the region. Using the last of these concepts, we show, however, that this focus is somewhat misguided. A first problem is that the terminology, at least as applied to multi-party and uninstitutionalized contexts, is imprecise. More importantly, our comprehensive survey of electoral results shows widely varying trends rather than a general move towards dealignment.

A seminal book on Latin American party systems proposed to classify party systems in the region according to their level of institutionalization (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). This contribution was groundbreaking because it shifted the focus of analysis of party systems in Latin America from simply counting the number of parties to evaluating the nature of inter-party interactions. An important drawback of this classification is that it is overly static. Mainwaring and Scully characterize party systems as either "institutionalized" or "inchoate" depending on how they score on a series of dimensions (stability in the rules of interparty competition, stable roots in society, political actors accepting the legitimacy of the electoral process, and strong party organizations). This classification and operationalization was useful to characterize party systems at any given point in time, but it was not intended to be a classificatory scheme of the evolution of party systems and partisan alignments.[1] This is the main goal of our paper.

To the extent that scholars have studied the nature and the evolution of partisan loyalties in Latin America they have used a framework imported from the literature on American and Western European parties. According to this conventional framework, the evolution of partisan alignments can be classified in three categories: stable alignment, realignment,

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[1] Actually, some of the party systems that were classified as "institutionalized" in this book (Mainwaring and Scully 1995) –e.g. Colombia and Venezuela– have become much more inchoate in the last fifteen years.

and dealignment, and most have classified the Latin American party systems in the last two of these categories.

This framework has had utility for application to party system change in systems where there have been two stable parties, but two important shortcomings make it difficult to use in the Latin American context. First, the concepts of dealignment and realignment both assume the previous existence of alignments. This assumption is problematic where, as in some Latin American countries, parties have not had stable support of strongly aligned voters. Second, the conventional framework is too rigid in its description of the evolution of partisan alignments, and is devoid of nuance, presuming an "either-or" logic that opposes stable alignments and dealignments. In Latin America, however, we find examples of systems where one party but not others have consistent support, or where some but not all parties have undergone important transitions. We also have examples where there are multiple small parties –perhaps with consistent levels of support– but large parts of the electorate that remain unaligned. The standard categorization scheme does not allow for these types of partial alignments or dealignments. In this paper we therefore offer a broader framework for study the evolution of partisan loyalties that is applicable to systems regardless of the level of institutionalization or other system traits.

This paper will proceed as follows. First, we will present the traditional framework of partisan alignments as it has been used in the American and in the European literature. Second, we will discuss the limitations of the existing framework and propose an alternative classification of the evolution of partisan alignments that overcomes these shortcomings. Third, we identify a series of aggregate indicators that allow us to classify the 18 countries of the region in the different categories of our refined framework. Finally, we use our new framework and our proposed operationalization to describe the evolution of partisan loyalties in Latin America in the period 1980-2010. This empirical evaluation leads us to describe several distinct tendencies of partisanship and party system change. We thus conclude that the view of ubiquitous partisan dealignment is erroneous and oversimplified; instead we show that in addition to cases of dealignment, there are also cases of continual alignment, realignment, partial alignment, and continuation of systems that have never achieved alignment.

II. The Conventional Framework of the Evolution of Partisan Alignments

The literature on partisan alignments in the United States and Western Europe is dominated by a framework consisting of three different patterns of the evolution of partisanship at the mass level: stable alignment, realignment, and dealignment. In this section, we will present these three concepts and introduce their ideal-typical characteristics. We will also illustrate these three patterns with examples from Latin America.[2]

A stable alignment of the party system is an electoral period marked by "constancy in party coalitions and aggregate partisan equilibrium" (Dalton, Beck and Flanagan 1984). Stable alignments are characterized by an unaltered partisan balance over a series of elections. During periods of stable alignment, the long term support for the different political parties in the system remains unchanged (Dalton *et al.* 1967). Stable alignments can imply the psychological party identifications held by individuals (or perhaps groups), and these may be tied to social cleavages that help define parties' ideology (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960; Lipset y Rokkan 1967; Bafumi y Saphiro 2009). We focus here, however, on the constancy in the support for the various parties in the system, presuming (rather than testing) the association between voters' allegiances and party support levels. Note too that this definition implies that a stable alignment requires that parties capture the bulk of the country's votes.

Stable alignments are relatively easy to pin down empirically; they require a) that most voters choose one of the existing parties and b) that electoral volatility is low. Although some voters will switch election-to-election, the stable alignments presume that most voters consistently support an existing party. The ideal type for stable alignments also requires high levels of electoral participation (though institutions also influence this number) and that few voters spoil ballots, owing to satisfaction with the slate of options (Fornos, Power and Garand 2004; Dettrey and Schwindt-Bayer 2009). High volatility or a

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[2] The concept of partisan alignment most clearly describes the strength and the stability of partisan loyalties in the electorate. However, the evolution of voters' alignments has direct implications for the party system. In the rest of this paper, therefore, we follow conventional usage and use expressions such as "dealigne" or "realigned" countries or party systems to refer to party systems that are undergoing a process of partisan dealignment or realignment.

significant decrease in participation rates, therefore, would indicate a move towards dealignment. Table I summarizes this ideal type.

Table I. *Markers of Stable Partisan Alignment*

- Electoral volatility is low and stable
- The level of support for established parties is high and stable
- New political parties do not emerge
- Voter turnout remains stable
- Invalid votes remain low and stable

While alignment implies constancy, dealignment indicates a period of change. Specifically, the party system is in a period of dealignment when the attachment of voters to established parties weakens, and mass party coalitions dissolve (Marinova 2008). In its traditional meaning, during dealignment phases, citizens' loyalties to all the established parties erode. The most visible sign of dealignment in the United States and Britain has been the decline in the number of citizens identified with political parties, and the rapid increase in the number of independents or non-identifiers (Crewe, Sarlvik and Alt 1977; Carmines, McIver and Stimson 1987). A partisan dealignment may result from the politization of new issues. If established parties are not able to aggregate and articulate these new issues in their programs, a part of the electorate may de-align.[3] Another source of dealignment which explains many of the Latin American countries is the gap between citizens' expectations and actual performance by political parties. Not only are citizens in many Latin American countries disappointed with the economic performance of established parties, they are also disenchanted by the high levels of corruption among party politicians (Hagopian 2005). Anti-establishment candidates who promise to fight against the corrupt practices of political parties feed on this disenchantment (Hawkins 2010). Note that if the citizenry continue to choose candidates from new or anti-system system parties, the system is dealigned rather than dealigning.

As summarized in Table II, several pieces of evidence can point towards a period of dealignment or a dealigned system. The first is a high or increased level of electoral volatility. As party ties weaken, voting patterns become more fluid. The number of

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[3] This type of dealignment appears to be affecting industrialized democracies. Traditional political parties in these countries have been unable to incorporate "post-material" issues into their programs, thereby producing the dealignment of a sizable portion of the electorate –especially the younger generations Dalton (1997).

floating voters increases in party systems that go through a dealignment phase; and electoral results may significantly vary across elections (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2008). A second sign of partisan dealignment is the rise of new political challengers who lack political experience and/or a developed party apparatus. There are many examples of successful outsiders in presidential elections in Latin America, such as Fujimori in the 1990 elections in Peru, and Chávez in the 1998 elections in Venezuela. A third potential piece of evidence for a dealigning system is a decline in voter turnout, because the erosion of partisan cues could make the act of voting more costly. Low turnout could also be a signal that partisan loyalty is less important to voters, or that they have lost confidence in the party (or democratic) system (Wattenberg 2000, Marinova 2008). By itself, however, electoral participation is not a good measure of dealignment, because a charismatic outsider could galvanize voting. A final potential marker of a partisan dealignment would be an increase in invalid ballots cast in legislative and presidential elections. The idea here is that a loss of confidence in the electoral options could lead voters to cast a blank or a spoiled ballot.

Table II. *Markers of Partisan Dealignment*

- Rise in electoral volatility
- Decline in support for established parties
- Emergence of political outsiders
- Decline in voter turnout
- Rise in invalid votes

The traditional literature defines a partisan realignment as an electoral period during which there is a fundamental and durable shift in the overall level of support for the political parties in a given political system. As Sundquist explains in his seminal book Dynamics of the Party System, realignments result from the introduction of new issues in the political agenda, thereby producing new partisan cleavages (Sundquist 1983). He defines realignments as "redistributions of party support, of whatever scale or pace, that reflect a change in the structure of the party conflict and hence the establishment of a new line of partisan cleavage on a different axis within the electorate" (Sundquist 1983). A key difference between dealignments and realignments is the existence of a new line of cleavage in the electorate. Whereas dealignments can occur in the absence of a new divisive issue in the political agenda, realignments imply a redefinition of the political cleavages. When a major national event occurs, or when a new issue is introduced in the

political agenda, the established parties must take a position. If the parties' stance on the new issue clashes with the positions of the voters of these parties, a partisan realignment is likely to follow. In some cases, however, the new line of partisan cleavage may simply result from ideological changes in the electorate.[4] Partisan realignment can occur in one "critical election" that crystallizes the emergence of a new partisan cleavage (Key 1955), but it can also develop gradually over a series of consecutive elections. This latter process has been described as "secular realignment" (Key 1959). The approach we propose is useful to identify both types of realignment processes.

Realignments are perhaps more difficult to pin down empirically than dealignments, because while it is clear when there is a change from an existing system, it is not often clear when voters have settled on opposing sides of a new political cleavage. Classifying the end of a realignment is further complicated because in some cases the process will produce a redistribution of support among established political parties, while in other cases it would produce a new and henceforth stable party that embodies support on one side of the new cleavage structure.[5]

These difficulties notwithstanding, the concept of realignment suggests a series of observable implications (Table III). First, unlike what might occur during a period of dealignment, realignment should not lead to a sharp increase in spoiled or null votes (associated with disenchantment with the party system) or a decrease in turnout. Second, the emergence of a new party is possible but is not a necessary condition of party system realignment. If a new party does appear, it should establish and institutionalize itself and garner stable support for a series of elections. Fourth, volatility should be very high during one or two critical elections, but then it should decrease as the parties' support stabilizes along the new dimensions.

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[4] A second meaning of the term realignment refers to enduring changes in support for a party within a group (Petrocik 1981: 15-20). Since we lack reliable and comparable survey data for the whole period (1980-2010), in this paper we focus in the shifts in the aggregate level of support for the different parties in the system.

[5] If the new party is an anti-systemic party (e.g. *Cambio* 90 in Peru), we would take this as evidence of dealignment. It is important to make this distinction between systemic and anti-systemic new parties.

Table III. *Markers of Partisan Realignment*

- Rise in electoral volatility, followed by gradual decline
- No increase in disenchantment with the party system
- Enduring shift in the level of support for established parties
- Possible emergence of new institutionalized parties
- Voter turnout remains stable
- Invalid and spoiled votes remain stable

III. Limitations of the Traditional Framework of Partisan Alignments

These three ideal types –stable alignment, dealignment, and realignment– are insufficient for classifying the evolution of partisan alignments in Latin American countries. The first limitation of this framework is that it assumes the existence of partisan alignments as a starting point. This assumption made sense in the study of party systems in the United States and Western Europe, but it is problematic for many countries in Africa (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001), Eastern Europe (Moser 1999; Lewis 2011) and Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Sánchez 2008), where there has never been a stable party system with voters clearly allied among the arrayed competitors. Since these systems have no aligned period, they cannot dealign or realign; they could only maintain a status of dealigned.

The second limitation of the existing framework is its lack of nuance and precision. The traditional approach assumes that alignment and dealignment are characteristics of the party system and applies to all voters (Morgan 2011; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Sánchez 2008; Tanaka 2006; Mainwaring, Bejarano and Pizarro Leongómez 2006). The electorate, however does not always move together, as there are many instances of in Latin America where one party has disintegrated without an accompanying collapse of the other parties in the systems (e.g. the *Unión Cívica Radical* in Argentina, and *Partido Unidad Social Cristiana* in Costa Rica). This suggests the need to add a new category, partial dealignment, to the traditional framework. Similarly, a non-aligned electorate may experience a partial alignment if a substantial portion of the electorate gradually becomes

aligned to one or more political parties, while a substantial group of voters remains un-aligned.

Introducing the possibility of partial alignments (or partial dealignments) also increases the empirical leverage afforded to researchers. Consider a hypothetical situation in which the share of the votes for the different parties remains the same over a series of elections, but turnout declines considerably. This is not a "full dealignment", but neither can it be considered a stable alignment. However, the current framework forces scholars analyzing this type of conflicting evidence to "choose" between these two extreme options (stable alignment and dealignment). We think that this choice is unnecessary and counterproductive, and we thus introduce the idea of a partial dealignment. The intermediate categories are also more appropriate to cases where one or more parties have consistent support, but large numbers of voters are always up for grabs.

A third limitation of the traditional framework is that it applies much better to party systems with a low number of parties that divide among identifiable cleavages. The concept of alignment suggests two or three large parties offering programmatic bases for alignment. The system would be stable and aligned if the same parties obtain a similar share of the votes over a series of elections. It is difficult to think of alignments in the same way in systems where many non-programmatic parties consistently obtain between 10 and 20 per cent of the vote, as in Brazil.[6] Even if the different parties maintain similar levels of support over time, it is not necessarily true that the parties attract their support for particular ideological or policy positions.[7] Survey evidence could assess the source of these parties' support,[8] but the inability of voters in some multi-party systems to identify the parties' policy stances (Samuels 2006: 1-27) suggests that partisan support –and hence alignments– in these cases cannot fit within the classification system in the traditional realignment literature. These situations, then, provide another area where an intermediate category of alignment is necessary.

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[6] If the party system is fractionalized and very volatile, it is easier to categorize the case as an example of an unaligned or a dealigned electorate. A case that combines multipartism and low volatility is harder to classify.

[7] This is also true for the recent electoral turn to the left in Latin America, where five different left-leaning presidents were elected in 11 countries between 1998 and 2011. Roberts argues that Latin America's left turn is not the result of more people identifying themselves as leftists; rather, it is attributable in part to retrospective economic voting behavior. In short, an electoral realignment does not necessarily imply an ideological realignment. (Roberts 2012)

[8] In this paper we focus on electoral data but we did run some analyses using LAPOP data to verify the very blurry lines that divide most of the parties. This analysis is available upon request from the authors.

IV. Toward a refined classification of partisan alignments

In order to overcome the limitations of the traditional framework, we propose a refined classification of the evolution of partisan alignments. As noted and illustrated in Figure I, the traditional framework allows for three different evolutionary patterns, starting from an assumed alignment between parties and voters and then retaining a stable alignment, moving through a period of realignment, or dealigning.

Figure I. *Traditional Framework of Partisan Alignments*
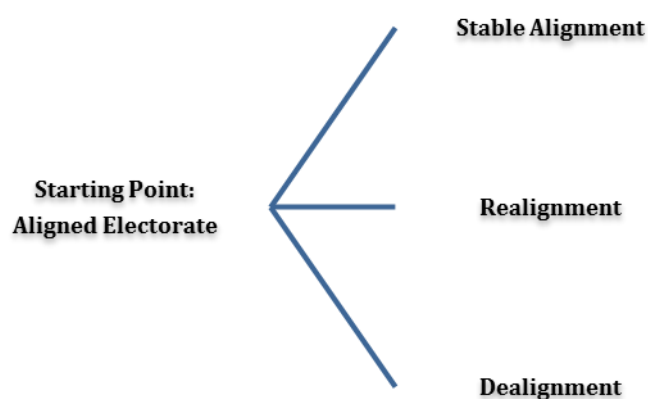
Our more comprehensive framework categorizes party systems in a particular period to be aligned, partially aligned, or non-aligned. Table IV therefore shows the three potential starting points, and also incorporates the possibility of halfway changes at every stage of the evolution of partisan alignments. For instance, an un-aligned electorate may remain un-aligned or become partially or fully aligned over a series of elections. We also modify the typology for aligned systems, given that an aligned electorate may de-align fully (if the vast majority of voters give up their party loyalties) or partially (if one portion of the electorate de-aligns while the other remains stably aligned to the existing parties). The model further captures the possible realignment scenarios, which could be changes among existing parties or shifts in support towards a new programmatic party.

Overall the model we propose is less parsimonious, but it is more comprehensive, allowing classification of a much wider range of cases, most notably those that lack institutionalized party systems. It generates, in sum, eleven different scenarios of partisan alignment change, as enumerated in the table.

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Table IV. *11 scenarios of partisan alignment evolution*

Starting Point of the Electorate	11 Scenarios of Alignment Evolution		Ending Point of the Electorate
Aligned	1	-Stable alignment------------------------>	Aligned
	2	-Realignment between existing parties->	Aligned
	3	-Realignment favoring a new party----->	Aligned
	4	-Full dealignment------------------------>	Non-Aligned
	5	-Partial dealignment---------------------->	Partially Aligned
Non-Aligned	6	-Full alignment---------------------------->	Aligned
	7	-Continual non-alignment--------------->	Non-Aligned
	8	-Partial alignment------------------------->	Partially Aligned
Partially Aligned	9	-Full alignment---------------------------->	Aligned
	10	-Full dealignment------------------------>	Non-Aligned
	11	-Continual partial alignment------------->	Partially Aligned

V. Measuring evolution in partisan alignments

In this section we identify a series of indicators that allow us to classify countries in the different categories of our refined framework. Ideally, the evolution of partisan alignments should be measured with both electoral and survey data. Surveys done at several points in time could show the evolution of respondents' attachment to parties, and could help to assess whether the decline in partisanship affects specific parties or is more general.[9] Survey data are increasingly available, but are unavailable for the earlier parts of our analysis (circa 1980).[10] Another possibility for assessing voter ties is to analyze electoral data at the municipal level. Wellhofer (2001) uses an ecological technique –developed by King (1997)– that allows him to infer electoral realignment from the voting patterns observed at the very local level. This technique is very difficult to implement in the present analysis, for the simple reason that it is extremely difficult to obtain municipal level electoral data for most Latin American countries.

Given the impossibility of using these alternative techniques, and the general interest in determining whether party dynamics remain relatively constant, in this paper we focus on a series of indicators based on legislative election results. Specifically, we analyze six aggregate indicators and their evolution: total volatility, change in support of top two parties, electoral support for new or outsider parties, turnout, the percentage of invalid votes, and the total support for the largest two parties. We created a database of legislative elections across Latin America (South and Central America, plus the Dominican Republic) for the period 1980-2012, and we measured these six indicators for each election. Since we have several elections per country in the database, we can infer the evolution of partisan alignments in each by carefully analyzing the evolution of these six indicators. No single indicator is necessary or sufficient to classify a country into one of the eleven scenarios, but the combined analysis of these six indicators allows a comprehensive view of the party system and its evolution.

To begin the analysis, we first operationalize the three variables that pertain to electoral volatility. To capture aggregate volatility (V) of the party system, we use the well-known

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[9] Recent studies have attempted to analyze the evolution of mass partisanship in many Latin American countries using survey data. See Luna and Altman (2011: 1-28) and Moreno and Méndez (2007: 43-76)

[10] The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) survey data are available for some countries since 2004, but many countries joined in later waves.

Pedersen Index, which is calculated by halving the sum of the absolute changes (across two elections) in the vote shares (or seats) for all parties.[11] Then, to account for the change to the top-two parties (T), we take the absolute change of the sum of the vote shares of these two parties between electiont1 and electiont divided by the total vote share of these two parties in electiont1 (multiplied by 100).[12] The third concern is whether new parties are gaining at the expense of traditional parties rather than voters transferring among existing parties. We capture the importance of new parties (N) by measuring the share of the vote going to new political parties. We consider a party as new in the first two national elections in which it participates. A new party's vote is counted in our measure if it gained 5% or more of the vote share. If it obtained 5% or more of the vote share in the first election but not in the second, we only counted its vote share in the first election. If it obtained 5% or more in the second election but not in the first, we only counted its vote share in the second election. New parties lose their status as "new" after the second election in which they participate. For instance, the *Movimiento V República* (MVR) first appeared in Venezuela in 1998 and we thus count it as new for that election (when it won 20%) as well as in 2000, when it won 44.4 %. After 2000, however, it is counted as an existing party.

In order to construct a map of party systems for the region, we divided these three variables into high, medium, and low (indicated by the respective capital, small, and subscripted letters), based on the cut points described in Table V.[13] We chose these particular cut-points at levels that provide a logical representation of the concepts; note for example that while we define high volatility for the top two parties to be more than a 10% shift in voters' support, we double that value to define a high level of total volatility. Moving the boundaries would, of course, change the empirical emplacement of specific parties, but this would not affect the theoretical analysis.

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[11] The Pedersen Index is calculated as halving the sum of the absolute change in all party vote shares (or seats) between two elections, which yields a scale from 0 to 100, with a higher value indicating a higher level of volatility. In this paper, we only considered parties that have obtained at least 5% of the votes in the calculation of the Index. When a party changed its name, we counted it as being the same organization. If two or more parties formed a coalition for election T2, but competed in election T1 as separate parties, we divided the vote share of the coalition by the number of parties as if each of them ran election T2 individually. If the coalition continued from elections T2 to T3, we consider this coalition as a single party organization over time.

[12] An alternative scheme could consider a constant base year, but we wanted to evaluate changes from each electoral period.

[13] One limitation of this system is that it evaluates change between each two elections, and thus does not permit a longer-term view. We attend to this limitation in our qualitative analysis.

Table V. *Categorization Criteria of Party Systems*

	High	Medium	Low
Total Volatility	V >20	10<V<20	$_V$< 10
Top-2 Volatility	T> 10	5<T<10	$_T$< 5
New Party Support	N> 20	10<N<20	$_N$<10

Using just these three variables and the three levels generates 27 different possible combinations (VTN, VtN, VtN, etc), but because there is a necessary relation among these variables, some combinations are illogical.[14] If T is large, then V, for example, cannot be small, and a medium level of "Top-2 Volatility" generates at least a medium level of "Total Volatility". Once removing the illogical combinations, 16 are left.

This is still a large number of categories, and it would multiply if we add the other three indicators, turnout, spoiled ballots, and the size of the top two parties. To minimize the complexity, therefore, we first evaluate party systems on these first three indicators, and then use the others to validate the placements.

VI. The evolution of partisan alignments in Latin America (1980-2010). Empirical application

Table VI maps all legislative elections in Central and South America after about 1980 (the start of the Third Wave) using our three main indicators. Rather than suggesting that parties across the region are all in decline, the map shows the largest cluster of countries in the southeast box of Table VI (coded VTN) where there have been low levels of volatility and limited support for new parties. These cases (which include most years for Chile and Honduras, but also several years for Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Venezuela in 1988) provide evidence to challenge the general claim that all Latin American party systems are collapsing (Hawkins 2003, Seawright 2012).

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[14] We have a complete set of the logical scenarios, based on a system of five parties, which we will make available in an online appendix.

Table VI. *Volatility, Top-2 Volatility, and Support for New Parties across Latin America (1980-2010)*

Top 2 Volatility (2nd letter) and Change in Support for New Party (3rd letter)

		Hh	Hm	Hl	Mh	mm	ml	lh	lm	ll
Volatility (1st letter)	H	VTN Ecuador 2009 Guatemala 2003 Nicaragua 2006 Paraguay 2003 Peru 1990, 11	VTn Brazil 1990 Colombia 1991 Peru 2001, 06 Venezuela 1993	VT$_n$	VtN Boliv. 1989, 02, 06 Costa Rica 2002 Guat. 1994, 07, 11 Peru 1985, 95, 00 Venezuela 2000	Vtn Ecuador 1984 Guatemala 1999 Panama 1999	Vt$_n$ Argentina 1997 D Repub. 1994, 98 Ecuador 1990 Uruguay 2004 Venezuela 2010	V$_t$N Bolivia 1993 Ecuador 2006 Nicaragua 2011 Venezuela 1998	V$_t$n Venezuela 2005	V$_{tn}$ Argentina 2009, 11 D Republic 2006 Ecuador 1988 Panama 2004 Panama 2009
	M	vTN	vTn	vT$_n$ D Republic 1990 Mexico 2009	vtN* Costa Rica 2006	vtn Argentina 1985 Ecuador 2002	vt$_n$ Argentina 1987, 01, 07 Brazil 2002 Colombia 2002 Ecuador 1998 Mexico 1997, 00	v$_t$N* Argentina 1995 Bolivia 2009 Colombia 2006, 10 El Salvador 1994 El Salvador 1997	v$_t$n Ecuador 1986	v$_{tn}$ Argentina 2003 Brazil 1998 Colombia 1990 Costa Rica 1982, 86 D Republic 1986 Ecuador 1994, 96 El Salv 1988, 2012 Guatemala 1995 Honduras 2009 Mexico 1994, 06 Urug. 1989, 94, 99 Venezuela 1983
	L	$_v$TN	$_v$Tn	$_v$T$_n$	$_v$tN	$_v$tn	$_v$t$_n$ Colombia 1986 D Republ. 1982, 02 El Salv. 1991, 06 Nicarar. 1996, 01 Paraguay 1998 Uruguay 2009	$_{vt}$N* Brazil 1994 Paraguay 2008	$_{vt}$n	$_{vtn}$ Argentina 1989, 91, 93, 99, 05 Brazil 2006, 10 Chile 1993, 97, 01, 05, 09 Colo. 1982, 94, 98 Costa Rica 1990, 94, 98, 2010 D Republic 2010 El Sal. 2000, 03, 09 Honduras 1985, 89, 93, 97, 01 ,05 Mexico 2003 Venezuela 1988

* The high volatility for the new parties is the result of parties appearing in their second election. In the second year the new parties were relatively stable, thus no generating high total volatility

At the same time, the table does not suggest that the region's party systems have achieved a high level of stability. Even the cases in the southeast box of Table VI can comport with two of our possible scenarios –continually aligned party systems and realigned party systems– and the rest of the table shows many instances of volatile party systems.

The patterns evident in Table VI allow us to evaluate each party system and categorize them in terms of the 11 scenarios we presented earlier. We provide specific examples below, but Table VII summarizes that analysis showing that the Latin American cases fit into nine of these scenarios.

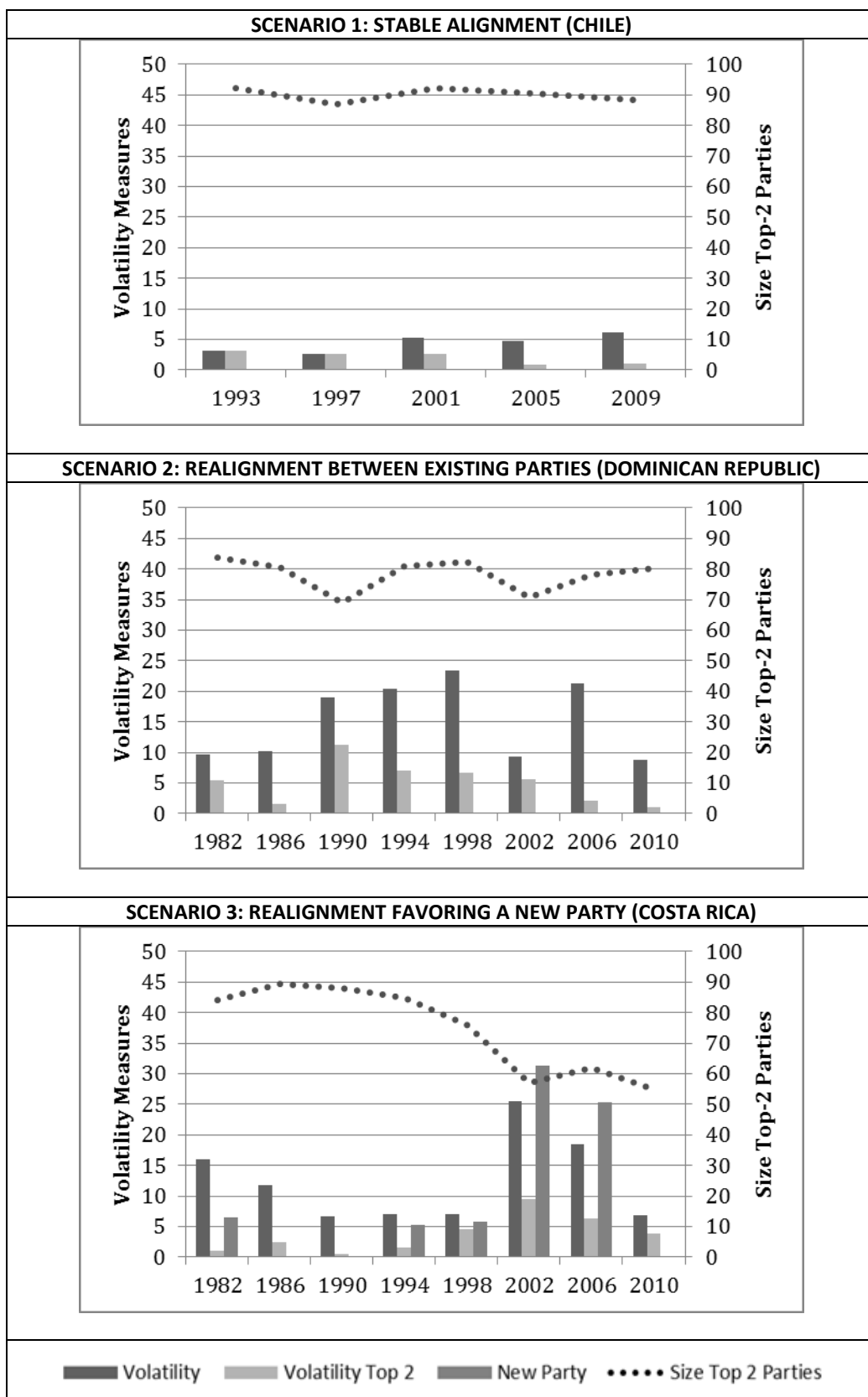Table VII. *The Evolution of Partisan Alignment in Latin America: A Classification*

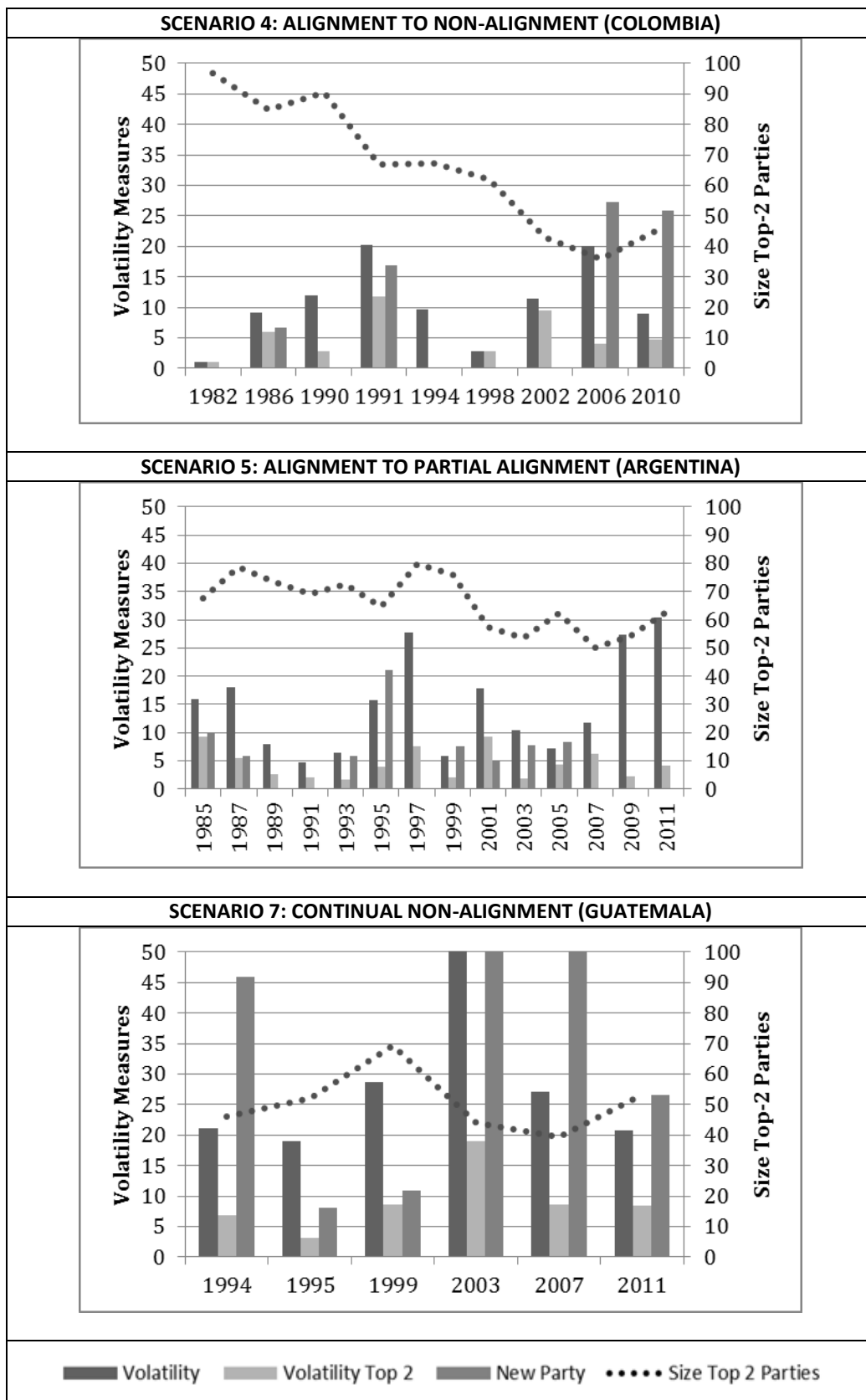| Scenarios of Partisan Alignment Evolution	Cases
Starting Point: Alignment	
Scenario 1: stable alignment	Chile, Honduras
Scenario 2: realignment between existing parties	Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Paraguay
Scenario 3: realignment favoring a new party	Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Uruguay
Scenario 4: full dealignment	Colombia, Venezuela 1 (1980-2000)
Scenario 5: partial dealignment	Argentina
Starting Point: Non-Alignment	
Scenario 6: full alignment	No case
Scenario 7: continual non-alignment	Guatemala, Panamá
Scenario 8: partial alignment	Venezuela 2 (2000-2012)
Starting Point: Partial Alignment	
Scenario 9: full alignment	No case
Scenario 10: full dealignment	Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru
Scenario 11: continual partial alignment	Brazil

Due to space constraints, we will limit our descriptive analysis to one country per category (though descriptions not presented here are available in an online appendix).[15] Figure II begins that process, displaying graphs that show the evolution of our three main variables plus the size of the top-two parties for our nine chosen cases.

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[15] The country descriptions not presented here are available online (web address will be added after peer review).

Figure II. *Evolution of Partisan Alignment in Latin America (1980-2012)*

SCENARIO 4: ALIGNMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT (COLOMBIA)

SCENARIO 5: ALIGNMENT TO PARTIAL ALIGNMENT (ARGENTINA)

SCENARIO 7: CONTINUAL NON-ALIGNMENT (GUATEMALA)

Legend: ■ Volatility   ■ Volatility Top 2   ■ New Party   •••• Size Top 2 Parties
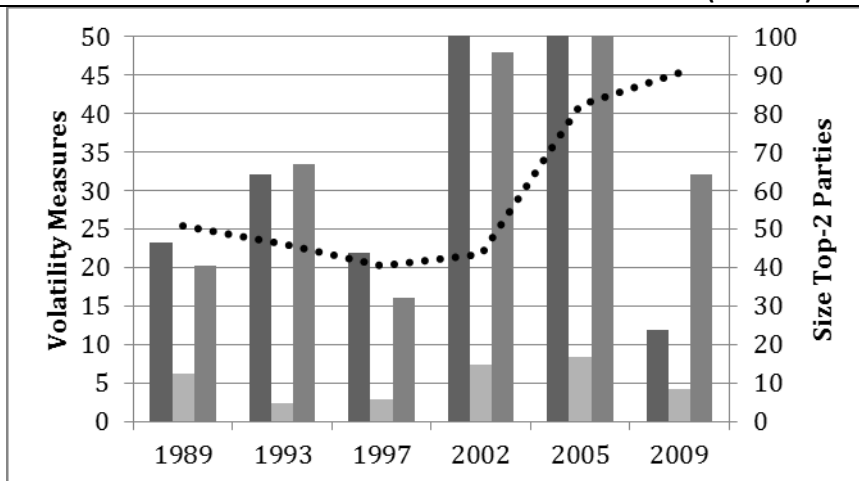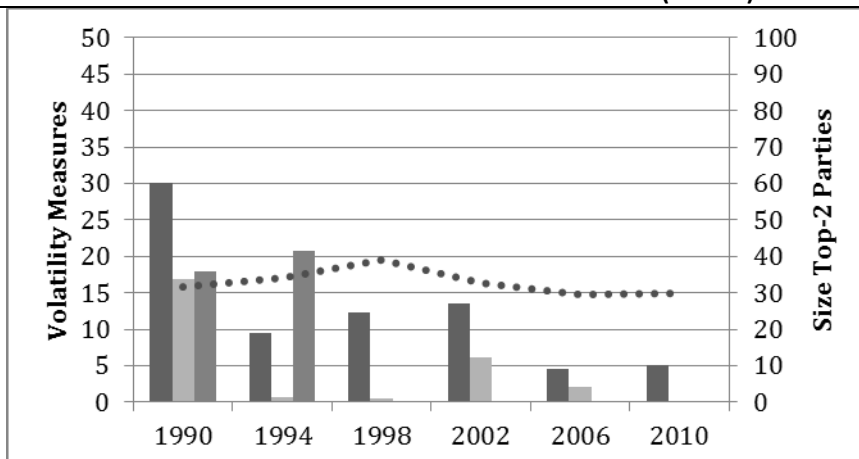
SCENARIO 8: NON-ALIGNMENT TO PARTIAL ALIGNMENT (VENEZUELA 2000-2012)
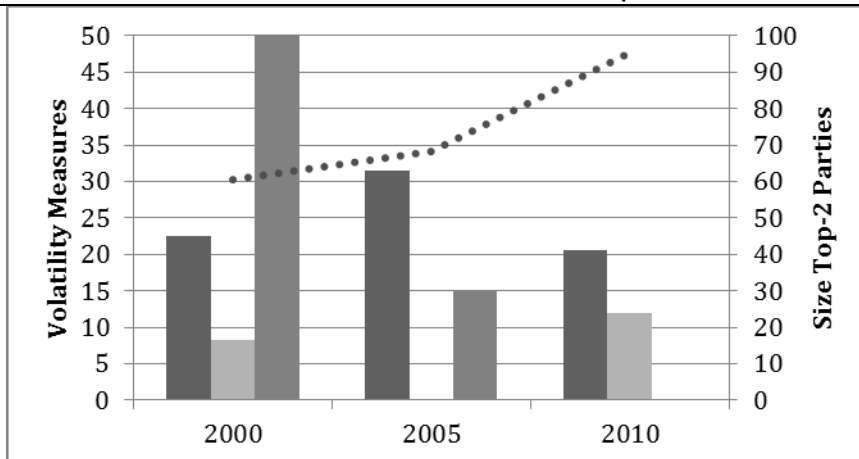
SCENARIO 10: PARTIAL ALIGNMENT TO NON-ALIGNMENT (BOLIVIA)

SCENARIO 11: CONTINUAL PARTIAL ALIGNMENT (BRAZIL)

Volatility   Volatility Top 2   New Party   ••••• Size Top 2 Parties

Scenario 1: Stable Partisan Alignment (Chile)

Chile is one of the countries fitting into the category of continually aligned party systems. Roberts argues that during the democratic transition in Chile, a realignment occurred in which voters shifted their support from the more radical Communist party to the new moderate option in the left (Roberts 1998). However, since the return to democracy, the voters have maintained stable alignment along a pro and anti-Pinochet cleavage, with two coalitions, the *Concertación* on the left and *Alianza* on the right. Two main coalitions have dominated all the post-Pinochet era elections, winning around 90% of the vote in each election. Further, using the coalitions to measure our indicators of volatility, Chile has fallen into the lower-right box of Table VI for all five of its post dictatorship elections (1993-2009). As observed in Table II, support for new parties has been consistently low. Further, although invalid votes in Chile have been a bit high (usually under 10% but 18% in 1997), turnout (which is mandatory) has been very high. The coalition-level analysis, in sum, suggests that the Chilean party system is very similar to the ideal type of stable alignment.

Focusing on Chile's parties rather than the coalitions does alter the analysis somewhat. Still, the same five parties have always dominated the coalitions, and the changes in support have not been very high. The *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (DC), the leading party of the *Concertación*, has been either the first or the second largest party in each of the five elections, and the second party has been one of the two parties of the rightist coalition. The CD, however, has fallen through the 2000s, from winning about one-quarter of the total vote in 1989, 1993, and 1997 to just 14% in 2009. On the right, the *Unión Demócráta Independiente* (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991) has not only replaced the *Renovacion Nacional* (RN) as the largest party in the coalition, but with about 25% of the vote it has become the largest party in the country in the elections of 2001, 2005, and 2009. This party-level analysis could land Chile into a partial alignment category, especially given that the sum of the two main parties has never reached even 50%. Still, we agree with Bartolini and Mair who caution that focusing on parties that make up coalitions can overstate the level of volatility (Bartolini and Mair 1990), and thus we keep the Chilean system as an example of continual stable alignment.

Scenario 2: Realignment Among Existing Parties (Dominican Republic)

Not all countries in the lower right box of Table VI have maintained a stable alignment. The dynamics of the party system in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Paraguay suggest realignments. In each of these cases there is evidence of an enduring shift in the level of partisan support favoring one of the parties in the system.

The Dominican Republic is possibly the best example of a realignment among existing parties. The party system has been dominated by the *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD), the *Partido de la Liberación Dominicana* (PLD), and the *Partido Reformista Social Cristiano* (PRSC) since the democratic transition in 1978, and these parties together have always captured more than 85% of votes. The longevity and stability of Dominican party system poses a challenge to the realignment literature, however, because instead of a clear ideological or policy divide, the parties are most known for their pervasive corruption, personalism, and clientelism (Mitchell 2008, Cueto Villamán 2006: 23-42). Personalism and corruption imply weak ties between the party and its citizenry, and should generate high levels of volatility. The low volatility, however, suggests that clientelism may be working against that trend. Initially there was an authoritarian/democracy cleavage (Mitchel 2010: 53-74), but this cleavage eroded in the 1980s and the rapid decline of the PRSC in the 1990s marked the end of that cleavage. This process led to low levels of total volatility in the early 1980s, followed by somewhat higher levels in the late 1980s and the 1990s, though as Table VI shows the vote for new parties has never been high. The resurgence of the PLD and the weakening of the PRSC then produced a high level of total volatility between the 2002 and 2006 elections. The country falls into the box indicating low levels of all types of volatility (VTN) in Table VI for 2010, but this does not mean that it has become a stable three-party system. In fact, a two party system emerged since the 2006, with the PRD and PLD as major parties and PRSC taking a less significant position). This configuration of 2+ parties mirrored the early 1980s, but at that time the PRD and PRSC dominated the PLD. Clearly, then, this is a case of realignment among existing parties.

Scenario 3: Realignment Favoring a New Party (Costa Rica)

Other countries also went through a realignment phase but a new party –rather than one of the existing parties– was the main beneficiary of the shift in partisan alignments. Four countries fall into this category, but we focus here on the example of Costa Rica.

Costa Rica appears multiple times in the lower right box of Table VI, but there is a notable gap; after a period of stability from 1990 to 1998, the country disappears from the southeast box for the next elections (moving to VtN and vtN) and then reappears there for 2010. The three stable elections suggest there was a previous alignment, and if it sustains the stability for more than just the 2010 election, it would have won a realignment classification. Figure II reinforces the conclusion; that Costa Rica has gone through a realignment favoring a new party. The graphs show low support for new parties during the stable alignment period of 1982-1998, followed by a remarkable increase in support for new parties for the 2002-2006 period. The return to lower levels of electoral volatility and support for new parties strongly suggests that this is a case of realignment, rather than dealignment.

The transformation of the party system in Costa Rica was the result of a split in an existing traditional party (*Partido de la Liberación Nacional, PLN*) which helped give rise to a new party, *Partido Acción Ciudadana* (PAC). The PLN moved from its center-left position in the 1980s to embrace neoliberal economic reform in the 1990s, thus blurring the ideological difference between the PLN and another traditional party, *Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana* (PUSC). This move left created an ideological space for a new political party, which the PAC occupied (Stokes 2001, Carreras 2012: 135-153). As a result, the PLN and PUSC fell from a combined total of about 75% of the vote in 1998 to just 56% in 2002, with the PAC winning 22% in that year. It then won 25% in 2006 before falling to 18% in 2010. The PLN has remained strong, winning 34%, 28%, and 35% in the 2002-2010 elections, but the PUSC has fallen sharply, winning less than 10% in the 2006 and 2010 elections. A fourth party, *Partido Movimiento Libertario* (PML) has also gained strength, winning 9% in 2002 and 2006, and then rising to almost 15% for 2010. It appears that this is a case of realignment to a system with one large, one medium, and two smaller parties.

Scenario 4: From Aligned to Fully Dealigned (Colombia)

Although the conventional wisdom suggests that the whole region has moved towards dealignment, our analysis reveals that only two countries clearly fit this category (Colombia and Venezuela in the period between 1980 and 2000). We present a detailed analysis of the Colombian case in this section.

Colombia fell into the VTN box of Table VI for the consecutive years of 1994, and 1998 (plus 1982), as a result of the consistent support for its two main parties: the Conservatives (PC) and the Liberals (PL). It then dealigned, as evidenced by the much greater levels of volatility and reduction in the share of the vote going to the top two parties (Figure II).

The party system had been stable since the 1950s when the parties signed the consociational pact known as the *Frente Nacional.* There was a new constitution passed in 1991, and the election that year generated high levels of volatility, and the rise of two new parties, *Alianza Democrática* M-19 and *Movimiento de Salvación Nacional.* Although these new parties quickly dissolved the party system did not return to the traditional two-party framework. Instead, a former Liberal Party politician, Alvaro Uribe, mounted a successful independent presidential candidacy in 2002, and the traditional parties saw dramatic drops in their support. Uribe's new party, the *Partido Social de Unidad Nacional* (PSUN), then won 17% of the legislative vote in 2006 and then 26% in 2010, even though Uribe was no longer its presidential candidate for that race. It would be incorrect to classify the new system as fully aligned however, since the PC, the PL, and the PSUN together won only 65% of the vote in 2010, and the percentage of invalid votes, which was very low through the 1990s, totaled over 25% that year. Turnout, moreover, has never been above 45%. Further, since the aggregate volatility was medium for 2006 and 2010 (in part due to the rise of the PSUN), it is too early to tell if the system is now partially aligned (with three medium sized parties, each winning about 20% of the vote and the remaining voters either spoiling their ballots or moving among changeable small parties), or if the system is still undergoing a dealignment process.

Scenario 5: Partial Dealignment (Argentina)

Argentina is a paradigmatic example of partial dealignment, in which one major party collapsed (the *Unión Cívica Radical, UCR*) while the other (*Partido Justicialista, PJ*) kept the loyalty of its supporters. Argentina, which has bi-annual elections for a portion of its legislature, fits into the southeast box of Table VI for the three elections from 1989 through 1993, then again for 1999 and 2005. For most of the missing years it still had only medium levels of total volatility, and new party volatility was never high (except in 1995). Further, the quantities of null, invalid, and blank ballots have been low (except in 2001 when they rose to 24%). We classify this case as one of partial rather than full alignment, however, for several reasons. First, while the dominant PJ has won a consistent percentage of the vote (usually between 35 and 45%), the other traditional party (the UCR) has only won about 15% in most recent elections (though it did gain 26% in 2009)[16]. As a result, about one-half of the electorate is not voting for one of the larger parties, and no party has been consistent in capturing this part of the electorate (c.f. Figure II). Second, the PJ vote has been divided among many regional parties that loosely affiliate with the PJ. On the other hand, voters do seem to maintain these traditional ties to the PJ. At the presidential level the PJ has run multiple candidates under the same label in several elections, suggesting that the candidates see a value in maintaining these traditional ties.

Scenario 7: Continual Non-Alignment (Guatemala)

The next cluster of countries, which includes Guatemala and Panamá, depict cases of continuously unaligned party systems.[17] These cases provide examples where the term dealignment is inappropriate, because they have not had a period of alignment from which to dealign. We focus here on the example of Guatemala.

Figure II shows that Guatemala has had extremely high volatility and support for new parties since democratization. Except for the 1995 and 1999 elections, most observations

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[16] Electoral coalitions are common at the provincial level in Argentina. To make the calculation more precise, we used the district-level electoral data. We added the vote shares of all Peronista parties together as the vote for PJ at the national level. The vote share for UCR in a provincial-level coalition where UCR formed with another party is calculated as half of the votes of the coalition.

[17] For the case of Guatemala see Sanchez (2009: 487-520) for the case of Panamá, see Otero Felipe (2006: 47-118).

land in the northeast corner of Table VI (VTN), and those other two years do not suggest stability. *Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca* (DCG) and *Unión del Centro Nacional* (UCN), the largest parties in the first democratic election, only captured a combined total of 40% of the vote in the first post-war election in 1990, and then saw that support quickly shrink towards zero. Other parties have been similarly unstable; the PAN rose from 15% in 1990 to 32% by 1995, but then fell to insignificance by 2011. The one bright spot is that turnout has increased significantly over time, rising from only 21% in 1994 (a fall from the post-war euphoria that produced a 56% level) to almost 70% in 2011. Invalid votes, however, were still high in that year (14%), close to an all-time high.

Scenario 8: From Non-Aligned to Partially Aligned (Venezuela 2000-2012)

The Venezuelan system is one that we have noted two distinct changes. It was stably aligned through the 1980s and then dealigned. Since 2000, however, elections have been fought as "pro-Chávez vs. anti-Chávez" contests. Since the opposition has been divided, however, the country fits best in the category of moving from a non-aligned system towards one of partial alignment. This is clearly visible in Figure II, which shows a gradual decline in the levels of electoral volatility, top-two party volatility and new party support in the period 2000-2010. The strong surge of the anti-Chávez camp (and resulting plunge of the MVR in the 2010 election), plus the congealing of the opposition groups for the 2012 election, might suggest that the partial alignment is incomplete and may take a new turn.

Scenario 10: From Partial Alignment to Non-Alignment (Bolivia)

Bolivia provides the best example of a case that typifies –or perhaps has passed through– scenario 10, where a system dealigns from a position of partial alignment. The largest two parties in the 1985 election, *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR) and *Acción Democrática Nacionalista* (ADN), captured 63% of vote share, suggesting partial alignment along an ideological cleavage (MNR to the left while ADN to the right). This weak partisan alignment, where the sum of the MNR and ADN was about 50%, endured between 1985 and 1997. However, starting in 1989 new contenders entered the electoral arena, and by 2005 the ADN disappeared and the MNR only obtained 6.5% of vote share. Since 2005, the Bolivian party system has experienced some (partial) realignment, given the success of two dominant parties: *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), led by Evo Morales, and *Poder*

Democrático y Social (Podemos). Together these parties captured 82% of votes in the 2005 election and 90% of votes in the 2009 election.

This evolution from partial alignment to dealignment to a new alignment is evident in Figure II. It reveals that electoral volatility and support for new parties hovered around 20% in the period 1989-1997, and then increased considerably to around 50%, showing the move from partial alignment to un-alignment. Table VI also shows that the decline in total volatility (with a move from the (VtN) box in 2005 to (vtN) in 2009, suggesting that the reshaped Bolivian party system has entered a new period of partial alignment.

Scenario 11: Continual Partial Alignment (Brazil)

The Brazilian party system, which appears in the southeast box of Table VI for its two most recent elections, poses a puzzle to the existing literature of party system development. The most prominent feature of this country's party system is its high level of fragmentation. The top two parties only captured 33% vote share on average from 1990 to 2010 (c.f. Figure II), and the identity of the top two parties differs over time. For instance, the *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (PMDB) and the *Partido da Frente Liberal* (PFL) were the largest two parties in the 1990 election, while the largest two parties in the 2002 elections were the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) and the *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (PSDB). The vote share of the top two parties reached 39% in 1998, but since that time it has fallen significantly (32% in 2002, 26% in 2006, and 29% in 2010). Even though the country did elect one outsider president (Fernando Collor de Mello in 1990), the legislative vote has continued to swirl among the multiple existing parties rather than moving to new parties, as evident in Figure II. This feature differentiates Brazil from the continuously unaligned party systems like Guatemala.

Given this configuration, we hesitate to call this a system of stable alignment, because Brazilian party politics are not rooted in profound social cleavages. This is partly due, again, to the lack of ideological identity of some of the parties, though the leftist identity of the PT has perhaps helped to define ideological lines. Also working against ideological identities is the country's open list proportional representation system, which encourages voters to focus on personal characteristics of candidates rather than partisan identities (Ames 2001; Hallergerg and Marier 2004: 571-87; Samuels 2002: 845-63). Moreover, in a multiparty system, the low level of aggregate volatility may hide significant changes in the

electoral behavior of voters. The "real" level of electoral stability is harder to detect in a system with many political parties. For these reasons, in sum, we classify Brazil as an example of stable partial alignment.

VII. Conclusion

Previous research on party system change in Latin America suggests that parties are no longer effective mechanisms of political representation and that once solid party systems are now in shambles. The mainstream view of the literature on parties and party systems in Latin America is extremely negative and pessimistic. Hawkins argues that Latin American countries have recently experienced a dual trend: "the breakdown of traditional party systems and the rise of antipartyism and charismatic movements" (Hawkins 2003). In the same vein, Van Cott argues that "parties and party systems in the region have suffered a marked deterioration in the last two decades" (Van Cott 2005). According to Roberts and Wibbels "the instability of party systems has become a source of puzzlement and concern" (Roberts and Wibbels 1999). In sum, the crisis of party systems in Latin America is perceived as a general phenomenon that affects the democratic consolidation of all the countries in the region.

While our more nuanced analysis of the evolution of partisan alignments may not dispel the perception of crisis, it shows a wider variety of patterns than suggested in most overviews. To justify this conclusion, we have provided a new theoretical framework for studying partisan alignments in uninstitutionalized political systems, and showed the utility of the model by operationalizing the concepts and applying them to the evolution of electoral alignments in Latin America. The results show that the Latin American cases fit into nine distinct patterns. One important finding that distinguishes our study from previous research is that we show that many purported dealignment cases (Guatemala and Panamá) are misclassified because voters were never aligned to political parties in the first place. Although Hagopian argues that "partisan and electoral dealignment has proceeded farther and faster in more countries than has realignment" (Hagopian 1990: 6), our analysis also suggests that this conclusion is not fully warranted. We reveal seven cases of partisan realignment, but only six cases of partisan dealignment (one of which is an instance of partial dealignment -Argentina-). We also find two cases of stable partisan alignments (Chile and Honduras) and one case of continual partial alignment (Brazil). Moving in the other direction, we have found few cases of non-aligned electorates

becoming aligned (or partially aligned). Only Bolivia and Venezuela showed signs of aligning after a dealignment phase, and we are skeptical about the stability of these new alignments.

In sum, Latin American party systems have been very dynamic, to borrow the phrase from the seminal work on party system alignments (Sundquist 1983). We have argued, however, that an addition to Sundquist's conceptual framework is necessary to encompass the variety in alignment patterns across Latin America and other non-institutionalized systems.

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