

THE RISE OF ALTERNATIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN CHILE, 2009-2017

El auge de candidatos presidenciales alternativos en Chile, 2009-2017

O aumento de candidatos presidenciais alternativos no Chile, 2009-2017

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Abstract

This article explores the growing popularity of alternative presidential candidates – those from outside the two dominant coalitions – in Chile from 2009 to 2017. Following a theoretical discussion that focuses on the causes of voter discontent with the political establishment, we formulate four hypotheses. We view support for alternative presidential candidates as a function of ideological detachment, declining political engagement, the economic vote, and socio-demographic shifts in the electorate. We use three pre-electoral Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys to present probit models and predicted probabilities. Our findings suggest that a distinct segment of Chilean voters is behind the rise of alternative presidential candidates. Younger and more educated voters who identify less with the traditional left-right ideological scale and political parties and suffer from economic anxiety – viewing the economy as performing well nationally while remaining pessimistic about their financial prospects – comprise this subgroup.

Palabras clave:
*Candidatos
presidenciales
alternativos;
partidismo; voto
económico;
cambios
sociodemográficos;
Chile*

Resumen

Este artículo explora la creciente popularidad de los candidatos presidenciales alternativos –aquellos que no pertenecen a las dos coaliciones dominantes– en Chile entre 2009 y 2017. Luego de una discusión teórica que se centra en las causas del descontento de los votantes con el establishment político, formulamos cuatro hipótesis. Consideramos que el apoyo hacia candidatos presidenciales alternativos corresponde a una función del desapego ideológico, la disminución de participación política, el voto económico y cambios sociodemográficos en el electorado. Utilizamos tres encuestas pre-electorales del Centro de Estudios Públicos para presentar modelos probit y probabilidades predichas. Nuestros hallazgos sugieren que un segmento específico de votantes chilenos está detrás del auge de candidatos presidenciales alternativos. Este subgrupo está compuesto por votantes más jóvenes y educados. Dichos votantes también se identifican menos con la escala ideológica izquierda-derecha y los partidos políticos tradicionales. A su vez, el subgrupo sufre de ansiedad económica, ya que consideran que la economía se desempeña bien a nivel nacional, mientras se mantienen pesimistas sobre sus perspectivas financieras.

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*candidatos
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Resumo

Este artigo explora a crescente popularidade dos candidatos presidenciais alternativos –aqueles que não pertencem às duas coalizões dominantes– no Chile entre 2009 e 2017. Após uma discussão teórica centrada nas causas do descontentamento dos eleitores com o establishment político, formulamos quatro hipóteses. Consideramos que o apoio à candidatos presidenciais alternativos ocorre em função do desapego ideológico, da diminuição da participação política, do voto econômico e das mudanças sociodemográficas no eleitorado. Utilizamos três pesquisas pré-eleitorais do Centro de Estudos Públicos para apresentar modelos probit e probabilidades preditas. Nossos achados sugerem que um segmento específico dos eleitores chilenos está por trás do aumento de candidatos presidenciais alternativos. Este subgrupo está composto por eleitores mais jovens e mais educados. Estes eleitores também se identificam menos com a escala ideológica esquerda-direita e com os partidos políticos tradicionais. Por sua vez, o subgrupo sofre de ansiedade econômica, já que consideram que a economia tem um bom desempenho em nível nacional sendo, no entanto, pessimistas sobre as suas perspectivas financeiras.

INTRODUCTION¹

in the wake of the third wave of democracy in the 1990s, scholars praised the institutionalization of Chile's party system. In more recent years, several studies have pointed to growing signs of distress in the party system. Although the

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center-left Concertación/New Majority and center-right Alianza/Chile Vamos coalitions have received a majority of votes in all presidential and legislative contests held since 1989, the party system has become increasingly fragmented in recent years. Chileans vote in growing numbers for candidates from coalitions other than the Concertación/New Majority and Alianza/Chile Vamos, especially in legislative and municipal elections. In 2017, five presidential candidates from other than the two dominant coalitions received a combined 35% of votes. The legislature that emerged from that election is the most diverse since democratization. Concurrently, voter turnout has decreased substantially, and identification with political parties is at historic lows.

The era of two main alliances governing Chile might be coming to an end. Though the two main coalitions remain influential, challengers from alternative parties and independents have made meaningful electoral inroads. The evidence points to a realignment in the making. We contribute to a better understanding of the change taking place by answering the following question: What are the determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates? We refer to alternative presidential candidates as all those not from the two dominant coalitions –regardless of their status as mavericks, outsiders, or representatives of minor parties. We use three Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP) public opinion surveys from 2009 to 2017 to explore the individual-level determinants fueling the rise of alternative presidential candidates– and the realignment of Chile’s party system.

In the next section, we discuss the theory behind the support for alternative presidential candidates and formulate our hypotheses, which we associate with a feeling of political discontent among voters. The third section reviews presidential elections in Chile following its transition to democracy in the early 1990s. After detailing our data and methodology, we present the results from our statistical modeling. Then, we analyze our findings. A final section summarizes our conclusions and offers guidelines for future research.

DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATES

Research on alternative candidates’ emergence and success has mostly focused on countries with an institutionalized two-party system, like the U.S. (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1984; Abramson *et al.*, 1995; Hirano & Snyder, 2007). In the U.S., alternative candidates come from outside the two-party system and are the exception to the norm (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1984; Scarrow, 1986; Abramson *et al.*, 1995; Hirano & Snyder, 2007). In Latin America, where party systems are more fluid, alternative candidates have successfully risen to power –though precisely because party systems are more fluid, the definition of an alternative candidate is subject to debate (Pérez-Liñán, 2007; Carreras, 2012, 2014). Notwithstanding

differences in the composition of party systems, the literature seems to agree that the rise of alternative presidential candidates –mavericks, outsiders, or minor parties– is a consequence of an existing party system’s shortcomings. In what follows, we discuss four potential explanations for the rise in support for alternative candidates.

Detachment from the left-right scale

The early literature on party systems identifies political divisions –cleavages– that explain inter-party competition (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). These cleavages are stable in time. In the U.S., a growing divide between voters and elected representatives drives support for alternative or third-party candidates. Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984), in perhaps the most thorough examination of third-party candidates in the U.S., view their rise as a consequence –among other factors– of a gap between the expected demands of voters and those supplied by established parties. Those divisions are policy-oriented and ideological. In their words, «some third-party voting is likely whenever there exists an ideological hole unfilled by a major party candidate» (1984, p. 130). Other studies have confirmed this finding (Magee, 2000; Lacy & Monson, 2002). Idridadson (2012) shows how non-competitive extremist parties can shift the policy platform of established parties. Bartels, Oliver, and Rahn (2016, p. 195) discuss how populist candidates are likely to emerge in U.S. presidential elections when there is a representation gap.

In Latin America, studies have widely documented partisan and electoral dealignment (Dix, 1989; Hagopian, 1998) and realignment (Carreras, Morgenstern, & Su, 2013). Whereas there is an ongoing debate concerning how to label party system change in the region, high electoral volatility –a good proxy of instability– is undeniable (Coppedge, 1998; Roberts & Wibbels, 1999). Thus, as parties and party systems are weak and fluid, candidates from outside the party system often abound. With its institutionalized party system stably aligned along with two dominant coalitions, the case of Chile stands in between the more stable and predictable U.S. party system and the more fluid Latin American party systems.

While an ideological or policy gap commonly explains the rise of third-party candidates in the U.S., ideological factors might not necessarily account for their emergence elsewhere. On the contrary, a sense of disaffection regarding traditional ideological divisions of inter-party competition could also fuel support for alternative presidential candidates. In examining Latin America, Zechmeister (2015) signals that «among other factors, non-response to the left-right scale is associated with measures of disassociation and dissatisfaction: political disinterest and perceived lack of system support» (2015, p. 216). In Zechmeister’s view, Chile falls within «a handful of Latin American systems in which left-right identification

is rich in policy contents and very relevant to vote choice» (Zechmeister, 2015, p. 217). Yet, identification on the left-right scale in Chile has dropped from a high of 73% in 1989 to 43% recently. While scholars continue to link vote choice for traditional coalitions to the left-right ideological divide (Navia & Osorio, 2015; Valenzuela, Somma & Scully, 2018), the same relationship might not apply to alternative presidential candidates. Since the left-right divide has resulted in «silent» shifts in an electoral competition elsewhere (Inglehart, 1977; Norris & Inglehart, 2019), and the rise of alternative presidential candidates coincides with a weakening of Chile's traditional ideological division, we hypothesize that:

H1. Vote intention for alternative presidential candidates is higher among those who do not identify on the left-right scale.

Declining political engagement

The second hypotheses partly stem from the discussion outlined above. The rational vote model stresses that citizens will be less inclined to support alternative candidates when they have a low probability of winning (Downs, 1957; Duverger, 1967). This outcome is why majoritarian electoral systems, which favor two-party systems, are often viewed as the main barrier for third party candidates, as in the U.S. (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1984; Scarrow, 1986; Abramson *et al.*, 1995; Hirano & Snyder, 2007).

In the U.S., support for third party candidates is mostly explained by voter dissatisfaction and discontent towards the partisan status quo (Rosenstone, Behr, & Lazarus, 1984; Lacy & Monson, 2002; Southwell, 2003). Voting for third party candidates is often described as a protest vote (Bowler & Lanoue, 1992; Southwell & Everest, 1998). Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984) make the case that major party decay conditions support for third party candidates. In their view, «when the two political parties violate their implicit pact with the people, citizens can either sit out the election or abandon the major parties to support a third party alternative (...) A third party vote is a vote *against* the major parties» (1984, p. 126-127, emphasis in the original).

In Chile, there is growing evidence that voters are turning their backs on established parties. Falling levels of partisanship (Luna & Altman, 2011; Navia & Osorio, 2015; Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018), electoral turnout (Contreras & Navia, 2013; Bargsted, Somma, & Muñoz-Rojas, 2019), and interest in politics evidence this outcome (Etchegaray, Scherman & Valenzuela, 2019). Hence, we hypothesize that support for alternative presidential candidates is also a function of declining political engagement, as follows:

H2. Vote intention for alternative presidential candidates is lower among those who are politically not engaged—that is, do not identify with a political party, have not participated in previous elections, and have less interest in politics.

Economic vote

Research on industrialized democracies widely documents the economic vote theory (Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000; Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2007; Duch & Stevenson, 2008). Studies on Latin American cases replicate those findings (Lewis-Beck & Ratto, 2013; Gélinau & Singer, 2015; Nadeau *et al.*, 2017). The basic premise is that voters reward or punish incumbents depending on the performance of the national economy.

Although voters may punish an incumbent if economic performance is low, this does not necessarily mean that they will immediately back the traditional opposition. According to Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus (1984, p. 134, emphasis added by authors), «while the incumbent party suffers at the polls during periods of economic decline (...) *a failing economy may also make voters more inclined to abandon the major parties altogether*. They are likely to be so inclined, especially if neither party appears capable of resolving the situation».

This reasoning applies to Latin America. The shift from state-led development to free-market policies alienated Latin American voters who perceived no differences in the reforms adopted by ruling parties (Stokes, 2001; Roberts, 2014, 2016; Lupu, 2016a, 2016b). In turn, this process made voters turn their backs on established parties and vote for political outsiders, as in Peru (Levitsky & Cameron, 2003) and Venezuela (Weyland, 2003). Carreras (2012) also argues that unfavorable socioeconomic conditions were strong determinants of support for outsider candidates in Latin American elections from 1980 to 2010.

Chile avoided programmatic dealignment because a coalition of center-left parties, the Concertación, «came into power in the aftermath to market reforms that had been adopted by conservative rulers» (Roberts, 2016, p. 70). The Concertación consolidated the Pinochet era's pro-market reforms while seeking redistribution (Landerretche, 2014; Contreras & Sehnbruch, 2014). Pro-democracy and pro-authoritarian divisions, added to the presence of a binomial electoral system that generated incentives for parties to align along with two coalitions, structured inter-party competition during much of Chile's era of democratization—at least more so than differences in the economic policies of governing coalitions (Tironi & Agüero, 1999; Torcal & Mainwaring, 2003). Since the center-left and center-right coalitions implemented similar economic policies when in power, following the economic vote theory, we hypothesize that economic discontent explains support for alternative presidential candidates, as follows:

H3. Vote intention for alternative presidential candidates is higher among those with negative economic outlooks.

Socio-demographic shifts

The fourth hypothesis focuses on socio-demographic shifts in the electorate. We discuss two crucial factors: age and education. Support for alternative presidential candidates might respond to a generational effect (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Since people are socialized politically in different times, generational variances in political behavior and electoral turnout inevitably emerge (Franklin 2004; Rubenson *et al.*, 2004). As newer generations acquire different values, they are more likely to develop different political views and, presumably, other electoral preferences than older generations. Parties that represent older generations are less likely to attract younger voters successfully. Hence, alternative presidential candidates should be more likely to attract younger voters' support because older voters have already stronger party affiliations and because younger voters have not yet developed strong party affiliations.

Simultaneously, individuals with lower education levels should also be more likely to support alternative presidential candidates because they suffer more from economic anxiety (Corrales 2008). As a result, they constitute a breeding ground for alternative presidential candidates to reap electoral rewards (Mayorga 2006; Lupu, 2010). In this vein, Southwell (2003, p. 99) argues that a sense of alienation marks third-party voters. Thus, groups that are least likely to vote (e.g., younger cohorts or individuals with lower education levels) might also be more likely to support third-party candidates. Our fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H4. Vote intention for alternative presidential candidates is higher among younger voters and individuals with lower education levels.

In sum, we view support for alternative presidential candidates as stemming from four overlapping factors that point to voter discontent: detachment from the traditional left-right ideological divide, declining political engagement, economic dissatisfaction, and socio-demographic shifts in voter preferences. In the next section, we present the case of Chile and then describe the data and methodology used to test our four hypotheses.

ALTERNATIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN CHILE, 1989-2017

We view the rise of alternative presidential candidates as a function of overlapping factors stemming from voter discontent. In what follows, we discuss some of the primary changes in electoral behavior in Chile from 1989 to 2017.

Following the third wave, low electoral volatility levels explained Chile's classification as a successful case of party system institutionalization (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Coppedge, 1998; Roberts & Wibbels, 1999; Siavelis, 2000; Angell, 2003). While the party system traces its origins to the pre-1973 democratic breakdown (Scully, 1992; Valenzuela, 1995), Pinochet's dictatorship shaped it into two main –pro-democracy and pro-authoritarianism– blocs (Tironi & Agüero, 1999; Torcal & Mainwaring, 2003). Not surprisingly, many studies treat Chile as a two-party system, considering the two multiparty dominant coalitions as single parties, even if for simplicity purposes only (Dow, 1998; Carey, 2002; Siavelis, 1997; Siavelis, 2004; Londregan, 2007; Alemán & Saiegh, 2007; Morgenstern, Polga-Hecimovich, & Siavelis, 2014; Bunker & Navia, 2015; Bargsted & Maldonado, 2018; Valenzuela, Somma & Scully, 2018). Although those studies also acknowledge Chilean politics' multiparty nature, they use the stable two-coalition alignment as a shortcut to simplify their analysis, treating Chile as «a de facto two-party system» (Alemán & Saiegh, 2007, p. 253).

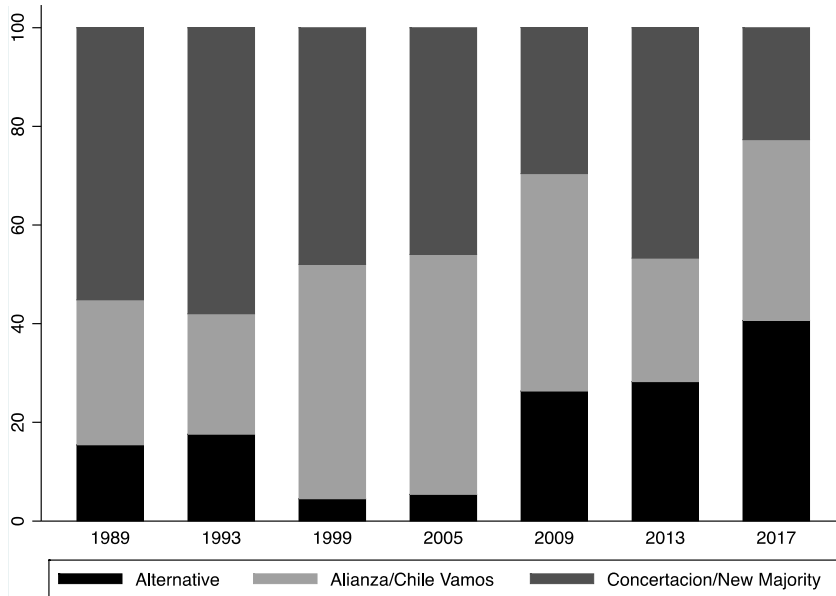
Despite scholars initially labeling the post-transition party system as institutionalized, recent studies warn about its weaknesses and about the decline in partisan alignment and electoral participation. Luna and Altman (2011: 22) conclude that the party system is uprooted but stable, «in Chile, decreasing national-level electoral volatility combines with decreasing party roots in society, decreasing legitimacy, and the weakening of partisan organizations as institutions.» Bargsted and Maldonado (2018: 53), who view the party system as being encapsulated, claim that the country's sources of social change are «consistently and rapidly leading toward the extinction of mass-level partisanship in Chilean society.» Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully (2018) view Chile's party system as reflecting both resilience and change. The resilience derives from «the long-standing divisions in Chilean society along religious and class lines that created the party system.» However, decreasing partisanship and recent electoral reforms –a shift to voluntary voting and the end of the binomial electoral system– point to change (Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully, 2018: 157-161). Carlin (2011) associates falling levels of electoral participation to declining trust in institutions, confirming the trend of institutional weakness identified in the Chilean political system.

Chile transitioned to democracy due to a pact between the outgoing authoritarian regime and the incoming democratic opposition. Although the party system traced its roots to the period before the breakdown of democracy (Valenzuela & Scully, 1997; Montes, Mainwaring & Ortega, 2000; Angell, 2003; Torcal & Mainwaring,

2003), Pinochet's dictatorship influenced the formation of two main coalitions (Tironi & Agüero, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999; Valenzuela, Somma & Scully, 2018).

On the right, the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) and National Renewal (RN), composed of groups that supported the dictatorship, formed the Alianza (though, the coalition has changed names several times and goes by Chile Vamos since 2015). On the center-left, the leading parties that opposed Pinochet, including the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), the Socialist Party (PS), the Party for Democracy (PPD), and the Radical Party (PR), comprised the Concertación. While there have been some changes in the composition of the two coalitions, with the Communist Party (PC) joining the Concertación in 2013 to form the New Majority coalition, the 1990-2018 period has been the most stable in Chilean history concerning multiparty democratic governance. Figure 1 shows the vote share for the Concertación/New Majority, Alianza/Chile Vamos, and alternative candidates (those not from the two dominant coalitions) for all presidential elections held between 1989 and 2017.

Figure 1. Vote share in first-round presidential elections, 1989-2017



The vote share of alternative presidential candidates includes all non-Concertación/New Majority or Alianza/Chile Vamos candidates. For the Alianza in 2005, we combine the vote share of Piñera (25.4%) and Lavín (23.2%). We also add the vote share of Guillier (22.7%) and Goic (5.9%) for the Concertación/New Majority in 2017.

Source: Authors, based on Servicio Electoral de Chile.

The two coalitions gained an overwhelming majority of votes in the 1989 presidential election and remained dominant in all subsequent elections (see Figure 1). The Concertación/New Majority coalition won four consecutive presidential elections between 1989 and 2005 and has won five of the seven presidential elections held since 1989. The Alianza/Chile Vamos coalition won presidential contests in 2009 and 2017.

The 1989 presidential election replicated the Yes/No divide of the 1988 plebiscite. The Alianza candidate was Hernán Büchi, Pinochet's Finance Minister (1985-1989). Patricio Aylwin (PDC), a renowned politician, ran on the platform of the Concertación. An alternative candidate, Francisco Javier Errázuriz, also entered the race. Errázuriz, a conservative who voted for Pinochet in 1988 but claimed that his heart was set on the No vote (against Pinochet staying in power), appealed to center-right voters. In the end, Aylwin comfortably won the election (55.2%). Büchi (29.4%) came in second, and Errázuriz ended in third place (15.4%).

The success of the Aylwin's government (1990-1994) gave the Concertación an advantage in the 1993 election. The coalition's candidate was Eduardo Frei (PDC), son of a former homonymous president (1964-1970). Arturo Alessandri, an independent senator from a well-known political family, ran as the Alianza candidate. There were four alternative presidential candidates. José Piñera, a conservative who served as Minister of Labor (1978-1980) and Mining (1980-1981) under Pinochet, ran as an independent. The other three alternative candidates were Manfred Max Neef, Eugenio Pizarro, and Cristián Reitze, each running on different platforms to the left of the Concertación, the so-called extra-parliamentary left. Frei won with a comfortable 58%, while Alessandri received 24.4%, marking the worst electoral performance by an Alianza/Chile Vamos presidential candidate in the post-authoritarian period. The combined electoral support for alternative candidates reached 17.6% votes.

The 1999 presidential election was the most competitive in the post-authoritarian-period. An economic recession in 1997 sank Frei's approval, making the race tricky for the incumbent Concertación candidate, Ricardo Lagos (PPD). The Alianza candidate was Joaquín Lavín (UDI), a popular conservative mayor from Las Condes, a wealthy municipality. There were three alternative candidates to the left of the Concertación: Gladys Marín (PC), Tomás Hirsch (Humanist Party), and Sara Larraín (Ecologist Party). A fourth alternative candidate, former PDC senator Arturo Frei Bolívar, campaigned on a similar platform as Errázuriz in 1989 (with televised ads that showed him alongside Pinochet and the senior president Frei). Lagos and Lavín received 47.9% and 47.5% of votes, respectively, consolidating the Concertación and Alianza electoral dominance. The four alternative candidates' combined first-round ballot was the lowest in the post-transition era: barely 4.5%. The razor-sharp vote forced the first presidential run-off in Chilean history, where Lagos clinched a narrow victory with 51.3%.

In 2005, Michelle Bachelet became the Concertación candidate after gaining popularity as minister of Health (2000-2002) and National Defense (2002-2004), during the Lagos presidency. The Alianza split between two presidential candidates. Joaquín Lavín ran again on the platform of the UDI, while RN nominated Sebastián Piñera, a former senator and billionaire. Whereas the center-right candidates received a combined first-round vote of 48.6%, Bachelet became Chile's first female president with 53.5%, after defeating Piñera in the run-off. There was a single alternative candidate, leftist Tomás Hirsch (5.4%), who had also run in 1999.

The 2009 election brought an end to twenty years of Concertación governments. Although president Bachelet (2006-2010) finished her term with an 80% record-breaking approval rating, amidst an economic recession, the Concertación candidate, former president Frei (1994-2000), did not benefit from her popularity. The center-right opposition rallied behind Piñera, who offered an option to years of wear-and-tear of Concertación governments. Two alternative leftwing candidates also helped undermine Frei. The PC and other leftist parties nominated Jorge Arrate, a former PS leader. At the same time, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, a former PS deputy, ran as an independent and received an unprecedented 20.1% in the first-round vote. Frei achieved 29%, the lowest vote share on record for a Concertación presidential candidate until then. Piñera won the presidency in a run-off against Frei with 51.6%.

In 2013, support for alternative candidates grew again. In addition to the Concertación/New Majority and Alianza candidates, there were seven alternative candidates. The bulk of support for alternative party alternatives went to two young candidates: center-left Marco Enríquez-Ominami and center-right Franco Parisi, who received 10.9% and 10.1%. The combined vote share for alternative candidates (28.2%) exceeded the vote share for the Alianza candidate, Evelyn Matthei, in the first-round vote (25%). Bachelet (62.2%) easily won the election after defeating Matthei (37.8%) in the run-off.

In 2017, support for alternative party presidential candidates reached its highest mark. In the first-round vote, the traditional coalitions Alianza/Chile Vamos and Concertación/New Majority received a combined vote share of 65.2%. The New Majority split before the election. As a result, the PDC nominated senator Carolina Goic (5.9%), and center-left New Majority parties did the same with senator Alejandro Guillier (22.7%). There were also five alternative candidates representing all political sectors, from the ultra-conservative José Antonio Kast to ultra-leftist Eduardo Artés. They all received a combined 34.8% of the votes. Leftist Beatriz Sánchez, from the newly formed Frente Amplio (Broad Front), an emerging left-wing coalition, ended in third place, with 20.3%, and fell short of defeating Guillier (22.7%) for a spot in the second-round vote. In the run-off, Piñera defeated Guillier by 54.5% to 45.4%.

The Chilean case reveals two parallel trends. On the one hand, the center-right and center-left coalitions remain electorally dominant. Both continue winning

majorities in presidential and legislative elections. Only candidates from those coalitions have made it to presidential run-offs, and the Concertación and Alianza remain the two largest parliamentary blocs. On the other hand, the decline of the main coalitions is undeniable, evidenced by decreasing partisanship and electoral support. The decay of traditional alliances has deepened as support for alternative presidential candidates grows.

Table 1 shows the vote share of alternative presidential candidates from 1989 to 2017, which includes a column with the definition of the type of candidate. We follow Carreras' (2012: 1457) typology to label alternative presidential candidates—mavericks, outsiders, and minor parties. The descriptive table reveals a U-shape pattern in support for alternative presidential candidates: relatively high in the early post-transition years (1989 and 1993), low during the peak of two-coalition rule (1999 and 2005), and increased again in more recent election cycles (2009, 2013, and 2017).

Table 1. Alternative presidential candidates in Chile, 1989-2017

Year	Candidate(s)	Vote Share (%)	Classification
1989	1. Francisco Javier Errázuriz	15.4	Outsider
1993	1. José Piñera	6.2	Maverick
	2. Manfred Max Neef	5.6	Outsider
	3. Eugenio Pizarro	4.7	Minor Party
	4. Cristián Reitze	1.2	Minor Party
1999	1. Gladys Marín	3.2	Minor Party
	2. Tomás Hirsch	0.5	Minor Party
	3. Sara Larraín	0.4	Outsider
	5. Arturo Frei Bolívar	0.4	Maverick
2005	1. Tomás Hirsch	5.4	Minor Party
2009	1. Marco Enríquez-Ominami	20.1	Maverick
	2. Jorge Arrate	6.2	Minor Party
2013	1. Marco Enríquez-Ominami	11.0	Minor Party
	2. Franco Parisi	10.1	Outsider
	3. Marcel Claude	2.8	Minor Party
	4. Alfredo Sfeir	2.4	Minor Party
	5. Roxana Miranda	1.2	Minor Party
	6. Ricardo Israel	0.6	Minor Party
	7. Tomás Jocelyn-Holt	0.2	Maverick

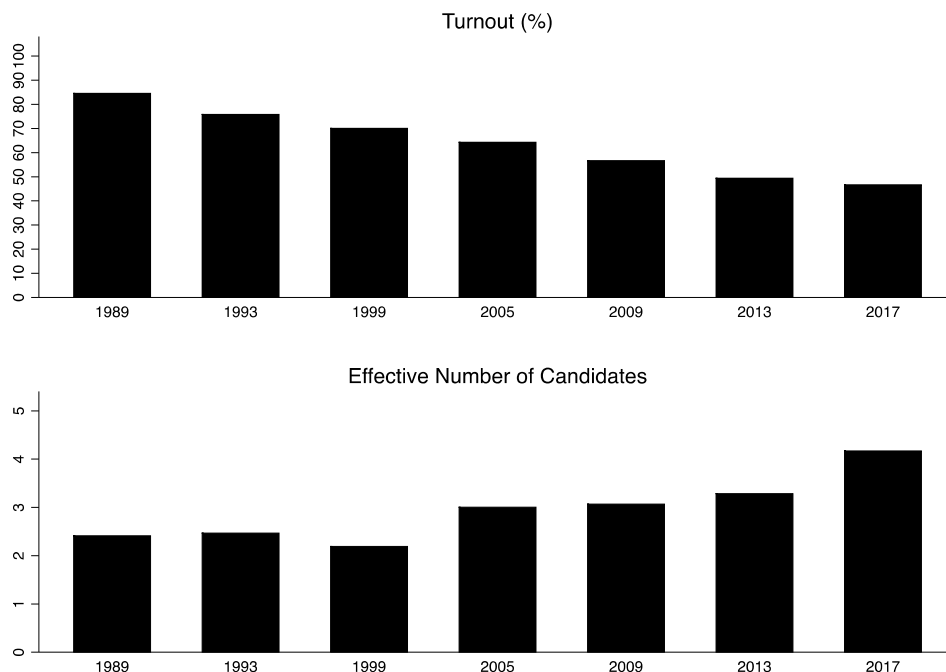
Year	Candidate(s)	Vote Share (%)	Classification
2017	1. Beatriz Sánchez	20.3	Minor Party
	2. José Antonio Kast	7.9	Maverick
	3. Marco Enríquez-Ominami	5.7	Minor Party
	4. Eduardo Artés	0.5	Minor Party
	5. Alejandro Navarro	0.4	Minor Party

* We label José Piñera and Jorge Arrate differently from Carreras (2012: 1417). In 1993, José Piñera –who had previously run for local councilmember as a UDI candidate in the municipality of Conchalí– ran as independent after resigning from the party. In 2009, Jorge Arrate, a former Socialist, was the Communist Party’s official candidate, though he was not a member of that party.

Source: Authors, based on Servicio Electoral de Chile and Carreras (2012).

Support for alternative presidential candidates runs parallel to broader transformations in Chile’s electorate. Figure 2 shows turnout in presidential elections measured as the percentage of the voting-age population. The data portrays a clear downward trend. In 1989, 84.6% of the voting-age population went to the polls. That number fell to 46.7% in the first-round vote of 2017. On average, turnout in presidential elections fell by 6.3 percentage points in every presidential election from 1993 to 2017. Figure 2 also presents the effective number of parties (ENP) –or in this case, candidates– for the same timeframe (1989-2017). As the plot reveals, the ENP was relatively stable in the elections of 1989, 1993, and 1993 (with a mean of 2.3). Starting in 2005, however, the ENP surpasses 3. Since the Alianza ran with two different candidates in 2005, it was not until 2009 that alternative candidates broke with the two-coalition system. From that moment on, the ENP in presidential elections averages 3.5, peaking in 2017 with 4.2.

Figure 2. Turnout and effective number of parties in presidential elections, 1989-2017

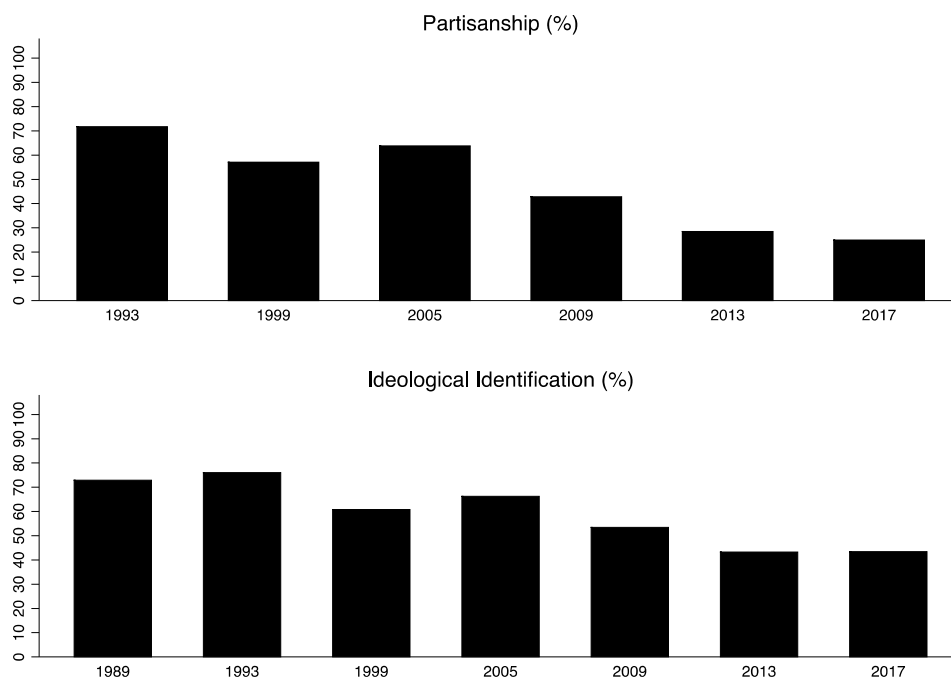


Source: Authors, based on Contreras and Navia (2013) and Servicio Electoral de Chile.

Public opinion surveys also portray the change in the ideological and partisan attachment in Chile—both of which reveal a significant decay (see Figure 3). In 1993, 71.2% of respondents identified with a political party². This figure fell to 25% in 2017. Respondents who identify on the left-right ideological scale reveal a similar trend. In 1989, 72.3% identified with the scale. In the pre-electoral survey of 1993, this number even grew to 75.6%. While those who identified with the scale from 1999 to 2009 still represented over half of Chile’s adult population, in the polls covering the 2013 and 2017 election, only 43% of respondents identified on the left-right divide.

2. See Valenzuela, Somma, and Scully (2018: 140) for a detailed discussion concerning how respondents might have interpreted the party identification question in 1993.

Figure 3. Selected survey questions for partisanship and ideological identification



Source: Authors, based on the Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys (November-December 1989, November 1993, September-October 1999, October-November 2005, October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017).

In sum, there is U-shaped evolution in support for alternative presidential candidates, with higher vote shares in the early years of post-authoritarian democracy (1989 and 1993), lower support as democracy consolidated (1999 and 2005), and more backing in the most recent elections (2009, 2013 and 2017). In turn, this distribution has coincided with falling levels of electoral turnout, partisanship, and ideological identification, and with an increase in the effective number of presidential candidates.

Since the growing presence of alternative presidential candidates in Chile might be a sign of realignment, we view their rise as a function of overlapping factors stemming from voter discontent in four main areas. We sustain that a growing alienation with the post-authoritarian ideological divide, declining political engagement, economic dissatisfaction, and socio-demographic shifts all play a role in explaining the increasing popularity for candidates who do not campaign on traditional coalition platforms.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We use public opinion surveys from the *Centro de Estudios Públicos* (Center for Public Studies, or CEP). The CEP has regularly published surveys since the mid-1980s. It also has one of the most anticipated pre-election polls in the country. We collected data from three pre-electoral surveys (October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017) representing the country's adult population. The fieldwork of all surveys, on average, was conducted a couple of months before the election³. We use the three surveys from 2009 to 2017 to present probit models to test our hypotheses, focusing on the individual-level determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates.

We focus on the elections from 2009 to 2017 for two reasons. First, there is missing data for crucial socio-demographic variables in previous polls. Second, few respondents supported alternative candidates ($N < 100$) in 1999 and 2005 to conduct meaningful statistical analysis.

The probit estimations contrast the support of alternative presidential candidates with that of the Alianza/Chile Vamos and Concertación/New Majority candidates. The dependent variable equals one (1) when the respondent says she will vote for an alternative presidential candidate and zero (0) when voting for an Alianza/Chile Vamos or Concertación/New Majority candidate. We code all other responses, including blank and null votes, as missing values.

Our first hypothesis centers on ideological detachment. We use self-placement on the left-right ideological scale. The CEP surveys ask the following question: *As you know, traditionally in our country people define political positions as closer to the left, to the center or to the right. In this card we represent the different political positions. Please, tell me, which one do you identify with more or which position do you like most?*⁴. Respondents are given a five-point scale, which ranges from left (1) to right (5). They can also indicate if they are «independent» or if they do not identify with any position on the scale. Hence, we recode a dummy variable for ideology. Respondents who identify on the left-right ideological scale equal one (1). Those who are either independent or do not identify equal zero (0). We code all other responses, including cases in which respondents do not know or fail to respond, as missing values.

3. The first-round elections were held as follows: December 13, 2009; November 17, 2013, and November 19, 2017.

4. Translated by the authors: *Como Ud. sabe, tradicionalmente en nuestro país la gente define las posiciones políticas como más cercanas a la izquierda, al centro o a la derecha. En esta tarjeta representamos las distintas posiciones políticas. Por favor, indíqueme, ¿con cuál Ud. se identifica más o con cuál posición simpatiza Ud. más?*

For our second hypothesis that focuses on political engagement, we use indicators of partisanship, electoral participation, and interest in politics. Partisanship is a dummy variable. Respondents who sympathize with a political party equal one (1) and those who do not equal zero (0). We measure electoral participation by reported participation in past presidential elections. A dummy variable equals one (1) if a respondent voted in the latest presidential election and zero (0) if she did not vote. The CEP surveys also ask if respondents are interested in politics. The question is: *How interested are you in politics?*⁵. The respondent can signify four alternatives that range from «Not at all interested» to «Very interested.» We rescale the values to range from zero (0) for those who are not interested to one (1) for those who are very interested in politics. We code all other responses as missing values.

We rely on independent variables that focus on perceptions of economic performance for our third hypothesis. We use the following question for national economic outlook: *According to this scale, how would you rate the current economic situation in the country?*⁶. We also use this question regarding future pocketbook views: *In the next 12 months, how do you think your economic situation will be?*⁷. The answers, which range from negative to positive values, are rescaled to range from zero (0) to one (1), respectively. Since the CEP surveys do not always ask the same questions, we cannot contrast future national economic views and pocketbook assessments due to data constraints.

Our models also include socio-demographic variables. We use two –education and age– for our fourth hypothesis. Research in Latin America (Carlin *et al.*, 2015) and Chile (Navia, Morales, & Briceño, 2009; Navia & Morales, 2010) has discussed how socio-demographic variables impact vote choice. The first one is education. We recode a continuous scale that ranges from zero (0) to one (1) for individuals who have primary, secondary, and tertiary education as their highest education level. The models also include the respondents' age, a continuous variable ranging from 0.18 to 1. We include two socio-demographic controls. First, a dummy for the region of residence. Respondents who reside in the Metropolitan Region, where Santiago, the capital, is located along with 40% of the population, equal one (1). Residents from elsewhere in the country equal (0). The respondent's sex is the second control. The dummy variable equals zero (0) for men and one (1) for women. All models include survey fixed effects (with dummy variables for the year in which each survey was conducted), but we omit those coefficients from the tables to simplify the visualization of the data. Table 2 summarizes our variables.

5. Translated by the authors: *¿Cuán interesado está Ud. en la política?*

6. Translated by the authors: *De acuerdo a esta escala, ¿cómo calificaría Ud. la actual situación económica del país?*

7. Translated by the authors *En los próximos 12 meses, ¿cómo cree Ud. que será su situación económica?*

Table 2. Summary of descriptive statistics used for regression analysis

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Intention for Alternative Candidates	3,432	0.252	0.434	0	1
Ideological Identification (Dummy)	3,287	0.555	0.497	0	1
Party Identification	3,342	0.389	0.488	0	1
Voted in Last Presidential Election	3,413	0.725	0.447	0	1
Interest in Politics	3,405	0.371	0.333	0	1
National Economy (Present)	3,418	0.469	0.352	0	1
Pocketbook Economy (Future)	3,418	0.702	0.296	0	1
Education	3,432	0.836	0.671	0	1
Age	3,432	0.478	0.179	0.18	0.98
Capital	3,432	0.360	0.480	0	1
Women	3,432	0.578	0.494	0	1

Source: Authors, based on the Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys (October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017).

RESULTS

We now turn to examine the individual-level determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates from 2009 to 2017. We divide the inferential analysis into two sections. The first section presents the probit estimations results, and the second one plots predicted probabilities for the primary outcomes. In the estimations, column 1 solely displays the effect of socio-demographic variables. Then, column 2 shows the impact of ideological identification. Column 3 exhibits political engagement (partisanship, past electoral turnout, and interest in politics), while column 4 includes the variables for national and pocketbook economic outlooks. Since ideological identification is highly correlated to party identification (> 0.6), we present two full models (columns 5 and 6) to avoid multicollinearity.

Table 3 presents the results of the probit estimations (we omit the fixed effects for the year of the election from the output). The influence of ideological identification is consistent between estimates. In both models (M2 and M5), the effect is negative and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). This result translates into respondents who do not identify with the ideological scale supporting alternative candidates in more significant numbers.

The variables for political engagement reveal uneven effects. Foremost, the output for party identification is negative and statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level in the individual and full models. Identifying with a political party decreases the likelihood of voting for an alternative presidential candidate. Simultaneously, voting in the previous presidential election is negative and statistically significant in the second full model ($p < 0.05$ level). This result tentatively translates to alternative presidential candidates' supporters as voting in fewer numbers in the past. Meanwhile, displaying interests in politics is not statistically significant, making it a weak predictor of alternative presidential candidates' support.

Table 3. The determinants of vote intention for alternative presidential candidates in Chile

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ideological Ident dummy		-0.227*** (0.050)			-0.211*** (0.053)	
Party Identification			-0.288*** (0.053)			-0.286*** (0.054)
Voted in Last Election			-0.118* (0.063)		-0.117* (0.065)	-0.146** (0.064)
Interest in Politics			-0.0648 (0.084)		-0.0789 (0.086)	-0.0628 (0.086)
National Economy (Present)				0.115 (0.070)	0.140* (0.073)	0.149** (0.073)
Pocketbook Economy (Future)				-0.263*** (0.084)	-0.257*** (0.087)	-0.267*** (0.087)
Education	0.293*** (0.079)	0.340*** (0.083)	0.363*** (0.085)	0.283*** (0.081)	0.365*** (0.087)	0.355*** (0.086)
Age	-1.486*** (0.150)	-1.497*** (0.155)	-1.364*** (0.180)	-1.590*** (0.156)	-1.415*** (0.187)	-1.420*** (0.185)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Capital	0.056 (0.049)	0.051 (0.051)	0.058 (0.051)	0.052 (0.051)	0.044 (0.053)	0.058 (0.052)
Women	0.012 (0.048)	-0.005 (0.049)	-0.004 (0.049)	0.009 (0.049)	-0.011 (0.051)	-0.001 (0.051)
Constant	-0.185* (0.108)	-0.096 (0.113)	-0.077 (0.113)	0.007 (0.132)	0.076 (0.138)	0.094 (0.136)
McFadden R2	0.05	0.056	0.063	0.053	0.062	0.068
Nagelkerke R2	0.081	0.091	0.102	0.087	0.101	0.109
N	3,432	3,287	3,298	3,311	3,140	3,191

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$ (two-tailed tests). Entries are unstandardized probit estimates, with standard errors in parenthesis.

All models include survey fixed effects that we omit as part of the output.

Source: Authors, based on the Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys (October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017).

The economic outlook variables reveal compelling findings. National economic views only have a negative impact that is significant in the second full model ($p < 0.05$ threshold). This outcome signifies that individuals with good evaluations of the country's economy are more likely to vote for alternative presidential candidates. Conversely, future pocketbook assessments are negative and significant at the $p < 0.01$ level in the individual and full models. In other words, individuals who are optimistic about their future personal economic situation are less likely to support alternative presidential candidates.

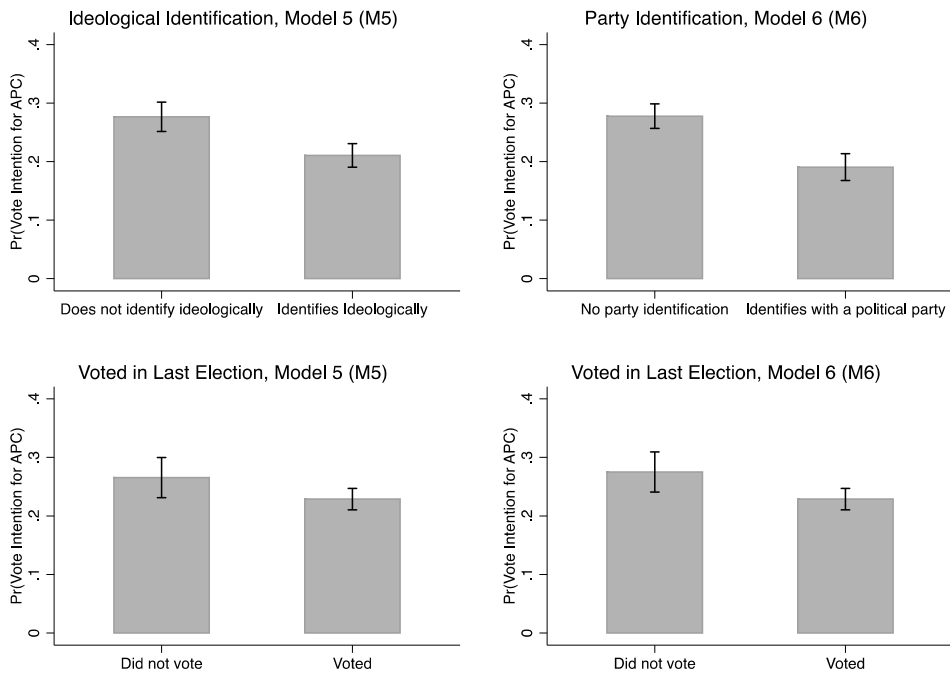
The effect of the socio-demographic variables is consistent across models. The impact of education is positive and significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. This outcome implies that individuals who have more years of education vote in more significant numbers for alternative presidential candidates. Age is consistently negative and significant at the $p < 0.01$ threshold, which indicates that being young increases the likelihood of voting for alternative presidential candidates. The probit estimations also reveal no substantial differences stemming from the controls for the region of residence and gender.

In short, the probit models show that, on the one hand, ideological identification, party identification, economic pocketbook perceptions, education, and age are robust predictors of support for alternative presidential candidates. One the

other hand, the national economic outlook and voting in past elections are significant in some models.

Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities for vote intention for alternative presidential candidates by selected indicators. The first row plots the results for ideological identification and party identification. The figure confirms how individuals who do not identify ideologically or identify with a political party are substantially more inclined to support alternative presidential candidates. The second row uses the two full models (M5 and M6) to portray support for alternative presidential candidates by past vote. The results indicate that individuals who did not vote are slightly more inclined to support alternative presidential candidates in the polls—although the difference is narrower in comparison to ideological and partisan identification.

Figure 4. Predicted probabilities by selected indicators



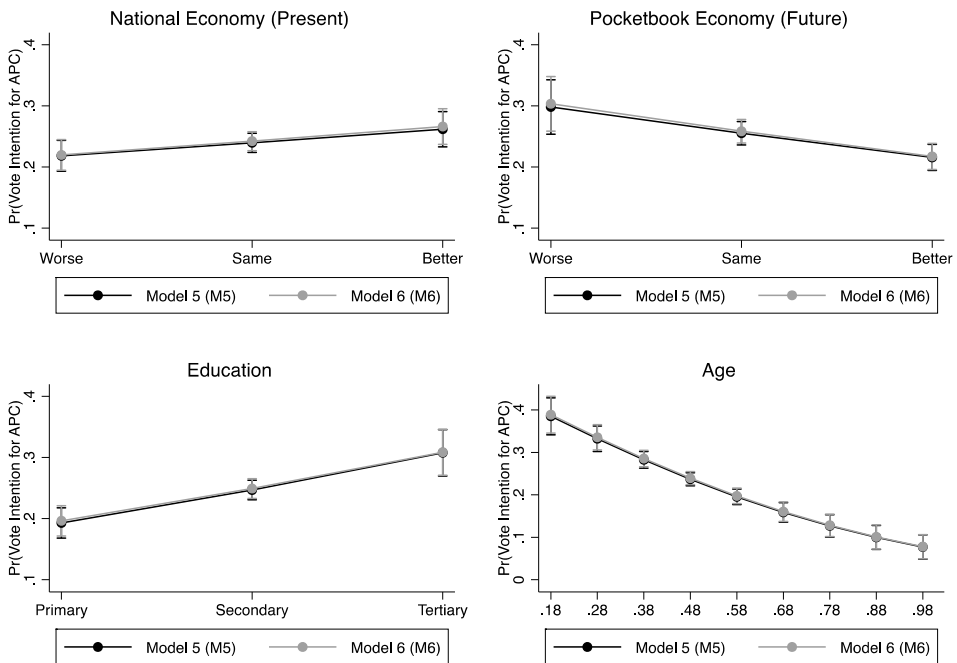
95% confidence intervals.

APC = Alternative presidential candidates.

Source: Authors, based on the Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys (October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017).

Figure 4 also reveals the extent to which there are differences between national and pocketbook outlooks. Individuals with better perceptions of the national economy are somewhat more inclined to vote for alternative presidential candidates. Conversely, those who have an optimistic view regarding their future economic situation are notoriously less inclined to support candidates not running on Chile's traditional coalitions. The last row provides results for education and age. The plot reveals how more years of education tend to increase voting for alternative presidential candidates. Similarly, support for alternative presidential candidates is notably less prevalent among older voters.

Figure 4 (continued). Predicted probabilities by selected indicators



95% confidence intervals.

APC = Alternative presidential candidates.

Source: Authors, based on the Centro de Estudios Públicos surveys (October 2009, September-October 2013, and September-October 2017).

DISCUSSION

The models above provide a statistical snapshot of the determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates in Chile from 2009 to 2017. The output reveals the extent to which voting for candidates not running on the platform of traditional coalitions stems from the four sources of voter discontent previously defined.

In the first hypothesis, we expected that not identifying with Chile's conventional left-right ideological divide increased support for alternative presidential candidates. The empirical results fall in line with this assumption, as identifying ideologically seemingly decreases support for alternative presidential candidates in the individual and full models. Alternative candidates receive stronger support among those who do not identify on the ideological scale. Our findings complement previous findings, using data from before automatic registration and voluntary voting, that report that lower trust in political parties induces higher abstention (Carlin, 2011). As all voters have been automatically registered since 2012, they can now easily opt between abstaining or casting a ballot for an alternative candidate.

In the second hypothesis, we postulated that individuals who do not identify with parties, did not participate in the past presidential election, and are less interested in politics are more likely to support alternative presidential candidates. The estimations suggest that identifying with a political party decreases vote intention for such candidates. We also report a modest effect for not voting in past elections (only in the second model at the $p < 0.05$ level), while documenting no substantial differences deriving from an interest in politics.

Hence, the results show that support for alternative presidential candidates functions as a vote against the party system establishment. After all, the rise of alternative presidential candidates coincides with a striking decrease in ideological and partisan attachments. In this vein, the unattached nature of alternative presidential candidate supporters insinuates the presence of critical citizens who channel their discontent electorally—despite not necessarily having voted in more significant numbers in the past.

For the third hypothesis, we tested whether economic vote variables condition support for alternative presidential candidates. We report a statistically significant effect of prospective pocketbook economic views across models and national economic outlooks in the full model. The results indicate that supporters of alternative presidential candidates positively view the general economic situation but are pessimistic about their future financial situation. Therefore, individuals who vote for alternative presidential candidates appropriately distinguish between the national and pocketbook economic conditions—and distinctly worry about their economic prospects.

The fourth hypothesis addresses socio-demographic shifts. We anticipated that younger individuals and individuals with lower education levels vote for alternative presidential candidates in more significant numbers. Our findings indicate that alternative presidential candidates are more popular among younger voters. The more substantial support for alternative presidential candidates among younger voters reflects the decay of attachment to traditional coalitions. In other words, younger voters have not developed the same electoral attachments as older voters and, consequently, are more inclined to vote for alternative presidential candidates.

The estimations also reveal that individuals with higher education levels are more prone to support alternative presidential candidates. We formulated this hypothesis with the comparative literature in mind, which often discusses how low-income segments have fueled political outsiders' rise elsewhere. In the case of Chile, individuals with higher education levels drive support for non-traditional presidential candidates.

In sum, the statistical output suggests that specific segments of Chilean voters support alternative presidential candidates. This subgroup of the population is younger and has higher education levels. These individuals also identify less ideologically and with political parties. Furthermore, they suffer from economic anxiety—viewing the economy as performing well for others while remaining pessimistic about their financial prospects.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we analyzed growing support for alternative presidential candidates in Chile; a country once praised for its stability that, in recent election cycles, has shown signs of realignment and declining level of electoral participation. We summarize our findings into two conclusions.

First, alternative presidential candidates' growing popularity coincides with increasing political fragmentation –as evidenced in the effective number of candidates– and a steady fall in electoral turnout, partisan, and ideological attachments. Second, the main individual-level determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates are ideological, partisan, economic, and socio-demographic. Traditional left-right ideological and partisan attachments decrease vote intention for alternative presidential candidates. This outcome points to the anti-establishment feeling driving their support. The fact that voter registration has been automatic since 2012 and voting is optional might have induced some people who previously chose not to register to vote to cast ballots for alternative presidential candidates now that they are automatically enfranchised.

Followers of alternative presidential candidates also suffer from economic anxiety, as they perceive the general economic situation in a positive light but are pessimistic about their future finances. This finding points to voting for alternative candidates as a potential expression of a protest vote against the political establishment for economic reasons. Concurrently, younger individuals and those with higher education levels are also more likely to vote for alternative candidates, an evidence that is consistent with the claim that declining partisanship responds to a generational effect, with more educated new voters being less likely to support candidates from the traditional coalitions.

The rise of alternative presidential candidates –mavericks, outsiders, or representatives of minor parties– in Latin American democracies is associated with political discontent and weakening party systems. In Chile, where alternative presidential candidates have grown considerably in popularity, the once institutionalized party system shows signs of decay and realignment. By examining the individual-level determinants of support for alternative presidential candidates, we hope to shed light on the features that fuel their rise in Chile and beyond.

Alternative presidential candidates come in all shapes and sizes. The case of Chile, a country with a weakening but still institutionalized party system, shows some interesting commonalities in the bases of support for alternative candidates. While economic anxiety and lack of deep political attachments make Chile similar to other Latin American countries, the results stemming from the youth and high education levels driving support for alternative presidential candidates provide a path for researchers to expand in future studies.

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